


MEET THE VULTURE—AND HATE HIM!

# THE THRILLER

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2<sup>d</sup> WEEKLY



WITH A MILLION POUNDS ON HIS BACK THE THIEF SLID AWAY, DOWN INTO THE DARKNESS. THE MAN AT THE WINDOW HAD HIM COVERED, YET NO SHOT WAS FIRED. WHY?

POWERFUL  
LONG  
COMPLETE  
SHADOW  
STORY

By Maxwell  
Grant

# CROOK BAIT!

# THE VULTURE



## Chapter I. THE VULTURE

ALONG the hot, dusty trail through the mesquite-studded wilderness, a troop of bandits rode at a canter on their foam-flecked horses. At their head, astride a magnificent roan stallion, rode the towering figure of Colonel Alexis Solokov, former Colonel of the Russian Cossacks who, for the past ten years, had ruled with brutal ferocity over a vast territory on the northern Mexican border.

And because his bloody trail was ever marked by the vultures that flocked to feast on his victims, Colonel Solokov had been named the "Vulture"; a name in which he took secret pleasure, for he had much in common with those sinister scavengers. Friend of no man—he walked alone.

The great white hat was in vivid contrast to the brutal, hawk-nosed face beneath, deeply scarred by an old sabre-cut running from cheek to jaw—memento of his fighting days in Russia. High cheekbones bespoke his Tartar blood; small, beady, black eyes bored forth from beneath shaggy eyebrows like twin gun-barrels; the ends of his heavy black moustache, drooping from the corners of his cruel, thick-lipped mouth, reached almost to his chin. Broad of shoulder, lean of flank in a word, the perfect cavalry officer.

As he rode, the thick, reddish-brown dust settled heavily on his sweat-covered face and neck, getting into his nostrils and choking his throat; making his ugly mood still darker.

Rounding a clump of cottonwoods the little village of San Rafael sprang into view, nestling quietly in a valley at the foot of the mighty Madres hills.

Rasping out a sharp command, the leader raked his splendid mount with his spurs, and the whole troop broke into full gallop. Long, curving sabres flashed in the sunlight as they swept along the trail into the narrow little street. Not until the tiny square was reached did they slacken the breakneck pace. Then the leader reined in sharply, jerking his mount back on its haunches as he threw his weight on the cruel Spanish bit. His men, knowing the usual procedure, spread out fan-wise and commenced rounding up the inhabitants.

Frightened screaming women covered in doorways and against crumbling adobe walls, clutching ragged, barefoot children to their skirts. And well might they be frightened for the ill fame of the Vulture and his troop had spread through all northern Mexico. The men under Colonel Solokov were called rurales, which is Spanish for soldiers, and they should have been protectors of their people. Instead, they were just bandits in uniform—spawn of the latest revolution. With hoarse shouts the rurales drove small groups of the villagers before them into the square, lashing them on brutally with the flat of their heavy sabres. Pitiful cries of "The Rurales!" "The Vulture!" rent the quiet of the late afternoon.

The big Cossack sat his panting horse and regarded the scene through cold, calculating eyes. A cringing old woman, seeking to curry favour, shuffled forward bearing a large crock, filled with water, in her wizened arms. Taking the vessel roughly from the old woman, he raised it to his thick lips and drank noisily; from time to time spilling some of the contents over his great barrel of a chest. The

crock emptied, he hurled it to the ground, where it broke into pieces. Meanwhile, his men had herded the ragged male population in the square and lined them up in a long row.

The colonel dismounted; a trooper coming forward took his horse immediately. While some of the rurales covered the men with their carbines, the colonel, accompanied by a squad of his men, walked slowly down past the long line of wretched humanity.

"Those I mark are for execution," he announced without bothering to turn his head.

Passing by several old men he halted in front of a sturdy, handsome young villager.

Reaching into a pocket he drew out a long silver cigarette case; emblazoned on the front was the Russian Eagle—a present from a one-time grateful archduke. Opening it, he selected a long brown cigarette and snapped the case shut. Carefully he tapped the cigarette on the face of the eagle, then placed it between his thick lips. Returning the case to his pocket, he struck a match and inhaled deeply.

Removing the cigarette from his lips, letting the deep blue smoke curl lazily out of his nostrils, he addressed the lad.

"Your name, fellow?" he barked out.

"José Romano, my colonel," came the soft-voiced reply.

"What have you done with the cattle you stole from the Don Luis Rancho?"

The boy raised a pair of amazed dark eyes.

"I have stolen no cattle, my colonel."

"Remove your hat when you talk to me, carion."

The bewildered boy removed his bat-

• HE WAS THE MOST HATED MAN IN MEXICO.  
—YOU WILL HATE HIM, TOO!

Utterly ruthless, glorying in his brutality, friend of no man—he walked alone.

WHAT HE WANTED, HE TOOK—

And when he saw the beauty of John Faulkner's girl, Dolores, he wanted her—

In these thrilling chapters you will learn to hate THE VULTURE as fiercely as did John Faulkner, and gladly ride with him on the vengeance trail to rid the world of this HUMAN BIRD OF PREY.

# By Gerald Drayson Adams

tered headpiece. Quick as a flash the colonel's arm rose and fell, lashing the boy savagely across the face with his heavy whip. The reeling villager was immediately pounced upon by the troopers. And so it went on down the long line; the mock cross-questioning; the heavy whip rising and falling; until twenty of the most able-bodied had been singled out. These unfortunates were then prodded across the square and stood with their backs to a crumbling adobe wall. The rest of the inhabitants looked on—the deep despair of utter hopelessness in their terrified eyes.

The condemned men stood dazedly facing their captors, the blood streaming down their faces—utterly resigned to their fate. They came of a race used to suffering and cruelty for generations—fatalists all. Devoid of any emotion, their eyes wandered hopelessly to their loved ones on the other side of the square—so near, yet to be separated from them in a few moments by the veil of death for ever. A deep, pregnant silence hung over all.

From a low doorway emerged the tall, lean figure of a young man. He walked with difficulty on a pair of crutches. In good health he must have made a splendid specimen, but now, recovering from a Mauser bullet through the thigh and an attack of malaria, he looked many years beyond his thirty and three.

Painfully he made his groping way across the square to the rurale commander. As he reached the man's side, he paused, leant on his crutches, stretched out a wasted arm and touched the colonel's sleeve.

"A moment, my colonel," he said in a quiet voice.

The big man turned irritably.

"Who are you?" he barked.

"An American, my colonel—these men, I know them well, they are innocent."

The big Cossack's face darkened; his black eyes narrowed.

"So!" he purred softly, "you are one of those cursed American's, eh? You have the impertinence to tell me, Colonel Alexis Solokov, that these cattle are innocent. Keep a still tongue in your head, fellow, or you will find yourself against the wall with these men—that you know so well."

A high flush crept over the pale face of the wounded man; a cold, steely look in the smoky grey eyes, as he asked softly:

"Is it not well to remember, my colonel, that in this country every dog has his day—to-day a man may be the executioner, to-morrow, who knows—he may be the executed?"

The colonel's face purpled with suppressed anger, the old sabre scar became livid; the thick lips parted in a snarl exposing the irregular yellow teeth.

"Caramba! You would have me remember, eh, Americano? You choose to threaten—you, who are but a walking corpse soon to be meat for vultures. Well, here is something by which to remember the Vulture—American swine!"

Quick as a striking rattlesnake he lashed out, striking the defenceless man savagely in the face with the butt of his heavy quirt; guffawing loudly as his victim fell senseless to the ground, blood spurting from his face.

With a piercing scream a beautiful young girl dashed out of the crowd and knelt beside the stricken man, taking his head in her lap.

"Oh, my dear!" she sobbed brokenly.

A great hairy hand descended and, fastening in her thick blue-black hair, jerked her head roughly back.

"Your name, girl?" demanded the colonel.

"Dolores, my colonel," the grief-stricken girl replied.

The small black eyes studied the beautiful face for a moment, then travelled down till they rested on the opening of the thin blouse, now drawn taut across her well-rounded figure. Suddenly the big Cossack's other hand swooped down, ripping the flimsy garment from her body—exposing her full young bosom. Frantically the girl sought to cover herself with her delicate hands.

"You are beautiful, senorita," came from the thick lips, "too beautiful to waste yourself on this dog of an American."

Fire flashed in the girl's eyes. Tensing, she suddenly spat straight in the bestial black eyes.

With a roar of rage the man let go his hold of the girl's hair, and whipped her savagely across head and back. With a low moan she fell forward across the unconscious form of the American. Little rivulets of blood trickled from the long angry welts on the warm, quivering, golden-brown flesh.

A hush fell on the square.

The colonel turned angrily upon his men, bellowing out an order. Immediately, six rurales ran forward and took up a position facing the doomed men.

Another command rasped out.

Bolts clicked and rifles came to grey-clad shoulders.

"Fire!"

A volley crashed out—men fell—again and again the rifles vomited their leaden messengers of death until all the men were down; some lying inert—others, writhing on the ground in agony. A small cloud of reddish-brown dust hung over them.

The big Cossack marched forward, drawing his revolver. Pausing every now and then to reload, he quickly dispatched the wounded.

The carnage completed to his satisfaction; he strode back and mounted his horse. Growling out another command, the whole troop mounted and, breaking into a gallop, circled the square, laying right and left with their sabres on any who came within reach. The circle completed, the troop wheeled and swept out of the square, disappearing amid a jangle of harness in a cloud of dust along the southern trail.

Immediately the crowd set up a loud wailing as they rushed forward to the mute bodies of their loved ones; little children followed screaming, clinging to their mothers' skirts.

Back in the centre of the square the girl Dolores stirred—a low moan escaped her lips. Painfully she raised her body on her arms. An old woman shuffled forward and, taking the shawl from her head, draped it over the girl's bleeding shoulders, hiding to some extent her nakedness.

Dazedly the girl rose to her feet, shaking her head to throw off the coma. Gradually her senses returned. Eventually her eyes dropped to the still form of the American at her feet. With a low cry she sank to her knees, clasping his wounded head to her bosom.

"My dear, my dear!" she sobbed. "Speak to me, Juan."

The man groaned; his eyes opened slightly; they looked straight up into those of the girl; a tortured smile touched the corners of his mouth.

"Dolores," he murmured faintly. His eyes closed again. With a choking cry the girl raised her head and called to a group of old men and women standing near.

"For the love of God, help me!"

At her pitiful cry four old men came forward and lifted the unconscious man. Drawing the shawl closely about her, the girl walked by the man's side as they bore him to a tiny adobe hut across the square.

From high overhead above the carnage came the whirring of mighty wings—the vultures wheeled in great lazy circles, waiting, their fathomless tawny eyes fastened avidly on the scene below.

Within the rude hut the form of the American was gently laid on a straw bed on the hard-packed earthen floor. Silently the men withdrew, leaving the girl alone with the wounded man.

She ran lightly across the room and returned bearing a jar of water and a piece of clean cloth. Depositing the vessel on the floor, she dipped the cloth in the water and commenced washing the blood and dust from the wounded man's face.

This man, John Faulkner, had been a mining engineer. Now he was a Colonel of the Dorados, a body of troops formed by General Pancho Villa to clean Mexico of the bandit bands who were terrorising the land under the guise of rurales.

Faulkner had received his wounds in a recent battle with the rurales, and the girl, Dolores, had found him dying by the roadside. With gentle care she had nursed him back to life, and in the doing had learned to love him with all the fierce intensity of her southern blood.

And John Faulkner loved her, too—this girl who had saved his life and was now his ministering angel. One day—soon—he hoped to be strong enough to travel with her to the nearby town of Nogales, where they would be wed.

Under the gentle touch of the cool cloth in the girl's tender hands, Faulkner opened his eyes slowly. Quickly she put down her cloth and held a bottle of wine to his lips.

As the fiery liquid caused new life to course through his veins, he slowly struggled to a sitting posture and gazed into the girl's anxious eyes.

"The rurales—have they gone, my Beautiful One?" he asked haltingly.

"Yes, yes, my dear—the hateful one and his followers have left. But," she added sadly, "death has trodden the streets heavily in our little village this day."

"And I was so helpless, Dolores—so utterly useless."

The girl held a silencing finger to his lips.

"You must not talk that way, my Juan. Dolores is very angry with you. You should never have left your bed. Your terrible wound has barely healed, and the fever has left you very weak."

Giving him a flashing smile, she rose and walked over to a little cupboard set in a niche in the wall. As she reached within, the shawl drooped from her smarting shoulders, and the faint rays of the setting sun, filtering through the small window, fell on her mutilated back.

Abject horror mirrored in the man's eyes as he beheld the livid blood-streaked welts.

"Dolores!" he cried sharply.

The girl turned quickly.

"What is it, Juan?"

"Your beautiful back—did that devil dare—"

"Yes, indeed, it is true," she cut in quickly, "he did indeed dare. Dolores ran to you when that beast struck you. He caught me by my hair and"—her eyes dropped momentarily—"he tore my blouse away with his great hairy hands. He said horrible things about you, my Juan. So Dolores, she spat in his ugly face. That made him angry—he gave me the whip," she paused; "but Dolores is glad he did, it might"—a shudder passed through her—"it might have been much worse."

The man's body tensed, great veins bulged in his neck, perspiration broke out on his forehead—a fierce, smouldering light glowed in his smoky eyes. A moment thus—and then it passed.

"Bring the salve, my Beautiful One," he said gently, "you are the one who needs attention."

The girl came and knelt beside him, turning her back with its record of the handiwork of the rurale chief. Tenderly he removed the shawl and washed the ugly cuts; reverently pressing his lips to each; gently he covered them with healing salve.

The girl made no outcry during his ministrations; at the touch of his hand on her flesh, a great exultation swept through her young body, sending her pulses racing madly—all pain miraculously vanished.

Gently he draped the shawl again about her shoulders, then, the effort proving too much for his weakened frame, the American sank slowly back on the bed. Lovingly the girl pillowed his feverish head on her breast; cool, small fingers ran gently through his curly fair hair.

"Never mind, my dear," she said soothingly as though to a small child, "you will be strong again some day, and then—who knows—there may be a different tale to tell."

The American breathed heavily as a strong motion gripped him. A vast black rage at his own weakness engulfed him. He spoke slowly, and with difficulty.

"For every mark of the whip on your lovely body, my Beautiful One, I shall one day give the Vulture ten in return. Some day I shall cross his trail again—some day, my Beautiful One—" His voice trailed off, his fair head sank wearily, but contentedly, back on the warm bosom.

She pressed her lips to his damp, curly hair. Cradling him in her strong young arms, she rocked him gently.

Softly there fell from her lips, in a rich, low, musical voice, a love song of old Mexico:

"In my arms my lover lies,  
Neath the tranquil moon-lit skies.  
His dear head upon my breast.  
Peace is on us—Peace and rest."

The light in the small window paled. Darkness swooped down on the little village. Gradually the wailing of the mourners sank to a whisper—somewhere a dog howled dismally. Presently, a blood-red moon rode the sky, lighting up the little square, now destitute of its grim, distorted figures—ugly dark spots alone marking the place where they had fallen. There came a swishing through the air as the vultures swooped low, only to soar angrily away—cheated of their feast.

Another day had ended—Death had spread his dark mantle over little San Rafael and had passed on his ghoulish way, sweeping down the sky. To-morrow would be another day—the warm sunshine would come again—things would re-

adjust themselves—life would go on. To-day we live—to-morrow we may die. It matters not.

Poor, fatalistic, child-like Mexico.

#### PEPE TOMÁSO.

A SILVERY stream of dawn ripped across the eastern horizon. The sun appeared, jewelling the lofty mountain peaks—a great ball of burnished gold. In the little village weary men and women stretched and yawned; peered out through hopeless red-rimmed eyes into the dazzling sunlight.

From across the little square, Pepe Tomás, old and bent with years of toil, shuffled along, leaning heavily on his staff. As he passed the gruesome stains lying in the red dust in the shadow of the adobe wall he crossed himself devoutly, and muttering in his ragged beard, continued on his way down the little narrow street.

Little spirals of blue smoke stole silently aloft from the flat roofs as the small village came to life. The sweet, pungent odour of burning greasewood filled the early morning air. Little children with dirty faces peeped with frightened eyes through tattered wooden shutters. A dog wandered into the sunshine and set to work scratching out the fleas that had nested in his fur overnight.

The girl, Dolores, appeared in her doorway. She stretched her arms and yawned sleepily, exposing a well-shaped row of perfect, dazzling white teeth. She ran her small hands through the thick mass of blue-black hair. She was clad in a spotless, loose-fitting muslin smock—her tiny feet in rough sandals.

From the direction of the little street sounded the tinkling of a tiny bell. Old Pepe appeared, driving two milch-goats before him. The girl ran inside her hut, and re-appeared immediately, a small earthen pitcher in her hands. The old man halted his goats before her and raised his battered hat.

"Good-day, señorita," he greeted her, bowing slightly.

"Good-day, Pepe," she replied. "It is a sad awakening for our poor little San Rafael this day."

"Yes, indeed!" The old man shook his head sadly, taking the pitcher from the girl he proceeded to milk one of the milch-goats.

After much squeezing of the shrivelled udder, the pitcher was finally filled. Old Pepe straightened his creaking back, and handed it to the girl, saying:

"My poor son Rodolfo—all night I hold the death watch. Now old Pepe is without child to care for him in his old age." Peering cautiously around, he moved closer to the girl and whispered, "Beware, señorita, the Vulture will return. You had better take your man away. I liked not the look the Cruel One gave him. When he has had his fill of executions he will return on his way to Hermosillo. I think he will want to see the American—it would, perhaps, be difficult to explain his wounds, and I doubt if you would be safe from him a second time." He paused. "Ah, I almost forgot. I saw that good-for-nothing fellow Tobasco mount and take the trail after the rurales last night. He hates your American, because since he came you do not listen to his love-making. Better you go to the Valley of the Caves. I will bring you food and let you know when it is safe to return."

Putting his hat back on his head, he whacked the rumps of his goats with his staff, and shuffled off to where his next

customer waited. Old Pepe was a business man.

For a few moments Dolores stared thoughtfully out into the sunlight, an icy feeling gripping her heart. Her Juan was not well enough to travel; yet, get him away from the clutches of the Vulture she must. Suddenly her eyes fell on the dark stains in the little square; with a shudder she turned and carried the milk inside the hut.

Through the vine-covered window a ray of sunshine splashed across the face of the sleeping man. He blinked his eyes, yawned, and slowly raised himself on an elbow, just as Dolores entered with the milk.

"Awake at last, my Sleepy-headed One!" she cried with forced gaiety. "How does my Juan feel this morning?"

The man looked up at her and smiled: "Much better, my Beautiful One—and very hungry."

"One moment, Senor Hungry One, and you shall have big fat cakes and fresh goat milk."

Putting her jar of milk on a small table, she bent over a stove and began her preparations.

"How does your poor back feel this morning, my dear?" asked the man. The girl turned her beautiful head.

"My back?" she asked, looking at him over her shoulder. "Poof! Dolores has forgotten about it already." She snapped her small fingers impishly. "That—for the Vulture!"

Presently she set a platter, piled high with cakes beside the man on the ground, next came the pitcher of goat's milk. Then she seated herself, cross-legged, beside him.

"There, Senor Hungry One," she laughed, "let me see just how hungry you really are."

"Just watch me, my dear," he replied, reaching for a cake. "Have a care, pretty soon I will be strong again, then I will take you in my arms and never let you go."

"Dolores is not afraid," she replied happily, kissing him lightly on the mouth. "All she wants is to be in her Juan's arms—for ever."

For some moments they ate in silence, both drinking from the same vessel. Suddenly noticing a worried frown on the girl's small forehead, the American asked:

"Something is troubling my Beautiful One?"

The girl paused, put down the cake she was eating, and rested a delicate hand on his forearm.

"Yes, my Juan, a little. Old Pepe just told me that the Ugly One would return this way soon, and that he might stop to question you," then added softly, "it would perhaps be difficult to explain your wounds, my Juan."

Alarm showed in the man's face.

"I had not thought of that," he said slowly.

"Also, my Juan," the girl continued, "old Pepe said that Tobasco took the trail last night after the Vulture—he hates us both. Maybe he has gone to tell the Vulture about you. So—Dolores will pack up, and we go to the mountains. Old Pepe said he would let us know when it was safe to return." Then added anxiously: "Does my Juan feel strong enough to ride a donkey?"

"Yes, my Beautiful One, I feel much stronger; but," he added "there is no need for you to go to the mountains and leave your little home—it is a rough life."

The girl's lovely eyes flashed proudly.

"Dolores is a soldier. Where her Juan goes, Dolores, she goes also."

A look of happiness came into the man's eyes—he had received the answer that he longed to hear. Gently he folded her in his arms, covering her face with kisses.

Unwillingly she disengaged herself from his embrace.

"Now," she said with an air of finality, "Dolores must get busy, she has much to do."

Quickly she commenced putting her pitifully few little treasures in an old shawl that she had laid on the ground—a small crucifix, a tiny bottle of cheap perfume, some beads.

John Faulkner watched her as she worked. Some day he would give her all the things her little heart could wish for; some day he would take her to his little white stucco bungalow, with its red-tiled roof and the rambling wisteria, high up on the cliffs at Los Angeles, over-looking the blue Pacific.



Tobasco's return to the village was far different from what he had expected. The vulture was taking no risks, even with him.

#### TREACHERY.

COLONEL ALEXIS SOLOKOV sat on his great haunches munching cakes, pausing every now and then to wash down the food with huge draughts of steaming black coffee. His men were gathered around in little groups, waiting for him to eat his fill before they were allowed to eat.

The troop had camped the night before on a low plain, overlooking the little village of Alamo—scene of their latest outrage. The horses, under guard of one trooper, were grazing close by on the short grass.

In the distance, on the narrow, winding brown ribbon of trail, a cloud of dust appeared. Presently, from it emerged a horseman—a ragged peasant mounted on a small wiry pony. As the newcomer neared the encampment, he slowed his jaded horse to a walk. At the campfire he dismounted, removed his weather-beaten hat and approached the big Cossack. The man was taller than the average peasant, and in a crude way, darkly handsome; he cringed as he faced the colonel.

"Good day, my Colonel," he said, bowing low.

The Vulture, one cheek bulging with food, glared at the man.

"What is it, fellow?" he barked out.

"My Colonel, I have followed fast, from San Rafael—the American——" he panted breathlessly.

The chief of the rurales took a great swallow of steaming black coffee before replying.

"The American, eh? Well! What about him?"

The peasant's face darkened cunningly.

"This American is a colonel of the dorados—he is but now recovering from wounds received in the battle of Altar, when the rurales and the dorados fought to the death, my Colonel."

A gleam of interest showed in the piercing black eyes.

"A colonel of the dorados, eh? Why do you tell me this, you dog? What is it that you seek in return? I have yet to see any of your scum do anything for nothing."

"The girl, my Colonel; she was to have been mine before the American came."

A dark smile floated across the colonel's face. Slowly he drew the long silver cigarette case from his pocket. Thoughtfully he gazed at the Russian eagle emblazoned on it—it reminded him of things—things belonging in the dim past—things best forgotten. Opening it, he selected a long brown Russian cigarette and placed it between his thick lips. Then carefully put the silver case away in his pocket. A trooper held a flaming twig from the fire. He inhaled deeply, his eyes boring into those of the peasant meanwhile. An uncomfortable feeling came to that gentleman that all was, perhaps, not well. Exhaling a long cloud of blue smoke, the rurale commander said:

"So! The American stole your girl, eh? Well, you shall have her——"

"Thank you, my Colonel, a thousand thanks!" murmured the delighted man; this was far better than he had dared hope.

The deep voice rumbled on.

"Yes, fellow, you shall have her—after I have tamed her. She is a little hell-cat

(Continued on page 95.)

# CROOK BAIT!

**Lamont Cranston—THE SHADOW—baited the trap with loot, and the crooks swarmed like flies on jam. With them came Bruce Dixon, robbing his own father, double-crossing his best friends. At least, it seemed like that, until—**

## Chapter I. DYNAMITE.

THE southern approach to Tower Bridge was jammed with an orderly procession of motor vehicles as far as the eye could reach. The bridge was "open"—the bascules were up to let a ship pass into the Pool of London. Lamont Cranston sat behind the wheel of his beautifully stream-lined car, and his hawk-like eyes were alert and intelligent. It amused him that people should stare with envy at his shining car, yet take no particular notice of him. It pleased Lamont Cranston to remain unknown and unrecognised.

For Lamont Cranston was the Shadow, the mysterious avenger of crime, who, garbed in trailing black cloak and slouch hat, roamed the underworld ferreting out crime in its lair, and bringing to justice those criminals who flouted the law. The name of the Shadow was a byword of terror to all criminals, but not one of them guessed that in his relentless warfare the Shadow was really pursuing a ceaseless quest after the man who had lured his only son into crime.

To-night, the Shadow, as Lamont Cranston, was returning from a brief holiday on the Kentish coast. While he waited in the string of traffic he scanned a newspaper. One item of news held his attention.

### TROUBLE AT SHADELAWN.

"Quick wit and quicker action prevented an attempted burglary last night at Shadelawn, the magnificent estate of Arnold Dixon, at Felham Bay, near Cliftonville. A man, attempting to enter the window of Bruce Dixon's room—only son of the retired millionaire—was discovered and driven off by Mr. William Timothy, with the help of Charles, the Dixon's butler. Although hotly pursued, the would-be burglar succeeded in escaping.

"A peculiar fact in the case is that



Mr. Dixon's son, Bruce, was unaware of the burglar's presence until he heard the shouting of the butler, although he was in his room playing patience when the attempt occurred. Mr. William Timothy, who is Mr. Dixon's solicitor, and an old friend of the millionaire, was unable to identify the burglar from police photographs; but Charles, the butler, picked out the picture of 'Spud' Wilson.

"This is the second time in recent months that Shadelawn has appeared in the news." Three months ago Bruce Dixon returned home after a prolonged absence of ten years due to a violent quarrel with his father. Efforts to discover the reason for the quarrel, and the recent reconciliation, were fruitless. Neither Mr. Arnold Dixon nor his son would consent to an interview."

The Shadow cut this from the paper and put it in his wallet. The bascules of the bridge were down. The cars ahead of him were beginning to move. He drove over the bridge and round by way of Tower Hill to Billingsgate. He found that unsalubrious thoroughfare deserted at that time of the evening, and his way was clear to get to Lower Thames Street, and thus to Upper Thames Street. He wanted to reach the Embankment by the shortest route, and

thus get to his West End club quickly.

A single fact glowed like flame in the keen mind of the Shadow. Spud Wilson, the burglar who had tried to enter Shadelawn, the mansion of Arnold Dixon, was no burglar at all! He was a cleverer and more dangerous rogue than that. Spud was a daring confidence man and shrewd swindler. He worked only on jobs where thousands were involved. What, then, was his purpose in sneaking into the grounds at Shadelawn?

Cranston's first hint of danger came as he proceeded along Upper Thames Street. He saw on his left a disused warehouse, set back from the road, with a drive in for lorries, now empty and untidy. By the kerb, a few yards farther on, a car was parked. Instantly, Cranston was rigidly alert. He was interested not in the parked car, nor in the disused warehouse. He saw the face and figure of a man who was coming from the warehouse across the loading yard, having just emerged from the side door of the grimy building. He was hurrying stealthily towards his waiting car.

The man was Spud Wilson. The shrewd crook who had so recently attempted to burgle the home of Arnold Dixon at Felham Bay!

Cranston acted without delay. His car shot round the next corner and came

# BY MAXWELL GRANT

## A POWERFUL, LONG COMPLETE SHADOW STORY



In the lurid glare of a lightning flash the two men saw the bedraggled figure of the Shadow outside the window. He had been left to die in a burning house, yet here he was—alive, menacing!

to a quick halt. A moment later the car was braked and locked, and Cranston was returning to make sure that his recognition had not been at fault. He crossed Upper Thames Street, and his steps slackened. He managed to time himself so that he walked abreast of the suspect just as the latter emerged from the yard of the warehouse and began to hurry towards the parked car which had first attracted the attention of Lamont Cranston.

In his suave manner, Lamont Cranston was holding an unlighted cigarette in his slim, muscular fingers. He smiled gently, said with an apologetic murmur: "Excuse me. Could you oblige me with a match?"

Cranston saw to it that he was between the man and the kerb. He remained there as he struck a match from the proffered box and held the yellow flame to the end of his cigarette. He didn't attempt to cup the flame. He held it so that the light shone full into the face of the suspect, who was now scowling at him with a look of frowning suspicion.

The man was Spud Wilson. No doubt of it at all. Narrow, pinched eyes, thin slash of a mouth, a pale, bumpy forehead. His words as well as his appearance proved Cranston's deduction.

He said in a low, menacing whisper:

"Who are you looking at? You'll know me next time, won't you? You're not a 'tec, or I'd know you. Who are you—a private 'tec?"

"Not at all. I'm merely a private individual borrowing a match. Thank you very much."

Wilson's hand reached out, caught Cranston by the wrist.

"Wait a minute! You can't kid me! What's the idea of trailing me?"

His hand jerked from under his coat.

Cranston saw the dull gleam of an automatic. He hadn't expected so savage a move from a confidence man. No flame spat from the muzzle of the pistol, but as Wilson pivoted on his toes, the barrel of his weapon whizzed like a glittering club, and struck Cranston a glancing blow on the temple that sent his hat flying and made him stagger off his balance.

The next instant Cranston's own gun was in his hand. But the strangely unexpected assault of Spud Wilson was followed by a terrified and equally strange flight. He whirled away, ran straight for his car at the kerb. He was behind the wheel, his foot fumbling toward the starter, before Cranston could gather his muscles and sprint across the pavement.

The brief delay in pursuit was all that saved Cranston's life. He saw the sinuous length of wire attached to the pedal. He saw the wire jerk as Wilson's foot jammed down hard. Lamont Cranston threw himself face down on the pavement. As he did so, the car, the kerb—the very street itself erupted into a pillar of flame. The thunderous roar of the explosion filled the air like the vicious boom of a field gun.

Blinded, his ears buzzing from the enormous wind pressure of the blast, Cranston groaned. He could feel a white-hot pain in his side, and knew dully that a flying chunk of metal from the dynamited car had ripped past his body just below the curve of his ribs.

Someone had planned for Spud Wilson to die! Someone, who had deliberately planted dynamite in the parked car and wired the starter to a detonating cap—

Cranston divined all this as he weakly clawed himself to his feet. He heard the screams of women, the hoarse shouts of men.

"There he goes! That's one of them!"

The yell restored Cranston's ebbing strength. He had no desire to be halted and questioned. Around the corner was his own car, with an attaché case inside that contained the complete disguise of the Shadow—the black cloak and the slouch hat. To be caught now would be to have his secret betrayed, his mysterious identity for ever ruined.

He raced desperately around the corner. Before the wildly excited people in the neighbourhood knew clearly what was happening, a sleek car was vanishing up a narrow hill to Queen Victoria Street in a droning whine of high power. A voice screamed thinly far behind him:

"Get his number!"

Cranston laughed. His hand reached toward the dash and jerked at a small knob. Apparently nothing happened, but Cranston was leaving nothing to chance. By his quick gesture he had changed the number plate on the rear of the car.

Lamont Cranston had vanished, too. In his place at the wheel sat the Shadow. The change in attire had been effected quickly, deftly. A black slouch hat covered his forehead and shaded the piercing eyes. Black gloves covered his lean hands. In spite of the throbbing agony of his wound, he had slipped into his disguise with sure dexterity. His safety now depended on speed—and cleverness. He knew he had to reach a safe haven before he collapsed.

He slackened speed. Biting his lips to keep from fainting, he drove as fast as he dared to the spot he had in mind from the very moment he knew he was hurt. His goal was a dark doorway in a quiet Westminster street. He shut off the engine, locked the car, taking the key with him. Staggering, he managed to climb a short flight of steps and press a bell button. Over the bell was a small bronze plate that read: "Rupert Sayre, M.D."

Cranston felt unconsciousness flooding him. But he had will enough to turn with a last effort and satisfy himself that no one had observed him leave the car at the kerb and climb the steps to the doctor's doorway. It was his final coherent thought. His body crumpled in a limp heap.

The Shadow was lying thus when the door opened. A keen-faced man peered, saw the unconscious figure, and uttered a quick exclamation.

"Good heavens! It's—it's he!"

Rupert Sayre was more than an alert young doctor. He was a man with a grim hatred for crime and criminals, and one of the trusted agents of the Shadow. In his gifted hands the bleeding body of the Shadow would be given competent treatment under conditions of absolute secrecy.

### TROUBLE AT SHADELAWN.

THE Shadow never did leave the house of Dr. Rupert Sayre. The gentleman who departed under cover of darkness one evening was Lamont Cranston. In his hand he carried a light attaché case. Inside it was a black robe, a broad-brimmed slouch hat, gloves, and certain other articles that formed an indispensable part of the Shadow's necessary equipment.

Cranston walked quietly to a nearby garage where his car had been kept waiting for his recovery. He drove eastwards, over the Tower Bridge, and through Southwark to the winding roads of Kent.

His driving was careful as befits a man who has had a narrow escape from death.

A stiff, corset-like band of adhesive tape made his figure sit somewhat slantingly behind the wheel. That and the unusual pallor of his lean cheeks were the only indications of a desperate adventure that had filled the newspapers with screaming headlines.

Who had planted the dynamite that had blown the parked car to pieces? And why? As yet, Cranston had no answer to either question. But the answer to the outrage seemed to point very definitely to the mansion of Arnold Dixon in Pelham Bay, on the Kentish coast. The "burglary" which had first excited Cranston's attention was very evidently a cover-up for something far more sinister and murderous.

It was toward the mansion of Arnold Dixon that Cranston was now driving. His plan was simple. He had an overwhelming desire to meet, observe, and study at close range this eccentric millionaire. He wanted to talk to Bruce, the recently returned son. He hoped to observe the butler, and—if possible—William Timothy, the millionaire's solicitor. Cranston was aware that Timothy was a long-standing friend of Dixon's. Nearly every night the two played chess together and drank a glass of port.

A sibilant laugh of satisfaction escaped his lips as he saw the massive, grey walls of the Dixon house loom up in the darkness. It was a large place, built like an old-fashioned castle. He drove past the gate, watching carefully until he saw a spot where he could hide his car. Turning the car, he backed it under a thick clump of evergreens, and left it there, securely hidden from sight.

Cranston discovered that the gate which led to the grounds was closed, but not locked. He passed through, and walked with deliberate steps along the curving path that led through a rather thickly planted park toward the distant turrets of the stone mansion.

Within an ornate, high-ceilinged room on the ground floor of the Dixon mansion, two men were awaiting the appearance of the millionaire. One of them was dressed in the severely dark clothing of a butler. He was a short, stocky man with a placid face and a fringe of grey hair around his ears and the back of his almost bald skull. This was Charles, who had been in the service of Arnold Dixon for more than thirty-five years. The second man was William Timothy, the millionaire's solicitor, and his closest friend.

Timothy was tall and spare. He paced up and down with an alert, nervous step.

"There's no need for either of us to beat about the bush, Charles," the solicitor was saying. "We know there's something highly unusual going on in this house. Mr. Dixon won't talk. He's desperately afraid of someone or something. We've both of us sensed that."

"That's true, sir," Charles quavered. "The master hasn't been himself for the past three months—not since those two men first came here for a private interview with him."

He added timorously:

"They're coming to-night, as I whispered to you over the 'phone."

"You were right in letting me know about it," Timothy said. "I'm very anxious to get a good look at this Bert Hooley and his friend, Joe Snaper." His voice hardened. He queried: "The same peculiar thing happens each time they call?"

"Yes, sir."

Charles amplified his statement in a low, hurried voice, his glance watching

the huge doorway through which presently would emerge Arnold Dixon and his good-looking son, Bruce. Hooley and Snaper had been coming regularly to the mansion for the past three months—twice every month. Their visits seemed to terrify Arnold Dixon, but he never refused to see them. They were closeted alone with him in his private study for twenty minutes or so. They always left looking triumphant.

"And Bruce—what of him?" asked Timothy.

Again the butler glanced at the doorway.

"Every time these two fellows call, Mr. Bruce vanishes. He's done it every time, sir. Never once has he commented on them either to me or his father. But the moment they enter his father's study and the door is locked, Mr. Bruce vanishes. I wasn't absolutely sure of that until lately. Then I began quietly to search for him. It was no use, sir. Apparently, Mr. Bruce either leaves the house or is hidden somewhere in the old wing where his father's study is situated."

"And a valuable collection of Chinese pottery—eh?" Timothy said softly. There was a taut smile on his worried face. "Tell me honestly, Charles, what is your opinion of these two fellows?"

"I—I think that Hooley and Snaper may be blackmailers, sir. It's curious that their visits began shortly after Mr. Bruce—er—returned from his long absence. I'm convinced that the master is paying out regularly to protect either himself or Bruce. Mr. Bruce was always a wild, headstrong boy. He left home after a dreadful quarrel about his gambling, his debts, and his—his peculiar friends."

Charles' eyes dropped away from the solicitor's steady stare.

"I have an uneasy feeling that Mr. Bruce always disappears when these rogues call because he is in league with them."

Timothy said sharply:

"Are you hinting that perhaps Bruce may not be Arnold Dixon's real son?"

"I—I don't know what to think," the butler whispered.

There was a long silence. Timothy shook his head, patted the trembling shoulder of the old servant.

"We're both allowing our imaginations to run away with us. Bruce is the real son. He can't be otherwise. You know the tests I insisted on making. Physical and mental. Tests of memory that go all the way back to the boy's childhood."

His voice deepened impatiently.

"Bruce passed every one of those tests with flying colours. The same appendicitis scar. No lobes on his ears. His face, his body, his very way of talking. You, yourself, heard him tell me things when I examined him—things about people and places, events that no one but a true son of Arnold Dixon could possibly have known. You, yourself, Charles, were absolutely convinced."

"I know it, sir. But—well, for one thing he's so good-humoured, so devoted to the welfare of his father. Before he left home, ten years ago, he was utterly different—"

Timothy's warning hand on Charles' arm cut short his anxious words. Both men turned towards the doorway. The solicitor's face was smiling.

"Hallo, Arnold! Ready for our chess? Good-evening, Bruce!"

Mindful of the butler's ominous words, Timothy studied Bruce quietly out of the corner of his eyes. The resemblance between father and son was striking. The

same long nose with flaring, sensitive nostrils, the same wide Dixon mouth.

The old man's hesitant words put an end to Timothy's complacency.

"Afraid we won't have time for chess to-night, William. It just happens I expect—er—a couple of visitors to-night. Friends of mine I—I used to know years ago. They happen to be in these parts on business, and I—I invited them over for a chat. Do you mind?"

"Not at all," Timothy replied, his voice even.

The quick clang of a brazen gong echoed through the silence of the living-room. Someone was impatiently ringing the front-door bell.

Charles straightened with the habitual woodenness of a servant, and left the room. Bruce gave his father a quick, inscrutable glance, and picked up a magazine from a side table.

To the solicitor's relief he heard the sound of approaching footsteps. Charles stood for an instant in the doorway, bowing formally.

"Mr. Lamont Cranston," he said.

If Cranston was aware that his visit was unexpected, he gave no sign of it. Smilingly, he approached the puzzled millionaire, held out his hand.

"How do you do, sir? I believe you know me, Mr. Dixon. If not by personal acquaintance, at least as a fellow art enthusiast. I come to-night hoping for the privilege of viewing your collection of Chinese pottery. I have a letter with me from the curator of ceramics of the Museum of Art, and I hope—"

Arnold Dixon forgot everything except his pride in the collection that had made him nationally famous in art circles.

"Lamont Cranston! Of course! I'm delighted to meet you. I've read your monographs on the ancient Oriental methods of glazing porcelain, with a great deal of interest. I disagree with some of your theories, and perhaps I can explain why when I show you some of the older specimens of my—"

"Aren't you forgetting, father, that you expect other visitors to-night?" a voice said dryly.

Cranston turned to observe the calm young man who had laid his magazine aside, and was rising lazily to his feet.

"My son, Bruce," Dixon said, with a quick smile. "And this is Mr. William Timothy, my solicitor and an old friend."

Cranston shook hands with both. He gauged their appearance as accurately as he had that of the millionaire.

"Too bad Mr. Cranston has had his journey here for nothing," Bruce said quickly. "I'm sure he would have enjoyed seeing those lovely Ming vases."

"I'd be glad to wait," Cranston said smoothly.

Arnold Dixon hesitated. He was torn between his desire to get rid of Cranston, and his childish eagerness to show off his collection to a man who understood their rare value. He glanced at his son, but Bruce merely shrugged and went back to his magazine. Timothy bowed, murmured a courteous phrase, and took his leave.

A few minutes passed, which Cranston bridged skilfully with polite conversation. He was determined to find out who these visitors were to whom Bruce had referred. Their coming had evidently excited both father and son. Cranston decided from the old man's fidgety behaviour, his sly glances at his watch, that the visitors were due at any moment now.

He was correct. Again the front-door bell changed. Bruce rose instantly from his chair. His whole manner had become sullen, almost defiant. With a quick



stride he walked toward the living-room door.

He said crisply, over his shoulder:

"Good-night, father! I think I'll go to the library and play a game or two of patience."

He was gone before Arnold Dixon could utter a word.

Hardly had he left when the heavy footfalls of Charles approached from the hall.

"Mr. Joe Snaper and Mr. Bert Hooley," he announced.

"Better show Mr. Cranston into the library," Dixon said hurriedly.

"Very good, sir."

But Cranston had other plans. He wanted to study for a moment this strange pair who had just entered the room. He stepped closer to them, his smile friendly.

"Good-evening, gentlemen! I'm sorry to have blundered into your appointment."

"That's all right, mate!" said Hooley.

Cranston summarised the two with a swift glance. Gaolbirds! Snaper was the uglier of the two. He was lanky, loose-jointed, with a grin as tight as a steel trap. Hooley was plumper, definitely more dapper. He was almost completely bald.

"Perhaps I'd better wait in the library while you gentlemen transact your business," Cranston remarked quietly.

He followed the butler down a long, gloomy hall, around a corner cut sharply in the length of the corridor, and so into a massively built room with bookshelves lining the wall solidly on all sides.

Charles was drifting quietly away when Cranston's curt voice halted him.

"Just a moment, please. Where's Bruce? He said he was coming here. Do you happen to know where he went?"

"No, sir; I don't."

Charles was getting nervous under the curt questioning.

"It's not my place to—er—follow the movements of Mr. Bruce," he murmured defiantly.

"Is it your place to discuss his character and his personality with Mr. Timothy?" asked Cranston sharply.

Charles straightened as if he had been shot. His face became pale with fright.

"You—you heard me talking to Mr. Timothy to-night? Who—who are you? A detective?"

"I'm a friend of Arnold Dixon. A word from me will lose you your job, Charles. Let that be a warning to you to answer my questions—and to say nothing afterwards. What do you really know about Snaper and Hooley?"

"Nothing, sir. I swear it!"

Cranston studied the butler narrowly. "Very well. We'll drop that matter for the present." He listened rigidly for a moment. "I want you to leave this library at once, and remain in the hall near the front door. You understand? When you hear Hooley and Snaper coming out of Mr. Dixon's study, I want you to cough twice. I have keen ears, and will hear you."

"I understand, sir."

Charles left with frightened haste, taking care, however, to make no sound. Cranston waited a moment, then he approached the library window. It was locked, but he found the catch, released it, and lifted the heavy sash. Thrusting his head out into the darkness, he stared toward the projecting wing of the house

where the study was, and where—this was Cranston's shrewd guess—the valuable collection of Chinese pottery was probably stored on one of the upper floors.

A figure was gliding rapidly between the shaggy masses of two adjacent bushes. A man—bent low toward the ground with something rigid in his hand that looked suspiciously like the outline of a gun. The man was gone before Cranston was able to catch a glimpse of his averted face. Was it Bruce Dixon?

Cranston was lifting one well-shod foot across the sill of the window when, from the corridor beyond the library, he heard the unmistakable sound of a man coughing. Instantly he abandoned his plan to slip out and have a look at the grounds. Hooley and Snaper were leaving.

Cranston lowered the window. He left



"What's the idea of trailing me?" demanded Wilson, menacing Cranston with his gun.

it unlocked. He hurried from the library to the front hall just in time to intercept Arnold Dixon and his two departing visitors. Glibly, he explained that he had changed his mind. He had remembered a previous appointment that would make it impossible for him to remain and view Dixon's collection of pottery.

As he talked he managed to bump slightly against Joe Snaper. His sharp eyes had detected something that jammed up the flap of Snaper's coat pocket. It was the leather top of a note case. To slip it unnoticed from Snaper's pocket was child's play for Lamont Cranston. It was palmed in his deft hand, shielded by the width of his body as he turned with a sudden, amused exclamation.

"Bless my soul!" he drawled. "I must have left my fountain pen in the library."

He hurried alone into the library, laid his fountain pen on the table for a blind in case he was followed. With his back to the doorway he opened the note case with a swift gesture. The sight of its contents made Cranston smile with stony satisfaction.

There was a cheque in the side pocket of the case. It was drawn to "Bearer," and it was signed by Arnold Dixon. The

cheque was for two hundred and fifty pounds!

Blackmail! There could be no other deduction. Cranston formulated his plan at once. He left the library, walked quietly back through the corridor to the hall. He dropped the note case close to the wall as he passed a small table. A search later would easily find it. Snaper and Hooley were still conversing in whispers with the millionaire.

"Find your fountain pen, mate?" Snaper asked.

Hooley didn't say anything, but his whole manner was hostile. Cranston excused himself, promised vaguely to come back at some later date to view Dixon's rare collection.

He walked slowly down the curving path that led from the mansion toward the distant entrance of the grounds. The moment he had rounded the first bend, and was sure that the bushes concealed him from view of the house, his dawdling manner changed to one of purposeful speed. He darted from the path, began to hurry swiftly through the darkness.

He found the green glade where his car was concealed, and entered it. A moment or two later he emerged again, but not as Lamont Cranston. The figure that crossed the road swiftly and ran toward the stone wall would have sent superstitious shivers up and down the spines of Hooley and Snaper.

Inky black from head to foot, hands encased in black gloves, a slouch hat drawn low over deep-set eyes that burned like steady reddish flames, the Shadow reclined the wall and dropped noiselessly to the dark turf inside. He moved with the swift silence of an Indian. Suddenly he halted. Ahead of him he could see the bent back of a man.

The man was crouched behind a dark bush, peering through the spread of leaves that gave him a good view of the curving path that led toward Arnold Dixon's door. The watchful face was turned slightly, and the Shadow caught a revealing glimpse of a tense profile. It was Bruce Dixon!

Cranston didn't delay. He made a cunning detour and passed the silent watcher without betraying his presence. He hadn't returned to spy on Bruce Dixon. That would come later. The two blackmailers were the men who now interested Lamont Cranston. His circling approach brought him almost to the front door of the mansion. Flat on the damp grass behind a spreading bush, he waited.

Feet came pounding down the gravel path from the gate where the two blackmailers had parked their car. It was Hooley and Snaper. And they were cursing with rage. They ran straight for the front door, which had closed behind them only a few moments before. They began to ring the bell and pound on the oaken panel with angry fists.

Dixon himself opened the door. He quailed as Hooley shook a vicious fist under his nose.

"Gentlemen! What—what in the world is wrong?"

"You know damned well what's wrong!" cried Hooley. "You pinched that cheque back. We want it back quick, or else—"

Arnold Dixon recovered his wits.

"Don't be a fool!" he said harshly. "Why should I do that? You've undoubtedly dropped your note case accidentally. Please, gentlemen, be quiet! Come inside—"

The two crooks shouldered in, and the massive door closed. Lamont Cranston rose swiftly, peered back at the grounds. If the lurking Bruce Dixon had heard

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*The Editor*

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## CROOK BAIT!

(Continued from previous page.)

the disturbance, he gave no sign of his presence.

Cranston rounded the stone corner of the mansion. He glided toward the wing in which the library was located. He pushed up a gentle inch or two the window which he had unlocked when he was previously in that room. He had barely accomplished this when Arnold Dixon and his two visitors entered the room.

A trailing length of leafy vine hid Cranston's prying eyes. He saw that Snaper had already found his lost note case, as Cranston had intended him to do. The rogue was waving it in one hand, the cheque in the other. Hooley was the calmer of the two.

He said grimly: "Don't try to kid us, mister! You picked Joe's pocket. Tryin' to double-cross us?" Snaper cursed the millionaire with fluent rage.

"How would you like Bert and me to call on the cops—and talk? I mean talk plenty!"

"No, no!" Dixon moaned. "Gentlemen, don't do that!"

"Then don't try any more foxy tricks!" Hooley grunted. "Two hundred and fifty twice a month is cheap for a bloke as rich as you. Especially when he's a bloke who could go to quod for—"

Cranston was leaning forward, his ear intent on not missing a single word inside the room. A sound behind him made him spring abruptly away, turning on his heel with a lithe movement.

The sound he had heard was the snap

of a dry twig. The next instant, dark bushes parted, and a man came plunging at him. So swift and deadly was the attack that Cranston's hand was caught midway as he reached for an automatic. A muscular heave threw him to the soft grass. He rolled over and over, trying to squirm out of the clutch of his powerful assailant, who caught him by the throat.

He could see the grim face of his enemy glaring close to his. It was a man Cranston had never seen before. Tiny, pin-point eyes under a curiously white forehead, and brown, tousled hair. A pointed brown beard. Teeth as even and white as a woman's.

But an interruption came from an unexpected quarter. The library window flew wide open. Framed in the opening were the tense faces of Snaper and Hooley. They came leaping out to the soft turf, guns glittering in their hands.

Brown Beard whirled to meet this new threat. His gun flamed. The bullet missed Snaper by an inch, and sent him diving headlong to the ground. Hooley had leaped aside as he saw the flash. His gun jerked level as Brown Beard hurled the fallen Snaper and jumped at him. The gun in Hooley's hand exploded once—twice—but the bullets screamed harmlessly upward toward the dark sky.

Both men had a double grip on the swaying gun, and were wrestling fiercely for its possession. Snaper started to rise from the ground to come to his partner's assistance. A back-heel-kick of the brown-bearded man caught him full in the throat and tumbled him flat again.

Cranston waited to see no more of the death struggle. He began to run in an erratic line through the dense scrubbery. He was desperately weak from his reopened wound, and knew he was on the verge of collapsing. The cold air on his

face revived him. Already he could see the dark roughness of the stone wall, when he heard a warning cry:

"Halt, or I'll shoot!"

Bruce Dixon was almost directly in Cranston's path, rising ghostlike from a patch of weedy darkness. The gun in his hand was rigid, pointed like an ominous steel finger.

Cranston's movement was purely instinctive. He bent, and his hand closed over a pebble as large as a walnut. He threw the round, hard stone with all his strength. His aim was good. The missile flew toward Bruce in a straight line, and struck him squarely on the forehead.

Bruce was stunned by the numbing blow. The gun slipped from his fingers, and he slid to his knees. He was not unconscious, but he was too dazed for the moment to do more than grope feebly for the weapon that lay in the grass at his feet.

Cranston resumed his flight toward the sheltered spot where he had left his car. He backed it out of concealment on to the road, and drove rapidly away.

Two facts became clear in his mind as he left the estate of Arnold Dixon far behind. Bruce Dixon was not as innocent as he had seemed at first glance. He was part of some vicious conspiracy against his father. And the conspiracy itself was a double one. Two forces of evil were fighting each other back in the darkness of that lonely and secluded estate. Hooley and Snaper were on one side, perhaps with the aid of Bruce. Brown Beard was on the other. Arnold Dixon would attempt to wash up the whole affair. Only Cranston knew!

His goal was now his secret sanctum in London—Hanover Square—where a private telephone wire linked him with trained agents who were eager to do his bidding. At the other end of that wire, night and day, was the calm

voice of Burbank, the Shadow's contact man.

Cranston's car roared on through the night.

#### MR. TIMOTHY IS PUZZLED.

WILLIAM TIMOTHY sat comfortably in a wide-armed chair. Sunlight streamed through the curtained windows of his expensive home. Timothy smiled as he saw from the paper he was scanning that his stocks had gone up. He was taking a cigar from a box when he heard a light step in the hall outside. A knock sounded on the door.

"Who is it?"

"It's Edith Allen, uncle. May I come in?"

The voice was eager. A moment later, a strikingly pretty girl entered the sunlit room. Timothy beamed, held out his hand.

"Edith! Well, this is a surprise, and a welcome one! What brings you all the way out here to see an old codger like me?"

Edith Allen didn't answer for a moment. Tall, slim, blue-eyed, with hair almost the shade of copper, Edith was the sort of girl to make even an old man's eyes twinkle appreciatively. She was the daughter of Timothy's dead sister. She had quite a good secretarial post in Margate.

Timothy saw instantly that Edith's red lips were tremulous.

"Is there anything wrong?" he said gently.

Her voice quivered.

"Uncle, I had to see you. I'm—I'm frightened—about Bruce Dixon."

Her whole manner puzzled the solicitor. "You love Bruce, don't you?" he asked.

"Yes; I—I do."

"Are you worried because you think Bruce doesn't love you?"

"It's not that," she said unsteadily.

Timothy laughed reassuringly.

"After all," he pointed out, "there's plenty of time for both of you romantic young colts to make up your minds. Bruce has only been home three months since his—er—trip."

"That's just it!" Edith cried out. The flush had faded from her cheeks. They were pale now. "Is he really Bruce? Oh, uncle, I can't make it out!"

Timothy sat up stiffly. He sounded incredulous.

"Are you suggesting that you think Bruce Dixon is an impostor?"

"He seems so different," she said faintly. "When he was a growing boy he was mean, selfish, with a nasty temper. We two, as children, used to fight like cats and dogs. Then he went away. He was gone for nearly ten years. And when he came back home, three months ago—"

"Is he so different from the Bruce you used to know?"

"Yes. He's kinder, more thoughtful. It seems a hateful thing to say, but he's been so—so sweet to me and to his father that I—I can't believe he's the same son. Then, suddenly, he changed again. For the last week or two he's seemed terribly uneasy. He's forgotten to keep three appointments with me. He—he says he loves me, asks me to be patient and he'll explain later. Uncle, could he be a fraud?"

William Timothy laughed. The tension left his shrewd, old face.

"You can take my word for it that he's the genuine Bruce Dixon," he said. "He might have fooled his father. But no fake could have misled me or Charles,

the butler. Naturally, we were both suspicious when Bruce returned so abruptly after years of being away. So we made tests—adequate tests that no impostor could have passed successfully. No, my dear; you're being hysterical and imaginative. If Bruce is different—better, finer—it's simply because he's been tempered by life. He's lost his ugly qualities by those years of rubbing against experiences all over the world."

Edith nodded. The haunted look left her blue eyes.

"You're right, uncle," she said finally. "I'm glad I came to you. What I really wanted was to talk with you and be reassured. You've done that. You're a dear. Now I must be going. Don't tell Bruce what I've said. I couldn't bear it if anything came between us now."

"Don't worry," laughed Timothy. "You can trust me. Try forgetting some of his appointments. Maybe that will bring the boy to his senses."

Timothy sat for a long time after Edith had left. There was a puzzled frown on his forehead. He hadn't told Edith of the peculiar visits to Dixon's mansion of Hooley and Snaper. Could Bruce actually be in league with them? He wondered if he ought to force Arnold Dixon to talk about this mystery. It was getting deeper, and beyond control. Charles had phoned the solicitor and spoken of men fighting in the grounds. The solicitor decided to visit his friend at Shadelawn that evening. The show-down and explanations would have to come sooner or later.

The strangers in the grounds at Shadelawn were, as a matter of fact, worrying other people besides Mr. William Timothy. Snaper and Hooley were perturbed about that incident. It made them realise that their own blackmailing racket was only a small affair, and that there was something infinitely bigger at stake somewhere in the house of Arnold Dixon. They felt they were in some strange way being cheated. If there was loot in the house they considered it should be theirs, by right. Somehow, they learned that a big shot of the underworld, named Paul Rodney, was in the neighbourhood.

But there was only one way open to them of finding out what was going on, and that was by keeping a close watch

on Shadelawn. Consequently, they went there almost every night. So it was not surprising that Lamont Cranston, out on the self-same errand, found their car hidden close to the stone wall of the Dixon estate.

Cranston intended to deal himself another hand in this swiftly changing game of intrigue and treachery. He paused only long enough to do a very peculiar and interesting thing. He unscrewed the cap of the petrol tank at the rear of Hooley's car. From beneath his black robe he took a tiny bottle. The contents of the bottle were colourless, like water, but heavier; it dropped like a sticky flow of castor oil as he poured it out. He poured every bit of it into the petrol tank.

Then he screwed back the cap, and took something else from under his robe. This was a shining instrument—a long, pointed tool. With it, Cranston attacked the under side of the tank, working carefully so as not to make too large a hole. When he was finished he stood waiting. After almost thirty seconds, a drop of petrol fell to the leaves that covered the ground. It was a most peculiar kind of petrol. It seemed to glow like a tiny firefly. Another measured wait—then another drop fell, phosphorescent, like the first.

Cranston dug a little pocket in the leaves, so that the tiny firefly specks would not be noticed by the returning crooks. It would take a long time for enough drops to fall to be noticeable. He then moved like a black streak toward the stone wall of the estate. He was up and over it like a creature of the night. Stealthily, Cranston began to approach the mansion of Arnold Dixon.

"Arnold, you've got to talk! You must confide in us and allow us to help you."

William Timothy's voice cracked with angry exasperation. He stared at Dixon. Bruce was there, too, his handsome face set in anxious lines.

"Father, please! This horrible thing that's threatening you must be stopped at once. It can't go on any longer."

Dixon passed a hand wearily over his brow. He had been trying to force himself to make a confession of it all. The sight of strange men fighting desperately



A man was crouched in the shadow of a bush. Cranston saw that it was the millionaire's own son!

outside his windows had unnerved him. He wanted nothing better than to unburden his mind. He began to talk to them in a low, barely audible voice. William Timothy listened as rigidly as a statue. Bruce leaned forward, as if afraid to miss a single word.

There was another listener interested in the millionaire's halting confession. The heavy curtains at the window behind Dixon were parted slightly. Cranston's deep-set eyes peered through as he listened to Dixon's story.

It was a sorry story of folly that went back through the years to Dixon's younger manhood. He had mixed with men of doubtful reputations—men who had become criminals and had robbed a country bank, an affair in which Dixon found himself involved, although he had neither planned the robbery nor had a share in the proceeds. The robbery had unexpectedly turned into murder. Pete Spargo, the ugliest of the five companions in crime, had killed the unfortunate cashier. All five escaped, but all were later captured, except Dixon. He had no criminal record, and he had not been at the bank at the time. He had helped them with their car without knowing what was behind it all. When he knew the worst he was terrified.

Spargo and a man named Trigger Trimble were convicted of murder, and paid the extreme penalty. Snaper and Hooley were sentenced to long terms of imprisonment. But Dixon got clean away, and his connection with the gang—however innocent—was never discovered by the police. Frightened and repentant at the deadly outcome of his folly, he reformed and went straight. He married, prospered, became wealthy, and finally a millionaire.

This was the situation that confronted Snaper and Hooley when they were released from prison. By grape-vine information they knew that Arnold Dixon was now wealthy and respected. They recognised his picture in a newspaper. They kept silent about him. When they were released they called on him and demanded money to keep their mouths shut. Dixon agreed to pay.

"There was no trouble, and no threats of death," Dixon concluded feebly, "until the appearance of this strange man in the brown beard. This man that Hooley calls Paul Rodney. I don't know who Rodney is, or what his game is, but Snaper and Hooley are in deadly fear of him. So am I, because I—I—"

He gulped, stopped talking abruptly. The tremor of his lips showed that he was holding something back.

"You're sure you don't know this Rodney?" Bruce asked him, quietly.

"Quite sure."

"But you do not know what he's after!" Timothy exclaimed.

"I can guess," said Arnold Dixon, in a queer, gasping voice. "Have you ever heard of the Cup of Confucius?"

"Of course."

Timothy's tone was one of puzzled interest. The Cup of Confucius was almost one of the seven wonders of the world. It had its legendary beginning in the ancient past of China. In that respect it was like the Holy Grail.

"I don't quite understand," Timothy murmured. "What has the Cup of Confucius to do with you, Arnold?"

"I think that's what Paul Rodney is after," Dixon faltered.

"But there isn't any cup," Bruce cried sharply. "It was burned, destroyed. Years ago."

"It wasn't burned, and it wasn't de-

stroyed," his father told him steadily. Arnold Dixon's eyes were ablaze with the fanatical, almost mad zeal of an art collector. "The cup is mine! I bought it, paid for it—I own it! It's here! Now! In this house! I bought it secretly from Sun Wang, the Chinese general who is now waging so desperate a fight against the invaders of his country. It was Wang's bandit troops who sacked the ancient Jade Temple, where the cup had been preserved for centuries.

"The temple was burned to the ground, but the cup was not lost. Sun Wang saved it himself. I got in touch with him through my Oriental agent, when he sent me a secret bid for its sale. Sun Wang wanted bullets, cannon, aeroplanes. I wanted the cup. I bought it—for two hundred and fifty thousand pounds!"

"Where is the cup now?" Bruce asked.

"In the tower-room upstairs. With the rest of my pottery collection. It's standing on a shelf in a plain wooden box."

"But that's madness," Timothy protested.

"Not at all," Dixon retorted. "Who is to know except us three? And even if Paul Rodney suspects I have it, he'd never dream of looking for it in a cheap wooden box standing openly on a shelf alongside a few valueless trinkets. It's safer there than it would be in a bank vault."

Outside the curtained window, Cranston's burning eyes were riveted on the pale face of Bruce. He paid no attention to the father. Arnold Dixon, oblivious to everything but the pride of his possession, was talking dreamily, like a drugged man.

"You must know the legend," he said faintly. "Confucius himself created the cup out of a cracked, earthen pitcher presented to him by a pious peasant. He was weary and thirsty, and the peasant offered him a drink of cold water after wealthy mandarins had driven the fainting holy man from their courtyards. Confucius blessed the pitcher, gave it back. The peasant fell on his knees when he saw it. It had changed to priceless jade, ornamented with nine circles of rare and perfect jewels. A circle of rubies, of pearls, of emeralds, diamonds—of the mystic number of nine."

The millionaire's voice rose triumphantly.

"Gentlemen, that is the wonder that now belongs to me—mine!—in this house. It's crusted with the dirt of centuries, it looks like a smoke-blackened piece of junk. But it is the true Cup of Confucius. Would you like to see it, to touch it, and feel the ancient satin smoothness of this priceless relic of old China?"

Bruce said hurriedly:

"I'm sorry, father. Some other time. Edith is waiting for me to pick her up at the door of the theatre. I gave her my word I'd meet her after the show."

He bowed departure to Timothy, who was watching him with a steady scrutiny.

Outside the curtained window, Cranston's eyes remained like hidden flame. They observed the two men who were left in the room. Dixon rang abruptly for Charles. The butler came in almost immediately. Timothy wondered if Charles might have been listening outside the door.

"I want the key to the Spanish chest," Dixon said.

Charles handed him a key from a large ring. The millionaire walked swiftly to a carved blackwood cabinet, and unlocked it. There was a combination lock on the lowest drawer inside, and Dixon twirled the dial and opened it. He took out another key—the key to the tower in the

south wing of the mansion. It was in an upper room in this tower that the millionaire's collection was stored.

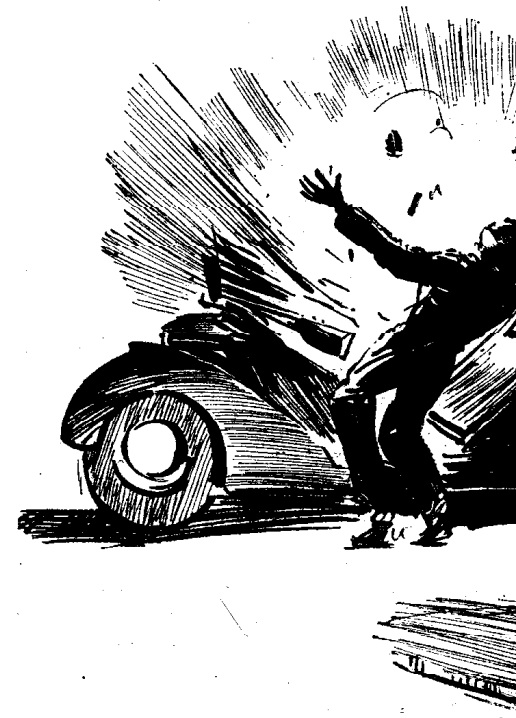
The moment Dixon looked at the key he gave a faint cry. There were tiny flecks of white on it. Timothy sprang forward, examined the key.

"Wax!" he said grimly. "Someone has recently taken a wax impression of that tower key." He swung toward Charles. "What do you know about this?"

"Nothing," Charles said. "If you think I tampered with the key, you're mistaken, sir. Only Mr. Dixon knows the combination of the lower drawer."

"Quick!" Dixon cried faintly. "To the tower-room. Come with me, Timothy! You, too, Charles!"

They followed his hasty steps down a long corridor. He fitted the waxed key in a lock and swung open a heavy door.



**The thunderous roar of the explosion filled the air like the vicious boom of a field gun. Someone had planned for Spud Wilson to die, and had succeeded. Only his quick wit saved the Shadow from sharing the same fate.**

Winding stairs led aloft, and the three hurried up. At the top, Dixon produced another key. This was a smaller one, and he produced it from under his shirt on a long neck-chain.

The door of the treasure chamber flew open under his eager pressure. He sprang inside. Charles and the solicitor remained at the threshold watching Dixon's quick rush toward a bare wooden shelf in a corner of the room. None of them paid any attention to the glass cases containing the collection of Chinese pottery. They watched the shelf where Dixon was standing.

There was no wooden box on that shelf. Dixon was moaning, wringing his hands.

"Gone!" he cried brokenly. "The cup is gone! It's been stolen!"

It was Timothy alone who retained his wits. A glance showed him that the

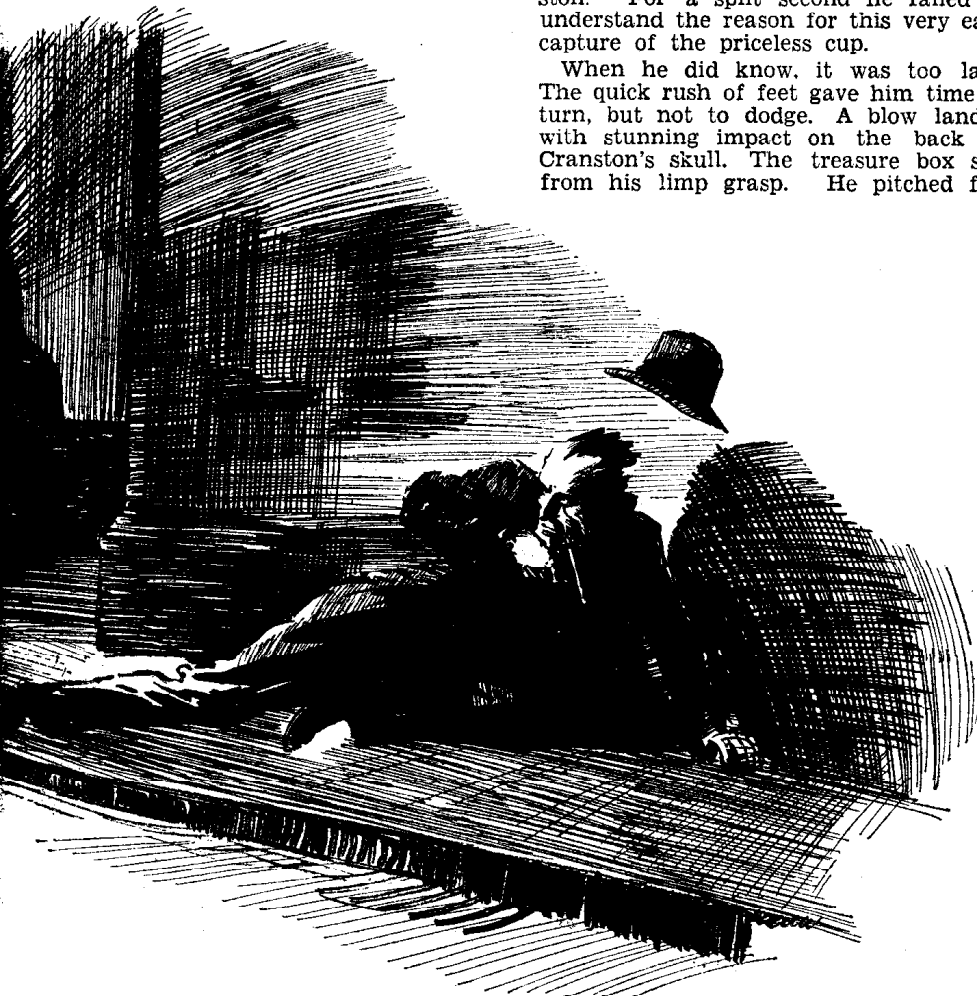
tower window was open. He thrust his head out, and stiffened. His yell was brief. It died in his throat as his two companions rushed toward the window.

But Timothy blocked them off with his back. He had seen the face of the escaping thief. He knew it was the thief, because the fellow was carrying the missing wooden box strapped behind his back. Both hands were busily engaged lowering himself down the rope that hung from the window. Timothy could have shot him—but he refrained.

Moonlight fell for an instant on the thief's frightened, upturned face. It was Bruce Dixon! He sprang instantly to the ground, ran like a streak into the darkness. He was gone before Arnold Dixon or Charles could peer out of the window.

"Who was he?" Dixon screamed, beside himself with rage and grief.

"I don't know," Timothy said huskily.



"He leaped down from the rope before I could see his face."

"Was it—Paul Rodney?" Charles asked, in a peculiar tone.

"I don't know Rodney," the solicitor retorted sharply. "Do you?"

Charles shook his head.

"I—I'm nervous. Excuse me—"

They turned back into the rifled room. Arnold Dixon was sobbing in a dry, terrified voice. He stopped Charles as the latter rushed toward the tower stairs.

"Don't notify the police," he cried brokenly. "I don't want publicity. The cup would be taken from me by the Chinese Government. If I knew who stole it—"

Timothy avoided the old man's tragic eyes. He tried to comfort him as best he could, but he didn't tell Arnold the truth

about the face he had seen in the moonlight.

Bruce Dixon had almost reached the looming mass of the stone wall that enclosed the estate, when a dark figure rose directly in his path. The figure was Lamont Cranston, in the guise of the Shadow. He sprang forward as Bruce crouched and drew a gun.

The thief had no chance to fire. Before his finger could tighten on the trigger he was dealt a heavy blow on the jaw that sent him sprawling. The box flew from his grasp, and landed half a dozen feet away.

Instantly, Cranston pounced on the treasure. He rose, ready to shoot if Bruce tried another attack. To his surprise, Bruce did nothing of the kind. He staggered, empty-handed, to his feet, whirled, fled into the darkness. His sudden change of heart surprised Cranston. For a split second he failed to understand the reason for this very easy capture of the priceless cup.

When he did know, it was too late. The quick rush of feet gave him time to turn, but not to dodge. A blow landed with stunning impact on the back of Cranston's skull. The treasure box slid from his limp grasp. He pitched for-

gleam like the twinkle of a firefly. It was a drop of the chemically treated petrol that had leaked from the tank of the fleeing crooks' car. Lamont Cranston had foreseen such an emergency, and had prepared for it. Now his grim care was rewarded. He had a sure way to trail at least two of the resolute thieves of the Cup of Confucius—the treasure that was worth a quarter of a million pounds.

His own car began to skim swiftly along the deserted road. Lamont Cranston's deep-set eyes watched the onrushing sweep of the road in front. The trail ended in an unexpected spot. A curving drive led from the road through dark grounds to a stately three-storey house perched almost on the cliff edge that flanked the wide sweep of Pelham Bay.

It was not long before Cranston was cautiously gliding toward the house, his movements hidden by the restless roar of the wind through the wildly tossing trees on the front lawn. Beyond the cliff on which the house was perched, Cranston could catch a glimpse of the sea. Even in the darkness the white froth was visible. A storm was roaring up with gale intensity.

Cranston relied on this fact as well as his black guise of the Shadow to help him getting into the house unnoticed. He failed to reckon on the presence of a watchdog. The animal was tethered on a long chain to a tree. It began to bark loudly.

Cranston halted. He was watching the lighted windows on the top floor of the silent house. The blinds were drawn, but suddenly the shadow of a man darkened the white square at one of the windows. A face peered out. For a minute or so it remained, while the dog continued to bark loudly. Then, evidently reassured that the sound meant nothing serious, the face withdrew.

Lamont Cranston had studied that countenance through a pair of tiny binoculars. Before it jerked away he knew exactly who it was, for his knowledge of the underworld and the people who dwell there was unique. This man who, so far, had not been evident in this strange case was a thin-faced, pock-marked little gunman named Squint Naddigan.

To Lamont Cranston, the fact that Squint was present in this remote house on the shore of Pelham Bay was a disturbing thing; cause for instant action. For wherever Squint went, there also went Paul Rodney, one of the wealthiest big shots in the underworld.

Cranston lost no time in forcing an entrance to the mysterious house. He circled it warily twice, then decided upon the cellar. Five minutes after he began his patient work at the rear cellar window he was inside, and the window closed softly behind him.

Cranston ascended a flight of boxed-in wooden stairs. He could hear nothing except the faint squeaks of mice in the dark cellar. But Cranston's feet made no sound on the wooden steps that led to the ground floor. He opened the door at the head of the stairs with infinite caution, and began to sidle through to the hall.

The slow, scraping sound of descending feet on the main staircase of the house caused Cranston to back hastily toward the cellar door from which he had recently emerged. He had a partial view of the staircase, and he left the cellar door open a bare inch or so, and waited.

That sound from the stairs puzzled him; it was not only the slow thump,

ward, unconscious, on his face, but not before he had recognised the face of the man who had slugged him, and the fellow at his side. Joe Snaper had swung the heavy gun butt. The second snarling assailant was Bert Hooley.

#### "WHEN THE INDIAN IS HIGH."

Cranston recovered consciousness in a narrow, grave-like vault, covered with cold, soft mud. For a horrified moment he thought that he was underground, buried alive. Then he realised where he was. His body was outside the walls of the estate. He had been shoved into a drainage culvert that was built under the road.

He crawled and stared down the road toward the spot where Hooley's car had been hidden. On the blackness of the smooth surface, Cranston detected a tiny

thump of descending feet, but a fainter sound—almost exactly like the careless drip of water. His eyes gleamed with apprehension when he saw the figure of Squint suddenly appear on the lower steps of the stairs. The rat-faced killer was carrying a gallon tin of petrol. He was spilling the stuff everywhere, sloshing it over wherever he walked, and grinning like a chalky mask of death.

Rodney came clumping down the petrol-soaked stairs a moment later. Cranston watched the ugly pair through the crack of the cellar door. There was a crumpled scrap of paper in Paul Rodney's hand, and he waved it angrily. This paper seemed to be the cause of his rage.

"Why bother with that?" snapped Squint. "It don't mean a thing. They were tryin' to kid us. It's a fake!"

"It means something," Rodney replied, "if only I could get the hang of it. I've searched the house from top to bottom. The cup isn't here. Those two gaulbirds were wise. They've got the thing buried somewhere. But where? That's what I'd like to know."

"That stuff about Indians is all bosh!" Squint insisted.

Rodney opened his mouth to make an angry rejoinder, when an unfortunate thing happened on which Cranston had not counted. Through the tiny opening of the cellar door darted a small, furry shape. Squint jumped nervously and almost dropped the petrol tin. Then he laughed with profane relief.

"Just a blasted mouse! The place is alive with 'em. Had me scared for the minute!"

"Shut up!" Rodney's voice was very quiet. "Where did that mouse come from?"

"Why, the cellar door, I s'pose. Lor'!" Squint's voice shrilled with understanding of what his bearded boss was driving at. "How did the mouse come out o' there? That cellar door was closed!"

"Exactly!" Rodney cried. "And now it's open!"

Cranston had tried to shut it as tightly as he dared, but he had been unable to do so completely because the click of the catch would have betrayed him. He sprang from concealment as both crooks darted toward the door. His gun crashed almost at the same instant as Rodney's. Cranston was thrown violently backward as his finger pressed the trigger. Rodney had shoved Squint, spinning, forward into Cranston. The impact sent both men reeling, but it saved Cranston's body from the rip of the brown-bearded man's bullet.

Squint squealed with terror. The petrol from the fallen can splashed in a puddle on the floor. Rodney tossed a lighted match into the heart of that glassy pool. Instantly, flame roared upward like an exploding pillar of heat. Cranston reeled away, beating fire from his robe. Rodney and Squint fled. The flames were mounting almost to the ceiling, leaping from puddle to puddle with swift fury.

Suddenly, Cranston saw a crumpled square of white paper on the floor. It lay barely an inch from the advancing flames, and Cranston grabbed it before it could burst into fire. It was the paper that Paul Rodney had been waving in his angry hand. When he drew his gun the paper had fluttered, unnoticed, from his grasp.

Cranston ran up the stairs with the paper thrust into a pocket. There was no other place to go now that the flames hemmed him in on all sides. But he had another grim reason for electing to re-

main a few minutes more in the doomed house. He wanted to find Hooley and Snaper.

He found them on the top floor. Both were lying dead in the front bed-room. Their clothing was soaked with petrol. So was every part of the room. Cranston's eyes blazed with fury. Both men's throats had been cut. But they had died without revealing the secret of the missing Cup of Confucius. The state of the petrol-soaked room was proof of that.

It had been torn to pieces. The bed was ripped apart, mattress and pillow slips torn to ribbons. There were even marks where Paul Rodney had tested the floor and walls with a pickaxe in his mad hunt for the vanished treasure. And now consuming flames would burn away all traces of the brutal double murder. Nothing could save the house. Cranston knew it.

Yet he stood motionless, while his hand drew a crumpled scrap of paper from his pocket. He read it, his piercing eyes intent. It wasn't in code. This was a message in which only the dead pair on the floor could read meaning. It was obviously based on facts known only to the murdered Hooley and Snaper. It read as follows:

"When the Indian is high follow his nose and reach under."

Hooley and Snaper must have written this message for their own guidance. They must have done it when they had hidden the treasure, before they were surprised by their murderers. Yet the task of understanding it was well-nigh hopeless.

The smoke in the room was now thick and choking. From the door came a scarlet blast of flame. Cranston darted toward the front window. Down below he could hear the shouts of men, the throbbing of a fire engine. Firemen were visible, flitting across the glare in the grounds. Cranston's chance of escaping unseen from the front of the house was practically gone.

He glided backward into the blazing room. The bed-room doorway and the passage beyond were like a writhing lake of fire. Cranston knew his chance for life rested on speed and nerve. Wrapping his coat about his face, ducking his head low beneath the protection of one arm, he took a deep breath of hot, smoky air. He held the air like a miser in his expanded lungs. He knew he dared not breathe again until he had passed the spouting volcano of staircase and upper passage. It was the only route to reach the comparatively safe haven of the left rear wing of the house.

He ran straight through the heart of red chaos. He felt heat envelop him in a dizzy, agonised swirl. But his flying feet never faltered. Leaping a gap where the bannisters had fallen inward, he swerved sharply in the fog of smoke and raced along the passage that led to the left wing.

He swung open a window that faced the storm-tossed sea. From his gasping throat came again that grim, determined laugh. He could see that he had hardly improved his position by his daring plunge through the heart of the blaze. The rear window showed that the house was built on a steep cliff that rose vertically out of the water. Sixty feet below the brow of the cliff was frothy turmoil of the sea.

An ominous crackling drew his glance to the right wing of the house. Cranston knew what that meant. The flame-gutted wing beyond him was swaying, tottering. A yell of terror eddied up to him from the brow of the rocky cliff that was directly

below the swaying wall. Cranston saw two figures racing away, desperately trying to reach the stone steps that were cut in the outer face of the cliff. These steps led steeply downward to a concrete landing-stage at the foot of the cliff.

It was a toss-up for thirty seconds whether the two fleeing fugitives would reach the cliff steps before the wall fell. Their blackened, terrified faces were clearly visible to Cranston at his upper window. He recognised them with a tightening of his lips. One of the men was the brown-bearded Paul Rodney. The other was his pinch-eyed little henchman—Squint.

The two killers reached the steps and threw themselves flat under the projecting stone. An instant later, with a rumbling roar like a landslide, the whole, swaying rear of the right wing of the house toppled outward and down. It missed the crouched forms of the terrified murderers, but it penned them temporarily at the head of the cliff steps, kept them from reaching the concrete landing-stage far below. The thing that had trapped them was the huge blazing length of an enormous timber that had fallen athwart the descent, rendering it impassable.

In the meantime, Cranston was wriggling out on the narrow sill of his window. His action was obscured from the view of the crooks on the cliff top by the dense roll of greasy smoke. He could see them, however, as they raved like ants along the brow of the cliff, determined to get past the blazing timber that blocked the steps below. They were mad with the desire to descend to that concrete landing-stage lashed by the gale-tossed bay.

Cranston knew why when he saw a speed-boat moored there, its bows rising and falling jerkily. Any moment might see the craft dashed to pieces. It was the last hope of Rodney and Squint. It was a faint chance for Lamont Cranston. He made his plans, decided what to do in the twinkling of an eye.

Cranston dived outward and down through space. He missed the brow of the cliff by a clear six inches. Down—down, wind roaring in his ears. Then he struck the surface in a clean, knife-like dive, and the cold bite of the water was like a healing poultice on his scorched body.

His hands swept upward and curved him towards the surface. His knee grazed a submerged granite shelf. It ripped his trousers leg as if a sharp knife had slashed through the cloth from ankle to knee. But Cranston disregarded it in his grim, grasping effort to swim to the speedboat unseen. His head emerged. Spume blew in his face as he struck out for the boat. He dived below the keel and reached it from the windward side.

Rodney and Squint, almost at the bottom of the cliff steps, were unaware that at this moment Cranston, in the tattered guise of the Shadow, was wriggling like a huge eel across the wet gunwale of the craft. The peak of the bow hid his body from the onrushing killers. Quickly he had squirmed headforemost under the protection of the decked-in space. A tarpaulin had been left there to keep the craft from flooding under the wild fury of wind and wave. Cranston spread it over his hunched body and waited for the next development of this wild night of peril.

Soon, feet thumped aboard the craft. It began to rock crazily with a wild, spinning motion. Cranston knew that one of the fugitives must have slashed

the rope that held it. The sudden, snarling roar of the engine stopped the crazy gyrations of the boat. It began to nose forward into the heaving waves.

The voices of Squint and Paul Rodney became faintly audible over the whine of the wind and the surge of the water.

"Hug the shore, Paul! D'you think we can make it?"

"Hug the shore — hell! D'you want us to pile up on those rocks? Keep your head lower, and leave this job to me."

Cranston wondered where the crooks could be going to across the storm-tossed bay. Squint was terrified.

"D'you think we can make the cove?" he was asking.

"We've got to," snapped Rodney. "Here's the head-land now."

The boat plunged on its way through the waves. For some time nothing was to be heard save the pounding of the motor, the thud of the waves, and the howling of the wind. Then Cranston sensed that the boat was turning, and Rodney said triumphantly:

"We shan't be long now!"

Cranston could feel an instant change. The craft raced along without that horrible pitching and tossing that threatened at any moment to capsize it. He guessed, then, that the haven they had reached was a lonely creek at the north end of the bay.

The motor stopped. The speedboat drifted slightly. Then there was a faint scraping bump. Cranston had no idea what was going on. He could see nothing, hidden by the bow of the boat and the enveloping covering of the water-drenched tarpaulin.

But he soon guessed from the sounds and scrapings he heard next. The killers were tying up to a buoy. Then the boat canted as they clambered over the side into some sort of small boat that must have been moored there. An instant later came the soft splash of oars. They were rowing ashore.

Cranston allowed them time to get clear, then cautiously he crept from under the tarpaulin and gazed about him. The boat lay in a small, landlocked harbour that looked like the water entrance to a private estate. Sandy hills swept out from the shore, almost meeting in a narrow inlet. Water boiled and thundered outside the opening, but within the harbour all was calm except for the flat rollers that raced toward the sandy beach. Rodney and Squint were drawing a dinghy up the beach out of reach of the waves. Cranston waited until they turned and walked away, vanishing along a winding path that ran between rank bushes and gaunt boulders.

Then Cranston eased himself over the side into the water, and swam slowly, noiselessly toward the shelving beach. He guessed that he had now reached Paul Rodney's hide-out. He was certain of it when he had waded ashore. He surveyed the land and a distant house that showed faintly in the darkness atop a small, sandy bluff. A path led upward, winding in and out among worn boulders.

Dixon told his story to his solicitor, while Cranston listened intently outside.



It was dark except for the light that shone out of the windows of the living-room on the ground floor. Cranston glided closer, his footsteps masked by the moan of the wind. A spat of rain began to fall. Peering, Cranston saw two men seated at a table, talking fiercely together, although it was impossible to hear a syllable of what either was saying.

Cranston had heard the low rumble of thunder, but had paid no attention to it. Thunder meant nothing to him at such a time. Yet, as he turned away from the window he was startled by the totally unforeseen flash of a jagged streak of lightning. It darted without warning across the black sky, lighted up objects on the ground with dazzling suddenness.

A cry came from within the house. Squint had uttered a yell of amazement. He had leaped to his feet. His finger pointed to the window. It pointed toward the bedraggled figure of the Shadow. Squint had recognised the man outside the window. He remembered the deep-set, piercing eyes. It was a man that Squint was confident had been left to roast to death in a burning inferno on the other side of the storm-tossed bay.

Yet here he was—alive, menacing—staring through the rain-pelted window like the vague embodiment of a ghost.

"The Shadow!"

Squint's scream was clearly audible above the moan of the gale. It was followed by an oath from Rodney, and the smash of a bullet through the glass pane of the window.

Cranston ran into enveloping gloom. For reasons of his own he did not want to make a fight of it with them at this time.

He had a plan that he hoped would be instrumental in disclosing the actual identity of this mysterious Paul Rodney.

Rodney's howl was like a trumpet call of rage through the rain.

"Where did he go? After him, Squint! Kill him!"

"Get the car out!" Squint shouted. "He can't get far on foot. There's no place where he can hide."

"Right!" Rodney bellowed.

Cranston heard no more. Racing down the road, he managed to elude his pursuers by hiding in bushes off the road. When he finally saw them get off the trail by taking a side road, he continued along the way he had headed originally. After he had covered a little more than two miles at a dog trot, he passed a cluster of houses and shops. One expanse of plate glass drew his keen attention. He read the sign on the dark window with a sibilant laugh—"John Honeywell, Estate Agent." The name, address, and profession were stored away and memorised for future service.

Presently, headlights glowed. Cranston listened and watched for a moment, then he stepped boldly from concealment, waving his arms. He was certain that the lights were not those of Paul Rodney's car. It proved to be a milk lorry. It stopped, and Cranston made a bargain with the driver. Then it rumbled on again, with Cranston aboard, in the direction of London.

The next morning, at the Cobalt Club, Cranston was busy on the 'phone. He got through to John Honeywell, the estate agent, making out he was interested in a secluded house he had seen near Pelham Bay. He described Rodney's house with accurate detail, and the estate agent apologised for the fact that the place was not for sale, being at the moment tenanted by a well-known London photographer, Mr. Donald Perdy.

That was all that Cranston wanted to know. He called at the photographic studios of Mr. Perdy in Bond Street to inquire the cost of enlargements, and to make other pertinent requests, while all the time he was studying this mysterious Mr. Donald Perdy. The photographer was a clean-shaven man with a strong, square face and high cheek bones. The cheek-bones and the eyes were proof enough to Lamont Cranston that his visit had been successful. The eyes were hard, black, rather coldly sullen.

Mentally, Cranston placed a brown beard on that smooth, hard countenance. He added a rasp to the cold voice, placed mentally a gun in that muscular hand. Donald Perdy and Paul Rodney were one and the same. There was no doubt about it, at all.

#### THE MAN IN THE GARAGE.

WHILE Lamont Cranston was in the photographic studio of Mr. Donald Perdy, alias Paul Rodney, Bruce Dixon was listening intently to the hoarse, frightened voice of his father.

"I tell you my mind is made up, Bruce," the older man was saying. "It's the only way. By changing my will I can check at one stroke the criminal designs of whoever is trying to get hold of my money, and who probably intend to kill me sooner or later. I feel that my life is in danger, and I want to have things settled."

He stopped short, his arm flung out in a nervous gesture. Then he resumed his worried pacing of the room.

"I think you're over-estimating things," Bruce said. His face was pale. He choked, seemed to have difficulty in speak-

ing. "I—I refuse to have the will changed in my favour."

"Why do you object?" asked Arnold Dixon.

"You forget, father. I've only been home three months. I—I still remember the occasion of my leaving, and the perfect right you had to cut me off." His face became paler. "I—I want you to be quite sure that I've reformed before you decide to make me your heir again."

Arnold Dixon laid his hand gently on the young man's arm.

"I don't want you ever to refer to the unfortunate past again," he said. "That's a closed chapter in both our lives. I am thankful that you've come back to me in my old age. I'm satisfied that you have reformed. I want the money to stay in the family, and not be dissipated by bequests to charity. You're in love with Edith Allen, my son. Are you not?"

"Yes. I am."

"I want you to marry her. She's a sweet, lovely girl. You're the last of the direct Dixon line. I want the name perpetuated. But, more than that, once the fortune is legally willed to you, I have a feeling that the attempts on my life and property will cease. Are you convinced now that I'm doing the wise thing?"

Bruce shrugged.

"Whatever you decide suits me," he said huskily, as his father strode to the telephone and summoned William Timothy to the mansion.

It was the son's turn now to become restive. He walked impatiently up and down the room while he waited for the arrival of the solicitor. William Timothy came in with brusque, springy step. It was evident that the news over the wire had disturbed him.

"You can't do this, Arnold!" Timothy spluttered. "It's ridiculous!"

"Ridiculous, hey?" Dixon rejoined. "I've a right to will my own money where I like, haven't I?"

"Of course. But things have been so unsettled."

He stared covertly towards Bruce, but was unable to find any change of expression on the young man's face. In the end, Arnold Dixon settled the whole argument with a stubborn exclamation:

"Very well, William. If you won't attend to your legal duty, I'll find a solicitor who will."

Timothy shrugged.

"In that case there's nothing to do but sign the new document." He drew a lengthy typewritten paper from his case. "Sign here. We'll need two witnesses."

Charles, the butler, and another servant, hastily summoned, became the witnesses. Timothy, who was still angry at the way in which his advice had been disregarded, took his leave, refusing a glass of port which the old man offered him as a peace gesture.

As soon as the door closed behind the fuming solicitor, Arnold Dixon shivered. The quarrel had been a tax on his strength. Feebly, he said that he'd go upstairs and lie down. Bruce read his magazine with unseeing eyes for perhaps a quarter of an hour. Then he summoned the butler, had him bring his hat and coat.

"I'm leaving for London," he said softly. "You needn't tell my father about this. Let him sleep. I may telephone him late, from town. If he should wake before I 'phone, tell him I had some important business that may clear up certain—difficulties. Good-day, Charles."

"Good-day, sir!"

Charles hurried to the window the moment he had closed the door behind

his employer's son. He was surprised to see that Bruce did not go back towards the garage. Instead, the young man walked along the gravel path for a few yards, and then turned off into the shrubbery. He seemed to be examining the grounds with peculiar interest.

Frowning, the butler went to the rear of the house and continued to clean the silver, from which duty he had been interrupted. Charles had been at his task for nearly an hour when he chanced to glance through the curtained window of the pantry. The garage was in his line of vision.

His jaw sagged as he saw a familiar figure skulking close to the garage entrance. The figure was inserting a key in the locked door. The door swung open—swiftly. The man appeared to be hasty, anxious to avoid being seen. But Charles recognised the pale profile that was turned momentarily toward him. It was Bruce Dixon. The young man who had left his father's house nearly an hour and a half ago on the pretext of going to town!

Charles dropped the ornate knife he was cleaning. He ran instantly toward a side door that was concealed by a wing of the house from a direct view of the garage. He slipped through the protecting bushes that lined the gravel drive. A moment later, he had reached the flank of the garage, and was up on a box, trying to peer into the high side window above the level of his eyes.

By straining upward on his toes, Charles was able to look through the glass pane. He saw Bruce working busily with a shining steel instrument. The car he was working on was the small one that Arnold Dixon always used when he drove alone. And Bruce was deliberately tampering with the steering mechanism. The sight unnerved the faithful butler. He gasped, rose higher on his toes to see better, and the box under his feet shifted and collapsed with a noisy crash as it broke under the butler's weight.

Instantly, Charles turned to flee. He dived headlong for the protection of the circling bushes, hoping to slide out of sight before Bruce could rush from the garage and intercept him. But his hope was in vain. Charles was too old to compete in speed with the long legs of the younger man. He had barely taken three steps when Bruce came racing from the garage and sprang in front of him.

The cry that bubbled on the butler's lips was cut short by a blow from Bruce. Dazed, barely conscious, he was lifted in a strong embrace and carried swiftly back into the garage. There was no sound from the silent mansion, Bruce waited a second to make sure that his attack on the butler had been unobserved. Then he closed the heavy garage door, and the sound of his laughter was ugly. He kicked Charles brutally in the ribs until the slumped servant stirred and groaned.

"You rat!" he snarled. "You cheap, snooping spy! Thought you'd do a little spying—eh? Well, you've cooked your own goose!"

Charles was staring in terror. A new car that he had never seen before was parked in the front space of the garage. Directly opposite it was Arnold Dixon's personal car, with whose mechanism Bruce had just finished tampering.

"Where—where did that new car come from?" Charles gasped.

"I drove it in here, you fool! It's going to carry both of us when we leave here presently."

"You're kidnapping me?" Charles whispered.

"I'm doing better than that. I'm killing you!"

It was hard to believe that this was the same young man who had left the mansion by the front door only an hour and a half before. His good-looking face was stiff with rage. His lips were a thin, murderous line.

"You're not Dixon's real son!" Charles cried. "I was right! I warned Mr. Timothy. Help! Murder!"

Bruce covered the cry with the pressure of his palm. A blow on the head ended all chance for the butler warning the old man in the silent mansion a few hundred yards away. Dazed, Charles saw his captor lift the garage telephone from its hook. He tried to shout, but his vocal cords were paralysed. He heard the young man call his father's 'phone number—the private one in his father's room.

"Hallo, dad!" He was deliberately making his voice urgent, almost terrified. "This is Bruce. Dad, you've got to come to me at once! I'm in London!" His voice dropped to a purring whisper. "I've found out who stole the Cup of Confucius!"

There was a pause, thinly filled by the squeak of his father's voice on the wire. Then again Bruce was speaking racing words, lying words, into the instrument. He gave an address in the East End of London.

There are two of them in the house. The crook in the brown beard, and a pal of his. I'm 'phoning from a public call-box across the street. And they've got the cup with them, dad; I saw them carry it in!"

"What shall I do?" Arnold Dixon's voice shrilled in far-away excitement.

"Get your car. The small one. Drive as fast as you can to London. I'll meet you here on the corner of this street. And, dad, don't take the main road. It's too crowded with traffic, and every minute counts now."

His eyes were cold slits.

"Take the winding road—the short cut that runs past the stone quarries. You can speed better there. I—I can't talk any longer. I'll be waiting."

Bruce hung up the receiver with a click. He heaved the fainting butler into the new car that was waiting with its motor purring softly. A moment later, the garage door opened and the car emerged. Bruce backed up and made a quick turn. With his eyes alertly on the rear of the mansion, he drove off along a weedy lane that traversed the back of the sprawling estate. It led to a wooden gate that opened on a road at the back.

The road was unpaved, but Bruce stepped recklessly on the accelerator and sent the car hurtling along at a furious pace. Presently he came to a cross-roads, and took the left turn. The only vehicles that had used this dangerous, winding road to any extent were the lorries that formerly ran to and from the quarry pits a mile or two ahead. Now, the quarries were deserted, because of the business failure of the contractor who had owned them.

Bruce slowed his reckless speed. He had to, or risk the plunge of his car and himself down the steep chasm of a deserted quarry. The road made a sharp S bend at this point as it wound past the enormous excavation in the earth.

The sweating son of Arnold Dixon drove around the first sharp swing of the S. He brought his car to a halt in the shadow of a scraggly scrub oak and pine that lined the steep hillside opposite the quarry excavation. On the inner side of



the curve was a frail wooden guard rail painted white. It was the only protection against a dizzy plunge to death. Bruce laughed as he saw it.

He roped Charles' ankles and wrists and tossed the moaning butler into the weeds behind the shadow of the halted car. Charles made no cry. His head lolled like a dead man's. He had fainted.

That suited Bruce perfectly. Seizing a large can of oil he ran back along the deserted road to the point where the concealed curve commenced. He spread a thick, wavering line of oil along the hard surface of the road. Bruce's plan was simple. A car, racing along at high speed would be forced to brake hard for the sharp turn. The oil under the wheels would cause an instant skid. The car, swerving toward the low wooden railing, would be doomed unless the driver, by a desperate wrench of the steering-wheel, succeeded in bringing it out of its skid. One such tug, and the tampered steering mechanism would snap!

Bruce had one more detail to take care of an unforeseen hitch in his murderous plans. A light rifle lay on the floor of his own hidden car. Stationed out of sight behind the sweep of green leaves, he intended to put a bullet into the front tyre of his father's car, and explode it to a flat pancake. But only in case of emergency. He didn't want any bullet holes showing in the wrecked car. The oil on the road would be an impossible clue for a coroner's jury. Oil might mean carelessness, a leaky tank on some old lorry—almost anything.

The jury would find the smashed bodies of Charles—Bruce meant to throw the butler's body after the car—and Arnold Dixon, and return a verdict of accidental death caused by reckless driving.

Such were the grim thoughts of the youthful killer as he reached into his parked car beyond the first curve, and picked up the light rifle he had secreted there.

Suddenly, a warning thought struck him. He turned, glanced toward the sheltered spot where the unconscious form of Charles had been lying. He uttered a frightened oath as he saw that the trampled grass was empty. Charles was gone! He was not unconscious, as he had pretended to be. The hasty cords that had bound his ankles and wrists were lying under the bush where the butler had been trussed.

Hardly had the significance of this disaster flashed on the mind of Bruce, when a sound from the road itself made him whirl about. It was the noise of a car approaching the curve at high speed. That distant roar was echoed by a shriller sound—the scream of a man desperate with determination. It came from the throat of Charles. He had leapt suddenly into the road, was racing madly toward the bend of the curve, waving his arms high above his head—screaming a warning.

It was remarkable how the old servant could run. Before Bruce had time to shoot, Charles had turned the curve and was hidden by the steep boulder of the slope that formed the outer side of the hairpin bend. Bruce raced after him.

A louder sound drowned out the piercing yells of Charles. It was the squeal of tortured brakes. The motor of the approaching car had been cut off. It was sliding with locked wheels to an abrupt stop on the unseen straight that preceded that first sharp curve of the quarry highway. Bruce Dixon dropped, panting, to one knee. His face peered around the

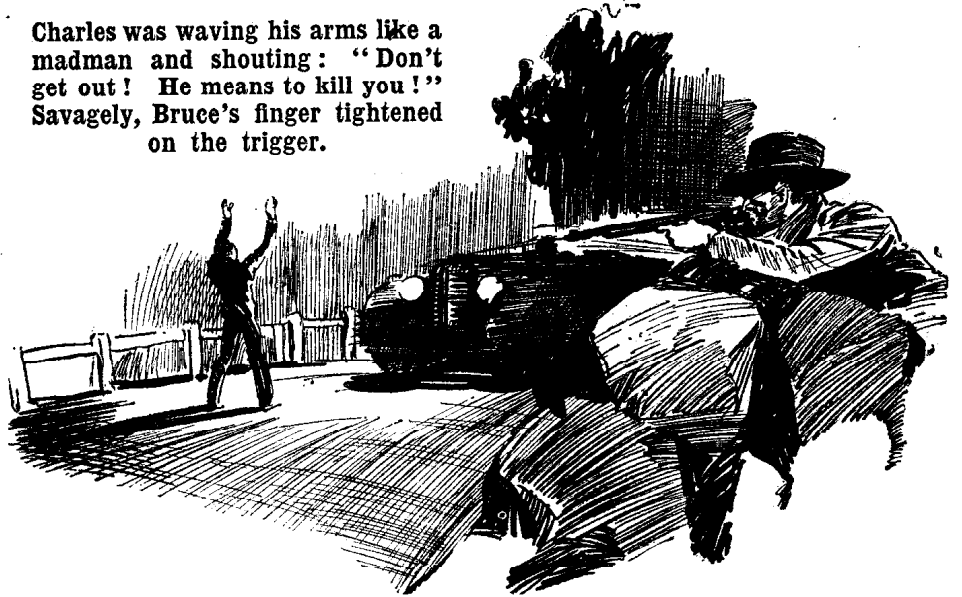
boulder that marked the bend in the road. His rifle leaped to his shoulder.

The speeding car had already jerked to a halt. Broad, black tyre-marks on the road behind it testified to the sure power of those brakes. Only the steering gear was damaged, and the straightness of the approach had given Arnold Dixon no occasion to twist the weakened wheel. He was already leaping from the stationary car, his face set in frightened lines. Charles was still out in front, waving his arms like a madman. His voice echoed clearly to the hidden murderer:

"For Heaven's sake, don't get out! He means to kill you! He's got a rifle. It's your own—"

Bruce's finger tightened on the trigger. The rifle cracked with a report that echoed among the encircling hills. Charles' waving hands jerked high above his head. They remained stiffly upright for a moment, then the butler plunged forward on his face in the road.

**Charles was waving his arms like a madman and shouting: "Don't get out! He means to kill you!" Savagely, Bruce's finger tightened on the trigger.**



Arnold Dixon stood rooted in horror, his eyes glaring at the turn in the road from whence the murderous bullet had been fired. He was an easy target. But the fear of discovery was in Bruce's heart, and that saved the old man's life.

Bruce didn't dare run the slightest risk of recognition. He could see Arnold Dixon's eyes staring straight toward him, and, with an oath, he sprang back out of sight. He jerked a handkerchief from his pocket, knotted it over his nose and the lower part of his face so that only his sullen eyes showed. Quick as he was, his victim had vanished when again he raised the rifle to his shoulder.

But a loud report revealed the whereabouts of the resolute Arnold Dixon. He was crouched behind his car, firing with an automatic pistol he had taken to carrying with him ever since the attempted burglary at Shadelawn. The sound of the firing was sure to bring help eventually, and maybe sooner than could be anticipated. Again Bruce changed his plan. He swung the muzzle of the gun sideways and concentrated on a new target. There was an explosive report from the left front tyre of the old man's car. It blew out with a bang.

Bruce had failed in his primary purpose, but he had preserved his anonymous identity. Charles could never betray him now. Arnold Dixon would have only a handkerchief-swathed face to recall when he tried to remember details of that murderous ambush. And now it was

impossible for Arnold Dixon to pursue the death car and try to get a glimpse of the number plate.

Bruce fled like a deer. He backed his own car out of concealment far down the road. It began to roar away at top speed.

#### TREASURE BAIT.

THE lights were on in the home of William Timothy. Outside, a cold gale blew with a mournful sound. It ruffled the parted curtains and roared through the bare branches of the elms outside the house of the solicitor. He shivered and walked to the window. Outside, the darkness was profound. With a clipped exclamation, Timothy drew the curtains and faced his visitor.

His visitor was Edith Allen, his niece. She was playing nervously with a tiny lace handkerchief in her hands. The loveliness of her face was deepened, rather than blurred, by the evident terror that filled her.

"Have the police found any trace of the—murderer?" she asked.

"None," the solicitor replied dully. "They combed the roads. The trouble is there is nothing in the way of a clue. You think that Bruce is mixed up in some way with this ghastly plot against his father's life?"

Edith wrung her slim hands, cried: "Bruce isn't a killer! He can't be—he can't!"

"But suppose he is? What then?"

"That's why I'm here," Edith replied drearily. "I've got to know. This doubt, this suspicion, is slowly killing me. I have a horrible feeling that the whole thing is coming to a climax to-night. Unless you and I do something to save him, Arnold Dixon will be killed. That's why I drove here at top speed after—after Bruce acted so queerly."

She amplified her statement while her uncle stared at her attentively. Bruce had just visited her late that afternoon, just before dusk. His manner was strained. He acted as though he regretted having an appointment to take her to dinner, although he himself had suggested it. He explained that it was again necessary for him to cry off the appointment. He made a glib excuse that was completely unconvincing. But the girl accepted it, as she had accepted similar excuses in the past fortnight.

This time, however, she determined to test Bruce's truthfulness. She had followed him to the street. He had told her

his business was taking him immediately to London. It was a lie. He got into his car and drove rapidly away—towards Pelham Bay.

Edith hailed a taxi and followed. But somehow Bruce became aware that he was being trailed. His car turned into a maze of side-streets and was lost.

"And you think—" Timothy prompted Edith slowly.

"I don't think, uncle, I know. He was taking a route that would bring him to only one spot—the home of his father at Pelham Bay."

"Nothing very strange about that," the solicitor said.

"But there is. I phoned Mr. Dixon, asked to speak to Bruce. His father said that Bruce wouldn't be home to-night, that he was spending the night in town. I asked if there were police on hand to guard the mansion in the event of—of another attempt against him. He laughed—you know how stubborn he is—and said no. He said that a loaded gun would be his best protection."

Timothy's jaw set in a sudden hard line. He slipped into his overcoat, donned his hat.

"You wait here," he told Edith. "I'll go over to Shadelawn and see if I can persuade Arnold Dixon to ask for police protection."

"I'm going with you," Edith asserted. "Don't be silly!" he snapped. "The night may turn out to be very dangerous."

Her answer was to walk stubbornly with him towards the door. Timothy hesitated a moment, then shrugged his shoulders.

"Very well," he said, a touch of fatalism in his voice. "I've warned you of the peril we may run into. I wash my hands of any consequences."

The solicitor's car swung into the road. It made the short run to Dixon's mansion in a few minutes. All the lights on the ground floor were extinguished, but there was a light in an upper room—Arnold Dixon's bed-room.

Timothy was about to ring the bell when a cold hand on his wrist restrained him. Edith had backed a few paces from him. She was staring around the silent corner of the house. Her expression was one of amazement and fear. She pointed silently. Timothy gave a faint exclamation. A figure was attempt-

ing to enter a ground-floor window of the mansion. The window was wide open, and the man was raising muscular hands to swing himself through the square aperture.

Faint as the solicitor's exclamation was, the figure heard him and whirled suspiciously. His face was a white blur in the darkness, but Edith and her uncle recognised him at once. It was Bruce Dixon.

While they stared, unable to determine what to do, Bruce approached them. Edith shrank back as she saw his face at close range. It was twisted with apprehension and fury. The lips were drawn back from the teeth. If ever murder glittered in a man's eyes, it was visible in the narrowed glance of Bruce Dixon. A gun menaced Timothy and his niece.

"Hands up!" Bruce snarled harshly, under his breath. "If either of you makes a sound, I'll kill you!"

Edith uttered a low moan.

"Oh, Bruce—Bruce!"

"Look here," Timothy gasped. "You can't do a thing like this! It's your own father you're plotting against! You can't—"

"Oh, can't I!" Bruce's laughter was like the crunch of frozen pebbles. His gun forced them to turn, to walk silently past the house. He made them proceed to the rear of the grounds. In the darkness the squat shape of a toolhouse became visible. Bruce unlocked the door, flung it open.

"In!" he growled. "Both of you!"

Timothy obeyed. But Edith made no move to follow. Instead, she faced her captor with a low, pleading cry that seemed to come from her very heart.

"Bruce! Are you mad? I—I love you! You love me! Or is it all a lie?" "Love you?" His voice was like steel. "I'll kill you if you don't do as you're told!"

Ruthlessly, he sent her spinning forward into the pitch blackness of the toolshed. The door shut, and an instant later the key turned.

Bruce waited to make sure that his prisoners' cries could not be heard far from the shed. Satisfied, he hurried through the silent grounds. He retraced his steps toward the open window where he had been surprised by the unexpected arrival of the girl and her uncle. Every-

thing was exactly as he had left it. The sash was still lifted half-way. The room within was black and utterly silent.

Bruce replaced the gun in his pocket, took something else out. It was a blackjack. Bruce didn't anticipate further trouble on the ground floor of the house, but if trouble came he was prepared to deal with it silently. He wanted no betraying noise to alarm the old man in the lighted bed-room upstairs.

He climbed through the window. A tiny funnel of light shot from a torch in Bruce's left hand toward the corner of the room. It lighted up the dark outline of a figure that had stepped from behind a tallboy. The figure moved slowly forward along the beam of the brilliant torch.

"The Shadow!" Bruce gasped.

The sound of his own voice restored his shaken courage. He leaped forward and grappled with the Shadow.

A strange duel followed—a furious battle between blackjack and clubbed gun. For Cranston made no effort to fire. He merely used his weapon to ward off the furious blows that rained at his skull from the whizzing blackjack, while he gave ground, retreating in a circle that brought him back to the open window before the chance came for which he had been watching.

Cranston swerved. His free hand darted like lightning to the hollow of the young man's collar-bone. He dropped his gun and clamped the other black-gloved hand on Bruce's forearm. It was a perfect ju-jitsu, but Cranston did not apply pressure enough to cause his foe to scream with agony. He merely threw Bruce backwards so that he sprawled full length on the soft rug.

Lamont Cranston immediately bent and recovered his own dropped gun. As he did so, he made an intentionally awkward movement. A scrap of paper fell from his pocket to the floor. Cranston took no apparent notice of his loss.

With a gasp of simulated terror he escaped through the window. It was the only cry he had uttered during the whole strange combat, and he took good care to keep it low-toned. By the time Bruce reached the window, Cranston had fled into the darkness of the grounds.

Arnold Dixon's son turned away with a snarl of triumph. He had beaten the Shadow at his own game. He was free now to press his criminal plan to completion. But, as he turned to hurry to the staircase, he saw the scrap of paper that had fallen from Cranston's pocket. It lay in the light of the electric torch, crumpled and white. Bruce's eyes gleamed as he saw it.

He picked it up, smoothed it with trembling fingers. It seemed to be the identical paper that Cranston had obtained when Paul Rodney dropped it in the house of the dead Snaper and Hooley.

Bruce read the awkward printing of the first two lines with eager attention. He didn't know it, but the lines were a perfect reproduction of the original, a photostatic copy: "When the Indian is high follow his nose and reach under."

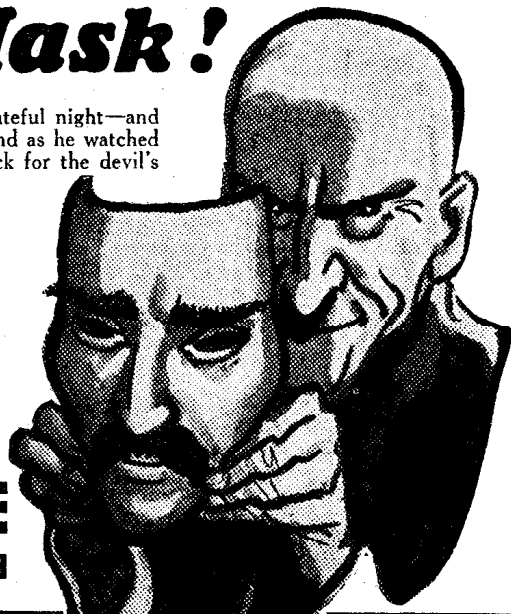
But it wasn't the cryptic sentence that made Bruce's eyes gleam. It was the typewritten paragraph that followed:

"Memo: The 'Indian' is a rock formation at the base of the cliff below the house that was burned. It is only 'high' when the low tide exposes it. By sighting a straight line from the nose, a spot is reached on the surface of the water that covers the entrance to a submerged tunnel leading inside the cliff

## Devil's Mask!

Claban Cragg died swiftly and terribly that fateful night—and the man who murdered him laughed like a fiend as he watched him crumple and drop. Here was devil's luck for the devil's own! Two million pounds for the taking—and something worth even more—a dead man's identity, a mask to hide him while he planned a come-back Scotland Yard and Sexton Blake never dreamed of—one they would never forget. Dr. Satira, brilliant, pitiless crook of crooks, had returned for vengeance!

Sexton Blake v. Dr. Satira in one of the most thrilling stories you've read for many a week! "WHERE IS DR. SATIRA?" is the title, and it's in today's



**DETECTIVE**  
**WEEKLY** Every Thursday 2d

itself. Reaching under at this exact spot will disclose the existence of the tunnel. It must logically lead to the place where the stolen Cup of Confucius is buried."

Bruce read the typed memo with a hissing intake of his breath. He darted to the open window and sprang out. His form disappeared in the blackness outside.

It was exactly what Cranston had wanted him to do. Bruce had swallowed the bait, and was off to retrieve for himself the treasure from the ancient past of China. Crouched close to the ground, Lamont Cranston watched the panting young man flee.

A man was crying out bitter words in the lighted top-floor room of the Dixon mansion. The man was Arnold Dixon himself. He sat, bound and helpless, in a chair, glaring at two other men who sat a few feet away from him, guns in their alert hands.

One of the silent captors was Clyde Burke, of the "Morning Sun," famous London reporter, and a loyal agent of the Shadow. His companion was Harry Vincent, another agent, who was also there by orders received over the 'phone from Burbank. It was those orders that had resulted in the tying-up of the millionaire by these resolute intruders.

Clyde and Vincent had been told to guard Arnold Dixon and prevent by whatever means they thought necessary his leaving the house. They were to stay with him, their guns ready to repel an attack, until they received orders from the Shadow.

"You're liars!" Arnold Dixon cried. "You're not trying to help me. You're here to rob me."

"You're mistaken, Mr. Dixon," Harry Vincent told him curtly. "We're neither thieves nor murderers. We're here at the orders of a man you have every reason to thank for being alive and unharmed at this very minute."

"Who?" Dixon demanded.

"The Shadow!"

Dixon's eyes bulged. He seemed struck with awe.

Even at that moment danger was approaching the mansion, for through the tangled undergrowth of the estate crept Paul Rodney, and his henchman, Squint. They had come to the conclusion that Arnold Dixon might be able to help them find the missing Cup of Confucius after they had forced him to talk. They were beaten, themselves, and were eager to set to work on somebody.

But as they slid noiselessly through the darkness, Squint, who was in the lead, swerved with a startled cry. He saw the same black-cloaked figure that Bruce Dixon had seen earlier. It rose like an ascending wraith from the dark surface of the ground.

Squint dodged as black-gloved hands reached for his throat. Gasping, he tripped over an unseen root and plunged heavily on his face. His mishap gave Cranston, in the guise of the Shadow, time to deal with the more resolute Rodney. He closed with the snarling killer and disarmed him with a quick jerk of his wrist and hand. The gun flew off in a tangent, and vanished.

Rodney fought furiously, and for an instant seemed to be conquering the Shadow by the very fury of his fists. The Shadow gave ground, seemed to falter. But it was only a momentary weakness, and it changed to strength in the twinkling of an eye. Cranston had seen Squint

rising to his feet. He threw Rodney aside with a tremendous shove, and whirled to meet this new menace.

Squint was no match at all for the Shadow. He screamed as his arm bone scraped in the socket of his shoulder. The gun he had tried to fire slipped from his pain-loosened fingers. Moaning, he reeled backward, intent only on getting away from this black-robed wraith that had risen to block his escape.

Cranston wanted Squint to flee. It left him free to deal with Rodney, who was again charging like a clumsy bear. The same thing that had happened when the Shadow fought his battle with Bruce Dixon was now repeated. He began to fight defensively, as if he had lost heart.

Rodney thought he had the Shadow at last. But Cranston, slipping suddenly away, ran like a deer in a direction opposite to that taken by Squint. As he ran, a paper fluttered to the ground.

Paul Rodney, who had eyes like a cat, saw the paper fall, and abandoned his plan to pursue his antagonist. He reached, scooped up the paper. Hastily scratching a match, he read its contents. Laughter issued from his throat. He was staring at an exact duplicate of the paper that Bruce Dixon had found.

Rodney whirled, followed the path Squint had taken. It took him to a gate in the stone wall. He darted through, raced towards a car where Squint was already behind the wheel. The car's headlights were dark, but the engine was throbbing harshly under the bonnet.

"You rat!" Rodney cried fiercely. "Were you going to scam and leave me here?"

"No, no!" Squint whispered. "I wanted to be all ready for the getaway. Get in—quick! That Shadow's got us licked—"

"He has not," Rodney purred. "I've got something to show you as soon as we're on our way. Drive straight for the cliff house—that burned-down dump where we fixed Snaper and Hooley—"

"Why there? That's a devil of a place to hide out."

"Is it? It's the best place in the world to find the Cup of Confucius. The Shadow made a bad mistake to-night."

While the car rocked along, Rodney held a scrap of paper before Squint's eyes so the ugly little chauffeur could read it.

The car increased its speed. The whine of tyres on the dark highway was like an ominous croon of death.

Upstairs in the Dixon mansion there was tense quiet. The stone that flew without warning through the open window almost struck Vincent's hunched shoulder. It landed with a thump on the floor, rebounded against the wall.

Vincent pounced on the object before he saw clearly what it was. His first thought was that it might be a bomb. But it was a plain, jagged stone. A sheet of paper was wrapped round it, tied securely with a tight loop of cord. Harry ripped the cord loose, spread the paper flat under his eager eyes. He uttered a low exclamation.

The paper contained a hasty scrawl in a hand that was familiar to Harry. There was no doubt in his mind but that the Shadow had written this message. The note was terse. Vincent frowned, but Clyde Burke's eyes gleamed when he read it:

"Vincent remain with Arnold Dixon. Do not leave under any circumstances. Burke report immediately to burned house on shore road. Signal sparrow chirp. Speed."

Clyde Burke whirled, his face aglow with delight. Vincent showed no sign of the disappointment that filled him. He merely extended his hand, said: "Good luck!" and watched Clyde race from the room. He heard Clyde depart on the motor-cycle on which he had come out from London.

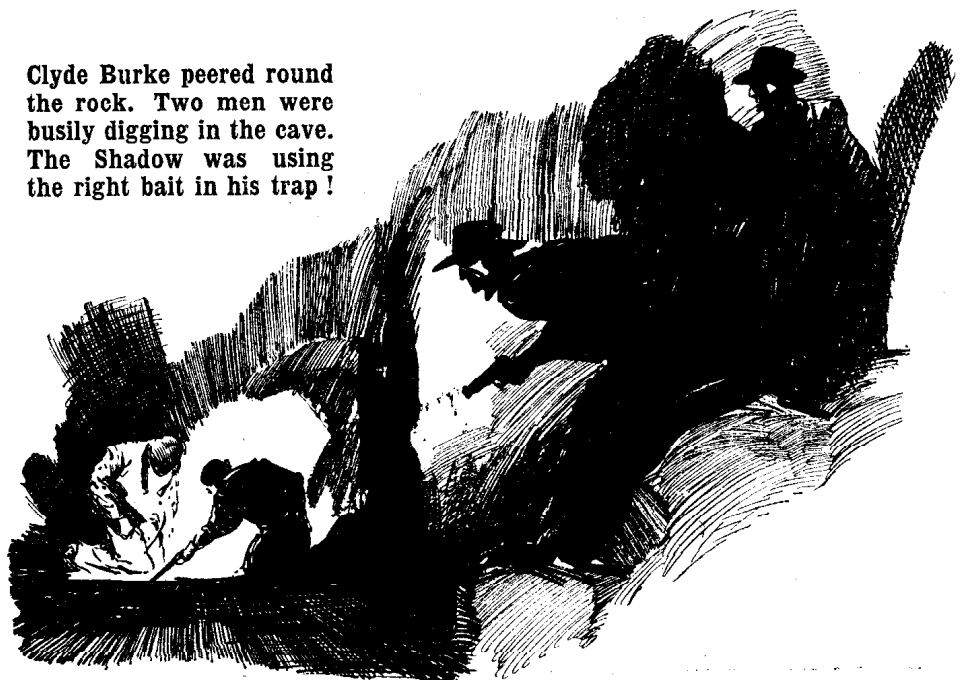
#### THE INDIAN'S NOSE.

IT was pitch dark in the toolshed where Bruce had so callously thrust William Timothy and his niece. The solicitor couldn't see Edith Allen, but the sound of her shrill scream made his ears tingle.

"Quiet!" he told her. "Screaming won't help us to get out of here. I'll break a way out in less than five minutes."

His sharp whisper was confident. Edith became silent. In the darkness she could hear the scratch of a match. Light flared. Timothy was holding the match

**Clyde Burke peered round the rock. Two men were busily digging in the cave. The Shadow was using the right bait in his trap!**



high over his head. He uttered an exclamation of satisfaction when he saw the vertical wire of an electric light. There was a click, and the windowless prison of the toolshed became bright with illumination.

Timothy's smile deepened.

"Luckily, I was suspicious about what we might run into here to-night, and I came prepared for any emergency."

As he spoke he fished a ring of keys from his pocket. They were skeleton keys. He knelt at the keyhole, of the door and began to manipulate them with trembling fingers. Then he left the door abruptly and began to rummage along the shelves at the back of the shed. He was looking for a length of stout cord, and he found a piece that satisfied him.

"Cord?" Edith inquired, in a puzzled tone. "What's that for?"

"For you, my dear," the solicitor cried softly, and sprang at her.

Timothy was as gentle as possible, but Edith was unable to elude the firm grasp that caught her and held her helpless. The cords were tied swiftly in spite of her furious efforts, and she found herself lying on the floor, securely trussed.

"Sorry," he murmured, in a shamefaced tone. "It's for your own good, Edith. This is the safest place you can be in to-night, and I mean you to stay here."

"You're afraid to trust me," she sobbed. "You think I'm still in love with Bruce?"

He nodded. His hands shook. But there was no relenting in his steady eyes.

"It will take all my nerve and energy to protect myself," he muttered. "I can't be bothered with the presence of a woman."

He sprang back to the door. One of his skeleton keys had really fitted the lock, although Edith had been unaware of it at the time. Timothy threw open the door, quickly slipped into the darkness. He ran noiselessly toward the mansion. As he darted past the side wing he glanced warily up. The house itself was in darkness except for two lighted rooms. One was on the upper storey; the bed-room of Arnold Dixon. The second lighted room was on the ground floor.

Timothy crouched back from the open window of that brilliant room on the ground floor, wondering uneasily what he ought to do. As he stood there, half-turned to protect himself, wondering if anyone were inside, his startled glance saw a tiny square of white paper lying on the grass. It was visible because of the slanting rays of light that issued from the window.

Bending swiftly, the solicitor snatched it up. He read the note with credulous amazement. It was the same bait that Cranston had left with Bruce Dixon. Bruce had dropped it as he sprang swiftly from the room after his rather easy victory over the Shadow.

The solicitor realised the significance of his find as quickly as Bruce had before him. It was obvious that someone—just who the worried solicitor found it impossible to decide—had unearthed the secret hiding-place of the missing Cup of Confucius. The typed memo under the cryptic lines was proof of that. And the memo made the whereabouts of the cup ridiculously clear. All that was needed now was resolute determination and speed.

He found his car where he had left it, and drove swiftly along the deserted road that led to the blackened ruin of the burnt-out house. He drove past it, and parked his car in a branching lane that

cut inward through pine and spruce, away from the direction of the sea.

When Timothy returned to the burnt house, he was on foot, and his movements were cautious. He circled the ruin and approached the brow of the cliff that overlooked the sea. He descended the stone steps cut in the face of the cliff.

A few moments after the solicitor had vanished, there was a faint pop-pop from down the road. A motor-cycle approached, its engine muffled. Clyde Burke dismounted hastily, wheeled the machine out of sight. He hurried to the ruin. He pursed his lips. The sound of a chirping sparrow filled the smoky air with brief clarity.

It was answered from the foundations of the ruined house. A black-gloved hand beckoned. Calm lips issued orders. Clyde listened attentively to the words.

When the Shadow had finished, Clyde was in complete knowledge of what was required of him. He nodded to show that he understood. There was utter amazement on his face. Cranston had told him things that seemed completely incredible. But knowing the Shadow's methods, the absolute logic of his thoughts and actions, Clyde was ready to obey.

The two hurried to the brow of the cliff and descended the stone steps to the landing-stage at the water's edge. There was no sign of William Timothy. Cranston's gloved hand pointed to the cliff wall two or three feet above the tide mark where the restless waters of the bay lapped the foot of the rocky precipice.

Exposed by the low tide was a perfect replica of an Indian's head. The freak rock was in profile, and the face pointed away from where Clyde and Cranston stood.

Cranston held a length of rope in his hand. The other was directly over the bold outline of the Indian's nose. Clutching the loose end of the rope, Clyde lowered himself into the water and swam slowly away. The rope straightened. It touched the black surface of the water a dozen feet to the left of the landing-stage.

Clyde's hand dipped beneath the surface at this exact point. His groping fingers felt no rock. There was a hole in the cliff below the water. It was the entrance to a submerged tunnel.

Clyde drew in a long breath of air. He dived. Relying implicitly upon the instructions that Cranston had given him, he swam through a long gallery filled completely with salt water from floor to roof.

The floor of the tunnel swerved sharply upward, and Clyde emerged, gasping, into air-filled darkness. He had been given a tiny torch, and he sent its beam into the gloom. The gallery continued upward for a few yards further. Its stone floor was dry.

There were muddy footprints showing that someone had preceded Clyde into this queer crypt within the cliff. Perhaps more than one if Cranston's warning had been correct. Other footmarks had evaporated. Only Timothy's showed still.

Clyde was very careful with his torch as he moved onward. He descended a suddenly steeper slope to what looked like a natural doorway in the rock tunnel. The round hole was open, but the means for closing it was close at hand.

A rounded boulder was propped against the wall, midway down the slant. Beside it rested a rusted crowbar. Both boulder and crowbar were relics of an earlier day of criminal activity. This cliff and the

house above it had been the headquarters of a powerful gang of smugglers.

With the crowbar, Clyde pried the boulder loose. The incline took care of the task of shifting it. It rolled downward with a faint rumble on the smooth floor of the slanting tunnel. It struck the opening in the rock, and wedged itself there. No man within could budge it without tools.

The exit of the solicitor and those who had preceded him into that underground labyrinth was now definitely closed. There was another entrance, but only Cranston knew of it. He alone had explored every nook and cranny on a previous visit. The last act of the drama was now about to commence.

Clyde again filled his lungs, dived into the water-filled gallery, and swam back to the dark ripple of the bay.

Edith Allen lay stretched on the floor of the toolshed where her uncle had left her bound hand and foot. She was working tenaciously to free her hands from the loops of twine that fettered them.

She had slim, supple wrists, muscular from golf and tennis. The cords bit deeply into her flesh as she worked to loosen them. She gritted her teeth and tried to forget the pain. Already, one of her wrists was almost free. In another moment she gave a sobbing cry. The cord fell to the floor. Bending, she untied her ankles with scarcely a pause.

She got to her feet, ran desperate eyes along the length of the shelves. Suddenly, she saw the glint of a hammer head. She seized the implement and went grimly back to her task of trying to escape. It took several hard blows before she was able to split a crumbling plank in the side of the shed. She was soon able to rip it out, piece by piece.

A nail gashed a furrow in the flesh of her neck as she crawled through, but she paid no attention to the sharp pain. She ran toward the home of Arnold Dixon.

Like her uncle, the first thing Edith noticed was the open window on the ground floor of the silent mansion. But, approaching it, she made an additional discovery. A gun lay in a patch of trampled grass. She picked it up, examined it, found that it was loaded.

Clutching it with a repressed sob of determination, Edith climbed swiftly through the open window and crept like a noiseless ghost up the broad staircase of the mansion. So gently did she ascend that she reached the upper floor without disclosing her presence to whoever was in the lighted room at the end of the corridor. The door was partly open, but it was impossible for the girl to see who was within.

That someone was inside with Arnold Dixon, she was certain. For she could hear the faint groaning voice of the millionaire, and another voice she had never heard before. She sprang through the doorway without warning. She had the drop on Vincent before he was aware there was anyone inside the house except himself and his frightened host.

"Drop your gun!" Edith cried. "If you move an eyelash I'll shoot to kill!"

Dixon cried hoarsely from his chair:

"Edith! Don't be a fool! This man isn't a crook. He's—he's here to help me!"

The girl paid no attention. She moved quickly toward the bureau where a small stone lay, partly covering a piece of paper. Her gun was ready to kill Vincent if he changed his helpless pose

against the rear wall of the room. She snatched the note, backed toward the open doorway.

Holding the paper over the barrel of her gun with a free hand, Edith was able to read it with a lightning glance.

Edith uttered a clipped cry of comprehension. She darted swiftly from the room.

"Stop!" Harry cried. "Don't go! You'll be killed!"

Vincent might easily have caught her. But he dared not stir a step outside. The Shadow had ordered him to remain.

Cranston, at that moment, was no longer on the surface of the ground. He had lifted a small link of copper embedded in the stone of a square flag in the centre of the cellar ruins of the burnt house. The stone had lifted slowly, ponderously. Through the opening descended Cranston, followed by the agile body of Clyde Burke.

Cranston had been through these passages before. He knew exactly what lay ahead.

Occasionally a side passage led to smaller caves filled with dust and musty odours. But from one of them a faint groan sounded as Cranston's light winked briefly. Lamont Cranston heard it, and motioned to Clyde to follow him.

It was with difficulty that Clyde repressed a cry as he saw the gagged and bound figure. Cranston's hand grasped Clyde's in a warning gesture. Clyde clamped his lips together and made no sound. He followed Cranston back to the ever-descending slope of the winding passage.

The corridor was widening, spreading into a huge underground cave.

The finger of Lamont Cranston was pointing. A light glowed in the midst of this underground maze.

Two men were digging furiously at a spot in the floor where the earth looked as though it had recently been disturbed. The underground diggers were Paul Rodney and his evil little henchman, Squint.

#### THE END OF THE RIDDLE.

"It's no use," Rodney snarled. "Get up out of that hole. We're wasting our time!"

"We've only dug about three feet," Squint protested. "The cup may be buried deeper than we thought."

"The cup can't be buried any deeper," Rodney growled. "It's been stolen already. I was afraid of this when I saw how soft the earth was. Somebody has been here ahead of us!"

"The Shadow!" Squint muttered.

Rodney's bearded face seemed to twitch under the impact of sudden murderous rage.

"That damned paper of his! It must have been a deliberate plant. He found the cup long ago. He meant us to read that note and come here. It might be a trap."

His arm gestured fiercely.

"Quick! Get back to that water tunnel. See if the exit is still open. I remember now; there was a boulder that might be—"

A voice behind the rigid pair interrupted with cold, slow menace:

"Hands up, you cheap rats!"

The evil pair whirled, saw the level gun. It was Bruce Dixon. His face was black with murder. He stood motionless at the edge of a dark gallery from which he had emerged. Rodney dropped his weapon. But Squint sprang sideways and

**The Hon. Ronald Purvale, out for a spot of fun, runs, instead, into — Murder — and a close friend suspected of it. JOHN C. BRANDON writes this yarn!**

# The ROAD-HOUSE MYSTERY

The Hon. R. S. V. Purvale and Lord Chanways make up a party to enjoy themselves one night at "Chesneys," a super road-house on the Colchester road.

On arrival, Purvale's friend, Tommy Lowrie, finds that Fanshawe, a man he hates and has quarrelled with, is taking part in a water gala. Just as Fanshawe is about to take the highest dive, he collapses . . . shot. Things look black for Lowrie, who has not disguised his dislike of Fanshawe. Will he clear himself? This book-length yarn grips all through!



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sent a treacherous bullet flaming toward their captor.

The bullet missed. The slug struck the rock with a sullen thwack. The cave was still roaring with sound when Squint toppled slowly forward. Bruce had shot him grimly through the forehead.

"How about it, Rodney?" Bruce jeered. "Want a little dose of the same medicine?"

Rodney made no hostile move.

"So this is your game, you double-skunk! I put you in Dixon's house, fix everything so you can pose as the old man's son and clean up his dough—and I get this!"

"Whining, eh?" sneered Bruce. "Did you think I came here to find that damned Cup of Confucius? I've got a bigger stake than that! I'm after every penny of Arnold Dixon's fortune. All I've got to do is to rub you out—and two more fools like you—and then I'm sitting pretty!"

Bruce's finger was beginning to squeeze ominously against the trigger, when Paul Rodney gave a shout of wild joy.

A streak of scarlet jetted from the rocky cave behind Bruce. A bullet smashed into his back. He went down as if struck by lightning, and lay there without moving, badly wounded.

Rodney said hoarsely:

"Nice shooting, Timothy!" and picked up his dropped gun.

Arnold Dixon's solicitor advanced slowly into the circle of yellow radiance.

"A fine mess you've made of things, you fool!"

"I obeyed every order you ever gave me," Rodney muttered. "It's not my fault if Bruce went mad. You should have offered him a bigger cut, then maybe he wouldn't have tried to double-cross us and grab everything."

"Maybe," Timothy snapped. "What

happened to the Shadow? Are you sure he didn't follow you here?"

"I don't know."

"Drop those guns—both of you!" Clyde Burke ordered.

Clyde had advanced with a noiseless bound from his vaulted hiding-place. Beside him was a more ominous figure, a black-cloaked spectre that seemed to tower above the tense Clyde.

"The Shadow!" Timothy gasped.

Cranston uttered a whisper of sibilant laughter. He began to glide forward, and at his side Clyde Burke advanced, too. Without warning, the cavern behind them echoed with a piercing scream. It was a woman's cry, bubbling with terror.

Clyde Burke whirled instinctively. He saw a girl bending over a motionless huddle on the floor. The huddle was Bruce Dixon. The girl was—Edith Allen.

Clyde had barely recognised her when he felt a powerful fist strike him between his shoulder blades. The blow knocked him from his feet. Timothy had fired with the speed of desperation. But Cranston's sidelong blow had sent his agent plunging headfirst out of the path of death. His other gun took care of Rodney, who fell forward, and the weight

(Continued overleaf.)

## ROYAL NAVY

Boys may now enter between the ages of 15 and 17½ years. Full particulars are con-

tained in the illustrated booklet: "The Royal Navy as a Career and How to Join It," which may be obtained on application to the—**Recruiting Staff Officer, R.N. & R.M. (N), 85, Whitehall, London, S.W.1,** or at any Post Office.

of his dead body struck Cranston's knee and knocked him off his balance.

In that second, Timothy recovered from his futile shot at Clyde. The muzzle of the crooked solicitor's gun pointed straight at Lamont Cranston's throat. But, even as the gun spat, Clyde fired. Timothy dropped in his tracks.

Edith was still on her knees beside the figure of Bruce Dixon. She was moaning and wringing her hands. Apparently she hadn't heard the roaring pistols a few feet away. Cranston vanished into darkness.

When he returned he was not alone. A figure stumbled at his side. The grief that held Edith speechless was abruptly broken. She uttered a shrill cry of wonder.

The man who stood facing her, his countenance etched in lines of suffering and pain, was an exact counterpart of the wounded man who lay on the ground. It was as though Bruce Dixon was staring downward into the sneering, wide-open eyes of—Bruce Dixon!

For an amazed second Edith stared at the identical men. Then two things happened. The wounded Bruce uttered a faint, snarling oath. The Bruce whom Cranston had brought back from the corridor held out trembling arms towards the girl.

"Edith! Thank God you're safe!"

Her face cleared. This was the man she loved and trusted.

"You are Bruce!" Edith whispered. "Now I understand at last. This wounded man is an impostor."

The man holding her in his arms was silent. His eyes avoided Edith. But the wounded man laughed jeeringly.

"Why doesn't he answer you? He



## Meet the Phantom Sheriff before he Vanishes!

Who is this will-o'-the-wisp Western lawman who wages war against big-city crime barons? Why has he left the ranges to round up ruthless crooks in the East? What chance have his Colts against mobsters and their machine-guns? You'll find the answers in "The Phantom Sheriff's Fiery Trail," the thrilling yarn appearing today in **WILD WEST WEEKLY**. This man-sized paper features a full programme of super-stories of Western adventure... yarns of the cattle country, range wars and rustlers, bandits, marshals and Mounties who always get their man. Ask today for

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can't, because he's a liar! He's not Arnold Dixon's real son. I am!"

The girl shuddered, drew back a pace.

"It's the truth," Clyde told Edith quietly. "Dixon's real son is that murderous rat on the floor. The man you love is an impostor. But don't misjudge him. The real criminal is Dixon's own son."

He glanced at the sneering crook on the floor.

"You're dying, Bruce. You might as well talk before you die."

Bruce laughed feebly.

"All right," he said. "Why not? I hated my old fool of a father—left him ten years ago—never would have come back until it was time for me to inherit his fortune. But I happened to read an item in a newspaper, and realised that this good-looking fake was taking my place in the family and pretending to be me.

"I came back secretly. I found out what was going on. This fellow was being used by Timothy, the solicitor, who was after the Dixon wealth. Rodney was the man who arranged the substitution."

"That's not true," the white-faced impostor replied. "I never met Rodney. I never saw him until the night he first appeared outside the library window at Shadelawn."

Cranston took a quick step forward where the dead Rodney lay. He bent suddenly, and his gloved hand ripped the false beard from the stark face. It was no longer Paul Rodney. It was the sleek, clean-shaven face of Donald Perdy, the art photographer.

The fake son of Arnold Dixon gave a shuddering cry. He buried his face.

"You had better talk," Clyde told him in a gentle voice. "You're safe now. Tell the truth."

The young man nodded.

His name, he confessed, was not Bruce Dixon, but James Chandler. He had come to London as a young civil engineer, out of work, but determined to get a job. He failed. He was hungry, penniless, on the Embankment when Perdy discovered him. Perdy had been combing the City with a camera, hunting for someone to impersonate Bruce Dixon. Perdy took Chandler to Timothy, and the latter convinced the young engineer that the whole scheme was a last effort to save the life of a sick and sorrowful old man.

Dixon, according to Timothy, was dying because of the continued absence of his son. Timothy, who had known the real son from childhood, taught Chandler every fact he could recall—and the cunning solicitor had a prodigious memory. The result was a masquerade that defied detection. It fooled the old man and Charles, the butler, and, at first, Edith.

"I love you, Edith," Chandler whispered brokenly. "And—and I learned to love Arnold Dixon, too. As soon as I discovered that I was being used in a plot to kill him and turn his fortune over to Timothy, I—I tried to protect him.

"I—I didn't know that the real Bruce had returned secretly. I didn't know who Snaper and Hooley were. There was no one that I dared turn to for help, except a crook named Spud Wilson. I offered Spud money, and he agreed to double-cross Timothy and help me to protect the old man. But Spud was murdered."

"He's telling the truth," Clyde Burke said. "The Cup of Confucius was stolen by Bruce himself, not by young Chandler. The murder of Charles and the attempted killing of his own father were also the ugly work of the real Bruce, who, just

before then had kidnapped Chandler in order to take his place in the house."

Cranston moved over to the real Bruce Dixon, knelt beside him.

"Listen," he said, so quietly that only the dying man could hear. "You have been in the underworld. Tell me, did you ever meet Jim Harverson? Tell me?"

Bruce Dixon laughed ironically.

"You'd like to know, wouldn't you?" he sneered.

Once more his laugh crackled from his parched lips, then his head sagged sideways. He was dead.

Cranston rose to his feet. His heart was like stone. One more chance of finding his own son had come—and gone. He moved across the cave, whispered briefly to Clyde. Then the darkness swallowed him up for a few moments. When he reappeared he was carrying something in his hand. Clyde took it from him, walked to where Chandler and Edith stood. He handed the object to the young man.

It was the Cup of Confucius. Chandler's eyes bulged as he looked at the cup.

"Is—is Bruce dead?" he faltered.

"It all depends," Clyde said slowly. "Do you really think of Arnold Dixon as your father? Enough to want to keep him from dying of heartbreak?"

"Yes, of course. He's been more than a real father to me."

"And you've been more than his real son. Bruce was his son only by name and birth. He's dead now. But Arnold Dixon need never know. Go back to him. Take the cup. Tell him you followed the thieves and recovered it. Timothy and Rodney are dead. They can never betray your secret. The police will never find out the actual facts of this case. The Shadow will take care of that. He wants you to continue in what no longer will be a deception."

Tears welled from Edith's blue eyes. She turned, stared toward the spot where the Shadow had been. The spot was empty.

From the fire-blackened stones of the foundations of the burned house a dark figure glided. A faint whisper of sibilant laughter was the only indication that a living being had moved across that open spot.

Lamont Cranston—the Shadow—was satisfied. The case was closed for ever.

THE END.

(The Editor would welcome your opinion of this story. Address your letters to The Editor, The THRILLER Office, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.)

**NEXT WEEK**

**THE FATAL CIRCLE**

**A NORMAN CONQUEST STORY**

**By Berkeley Gray**

**As good as Norman Conquest stories always are!**

**(See Page 82 for full details.)**

## THE VULTURE

(Continued from page 77.)

that one, but the Vulture knows how to treat a pretty woman.

Chuckling hugely to himself, he smacked his thick lips with gusto. Then turned to his men.

"Put this dog under guard!" he barked out. "Then eat your breakfast—we ride shortly."

He turned to the now greatly disappointed peasant and said, a deadly menace in his voice:

"It will be unfortunate for you, fellow, if the American should not be there. And I shall be very angry if I miss the fun of taming the beautiful senorita."

A short time later the troop broke camp. The prisoner, mounted on his pony, hands tied securely behind his back, was placed between two troopers.

A sharp command rang out, and the troop cantered off, taking the back-trail to San Rafael.

### VALLEY OF THE CAVES.

ALONG the narrow trail, slanting steeply up the mountain-side, plodded a heavily laden donkey. Astride its back, John Faulkner rode, leaning weakly forward on the pommel of the little saddle. Across the donkey's rump was piled a mountain of baggage—sacks of flour, corn-meal, bedding and goat-skin water-bags. Four chickens and a rooster bounced protestingly back and forth, suspended from the saddle-horn. Across the man's thighs rested a carbine. The girl, Dolores, trod lightheartedly along, leading the little animal. Far below them, gleaming like a piece of quartz in the sunlight, San Rafael lay sweltering in the morning heat.

As the trail branched out on to a small mesa the travellers paused to rest. The man dismounted stiffly and stretched out at full length on the ground near the edge of the precipice, the girl sat beside him. The little donkey promptly dozed in the warm sunlight.

Lying lazily on his back, the American closed his weary eyes. By his side, the girl stared down on the vast panorama below.

Suddenly, a stream of little black dots swept around a low hill and entered the village.

"Juan!" came the sharp cry from the girl. Quickly the American rolled over and sat up.

"What is it, Beautiful One?" he asked in alarm.

"It is the Ugly One. We have but left in time, my Juan."

The man in turn gazed down on the scene below.

"It is a number of riders all right, and by the military formation—yes—it is the rurales."

Presently the two watchers saw the riders enter the square and dismount. A little later, the faint crackle of musketry floated up from below. The troop mounted, and soon disappeared to the south in a cloud of dust.

The girl rose quickly.

"We must hurry, my dear," she said tensely. "Someone may have seen us leave—the rurales may follow."

Slowly the American got to his feet and mounted the little donkey. Spanking the rump of the protesting little Pedro with a small stick she carried, the girl managed

to coax it into motion, and the journey was resumed.

The sun was riding low in the western sky when the girl turned the little donkey off the trail and followed the bed of a small stream, completely hidden by an overhanging network of balsam branches.

Splashing through this for about a quarter of a mile they came to a place where the stream forked. Taking the left fork they suddenly came upon a natural archway formed by two great slabs of rock resting against each other. Passing under this, they emerged into a beautiful little valley, about two acres in size, flanked on all sides by great towering walls of rock, reaching with long jagged fingers to the sky.

Water gurgled cheerfully as it cascaded down a small cleft at the far end of the glade, falling with a silvery tinkle as it splashed into a crystal-clear pool at the base of the cliff. A clump of willows overshadowed the pool; cool lush grass covered the valley floor. A narrow aperture in the face of the cliff near the falls gave entrance to a large roomy cave—a natural fortress, making it possible for one man, if need be, to hold an army at bay. They had reached the Valley of the Caves.

About half an hour later a little fire was burning briskly between two small boulders. The girl returned from the pool with a vessel full of crystal-clear water. Soon the aroma of coffee hung appetizingly in the air.

Supper was barely over when a black, velvety night stole swiftly over the purple-packed valley.

For a long time the two lovers sat silently spellbound—entranced by the quiet beauty of the little valley. Finally, the girl, afraid lest the sound of her voice would break the magic spell, whispered softly:

"Is it not beautiful, my Juan?"

The man leaned towards her, softly kissing her on the lips.

"Yes, my dear—it is very beautiful; and with you here—it is Paradise."

The girl's lovely face flashed happily in the moonlight.

Outside, little Pedro rambled around, contentedly cropping grass; the waterfall tinkled musically; a soft wind rustled in the willow trees over the pool. Peace spread its protecting mantle over the Valley of the Caves.

### THE COYOTE.

COLONEL ALEXIS SOLOKOV sat in his office in the little town of Alamo.

The day was exceptionally hot. Every once in a while he would wipe the perspiration from his forehead and from the back of his neck with a large colourful silk handkerchief. The chief of the rurales was holding court.

A stoic, wizened-up old man stood before him, holding a frayed straw hat in his palsied hands. On either side of the prisoner stood an armed rurale. The colonel rather prided himself on the way he browbeat the peasant prisoners who were unlucky enough to be brought before him. This old man was to be no exception to the rule.

"So!" purred the big Cossack, "Balbino, you are accused of stealing a young goat from the herd of my friend Don Carlos de Pineda. What have you to say for yourself?"

The old man raised a pair of fearless eyes. He spoke in a high-pitched, quavering voice.

"Yes, indeed, my Colonel, it is true. I did steal one small goat. My little family was hungry, and I am old. It is difficult

for an old man to provide food these times. Besides—Don Carlos has many goats."

The big man leaned forward on his desk, a cunning smile in his glittering black eyes.

"Balbino, you are an old man, so I am going to do you a great favour."

"Thank you, my Colonel, a thousand thanks," the old man babbled.

"Yes, Balbino, I am glad you appreciate it, for I am going to do you a very great favour. I am going to arrange things so that you will not have to worry about your little family any more." He turned to his men and said sharply: "Take the old one out and stick him against the wall."

Dark laughter burst from the rurales present. What a droll fellow the colonel was.

Not a muscle moved in the old man's face as he was hustled roughly out of the court-room.

The colonel took out his long, silver cigarette case, selected and lit a cigarette, inhaling deeply.

Through the doorway came the crash of musketry—little old Balbino would have no further need of Don Carlos' goats. Colonel Alexis Solokov had kept his promise.

A gleam of amusement showed in the dark Tartar features—a thin cloud of blue smoke escaped his nostrils.

A young woman was brought in, a typical peasant girl, handsome in a dark, coarse manner. The colonel consulted with one of his men, then turned to the girl, raising an appraising eyebrow.

"Josefa, Corporal Gallardo tells me that you refused to let him make love to you, and further, that when he called on you last night, that you broke a crock over his head. Don't you realise, young woman, that to attack a member of La Guardia Rurale is a very serious offence? What have you to say for yourself?"

(Continued overleaf.)

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"Gallardo is a big fat pig!" the girl replied spiritedly. "Besides, he is dirty, and I do not like dirty men."

"Come, come, Josefa"—the big man was enjoying himself hugely—"Corporal Gallardo is a fine fellow—a little dirty perhaps, but a very fine lover, Josefa. Now, I am going to give you a little present"—the girl regarded him doubtfully, she had heard of his little presents before; they were not pleasant.

"I am going to give you a small love potion—The whip—five!" he rapped out.

Two troopers stepped forward. One of them ripped the thin ragged cotton blouse from her body, exposing her brown flesh to the waist.

Five lashes were laid on heavily across the girl's back. As the gaping rents appeared the girl sank to her knees, but never a cry escaped her lips. Salt was rubbed into the wounds and she was told to leave. On the way to the door she looked up into the grinning face of the man Gallardo. With all her might she slapped him across his dirty face, then promptly took to her heels, followed by roars of laughter from the colonel—he always admired fire—in women.

As no more victims were on the court list that morning, the rurale chief dismissed his men. Alone in his office, he leaned back in his chair, lazily watching the blue smoke of his cigarette curling up to the ceiling.

A long, sinister shadow fell across the doorway. A tall, lean, pock-marked man entered, walking with the stealthy grace of a leopard.

"You sent for me, colonel?" he asked silkily.

"I did indeed send for the Coyote." The black eyes bored across the desk at the new arrival—like twin gun-barrels. You are long in coming fellow."

"I was in Nogales, my Colonel," was the sphinx-like reply.

"In Nogales, eh?" The big man cocked an inquisitive eyebrow. "Up to your old smuggling tricks again?"

The Coyote permitted the vestige of a smile to flit across his dark features.

"Perhaps, my Colonel; but only into the United States—not into Mexico."

"It is well," grunted the other. "Now I have a little job for you. Lately, in San Rafael, lived an accursed American—a dorado. He is recovering from his wounds. With him there was also a girl. They have vanished. I want you to find them. I will send three of my men with you. If you capture the man, see that he gets the death bullet—shot while trying to escape. But the girl"—there was a threat in his words—"I want her brought to me—unharméd. You understand?"

"Perfectly, my Colonel." The man smiled impudently. "This girl—she is beautiful, I suppose, my Colonel?"

"Friend, I am never interested in women unless they are beautiful—very beautiful. I shall hold you responsible for her. If you please me in this—after I am tired of her—I may give her to you. She would fetch a good price in the secret slave market in Nogales."

"Thanks my Colonel." The man bowed slightly.

"You will leave at once," came the command.

The man turned on his heel and silently vanished through the doorway.

(Will the Vulture succeed? Don't miss next week's long instalment of this amazing story.)

# BONUS WEEK for "THRILLER" READERS!

**THE GREAT ARMAMENTS RACE**

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**G**O on collecting all the Armaments Stamps you can—it's well worth your while! There are still Five More "Hercules" Bikes and at least 2,000 of the other grand prizes to be given away in the July contest which will finish next week—for collecting the stamps "THRILLER" is giving. There are five different kinds to be collected now—BATTLESHIPS, TANKS DESTROYERS, and so on. Cut them out and try to get as many others as you can—all those you have collected so far (except Bombers, Submarines and Searchlights, which have been called in) should be kept for this month's contest.

There are twenty more stamps on this page, including **Four Bonus Tanks!** Add them to your collection right away, and remember there are more of these stamps to swell your total in other papers like "Detective Weekly" and "Sports Budget."

Hurry up and collect all the stamps you can, because next week we shall be asking you how many of one or more kinds of stamps you have collected. Then the remaining Five Bikes and at least 2,000 of the other prizes will be awarded to those readers with the biggest collections of stamps called for. The rules governing the contest have already appeared and will be repeated next week, too.

OVERSEAS READERS are in this great scheme also and special awards will be given for the best collections from overseas readers, for whom there will be a special closing date.

(N.B.—You can also collect or exchange Armaments Stamps with readers of—"Boy's Cinema," "Triumph," "Champion," "Magnet," "Gem," "Sports Budget," "Modern Boy" and "Detective Weekly." Stamps can be cut from all these papers, but no reader may win more than one first prize or share, of course.)

## 4 BONUS TANKS

 TANK	 DESTROYER	 DESTROYER	 TANK	 TANK
 ANTI-AIRCRAFT GUN	 BATTLESHIP	 TANK	 TANK	 TANK
 TANK	 BATTLESHIP	 HOWITZER	 TANK	 BATTLESHIP
 DESTROYER	 ANTI-AIRCRAFT GUN	 TANK	 BATTLESHIP	 TANK



soon. For a split second he failed to understand the reason for this very easy capture of the priceless cup.

When he did know, it was too late. The quick rush of feet gave him time to turn, but not to dodge. A blow landed with stunning impact on the back of Cranston's skull. The treasure box slid from his limp grasp. He pitched for-



The thunderous roar of the explosion filled the air like the vicious boom of a field gun. Someone had planned for Spud Wilson to die, and had succeeded. Only his quick wit saved the Shadow from sharing the same fate.