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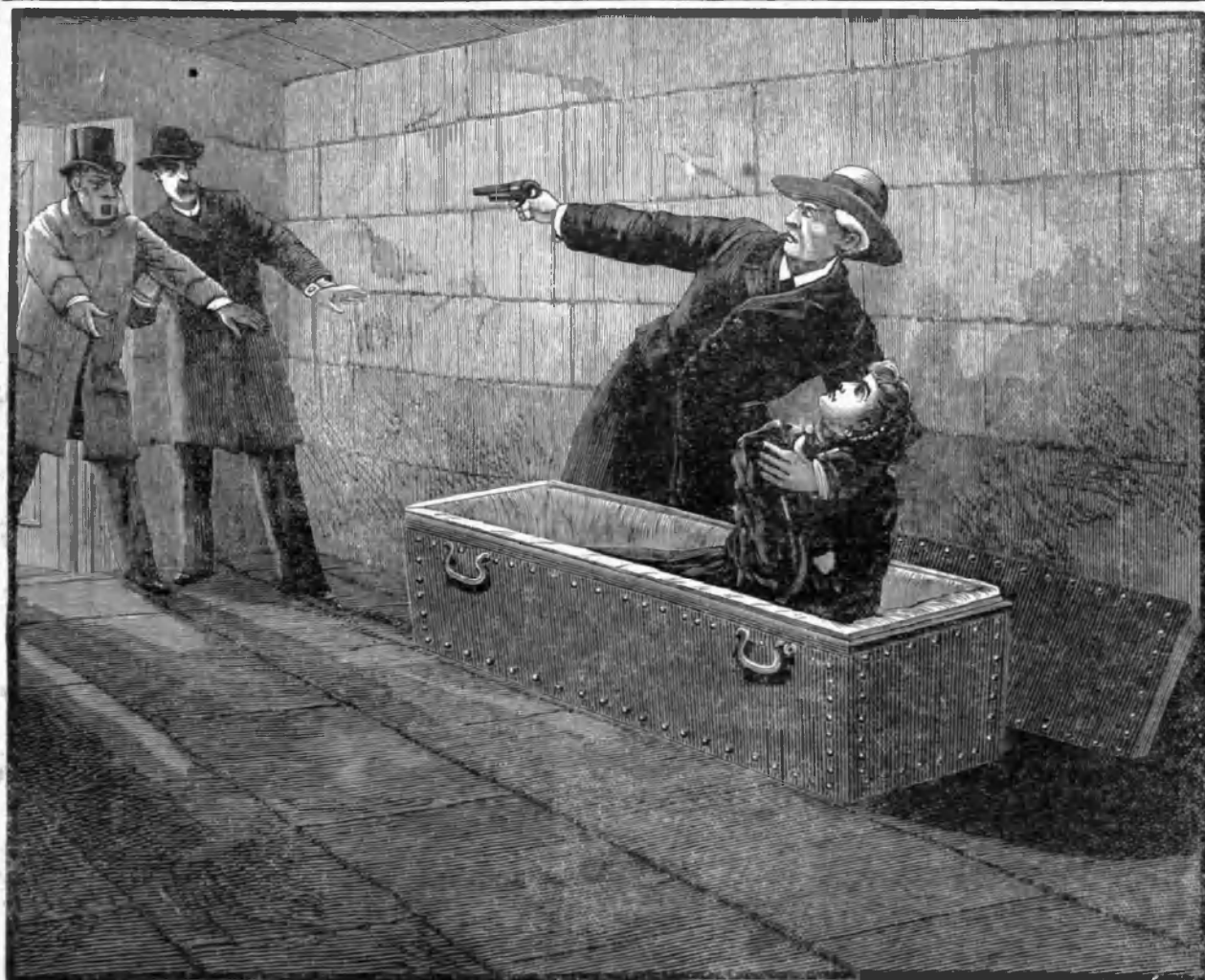
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OLD KING BRADY AND THE BLACK DOCTOR'S PLOT;

OR,

The True Story of the Great Buckaloo Bank Robbery.

By A NEW YORK DETECTIVE.



The sight which met their astonished gaze was the detective kneeling beside that coffin. He had partly raised the recumbent form and had one arm around her while the other grasped a cocked revolver. "Stand back! Let no one interfere!" he shouted. "I propose to save the life of this poor girl or perish in the attempt!" said Old King Brady.

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Old King Brady and the Black Doctor's Plot;

OR,

THE TRUE STORY OF THE GREAT BUGKALOO BANK ROBBERY.

By A. N. Y. DETECTIVE,

Author of "Old King Brady and the Green Diamond; or, The Mystery of a Millionaire," etc., etc.

CHAPTER I.

A MYSTERIOUS VISITOR.

"THERE is a veiled woman outside who wants to see you, Mr. Brady."

So announced Old King Brady's clerk, looking in upon the great detective.

It was late on a certain afternoon in the month of May, some years ago.

"Show her in," said Old King Brady, looking up from a letter he was writing.

"She won't come in, sir."

"Won't come in?"

"No."

"What name does she give?"

"She won't give any name."

"Tell her she must either give her name or her business. I don't see people in the hall."

And Old King Brady returned to his writing. It was not that the detective was disposed to be churlish.

There was danger in such peculiar people.

Many criminals during many years had been treated to their deserts by the energy of the old detective.

Many had sworn to be avenged either on their own account or the account of their friends.

Old King Brady did not like the idea of meeting veiled women in the hall of Police Headquarters on Mulberry street.

Attacks upon police officials had been made before by cranks and might be again.

And yet Old King Brady did meet this particular veiled woman five minutes later on.

"She says she must see you," said the clerk, returning a moment later.

"Tell her that she can see me here or nowhere," said the detective.

The clerk retired and returned, ushering in the veiled figure.

She was rather a small person.

Her dress was the deepest mourning.

Her face was wrapped in a thick black veil—a veil so thick that it was impossible to distinguish a feature.

The detective arose, bowed and motioned his visitor to a chair.

She shook her head.

Speaking in a low voice, strangely monotonous in its utterances, she said:

"I wish to see Old King Brady, the detective."

"I am the person."

"I wish to see you alone."

"We are alone, miss."

"Will you oblige me by closing the door?"

The detective closed the door.

He half expected to see a revolver suddenly appear from the somber folds of her garments. Nothing of the sort happened.

"Mr. Brady, I wish to give you information of a proposed bank burglary," she said, in that same constrained voice.

"A bank burglary?"

"Yes."

"Why not lay your information before the police in the regular way?"

"I am afraid of the police."

"Why so?"

"I am afraid they might detain me as a witness."

"I might have you detained as a witness."

"I have confidence that you will not."

"Why?"

"Because you have the reputation of being a fair man."

"I try to be."

"You are. You will listen to what I have to say?"

"Yes; proceed."

"To-night—or, rather, to-morrow morning, between the hours of two and three—the vault of a prominent Wall street banker will be burglarized."

"His name?"

"Stop a moment. I wish you to prevent this burglary."

"Well?"

"Will you do so?"

"If I can—yes."

"You can—you must."

"But how can I, if you will not tell me who the banker is?"

"You shall be informed, providing you agree to undertake the case."

"I agree."

"Then be at the corner of Fulton street and Broadway at two o'clock to-morrow morning. Can you do this?"

"Yes."

"And you will?"

"Yes."

"You will see a young man there who will guide you to the bank."

"Which corner?"

"By St. Paul's churchyard."

"How shall I know him? Describe his appearance."

"He will wear a black sack coat, double-breasted, and a brown derby."

"That description might apply to a dozen young men."

"He knows you. He will raise his right hand and touch the top of his hat in the center. Will that do?"

"That will do. And then?"

"Then he will give you full particulars and take you to the bank."

"Is that all?"

"Yes, all."

"But at least you will tell me your name?"

"No, I cannot. Open the door, please. I trust in you, Mr. Brady, to keep your word and thereby prevent this crime."

"But pardon me. Would it not be better to prevent the crime by giving the name of the banker, so that I might warn him of the plot?"

"No."

"Or of the burglars, so that I might head them off?"

"No. It can only be done in the way I have specified."

Now she turned to pass through the door, which the detective had opened.

As she did so, the full light of the descending sun struck upon the veil.

It penetrated its folds, and the sharp eyes of the detective caught a glimpse of her face.

It was a face not only young but very beautiful.

The detective bowed profoundly.

"Good-afternoon, miss," he said.

She shot a sharp glance toward him.

Did she know that he had seen her face?

Possibly—probably.

She left Old King Brady wondering after she had disappeared.

The sun, which had shown Old King Brady those veiled lines of beauty, sank out of sight in the usual way.

It is an old saying that nothing in this changeable world is certain but death and taxes.

Equally certain is sunset and that midnight will follow it.

Midnight came and passed.

So did the first hour of the morning.

At two o'clock Old King Brady walked down Broadway past old St. Paul's.

There was no one on the block in front of the church but a drunken man.

He was holding on to the ancient iron railing as though it was his best friend, wobbling to and fro.

Old King Brady glanced at him casually as he passed.

It struck the detective somehow that the drunken man was rather overdoing the business.

He wobbled too much entirely.

Looking back suddenly he saw that the fellow had stopped wobbling and had turned to look after him.

This, of course, confirmed the detective's suspicions that the man was not as drunk as he seemed.

He turned into Fulton street.

There was no young man in waiting by the churchyard fence.

And yet it was already two o'clock.

Old King Brady walked slowly down Fulton street alongside the iron fence as far as Church street.

Here he turned and started back again, but on the other side of the way.

All was very still for a part of New York which is scarcely ever entirely still, night or day.

Now the sky had become overcast, and a few drops of rain began to fall.

"There's going to be a storm sure," said Old King Brady to himself as he approached Broadway.

He began to wonder if some one had been playing a trick on him.

Still there was no sign of the young man with the brown derby.

When the detective looked around the corner of the fence, there was the drunken man still holding on to the rail.

Another turn to Church street and then back again.

Then he saw the young man with the brown derby—saw him all at once.

He was coming across Broadway, looking nervously up and down.

He knew him instantly.

Knew him from the resemblance of his face to that beautiful face behind the veil.

Old King Brady, who was half way down the block, hurried forward.

At the same instant he saw a man leap over the churchyard railing.

Even as he did so the drunken man came dashing around the corner.

No wobbling now.

The two men flung themselves upon the boy with the utmost fury.

"Help! Murder!"

Old King Brady heard the cry and ran for the corner at the top of his speed.

CHAPTER II.

BURGULARS IN THE BANK.

"HAVE they gone?"

"Yes."

"Thank Heaven! You are the detective?"

"Yes."

"Thank you too. You have saved my life."
 "I only wish I had been here in time to capture those who would have taken it."
 "No."
 "You speak positively."
 "I mean it. It would have interfered with our work to-night."
 "You will explain?"
 "At once. Come with me."
 "How'd on—how'd on! Not so fast, if you please!"
 A policeman had come suddenly up behind them.
 He was evidently a new arrival on the force.
 "I arrest yez both!" he declared.
 "Arrest us? What for?" demanded the astonished detective.
 "For disturbin' the pace. Wan of you holler bloody murder, and there's—"
 "Stop, officer!"
 The detective showed his silent.
 "Oh, murder! A detective!"
 "Yes."
 "Faith, an' I know ye now. The roundsman pointed you out the other day. Owid King Brady, is it?"
 "Yes."
 "This gent is a friend of yours?"
 "He is in my charge."
 "Enough said. I ax yer pardon. I—"
 "One moment, officer—just between ourselves, now—how came you to pounce suddenly down upon us? You were not in sight a moment ago."
 "A man towd me there was two tights on the corner a-hollerin' bloody murder."
 "There was another man with him?"
 "Yes."
 "One tall and the other shortish?"
 "Yes."
 Old King Brady glanced at his companion.
 "These are the fellows."
 "Evidently."
 "This gentleman was attacked by those men, officer. I saw it all; but where were you?"
 The officer grew nervous.
 "No matter. I will not press you. They sent you here?"
 "They did."
 "Which way did they go?"
 "Down Broadway."
 "Good-night, officer."
 "Sure, Mr. Brady—wan warrnd."
 "Say it."
 "Is there to be a report of this?"
 "No."
 "Thank you."
 "Good-night!"
 "Good-night!"
 Old King Brady locked arms with the young man and turned the corner.
 "Do we go down Broadway?" he asked.
 "Yes, to Wall street; hurry for Heaven sake." They walked as rapidly as possible.
 "Did you know those men?" the detective asked.
 "One of them."
 "Who was he?"
 "A wretch—no matter—I must speak as we go."
 "Proceed."
 "You met me because—because—"
 The young man gave a great gulp—he was sobbing.
 "Was it the thought of that beautiful face behind the black veil?"
 "You met me because you were requested to do so by a lady."
 "Yes."
 "You have done well. Mr. Buckaloo, the hanker, is the party. His vault will be broken open to-night."
 "Mr. Buckaloo was probably the best known private banker on Wall street at the time of which we write."
 "Buckaloo! You don't mean it!" exclaimed the detective.
 "Yes."
 "You are sure?"
 "So sure that I know all about it."
 "Probably you know Mr. Buckaloo?"
 "No."
 "But—"
 "But I can tell you to a penny how much money there is in his vault to-night."
 "How much?"
 "Over \$75,000."
 "A good haul if they get it," murmured the detective.
 "They won't get it if we are sharp."
 "What can we do?"
 "That I will show you. Don't take offense. I suppose you are not used to being dictated to by a boy like me."

"I am used to anything—everything."
 "We shall soon be there."
 "Very soon. Would it not be well for you to explain as we go along?"
 "I can tell you nothing."
 "Young man, I do not like the idea of going it blind. You must at least tell me the names of these burglars."
 "That I will do; but I don't think you know them."
 "Why?"
 "They are from Chicago."
 "Give their names, please."
 "They are known as Plug Moran, Prof. Fogarty and Big Schmitz."
 The names were strange to Old King Brady. Still, they had the true ring of the names of burglars.
 By this time they were on Wall street, and were nearing the old-fashioned building where, for nearly a century, the banking business of the well-known Buckaloo family had been carried on.
 Here another policeman challenged them.
 This man was known to Old King Brady.
 There was a momentary conversation, and the detective passed on.
 "Where do we go?" was asked.
 "In here."
 The young man pointed to the door of the next building below Buckaloo's bank.
 "Don't you think you are going to a pretty good length to expect me to enter that building with you at two o'clock in the morning when I don't even know your name?"
 "You never asked me my name, sir."
 "Will you tell it?"
 "I could so easily give you a false one—is it any use?"
 "But I feel convinced that you would not give me a false name."
 "Why?"
 "Because you would have given it before this and would never have made that statement."
 "My name is Ben Morris, Mr. Brady."
 "And I believe you when you say so."
 "It is my name."
 "Why do we go in here?"
 "Because by so doing I can put you in a position where you can look right in and see the burglars at work."
 "Do you think they are at work there now?"
 "I do."
 "You don't positively know?"
 "I cannot be sure, for I did not see them go in, but I have every reason to believe that they are there."
 "Lead on."
 It was raining hard now.
 Old King Brady looked around to see if they were observed.
 Usually it is the custom for burglars to have an outside man—a lookout.
 There was no such person visible.
 The detective could not even see the policeman who had spoken to them.
 Meanwhile, Ben Morris had produced a latch-key and opened the front door.
 This building, like the one occupied by Mr. Buckaloo, was one of the old-fashioned dwellings turned to business use which are now disappearing from Wall street so rapidly that in a few years not one will be left.
 On the main floor of this building were the offices of a prominent insurance company.
 There were other offices on the next story.
 Probably the janitor lived on the top floor, Old King Brady thought.
 But Ben Morris did not mention the janitor.
 He closed the door, and lighting a hall gas jet led the way to the other end.
 Here there was a wash room.
 In the wash room was a door which had thick slats of wood nailed across it.
 "Hal! I see," murmured the detective.
 "I thought you would. That door leads into Buckaloo's bank."
 "It does. Hark!"
 The detective listened.
 There was a dull sound steadily continued.
 To the detective's experienced ear it was unmistakably the sound of the drilling of iron.
 "They are at work," he whispered.
 "You hear?"
 "Yes."
 "You are satisfied now that I have been square with you?"
 "I am. What is to be done—open this door I suppose?"
 "That is why I brought you here. I can do no more; but I want to ask one favor of you?"
 "Which is?"
 "As sure as we are standing here, the three"

burglars, Plug Moran, Prof. Fogarty and Big Schmitz are at work in there."
 "I don't question it."
 "Under no circumstances shall I desert you, and I ask you to protect me from them."
 "Which I most certainly shall do."
 "Then I leave the rest to you. Take them if you can, for three bigger scoundrels never went unhung."
 "All right. It is rather a desperate undertaking for one man to tackle three. I suppose you can fight, however?"
 "Yes, and will until the last gasp."
 "How did these men get in? How do they expect to get out?"
 "They were admitted through the front door, which is now fastened on the inside."
 "Is there no watchman to this bank?"
 "The watchman died last night."
 "Sol! Well, you and I will have right on our side, and ought to be good for them. Put out that gas, or, rather, turn it down as low as possible. We might need a glimmer in case of a retreat."
 Ben Morris went back to do this.
 When he returned he found Old King Brady with a curious tool in his hand, engaged in drawing the nails from the boards.
 They came out noiselessly.
 Soon one board was removed.
 The other two followed.
 Then the detective produced skeleton keys and went to work on the rusty lock.
 "Are you armed?" he whispered.
 "No."
 "Take this revolver then, for I have another. You know how to use it?"
 "Certainly."
 "And are not afraid?"
 "Not a bit."
 "Does this door open directly into the bank?"
 "No—it opens into a closet similar to this."
 "Good! Just what we want. Now, then, here goes."
 He had been working the rusty lock back and forth gently.
 Now he applied more pressure.
 There was a slight snap and the door softly opened.
 Evidently these two houses had been joined by this door in years gone by.
 The detective shut off his lantern to a mere glimmer, at the same time holding his finger to his lips to observe silence.
 This was necessary.
 They could now hear the voices of the bank burglars distinctly.
 "Blame tough, this iron!" one said.
 "Go on—go on! You must be near through now."
 "Pretty near."
 "What time is it?"
 "Quarter to three."
 "And nothing of the boy yet. They must have done him up."
 "You bet! Leave them alone for that."
 "By time! I'd like to cut his heart out."
 "Hush! You are doing too much talking."
 "Yab, you don't vas vant to say nodings already," chimed in a third voice.
 This was Big Schmitz, the detective thought.
 He turned to look at his companion.
 The glimmer from the lantern showed him his face as pale as death.
 "Of course he heard," thought the detective; "of course he knows they are talking about him."
 But it was no part of Old King Brady's plan to stand idly listening.
 He wanted to see with whom he had to deal.
 He now produced a small gimlet, and gently—very gently bored a hole through the door.
 Immediately a stream of light shot in upon them.
 Old King Brady applied his eye to the hole.
 He could see the vault door plainly.
 There were three masked men standing in front of it.
 One was working a hand drill, boring in under the lock.
 Around the floor burglars' tools lay scattered.
 There was the powder can, the coil of fuse, the jimmy.
 The dark lantern was in the hands of the stoutest of the three.
 As all were masked the detective could not see their faces.
 He wondered if Ben Morris knew which was which, but it would have been decidedly unsafe to ask.
 Old King Brady tried the door.
 It was not only locked but nailed up on the other side.
 Here was a dilemma.

To open the door without noise was clearly an impossibility.

What was to be done?

Old King Brady drew his companion back into the other building and proceeded to explain.

"You did not know the door was nailed?" he asked.

"No, indeed! What is to be done?"

"I shall go for help. You must stay here."

"How long will you be gone?"

"Not many minutes—perhaps ten."

"How far along do you think they have got?"

"Why, from the way the drill went in I should think there was time enough. But I must be off. Be cautious. Above all things, make no noise."

And Old King Brady retreated by the way he had come.

After he had gone the boy for a moment or two remained motionless.

Was he listening to the boring sounds in the banking room beyond?

What were his thoughts?

Who can tell, since Old King Brady was now making all possible haste toward New street.

"I must see," he murmured, after a little.

"It is no use to stand here. There can be no harm in my taking a look."

He crept through into the other closet.

Applying his eye to the keyhole, he peered through.

"Great heavens! If the detective is going to do anything, he must be quick about it," he thought.

The drilling was over.

The man who had been doing the work had just taken the drill out.

"Gimme the powder, Dutch," he said to the fat man.

There was a good deal of talking in low tones. The powder and fuse were put in place in the hole, and the muffers were arranged to deaden the sound.

Would Old King Brady never come?

This boy was no fool.

He was in a desperate frame of mind evidently, but he displayed no disposition to do anything rash.

He hurried away now, and opening the first door of the other building peered out.

It was raining hard.

Not a soul was to be seen on the entire block. "He is too late, and that's all there is about it," murmured Ben Morris.

He returned to the closet.

Big Schmitz had just lighted the fuse.

Now the three masked men stood back and watched it.

They little dreamed that eager eyes were watching them.

Boom!

There was a muffled report.

The big door of the vault fell outward.

"Nana! Nana!"

A sharp cry rang out.

Ben Morris made the cry, which was echoed by the three masked burglars.

For as the vault door fell out something else fell out with it.

It was the form of a woman.

A woman in black, with a veiled face.

The woman who had called on Old King Brady earlier in the day.

Out of the vault the form came tumbling, and lay at full length at the feet of the astonished men.

Bang! Bang!

"Great heavens, what is that?" breathed the burglar who had drilled the hole.

It was some one pounding furiously on the closet door.

"Nana! Nana!"

All in a minute the door burst open and Ben Morris tumbled in.

"Burning blue blazes!" bawled one of the burglars. "It is the boy!"

"Nana! Nana!"

Ben Morris threw himself across the prostrate form.

CHAPTER III

THE BEGINNING OF A STRANGE CHASE.

"NANA! NANA! Speak to me, Nana! Look up! Say that you are not dead!"

"Burning blue blazes! Will no one choke that yawping pup?" breathed the long burglar.

"Boys, we've got to go to work here, or we're up Salt Creek, fer sure."

"Choke him yerself, Parson. Gosh blame it, I ain't a-doin' yer dirty job!"

"Vy yer don't vas hold ver plame jaw already yet?" muttered the fat burglar. "Too much

talk—no vork! Donner vetter! but dis is de vay to do!"

And Big Schmitz, the burglar, flung himself upon the boy, clutched him by the throat and choked him till he was black in the face, in spite of his struggles.

Then he thrust a dirty old handkerchief in his mouth and tied his hands behind him.

"Vork, vork, vork! Ged dot boodle!" Le hissed at the beginning of these operations.

"I'd schust like to puild a fire under you urd see if dot would start you up."

And the other two did work from that instant.

"Professor" Fogarty hastily examined the veiled woman.

"Dead, b'gosh!" he exclaimed.

"For Heaven's sake, professor, how came she there in the vault?" gasped the crib-cracker, who being the only one of the precious trio not yet identified, must, of necessity, have been Mr. Plug Moran.

"Dunno! There ain't no time to speculate on it neither. Where's the bag?"

"Here!"

A big canvas bag, such as sailors use to carry their clothes in, was hastily produced.

"Is dat boodle dere or has it been prigged already?" asked Big Schmitz, feelingly.

"It's here," said Prof. Fogarty.

He and Plug began tumbling bundles of bills into the bag.

"Hark!"

Plug paused and held up his hand.

"Some one coming through the other building. Come, boys!"

"And dis Ben boy?" asked Schmitz. "Vat about him?"

"Goes with us! Skip! I'll do the rest."

"Heavens, no!" breathed Prof. Fogarty, turning pale. "Not with the girl there!"

"Yes! She's dead. I dunno how she came here, and I don't care! I say yes! Skip!"

Prof. Fogarty seized the bag and made a bolt for the door.

Big Schmitz picked up poor Ben Morris as easily as though he had been a bundle of straw and followed.

Meanwhile Plug Moran struck a match and touched it to the fuse of something which looked very much like an iron tube.

Flinging down the match he leaped through the door in a hurry.

Now all this was but the work of a minute.

During that minute the noise which had attracted the attention of these worthies increased.

An instant later and faces appeared at the closet door.

Boom!

There was a flash, followed instantly by loud reports.

"Look out! Dynamite!"

The word was shouted loud enough to be heard across the street.

The next instant and the banking room was a hopeless wreck, with the carpet ablaze in a dozen places.

The flames were playing around that silent figure in black in a way awful to behold, when four men came bursting into the room.

The intruders were Old King Brady and three police officers—all that he could muster, and all too late.

"Stamp it out! Stamp it out!" cried the detective. "So much for delay! Gentlemen, we are a day behind the fair!"

But they had the flames out in a moment.

"What's this? A girl? Where's your boy?" demanded one of the officers.

"They've been through the safe already!" cried another.

"Heavens! It's a good job we weren't in a minute sooner, or we'd have been blown to kingdom come," exclaimed the third.

"She is dead—dead! I'm off. Look to things here, gentlemen. The scoundrels who did the job went this way."

Thus exclaiming, Old King Brady bolted through the door, which but a moment before had been opened to admit the forms of Plug Moran, Prof. Fogarty, Big Schmitz and their respective burdens.

Old King Brady felt deeply chagrined.

That he had made a fatal blunder in leaving the premises was evident.

Where was Ben Morris?

How did it happen that the boy had changed into the veiled woman who had come to him with the warning of this plot—that the veiled woman lay there dead amid the wreck?

All these were questions which Old King Brady could not answer.

He had caught a glimpse of a clew even as he bent over the body of the veiled woman in black.

It was an absurd clew.

Yet it was a very telling one.

A piece of a man's coat-tail had caught on the door and hung there.

Somehow a rip in the lining had caught on the knob.

The coat-tail was torn short off.

"That fellow was in a hurry," Old King Brady thought as he bolted through the door.

He remembered what Ben Morris had told him about the scuttle.

Therefore he felt certain which way to go.

With his lantern in one hand and his revolver in the other, he dashed up the stairs of the ancient structure.

It was only the matter of a moment before he was standing underneath the scuttle.

The scuttle was open.

The ladder had been removed.

The rain beat down upon the detective's head as he looked up.

"They can't be more than two or three minutes ahead of me," he reflected.

But how to get up to the roof?

The remedy suggested itself instantly to Old King Brady's fertile brain.

Out of his multitudinous pockets came a curious looking knife. With this he cut away the plaster as one would cut a cheese.

There was no trouble in climbing up now, for he had the laths to clutch and to rest his feet in everywhere the cuts were made.

In less than two minutes Old King Brady was on the roof.

There lay the ladder just as he had supposed.

There was, however, no trace of the burglars.

It was pouring now and nothing in the way of footprints could be expected to last a moment upon the tin.

A hasty survey gave Old King Brady the clew he wanted.

"Jauncey Court!" he muttered.

Now the boys of to-day do not know Jauncey Court, but their fathers do.

It ran in from the south side of Wall street, between Nassau and William streets.

Law office buildings, the upper floors of which were reached by outside iron steps and balconies, lined Jauncey Court.

And what was still more peculiar, there were passages leading through to William street and Exchange Place.

Taken all in all Jauncey Court was a very peculiar place.

Now behind the building in which Buckaloo's bank was located was an extension leading around into Jauncey Court.

This extension was connected with the main building by a narrow strip of roof not over ten feet in width.

Over this the detective hurried.

It was right here that he found another clew.

Or rather was it a piece of the same clew?

In other words, more of the coat-tail. A rag hanging and torn off no doubt.

"They went this way," murmured the detective.

He hurried to the front of the building.

Looking down over the cornice he saw a balcony just below him—say ten feet or more.

Looking further down into the court he saw something else.

There they were.

They were crouching under the iron steps of the building opposite.

Three men, a bag, and the boy, Ben.

"A traitor, by gracious!" murmured Old King Brady. "But—thunder! There they go!"

Even as he spoke the door under the steps was seen to open, and burglars, bag and boy, disappeared like a flash.

Old King Brady drew a long breath.

"Of course they must have a confederate in there," he muttered.

Flinging himself down upon the wet roof he dropped over on the balcony.

A moment later and he had descended the iron steps and was in Jauncey Court.

Here he examined the door under the steps.

It was fast.

The secret of the burglars choosing this way instead of the street was no secret to Old King Brady.

He knew that the little door communicated with the passage leading through to William street.

Old King Brady ran through the court to Wall street and hurried around to William.

Not an instant was lost.

He did not even speak to the policeman who had been left on guard before Buckaloo's bank.

In a moment he was in front of a well known dining saloon.

Beside the door of the dining saloon was another door.

This communicated with the passage leading from Jauncey Court.

Had the burglars gone through it?

Old King Brady wondered as he shook the door.

Just then he heard footsteps hurrying toward him.

An officer was running up from old Delmonico's.

He stopped running as soon as he saw the detective.

He had been long on this beat and knew Old King Brady perfectly well.

"Mr. Brady! Is it you?"

"Yes, yes!"

"I thought it was a burglar."

"Burglars are what I am after! Three men, a boy and a bag!"

"Heavens! You don't say!"

"You saw them?"

"Yes."

"Which way did they go?"

"Went around the corner of Stone street not two minutes ago."

"For Heaven's sake why didn't you stop them?" exclaimed the detective.

He started down the street at full speed as he spoke, the officer running with him.

"Stop them! Why, I never dreamed that they were anything more than a parcel of drunken sailors."

"They've just committed a murder, I believe."

"Heavens! You don't say!"

"Yes."

"I'm a fool!"

"And blown up the vault of Buckaloo's bank."

"I'm an ass!"

"And came out of the passage from Jauncey Court."

"Oh, I'm an idiot—a perfect idiot! There's no doubt of that."

"I suppose you ought to know."

"Here we are, Mr. Brady. They went that way."

"Through to Broad street, you think?"

"I can't tell. They may have cut across to Pearl street by the alley."

"I'll take the alley. You run around by Broad street."

"Good! I'll do it."

They ran on.

"I'd bet you a sixpence they've made for Buck's," said the policeman just before they came to the alley.

"Where is Buck's?"

"Don't you know Buck's?"

"I'm not as well acquainted down here as I might be."

"Corner of Front street."

"Side door?"

"Yes."

"An all nighter?"

"Hain't closed in twenty years. Key lost before I came on the force."

"To Buck's it is. You can come there if you see nothing of 'em!"

Old King Brady wheeled around into the alley while the policeman kept on toward Broad street.

As the detective bounded into Pearl street, a mass of rags rose up before him.

They were living rags.

They enveloped what had once been a woman. Around her head an old stocking was tied.

Beside her on the walk a basket filled with rotten apples stood.

Old King Brady at a glance recognized the once notorious "Mary Gobadly," or "Apple Mary"—she went by both names—who for years and years was a prominent figure in the lower wards of New York.

"Mary, is it you?"

"Arrah! Bad luck to yez, yis. Is there no chance for an honest woman to git a bit of a snooze?"

"Do you sleep on the step in the rain?"

"Yis."

"Why don't you go home?"

"Home! Ha, ha, ha!"

"They say you own a row of brown-stone houses up-town, Mary."

"Do they, darlint? Do they? Oh, be gollys, and I wish them as says it would give me the keys, so I do!"

"Mary, who disturbed you last? Three men, a boy and a bag?"

"The very wans—partickerly the bag."

"Ah, you guessed!"

"They've cracked a crib, darlint. Oh, I know—I know! An' I know you, too, this munny a year. Thank you! God bless you! They wint

to Buck's, Misther Brady, for they woke me up to ax the way, so they did."

The dollar bill slipped into Mary's hand had done its work.

"Strangers in the city!" muttered the detective. "Mary, did the boy go willingly?"

"No; they had him tied."

"Good-night!"

But Mary Gobadly had already lost her interest in the matter.

The bundle of rags dropped back beside the basket of rotten apples.

Many and many is the night in years gone by have we seen old Mary sitting thus.

No one ever disturbed her.

Old King Brady did not disturb her now, but ran on down Coenties Slip.

As he neared Water street he slackened his pace.

There was not so much hurry now.

The burglars once in Buck's were likely to remain there for awhile at least.

In a moment Old King Brady stood before this once noted resort for longshoremen.

There was the faintest glimmer of light behind the drawn curtains.

Old King Brady pressed his ear against the door and listened.

Yes, and there were people inside. He could hear them talking. He could hear glasses clink on the bar.

"I must go in there," murmured the detective. Instead of doing so, he slipped across the street.

It was before the days of the little park. Coenties Slip came up there and was filled with canal boats and tugs.

Dropping behind a truck, Old King Brady made a hasty change of toilette.

In less than two minutes he was transformed into a regular longshoreman, so far as appearance went.

And his wonderful pockets supplied materials for it all.

"There, that will do, I think," he muttered. "Now then, I'll tackle Buck's."

He started, but he did not go. Suddenly some one under the truck grasped his legs and pulled.

It was all done in an instant. Crash!

Old King Brady was sprawling on his back before he knew it.

His head struck the string-piece of the slip with cruel force.

After that Old King Brady never moved.

"Is he dead?"

"Reckon he is."

"Blame good job, too!"

"Lucky he came here to change his clothes."

"You fellers don't vas know how good schob it vas already yet. Ven I uteder keep dot lager pier saloon py der Powery, I knowed dis man, und I tell you he's a bad one."

"Shut up, Dutch! You're always chinning. Burning blue blazes! It's a lucky thing we didn't go into Buck's."

And Prof. Fogarty wiped a series of crumbs off his mustache, which was long, red and flowing.

"I wisht to goodness the tug would come," he plaintively remarked.

Then out from under the truck came Mr. Plug Moran.

"We'd better see whether he's dead or not," he whispered. "You can't sometimes most always tell about thim detectives."

Then Plug Moran proceeded to make a thorough examination of Old King Brady's person from head to foot.

"Come out here, young feller!" he whispered at last.

"Yes, go out there when the gentleman calls you. What the burning blue blazes are you hanging back for?" growled Prof. Fogarty.

It was the boy Ben Morris who was dragged and pushed out from under the truck.

"Take out the gag," said Plug.

The professor removed the gag.

"Shoot him down, Schmitz, if he squeals," said Plug. "Now then, bub, do you know him?"

"Y'es."

Ben gulped out the word almost like a sob.

"This is the man?"

"Yes."

"I thought so."

"By the burning blue blazes and so did I!" exclaimed Prof. Fogarty.

"Dry up, profess—dry up! If you don't hold that long tongue of your'n I'll smash you in the snoot! Now then, boy, once more."

"What?"

"Why did you do it?"

"I'll never tell you!"

"How came that girl in the vault?"

"I don't know."

"Sure?"

"I tell you I don't know."

"I don't believe you do."

"By the burning blue blazes, of course he don't!" put in Prof. Fogarty. "Anny fool could see—"

"Ven I kept dot lager pier saloon py de Powery, in sixty-tree—"

"Schmitz—Profess! Shut up, will yer? Let me talk to the boy! Blast it all! Now it's too late, for here comes the tug."

"Vell, vat's de madder mit talking all de vay down?" growled Schmitz. "Ven I run de lager pier saloon on de Powery in sixty-tree, dere vas a feller vot talked to anoder feller all inside already, and de oder feller died in de mornung—by gosh, Irish, I'll pay you off for dot."

For Prof. Fogarty, weary of the "peer saloon by de Powery in sixty-tree," had brought his fist down in sudden and violent contact with Big Schmitz's hat.

As a result, the hat, too big for its wearer before, now dropped easily and naturally over his eyes, obliterating his blooming countenance completely.

At the same time a tug came steaming up the slip.

Too—hoo! too—hoo! too—hoo—hoo! The whistles were from the tug.

They were low, yet sharp and peculiar. Putting his fingers into his mouth, Mr. Plug Moran whistled in a similar manner.

Too—hoo! too—hoo! too—hoo—hoo! "Shall we take the detective along?" asked Prof. Fogarty.

"Vell, I guess not mooch, Irish!" breathed Schmitz. "Vat you want mit him? To sell him to de bone boiler for a ten shillin'—huh?"

"Leave him where he is. I don't know whether he is dead or not, and I don't care a blame," whispered Plug Moran. "Come on, boys. We're off."

The tug had stopped outside of two canal boats.

Clutching Ben Morris' arm, Mr. Plug Moran jumped down upon the canal boat with the pleasing assurance that he would carve the liver out of him if he dared to croak.

Big Schmitz, having rescued himself from his own hat, followed with the bag.

Prof. Fogarty brought up the rear. They crossed the canallers in safety, and might have been seen climbing aboard the tug if any one happened to be watching from the truck.

Was Old King Brady watching them from the truck?

CHAPTER IV.

ON THE TRAIL OF THE TUG.

"Boss! Boss! Boss!"

This was what Old King Brady heard first when consciousness began to creep back.

Some one was shaking his shoulder. He straightened up, feeling as weak and dizzy as possible.

Mary Gobadly bent over him. Her basket of rotten apples rested upon the truck.

"Mary, is it you?"

"Tain't no one else. Sure, what happened ye?"

"I—I hardly know."

"And I hardly knowed you. You've changed your rig."

"Yes. Your eyes are sharp to know me at all."

"Ar-r-r-eh, an' who says I'm a fule? Hev I walked the strates of New York night an' day this twenty years w'dout gettin' me eye-teeth cut? Go along wid yez. I knowed ye fast shot, and I know what happened ye too."

"What—what was it?"

"Them crooks was under the truck, faith. They pulled you down."

"Ah!"

"Y'es, I seen them."

"The same men I inquired for?"

"The very same."

Old King Brady gave an exclamation of deep disgust.

"And which way did they go?"

"They went aboard a tug what too-hooed for 'em up the slip."

"And the bag and the boy were with them?"

"Faith, and they wor. Will I go over an' git yer a drink? Or can you walk over yourself?"

"I don't think I want anything, Mary. I'll come out all right, I guess."

He staggered to his feet. Though very far from being all right, the detective was still able to stand.

He felt deeply chagrined. It seemed as though one blunder after another was destined to be his lot that night.

"How long are they gone, Mary?" he asked.

"About five minutes."

"Which way did they go?"

"Down."

"Good-night again, Mary! Take this. Go inside somewhere. Don't stay out in the rain on a night like this."

She was profuse in her thanks, this poor creature, for it was a five dollar bill that Old King Brady slipped into her hands this time.

The detective hurried down the slip as fast as his enfeebled condition would let him. He knew just where he was going.

Down below the old flour wharves there were tugs lying up, ready for hire, night or day.

It was less than five minutes after he left Mary Gobaddy when Old King Brady went on board one of these tugs.

A man came tumbling out of the cabin at the sound of his step.

"I want your tug!" gasped the detective, all out of breath.

"All right, boss. Where to?"

"I am a police detective."

"The deuce you are!"

"I want you to follow a certain tug, which went out of this slip a few minutes ago."

"Well, I guess the skipper'll do it for you, always providin' you'll pay in advance."

"That's all right."

"Shall I call him?"

"Yea."

The man opened a door.

"Cap'n Jake—Cap'n Jake!" he roared.

"Go 'way—go 'way, gol blame yer, an' leave me alone!"

Such was the sleepy response from behind the door.

"Come, tumble up, Cap'n Jake—tumble up! There's a job!" roared the man.

In a moment a sleepy-looking individual, with one eye and a fiery red head, looked out from behind the door.

"How long will it take you to get steam up?" asked the detective.

"She's up now. Orter be, I go down the bay at four o'clock."

"It's pretty near that now. I want you."

"Well?"

"I'm a police detective. I want you to chase a tug with some burglars aboard. She went out of the slip a few minutes ago."

"Well?"

"Will you do it?"

"For money—of course."

"How much?"

"Forty dollars if it ain't too far."

"Done! Start at once."

"No."

"Why not?"

"Cash."

"Ah, you want your money in advance?"

"Well, now, I rather guess yea."

"There it is providin' you can start in five minutes."

"Yea, and in three."

"Take it!"

"Shake up the engineer. Make ready!" roared Captain Jake. "Boss, just wait till I put my pants on and I'll be with you."

It was just four minutes when the tug went out of the slip.

The skipper—with his pants on—stood in the pilot-house and Old King Brady stood beside him.

There was a little backing and filling, but not much.

Soon they were in the river, and Old King Brady with the captain's night glass was looking about in every direction for the other tug.

"I think she must have gone down the bay," he said at last.

"Would you know her if you was to see her?"

"Unfortunately not."

"That's a bad job."

"Go to the right of Governor's Island first and we'll have a look."

"Suppose we get the wrong tug?"

"Suppose we get the right one? It is'n't likely there'll be very many tugs out at this early hour."

"Oh, you can't tell nothing at all about it."

"Go as I tell you, Captain Jake."

The captain gave his wheel a twist, and they soon rounded Castle William.

Well in the distance they could see a tug moving down the bay in the direction of the kills.

"That her?" asked Captain Jake.

"We will follow that one. We can't follow more than one at a time very well."

"Here, let me have the glass."

Captain Jake scanned the horizon. The view was by no means an extensive one, as it was still raining and very dark.

"There hain't no other cug in sight," he declared.

"Go on. Can you overtake her?"

"What! Tue Doctor do it? Well, now, I guess yea!"

"Is your tug named the Doctor?"

"Yea."

"Odd name for a boat. Never mind Doctor, that tug and you'll lose nothing by it."

"I'll overhaul her, boss; never you fear."

"And I, while you are overhauling her, will just lie down here and take a sleep, for the fact is I'm pretty well used up."

"Shall I wake you when we come up with her?"

"I wish you would."

It was thus arranged.

Old King Brady curled himself up on the seat and was asleep in a moment.

This was the great detective's medicine. Many is the blow on the head of which sleep has cured him.

When he awoke it seemed to him that no more than a minute had elapsed.

Captain Jake was shaking him vigorously.

"Hey! Hello, boss! Wake up, there!" he was shouting.

Old King Brady started up.

"What's the row, cap?"

"We're coming up with her."

"Good!"

"You had better take a look. She will pass Bergen Point light in a moment, and you won't have no better chance."

Old King Brady started up and seized the night glass which the captain handed him.

It was lighter now.

The rain had ceased, and the moon was struggling to escape from a mass of enveloping clouds.

As for the detective's feelings he would never have known that any accidents had happened.

When he took the night glass he felt as well as ever in his life.

There was the tug forging ahead.

So was the Doctor.

They were evidently gaining.

Old King Brady fixed the night glass upon the tug and took what Captain Jake styled a squint.

It was not easy to see anything.

In a moment the tug turned Bergen Point and came abreast of the light.

There were several men on the tug, but beyond this the detective could determine nothing.

"They are heading for Newark Bay," he said.

"Yea."

"We must get through the draw when they do, or we lose them."

"Just so; but looker here, boss."

"What is it?"

"Suppose we overtake them, what are we going to do?"

Now of course Old King Brady had thought of this.

What could they do?

Of course he could not attack the tug single-handed.

To expect Captain Jake and his crew to join in a fight was to expect the impossible.

"We won't overhaul them," said the detective, quietly. "We'll follow."

"And suppose they land?"

"When they land I want to land, too."

"Good enough! Hello! There they go!"

The tug had blown the whistle for the draw of the Long Bridge to open.

But it happened that the draw was just then opening for another tug.

Thus, when the burglars' tug reached it, the draw was wide open, and the tug shot right through.

"Bad luck to them! They'll get the bulge on us if we are shut off!" exclaimed Captain Jake.

He blew his whistle furiously.

It was no use.

Precisely what Captain Jake had feared happened.

The limit for the draw to be open had already been passed.

There was a freight train on the track waiting for a chance to cross.

"That settles us," said Old King Brady.

He sat down upon the leather-cushioned seat in despair.

"Never mind," said Captain Jake, consolingly. "Perhaps I can fix it, after all."

"How?"

"More steam. The old blier kin stand it, I guess. Here, take the wheel, and I'll go down

and see. Hold her so—keep your eye fixed on that there light on the bridge."

But Old King Brady had steered tugs before. There are few situations into which the old detective has not been thrown.

He had no difficulty in mastering this.

When Captain Jake returned Old King Brady had just given the bell to stop.

They had arrived at the draw, and there was now nothing for it but to wait until it opened again.

It was fully ten minutes before they were able to pass through.

Old King Brady strained his eyes to see the tug.

Unfortunately there were two tugs.

Both were at a considerable distance in advance.

One was heading for Newark.

The other was going up the bay.

"Bad luck take it!" cried Captain Jake; "now which is which?"

Old King Brady seized the night glass and did his best to determine.

But there was nothing definite to go by.

He looked first at one and then the other, deciding in favor of the Newark tug at last.

"We have got to decide one way or the other, cap," he said. "We'll take that one. Let her go for all she's worth."

The captain gave the bell a pull and away they flew.

"Ah, if you'd only done that before!" sighed the detective.

"I may be overdoing it now. I'm bound to carry out my contract if I can, though."

"You fear the boiler?"

"Yea."

"Old?"

"Very old and patched."

The detective passed his cigar case to Captain Jake and then lit a weed himself.

Seating himself, he calmly awaited the result.

"We are gaining," reported Captain Jake after five minutes.

"We are decidedly gaining," he declared after ten.

And the decided gain continued.

They began to approach Newark and were surely overhauling the tug.

Old King Brady was on his feet now and watching the result.

Nearer and nearer they drew, but the detective's spirits did not rise.

What troubled him was to see that while they were making every effort to overtake the tug, there was no effort whatever on the part of the pursued to keep out of the way.

"I'm afraid we have made the fatal mistake," said the detective, at last.

"I'm afraid so, too; but we'll soon know," was the reply of Captain Jake.

Ten minutes more elapsed.

They were within hailing distance now.

Captain Jake gave a shout which might have been heard half the length of Newark Bay.

"Tug ahoy! Ahoy! n—h—o—y!"

"Ahoy there!" came the answer.

"Who—are—you?"

"The Solomon Jones of Newark!"

"Bad!" muttered Old King Brady. "Ask them to leave to."

"Heave—to! We—want—to—speak—to—you!" bawled Captain Jake.

Immediately the screw of the Solomon Jones ceased to grind.

"That settles it," muttered the detective.

"Yea."

"We've got the wrong tug."

"Sure."

"Too bad."

"Boss, I done my best."

"You did, indeed. I haven't a word of fault to find."

No more was said until they reached the tug. It was a disappointing ending of the trail.

But was it the end?

Old King Brady thought so then.

"What you fellers want?" roared the skipper of the Jones.

Old King Brady thrust his head out of the pilot-house window.

"Cap, there was a tug ahead of you when you went through the draw?"

"Yea, there was."

"Did you notice who was on it?"

"Yea, I did."

"Could you tell me what they looked like?"

"Yea, I could."

"Blame the man," muttered Captain Jake; "he's like a boss what puts his feet down in the same place where he takes them up an' never gits nowhere. Blame me if he hain't."

"Do it if you please," called the detective, very politely.

He was more used to dealing with such people than Captain Jake.

"Waal, one wuz tall."

Here the captain of the Jones paused.

It was an unusual effort, apparently.

Perhaps he paused for breath.

"Yes, yes!"

"An' 't'other wuz short."

"And the other?"

"Waal, the other wuz fat—them's the passengers, boss. I hain't a-sayin' nothin' about the deck-hands—see?"

"I understand. Go on."

"Waal, there wuz another."

"Yes."

"An' he wuzn't nawthin' more'n a boy."

"Yes—yes! How came you to notice them so closely? Were they all on deck?"

"Boss, they were."

"But even so, I see by your manner that you've got something else to tell."

"Boss, I hev."

"Oh, great snakes and little scorpions!" fumed Captain Jake, in an undertone. "Wouldn't I like to fling my boot at that fellow's head."

"Patience—patience!" murmured the detective.

"Well, my friend, let us have it," he said, quietly.

"Be you the detective?"

"Yes."

"I thought so."

"I am."

"I knowed it."

"Friend, we are in a big hurry. Would you please tell me what you have to say?"

"Yaas."

"Well?"

"He sez to me, he sez—"

"Who says?"

"The long feller."

"Go on."

"He sez to me, he sez, 'boss, there's a detective after me, nebba in that there tug what didn't get through the draw,' he sez, 'an' if they ax you if you seen us, don't you tell,' he sez, 'an' do a big favor to an honest working man.'"

"Yes, ye!"

"Waal, I didn't say ay, yes nor no, boss."

"Did you see the name of the tug?"

"Yaas," drawled the skipper.

Poor Captain Jake could stand it no longer. "Gol bust you, I wish some one would build a fire underneath you!" he shouted.

"What's the matter with that feller? Is he looney, or hez he got a fit?" drawled he of the Jones.

"Go on, friend—go on—the name of the tug?" demanded the detective, doing his best to keep his patience.

"Waal, 'twas the War Eagle."

"And what is it that you want to tell me?"

"Waal, it's jest this, boss. I don't know them fellers, an' I don't want'er."

"No, of course not."

"So I sez to myself, sez I, looker hyar, you go on about yer business, an' if yer overhauled you tell, and give up the letter. If you hain't overhauled, give up the letter. Let her go so."

"Letter—what letter?"

"The letter the long feller gimme to mail."

"Oh, he gave you a letter, did he?"

"Yaas, an' I'm a-goin' to give it to you."

"Come! There's something tangible in that," muttered the detective. "Let's have the letter, friend."

Very slowly and with great deliberation the skipper of the Jones produced a letter.

"He axed me to mail it in Newark," he drawled, "but I ain't a-mixin' myself up in another man's business, not if I know it."

The letter was handed to the deck-hand on the Doctor.

The deck-hand passed it up to Old King Brady.

"Is that all you've got to say, neighbor?" asked Captain Jake, with an air of grim determination.

"That's all."

"Then let me say that of all the slow, con-sarned double-back action, tarnal lints, you'se the worst. By gnm, ye! The very worst!"

"What's—ther—matter?" drawled the skipper. "Hev you ran looney again?"

Then at each other the two skippers of the two tugs went hammer and tongs.

The air was fairly blue with their imprecations.

Old King Brady meanwhile tore open the letter and read it.

It was addressed to "Mrs. Q. Beezee, 892 Bedford street, New York City."

Its contents were as follows:

"MOTHER BEEZEE—The girl is dead. We've got the boy. You kill the baby and the boodle's ours. Yours in hopes, Professor."

"Stop that noise and take me back to New York!" roared Old King Brady.

He knew now that he had not followed up the trail of the tug in vain.

CHAPTER V.

MOTHER BEEZEE.

"ANYTHING NEW?"

"No."

"Did you find out how much money had been taken?"

"Yes."

"How much?"

"Over eighty thousand dollars."

"A big haul."

"Yes."

"Who was telling you?"

"Buckaloo."

"Does he feel cut up by it?"

"Not at all."

"What did he say?"

"Said that he'd give that much more to know how the girl came to be in the vault."

"What?"

Old King Brady drew a long breath.

The suggestion that the girl had been concealed in the vault was something new to him.

It was morning.

Back in New York now and none the worse for his midnight adventures, Old King Brady, after getting his breakfast, had come around to Buckaloo's bank.

It was too early for the bank to be open, but just inside the door the detective met one of the policemen who came in at his call the night before.

Of course there was questioning and cross-questioning.

Now came this statement which made the old detective open his eyes.

"What makes you think the woman was in the vault?" he demanded.

"We found a piece of her dress there for one thing."

"That ain't proof enough."

"Well, we found her shoe there for another."

"Nor that either."

"Well, she wasn't dead. She revived in the ambulance an' told the doctor that she was in the vault."

"Blast this fellow! He's as slow as the captain of the Solomon Jones," thought Old King Brady.

"Is she still alive?" he asked, eagerly.

"No. She died in the Chambers Street Hospital."

"Say anything before she died?"

"Well, if she did, I don't know it. That's all I heard."

There was clearly no use hanging around Buckaloo's bank any longer.

It is true that Old King Brady meant to have an interview with Mr. Buckaloo, but that, he decided, should be later.

He left the bank, and proceeding to the nearest drug store, applied himself to the telephone, calling up his own office.

"Has the man been sent to look after the tug?" he called.

Of course the answer was not audible.

Then followed a one-sided conversation.

"War Eagle!"

"Newark Bay! Yes! Get that! Newark Bay!"

"What's that? He'll start in half an hour! He ought to have started before."

"All right. Let him find the owner and arrest the skipper. Good-bye."

Having finished this Old King Brady walked around to the Chambers Street Hospital.

"I want to see the doctor who knows about the young woman brought in from Buckaloo's bank early this morning," he said.

"Dr. Brown," replied the clerk.

"Where can I find him?"

"Up-stairs in the casual ward"

To the casual ward the detective went and found Dr. Brown.

"My name is Brady. I want to speak with you a moment, doctor."

"Old King Brady, the detective?"

"Yes, sir."

"About what did you wish to ask?"

"The young lady brought in from Buckaloo's bank last night."

"Ah, yes. Poor thing!"

"She is dead."

"Yes. Died soon after."

"Was she much disfigured?"

"Not at all, excepting a slight cut about the

face. Strange, too, when there was a dynamite explosion in the bank, they say."

"Were you the party who brought her in?"

"Oh, no. I'm in charge of the ward."

"Who did?"

"Dr. Greenough."

"Can I see Dr. Greenough?"

Dr. Greenough was called in from another room.

He started slightly as he saw the detective. He was a young man with tow-colored hair and fishy eyes.

He responded to the detective's first questions satisfactorily enough.

They related to the call and the receiving of the dead girl.

Dr. Greenough's answers were slow to come, and brief when they came.

It was the case of the tug captain still again, but with the difference that Dr. Greenough was well educated and very shrewd.

"And you thought this lady was dead when you received her into your ambulance?" asked the detective as the conversation continued.

"Yes, sir."

"Did you examine her in the bank?"

"Yes, sir."

"No signs of life then?"

"No, sir."

"When did she revive?"

"It was somewhere about Broadway and Vesey street that I first heard her moan."

"And then?"

"Then I administered the usual remedies and she revived."

"What did she say?"

"She seemed dazed; she kept muttering: 'Oh, that safe! That dreadful safe!'"

"By which you assumed she had been locked up in the bank vault before it was blown open?"

"Not at all. She told me it was so."

"Did she say anything else?"

"Yes; she was crying out about her brother."

"Anything else?"

"She made some indistinct allusion to a baby."

"What did she say about her brother?"

"She kept calling him."

"The name?"

"Ben."

"I beg your pardon, doctor, but if you could just give a connected statement of what she said—"

"Well, that is about all."

"And she died in the hospital after you took her from the ambulance?"

"No, she died in the ambulance."

"But I understood to the contrary."

"It is a mistake, whoever told you."

"She did not give her name?"

"No."

"You asked her?"

"Yes."

"What did she say?"

"Her mind did not seem to be clear at any time. She made no definite answer."

"What were the circumstances of her death?"

"She was silent for a few moments. Before that she had been muttering. When I came to look I found she was gone."

"Was there nothing found upon her to indicate who she was?"

"I could not say. As soon as she was brought into the hospital I turned her over to Dr. Brown."

"No, there was nothing," said Dr. Brown. "I made the search myself. Nothing was found."

"Can I see the body?"

"See the body! Why, they took the body away, Mr. Brady."

"Come," thought the detective; "my friend of the Solomon Jones ain't in it alongside these two doctors."

"Who took the body away?" he asked aloud.

"There was a woman called and claimed it."

"Her name?"

"She gave the name of Beezee."

"When?"

"Early this morning."

"But the coroner?"

"The coroner happened to look in a few moments before she appeared. They had some talk together, and he signed a permit for her to take the body."

"Strange and very unusual."

"So it struck me at the time."

"Did the Beezee woman give no name to the girl?"

"She said she was her boarder and that she didn't know her name."

"Stranger still. What address did this woman give?"

"Some number in Eighth street; you'll find it on the books down-stairs."
 "What coroner was it?"
 "Dr. Sweeney."
 "Humph! I know him. And this is all?"
 "All I know," said Dr. Brown, hesitatingly. Matters were becoming highly interesting. It struck Old King Brady that Dr. Brown was keeping something back.
 He looked around for Dr. Greenough. But Dr. Greenough had taken himself off. Dr. Brown looked around nervously.
 Old King Brady, watching him, suddenly seized the man by both coat lapels and confidentially said:
 "Now come, doctor, you know you haven't told me all."
 "Mr. Brady, I—I—"
 "Not a word, doctor."
 "But I—"
 "You're a man of family?"
 "I am. Three small children and a salary so small as to be ridiculous."
 "Enough said. You shall not be dragged into the case if it is possible to avoid it."
 "She gave the coroner money. I saw her slip it into his hand," whispered Dr. Brown, with a nervous look around.
 "And before that he was—"
 "Very rough with her. Afterward he signed the permit. It's a shame, Mr. Brady."
 "Indeed, it is."
 "Sweeney is a disgrace to the profession; but he's no doctor."
 "How so?"
 "Nothing but a Harlem drug clerk who was rushed through a Philadelphia college in order that he might be made coroner. That is all."
 "You don't think she told him anything?"
 "I'm very sure she didn't. The money was given so that she wouldn't have to."
 "Enough said. What made Dr. Greenough go off in such a hurry?"
 "I suppose he was through. Or perhaps he had a call."
 "I'd like to see him again for a moment before I leave," said the detective.
 But it was found upon investigation that Dr. Greenough had suddenly left the hospital without having had a call.
 "Why?"
 Old King Brady wondered as he walked up to Broadway.
 In the new developments of this strange case he began to recognize something more than the work of ordinary burglars.
 He recognized that mighty power in the great metropolis—the power more mighty than money—the political pull.
 Now everything resolved itself into one burning question:
 "Who was this mysterious Mrs. Beezee?"
 The detective went over on to Chatham street. Here in a stationery store he purchased an envelope and with great care copied the address and handwriting on the letter which he had received from the captain of the Solomon Jones.
 He sealed the letter then.
 "There! That will do," he murmured. "I'd like to see the face of Prof. Fogarty when he learns that his cautiously worded letter fell to Old King Brady to deliver. Ha, ha!"
 And the idea continued to amuse the detective until he entered a Fourth avenue car.
 He alighted at Eighth street.
 He was determined to try that address first. Not that he thought it was the true one. On the contrary, he felt sure that it was not, but he wanted to make sure of it before going to Ralford street.
 And he was right.
 The number in Eighth street proved to be an old private residence, transformed for business purposes.
 There was a lager beer saloon in the basement, a fur factory on the first floor, and a worker in fancy feathers up-stairs.
 Each of these parties was visited and questioned.
 It was certain that the mysterious Mrs. Beezee was not known in this house.
 Next Old King Brady went to Bedford street. Here in that curious neighborhood, the only part of New York where the streets are narrow and winding, he discovered that the number given in Prof. Fogarty's letter was attached to the door of an old fashioned house, which carried its air of mystery upon its face.
 It was one of those houses one sometimes meets with in New York's by streets which bears the appearance of having dropped out of another age.
 It was a three-story, red-painted brick house. The blinds were as intensely green as the

bricks were brilliantly red, and as tightly shut as the shell of the proverbial oyster.
 The whole appearance of the Bedford street domicile indicated a determination to give nothing away.
 Old King Brady took a survey of the house, walked on past it and entered the grocery on the corner.
 Here he expected to find a German, as usual, for he had not looked at the sign.
 If he had done so he would have seen that it bore the name Murphy.
 Once we knew of an Irish darkey who bore the name Patrick Murphy, but a German Murphy is a manifest impossibility.
 It was a little, dried-up specimen of the Emerald Isle who greeted the detective.
 "I'm looking for a Mrs. Beezee. Can you tell me where she lives?" the detective asked.
 "Sure I can," said Mr. Murphy, and he indicated the house.
 "Does she trade with you?"
 "She used to. How'd on. I know you, boss."
 "Yes?"
 "I know'd ye years ago when ye arristed Alderman McGroarty for counterfeiting—d'ye mind? He kipt the saloon an the corner of Cornelia street."
 "Oh, very well."
 "Luk at that now! An' it's twinty years ago if it's a day."
 "I guess you're right."
 "An' ar ye after Mother Beezee?" inquired the grocer, leaning over the counter confidentially.
 "I have business with her."
 "And I have none sure—not since she tuk her trade to ould sourcrot on the other corner, bad luck to him! I tell you, Mr. Brady, thim Dutchmen ought to be hunted out of New York, so they ought."
 "Why, it is generally supposed that the Dutch were the first owners of New York," laughed the detective.
 "Not at all. Whoever towld ye that towld a blamed lie. Sure everywan knows that the Irish diskivered New York in the tinth century before Columbus was born."
 "Just so! Just so. Bat about this Mrs. Beezee. Since you know me I'm going to ask a favor of you."
 "Anything at all to oblige."
 "Who is she and what is she?"
 "Now looket here; ye jist struck the right spot for the informaytion. I know her like a book."
 "What kind of a crib does she keep?"
 "Tell me an' I'll tell you; but there's many goes in an' few comes out."
 "Boarders?"
 "A-r-r-h! G'long wid ye! Boarders me eye!"
 "What then?"
 Mr. Murphy leaned farther over the counter and put his hand alongside his mouth.
 "Murderers more than boarders," he whispered.
 "What can you mean?"
 "Murderers! They come in carriages, too, some on 'em. Oh, I've seen 'em this many a year."
 "I wish you'd explain."
 "That's what I'm a-doin'. Sure, these murderin' women—"
 "Hold on! Is it a baby farm?"
 "You've hit it straight."
 "And it has been running a long while?"
 "Twinty years."
 "Then this Mrs. Beezee must be a woman of many secrets."
 "Saycrets! Saycrets, is it! Well, now, you're tarkin' straight!"
 "Thank you! Thank you!" said the detective.
 He managed to get away soon after that and walked straight up Mrs. Beezee's steps and rang the bell.
 A very singular looking person opened the door.
 She was a woman not over five feet high and almost as broad as she was long.
 She was old, wrinkled and hideous.
 Her face was as ugly as sin itself.
 "I have a letter here for Mrs. Q. Beezee," said Old King Brady. "I came from Prof. Fogarty."
 The woman eyed him narrowly, but did not hold out her hand for the letter.
 She seemed suspicious—afraid.
 And yet the detective felt that she could scarcely have recognized him.
 He was but little known in this neighborhood. In no part of New York do people live in such

quiet retirement as in this almost unknown region around the head of Bleeker street.
 Moreover, Old King Brady had disposed of the white hat before starting on this errand.
 "No. She don't know me, but she's afraid on general principles," he thought.
 "Here's the letter, ma'am, if you are Mrs. Beezee," he said, humbly.
 "I am Mrs. Beezee. When did you see Prof. Fogarty?"
 "Last night!"
 "Last night! You were in the—"
 She paused suddenly and glanced behind her in a frightened way.
 "Yes, I was in the bank when the professor and Plug Moran and Big Schmitz cracked the vault," whispered the detective, confidentially.
 "You needn't be afraid of me."
 Mother Beezee looked relieved.
 "Oh, you were?"
 "Yes."
 "How did it come out?"
 "Bang up! We got the boodle and gave the fly cops the slip."
 "They did?"
 "Yes."
 "Where—"
 "Where did they go?"
 "Yes."
 "Up Newark Bay, you know."
 "Come in," said Mother Beezee. "Give me the letter and come in. I never seen you before an' you took me by surprise. What's your name?"
 "Duffy. Friend of Prof. Fogarty."
 Mrs. Beezee tore open the letter and hastily read it.
 Her face turned deathly pale.
 "You know what this is about?" she stammered.
 "Oh, yes," replied the detective, easily. "He tells you that the girl is dead and the boy captured, and wants you to do up the kid."
 The last remnant of suspicion vanished from the woman's face.
 "Come in here," she said, flinging open a door.
 She ushered the detective into a dirty room where there was an unmade bed, clothes scattered about and the air very close and stuffy.
 "We've got to act quick or there'll be trouble," said Old King Brady. "First of all the girl must be buried, you know."
 "She's buried already."
 "Not! Is that so?"
 "Yes, I took her out of the hospital and we ran her right out to the cemetery of the Evergreens and buried her this morning. I've just got back."
 "Where did you bury her?"
 Mrs. Beezee gave the grave number in the public plot.
 "That settles her," said the detective.
 "Yes."
 "Now for the baby?"
 "Yes; we must attend to the baby. Just wait a minute. We'll talk it over."
 She left the room hastily.
 But in spite of his manifest success Old King Brady felt uneasy.
 He had succeeded too well.
 He felt as though something was about to happen.
 As he faced the dirty room his eyes chanced to rest upon a mirror which hung between the windows and consequently faced the inner door, through which Mother Beezee had disappeared.
 Twice in his walk he had glanced at this mirror, and it reflected nothing but the contents of the dirty room and the closed door.
 This was the third time, and now there suddenly appeared upon the mirror the shadow of a man.
 He was peering at the reflection of the detective's face through the door.
 It was only for an instant that the shadow remained visible, but before it vanished the detective knew what he had to expect.
 It was the face of Dr. Greenough, the young ambulance surgeon, who had taken the body of Old King Brady's veiled visitor from the Buckaloo bank.

CHAPTER VI.
 BEN AND THE COUNT.

Now the reader knows one very important point in connection with this important case that Old King Brady did not know.
 It was that the boy, Ben Morris, instead of being the traitor that the detective feared, was actually an unwilling prisoner in the hands of the burglars.
 Passing over the happenings of the time occu-

pied in the escape from the bank and the trip through the Kills, we take up Ben after the separation of the tugs.

Still a prisoner, Ben sat upon a coil of rope in the stern of the tug, watching the Solomon Jones as that tug sheered off in the direction of Newark.

Prof. Fogarty had just gone into the cabin, after handing the letter to the captain of the Jones.

Now he came out again, and after pacing up and down the narrow deck a few moments, addressed himself to Mr. Plug Moran, who was in the pilot-house with the steersman, straining his eyes back toward the long bridge.

"Is it shut still? I can't see, me eyesight is so blame poor," asked the professor.

"Yes," replied Plug; "the bridge is still shut."

"Has the train gone over?"

"It is just over."

"They'll be opening it again in a minute then?"

"They are opening it now."

"Blame good job for us that the train came along."

"Yes."

"Is she open?"

This a few moments later.

In the meantime Mr. Plug Moran had produced a night glass and was looking through it at the bridge.

"She's open."

"Are they coming through?"

"Yes, they are."

"It can't be the detective," muttered Prof. Fogarty, "and yet it might be. Burning blue blazes! I wish we'd cut his head off while we had a chance and checked it into the slip."

It was now some time since they first noticed the tug.

From the first it had given them uneasiness. They had discussed and rediscussed the chances of it being some one in pursuit of them, but even now they were not sure.

"Is she through? Is she through?" cried the professor, leaning over the stern rail until Ben began to think how easy it would be to give him one shove and send him into the water.

Plug Moran had left the pilot-house before this, and was now standing on top of the little cabin looking through the glass.

Big Schmitz had just appeared through the cabin door and joined Prof. Fogarty at the stern.

"Yes. She's through," said Plug, after a moment. "Now we'll know."

The professor and Big Schmitz held their breath.

"Wrong! We are all wrong! They weren't after us at all."

And Plug Moran shutting the night glass with a snap, began executing a jig on top of the cabin roof in the excess of his joy.

"Hey, hey! Stop that, blame you!" roared the captain of the War Eagle. "Do you want to bust in me roof. That there hain't made to dance on. If you want'er jig it, go ashore."

"Oncet I knowed a Irisher what jigged it four hours on a stretch, when I keeps dot leadle peer saloon by de Bowery in sixty-tree," drawled Big Schmitz, beginning on one of his interminable reminiscences.

But his story was cut short by Plug Moran suddenly leaping on his back from the roof, above.

"*Mein Gott in Himmel!*" groaned the German.

"Shut up! I feel as though I must do something!" roared Plug. "We've got it, profess! We've got it and no one after us. That tug has headed straight for Newark and wasn't after us at all."

He seized the hands of the astonished Fogarty and began jiggling it again.

"Oh! Aucht! Be gollys but you've ground me big toe to powder!" roared Prof. Fogarty, tearing himself away and limping about the deck. "Will ye believe yourself? Is it after going crazy you are?"

It was a ludicrous scene altogether. Even Ben had to laugh at it.

They had removed the gag some time before this, but the boy's hands were still tied.

Plug seemed to take pity on him when he heard him laugh.

"Say, if ye'll promise not to try to escape I'll untie your hands," he said.

"I'll promise."

"You must be tired of holdin' em so."

"I am."

Plug whipped out his knife and cut the cords. Meanwhile Prof. Fogarty had been standing, meditatively rubbing his slim jaw and looking down at Ben.

"Say, Plug, why wouldn't he do?" he asked.

"What's the matter with getting the count to-night?"

Plug Moran stared and then gave his big thigh a slap.

"Profess, your head is a great one!"

"He could get in. He's sharp, too. We might pick up a lad who would be a blamed sight worse."

"That's so. But would he do it?"

"Tell him the truth an' he'll do it."

"You wouldn't dare!" gasped Fogarty. "Think what the count would say."

All this had been spoken out right before Ben. Of course the boy listened curiously.

He suspected the truth already. What is more, Prof. Fogarty intended that he should.

"You can talk to him if you want to," said Plug. "Come on, Dutch, and give the profess a chance."

Ben sat still, with a face deathly white. His eyes were fixed on Prof. Fogarty.

The whole expression of his face showed that he was perfectly prepared for what was to come.

"Now, looker here, Benny," began Prof. Fogarty, with a whine, "you heard what was being said, of course?"

"Of course."

"What do you think of it?"

"I am thinking."

"There ain't no use of our quarreling."

"No, I don't care to quarrel."

"Because Nana is dead there's no use a-givin' up in despair—is there now, Benny?"

"No—no use," repeated the boy, in that same hard way.

"Say, Benny!"

"What is it?"

"How do you suppose Nana came to be there?"

"You asked me that before, Fogarty."

"I know I did, but you didn't answer."

"I told you I didn't know."

"But you do—you must!"

"I don't! If I did I wouldn't tell you."

"Oh, dear, but this is hard!" groaned Prof. Fogarty, sentimentally.

"Burning blue blazes, but it's very hard! Here's a boy what I've brung up from a kid on the fat of the land, with precious little of the lean mixed with it, so to speak, an' of all the ongratefulest, rantankerous—"

"Dry up! Drop all that and get to business, you long-winded snoozer!" bawled the voice of Plug Moran, from some mysterious concealment—possibly behind the cabin window.

Ben's lip curled.

"The usual spy business," he murmured.

"Burning blue blazes! How that scared me," cried Fogarty. "How I'd like to bust that snoozer in the snoot, an' I'll do it, too, some day."

Ben gave a contemptuous laugh.

"Go on! Go on! If you want me to rescue the count, say so."

"I do, Benny. I do."

"Ain't you afraid to trust me?"

"Benny, I am. Still, as Plug says, it seems to be the best way."

"Is everything arranged?"

"Well, no; not quite. It was to be next week. That's why I don't like it. Still we might make a go of it to-night."

"But how—how? I don't know anything about it."

"You know the count is on Snake Hill?"

"Yes."

"They've been repairing the penitentiary."

"Well?"

"There's a way of getting into his cell."

"He knows it?"

"No."

"Then how do you?"

"We was told by a feller who came out last week."

"Ah! and what is the way?"

"There's a new sewer running right under the count's cell."

"But the floor is paved with stone?"

"Ah, yes; but sure the stone has been all loosened, it's under the bunk, so it is. Easy raised, lad, easy raised!"

"And you want me to crawl through this sewer, raise the stone and help the count to escape?"

"That's it, lad! That's it. You're as sharp as iver I see."

"Professor, I'll do it."

"I knowed you wud. Sure an' there niver was an' niver will be a smarter lad nor you."

"You've got the same old blarney, Professor."

"The very same lad. The very same. The

Fogarty's niver change. Plug, d'ye hear that?"

"Go on with your work an' let me alone," called Plug from behind the window. "Young Ben, if you try to escape it'll be all day with you. I don't trust yer for a cent."

"That's all right," said Fogarty. "Now you'll jine us, won't you?"

"I ain't saying—I'll see about that. Has the count the slightest suspicion you are going to try a rescue?"

"No."

"Why didn't you warn him?"

"We tried, but we could find no one for the job."

"And having caught me you thought you might as well make me useful before you killed me?"

"An' we mightn't kill yer at all if you'd behave yerself."

"All right. I'll do the job. Now let me go to sleep."

Prof. Fogarty led him to a bunk amidships, and told him to turn in.

"I'll wake ye when we git there, Benny; trust me," he said, as Ben closed the door.

It was four o'clock when Prof. Fogarty tapped on the door.

The War Eagle was lying in the Hackensack among a thick clump of bushes which almost concealed her smoke-stack, and fully concealed every other part of her.

The situation was a horribly lonely one. Behind them trailed the muddy river.

On the right rose the crags of the old quarries on Snake Hill, while on the left marshes extended as far as the eye could reach.

Prof. Fogarty was right outside the door when Ben stepped out.

Plug Moran was there too.

So was Big Schmitz.

"You want to be almighty quick, boy," whispered Plug. "We've whistled for the bridge."

"Bridge? What bridge?" stammered Ben, who was not more than half awake yet.

"The railroad drawbridge across the Hackensack, stupid."

"What's that got to do with it?"

"Why, we can't stay here. Tain't allowed. They'll order us off."

"We're seen then?"

"Of course we are seen. We shall have to start the instant the bridge whistle blows."

"Am I to leave you here?"

"Yes."

"Well?"

"See that pole sticking up there?"

"Yes."

"That marks the entrance to the sewer—"

"And I'm to dive?"

"Yes."

"What then?"

"Go back up the sewer. Before you've gone far you'll come to a branch leading back under the prison. This is the new sewer. Tain't finished yet an' must be dry."

"Hurry up, for goodness sake," interrupted Fogarty, "or we'll have to start."

"Tell it yourself," growled Plug.

"Sure there's a white stone right under his cell."

"All right. And what's to be done?"

"We have it all to you, Benny. If you can't do it nobody can."

"And where am I to meet you?"

"At the old foundry. Now, Benny, be a good lad an' do yer best. Take this."

"And this," added Plug.

It was a dark lantern from Fogarty and a revolver from Plug.

"Too-hoo! Too-hoo!"

It was the whistle of the little stationary engine which was used to turn the drawbridge making all the noise.

"We'll have to make a start at once," called down the captain of the War Eagle in a low voice.

"Go, Ben!" breathed Prof. Fogarty.

Without a word Ben, who had pocketed revolver and lantern, made a dive over the tug rail and disappeared beneath the turbid water.

They had made no mistake in choosing this boy for their strange errand, these men.

They knew exactly what they were about. They knew that there was no better swimmer and diver in the land.

"What are you fellows tolding on there for?" shouted a voice.

On the top of the ledge a man appeared with a gun.

"Too-hoo! Too-hoo!" went the whistle of the bridge.

"Too-hoo!" answered the tug.

And immediately the screw began to grind.

But the prison guard was not satisfied. "Stop!" he shouted. It seemed a little unreasonable, just now he wanted to know why they didn't go?"

"What in thunder is the matter with you?" roared the skipper.

"What was that splash?"

"One of the boys drew a bucket of water to swab down the decks with—that's all." There was a moment's pause. Then the man on the rocks shouted: "Go on."

And the War Eagle went puffing through the draw.

As long as it was possible to see the stake Prof. Fogarty and Plug Moran strained their eyes toward it.

They saw nothing of Ben, however. "Will he succeed, think?" asked Plug. "Faith an' if he don't, no one can," was Prof. Fogarty's reply.

"Suppose they shoot him?"

"Burning blue blazes! Then it will save us the bother of doing the job."

And the tug went on up the Hackensack. Now, as we mentioned before, these men made no mistake in selecting Ben for this task. The boy understood his danger thoroughly. But his heart was in his work.

If success was possible, Ben was bound to succeed.

His dive had been a bold one. He meant to go down almost to the bottom, and he succeeded.

He opened his eyes the instant he went under the water.

He kept them open as he came up. And when he came up it was alongside the stake which he had taken good care not to lose sight of.

It was next to impossible to see anything. To help matters out in this regard, Prof. Fogarty had placed the largest lantern on the tug in such a position that its light would strike down into the water.

It was only for a minute that it remained thus.

But during that minute Ben found the mouth of the sewer and passed in.

Now came the danger.

Was there air enough for him once he passed the point where the water was above his head?

Prof. Fogarty had said yes.

But Ben hardly believed it.

Nor would he have cared much if it had proved no.

Ben had loved his sister Nana with a depth of affection which but few men feel for their wives. Nana was dead!

Ben would just as soon have died, too.

But it was not to be then.

In a moment his head came out of the water and struck against the top of the sewer, though not hard enough to hurt him.

It was totally dark, but there was plenty of air.

Ben put his feet down.

They touched bottom.

He stood still and drew a long breath.

The air, penetrating through some opening further back along the line of the sewer, seemed pure and sweet to Ben.

Yet it was but the malaria-laden air of the Jersey marshes after all.

"That's all right," muttered the boy. "But can the count do it? He can't swim as well as I can. Oh, this dreadful life! Shall I never get away from it? Probably never. I wish to God I was dead!"

But with this expression of feeling hesitation seemed to end.

Ben now produced his lantern and started back along the sewer.

Before he had gone many feet the water sank below his knees.

Soon it became a mere slimy ooze.

A few steps further and he reached the mouth of the new branch leading under the prison.

From here the main sewer continued on beneath the almshouse and lunatic asylum.

Ben took the branch.

Now in a minute he knew where the light came from.

Suddenly he came to a break where the top was all open.

A light came streaming in through the break before he had half crossed it.

"Thunder! What's that down the new sewer?" he heard a voice exclaim.

Ben caught his breath and put his light out in a hurry.

His heart beat so violently that it seemed as if

its throbs must surely be heard by those whom he could plainly hear moving about above.

"What's that?" demanded another voice.

"Thought I seen a light down there."

"Well, you don't see it now, do you?"

"No, I don't."

"Pshaw, it was only the reflection of your own lantern on the water."

"Beautiful theory, only there ain't no water down there."

Then the light came flashing down, and a head could be seen peering into the sewer.

Ben crowded against the wall and held his breath.

"Dunno what it is, but I don't see nothing," spoke the voice.

Then the voices began talking of other matters and presently died away in the distance.

Ben sprang across the break and hurried on. He did not dare to use his lantern for a moment or two.

"I'll just creep along till I come to the end and then have a look," he was thinking when suddenly there was a rush and a gasping cry:

"Move! Speak! Raise your little finger and you are a dead man!" hissed a voice in his ear as two strong hands closed upon his throat.

But even though the voice spoke in whispers Ben knew it.

"Hold on, count!" he whispered. "It's Ben! Don't you know me!"

CHAPTER VII.

OLD KING BRADY'S MISHAP.

"Come in and sit down. We'll talk the matter over."

"We can talk it over here."

"No, no. This room is all in disorder. Come into my sitting-room. Come."

Mother Beezee had come back. Her invitation to the detective to come into the next room was most cordial.

But as it came within two minutes after the detective saw the face of Dr. Greenough vanish from the mirror he did not feel quite certain what he ought to do.

There was deep treachery somewhere. He felt perfectly confident that he was fighting against shrewd plotters.

Eighty thousand dollars had been stolen from a well-known banker, and a mysterious female found dead or dying in his office.

It was just the sort of case that Old King Brady liked on account of its mystery, but he felt sure some trap was set for him in the other room.

Therefore he repeated:

"No, we will talk it over here."

Mother Beezee looked troubled.

"You are afraid of me," she said.

"Frankly, madam, I am."

"Why?"

"To continue to be frank, there is somebody else in that other room."

The woman changed color.

"Only my nephew."

"Dr. Greenough?"

"Yes. You know him?"

"I met him this morning."

Old King Brady spoke as loud as possible.

He intended the listener should hear.

He not only heard but he came right out into the room.

"How are you?" he said, carelessly.

The detective nodded.

He was ready for treachery of any sort now.

"This is a queer meeting."

"Yes."

"Of course you understand that we know you here?"

"Certainly."

"I don't know what the deuce to do. I just happened to see your face in the glass. Odd, isn't it?"

"Very."

"Have a smoke."

"Have one with me."

"Ha! ha! You're afraid my cigars are poisoned."

"Bless my soul, man, I never thought of such a thing!"

"Oh, yes, you did! Ha, ha! Doctor—poison—I see. Well, never mind, I don't blame you a bit. Well, I'll take your word. Sit down, old man, and let's talk it out. Mother, you get out of the way."

"No, let her stay where she is," said the detective, sternly.

Mother Beezee sank into a chair.

Cigars were lighted.

The detective flung himself into one chair and Dr. Greenough into another; each seemed to be waiting for the other to begin.

It was the young ambulance surgeon who finally took up the ball.

"Look here, Mr. Brady, just how do we stand?"

"My young friend, we seem to be sitting just at present," said the detective serenely.

"Oh, say, now come. There's no use beating about the bush."

"Not a bit."

"Of course you know that I know you are a detective."

"Why certainly."

"And an almighty smart one."

"Thank you, thank you."

"If I hadn't been here you'd have pulled the wool over my mother's eyes completely."

"Mother! I understood madam to say that she was your aunt."

"I never said nothing of the sort. I said he was my son!" snapped the old woman.

"Oh, I beg pardon."

"Well, I am her son, whatever you understood," continued Dr. Greenough, doggedly.

"You're smart, but I'm lucky I happened to come in and catch you, and that's just how matters stand."

"Just so."

"Now, then, what do you propose?"

"Oh, it's for you to propose!"

"You are open to a proposition?"

"Why, certainly."

"Give me five minutes to talk to my mother, will you?"

"Yes."

"It's to be cash."

"Make your proposition."

"Come, mother."

The aged baby farmer arose and walked heavily into the other room, followed by her son.

They closed the intervening door, and their voices could be heard in whispered conversation behind it.

It was too much for Old King Brady. He arose and crept softly into the passage between the two rooms.

Bending down, he was about to fix his eye to the keyhole, when the end came.

There was a slight click.

Then to the detective's horror, the floor sank beneath his feet.

Down dropped Old King Brady as easily as possible.

Snap!

He heard the fatal trap-door close behind him as he struck bottom.

The detective ground his teeth in rage. "You infernal fool!" he muttered. "You might have known it! Will you never learn? Oh, will you never learn?"

It was aggravating.

Particularly as no one knew better than he how common such traps are in the great city.

But the mischief was done now and the best way—the only way—was to see how it could be undone.

And Old King Brady wasted no time in going to work.

He was not hurt in the least. The fall had been to no great depth.

It could not be even said that he was badly shaken up.

Out came the dark lantern now.

Flashing it about, nothing but brick walls were revealed.

The place was a circular inclosure rising to a point, or cone, like a potter's furnace.

"An old cistern," thought the detective.

"That back room is an extension. This originally opened into the back yard."

It was all so, but it did the detective but little good to know the truth in his present plight.

On account of the peculiar formation of the walls there was no such thing as climbing up to be thought of.

A horrible thought crossed the mind of the detective.

Mother Beezee was a baby farmer. Some of Mother Beezee's babies must die some time.

Did she drop them in this horrible pit when they died?

The bare thought almost made Old King Brady's back hair rise, as the saying goes.

He flashed his lantern downward.

No; there was no signs that he was right in the thought.

Then came a thorough examination.

It resulted only in proving to the detective that unless help came from without he must starve to death in this hole.

Half an hour passed.

Nothing had happened.

The detective was gasping like a girl.

No fresh air penetrated here.

His own lungs were rapidly using up the oxygen.

If this state of things continued long he must surely die.

It was just about this time that the detective heard a slight noise behind him.

It sounded like some one trying to unhasp a rusty lock from its staple.

He shut off the lantern instantly, watched and listened.

In a moment a round trap arose out of the wooden flooring, and up came a fiery red head.

So red was it that said head almost rivaled the candle which came after it.

"Hully Gee! What's this!" gasped a voice. Leggo! Leggo, blame you! Leggo!"

For Old King Brady had pounced down and caught this unexpected intruder by his fiery locks.

"Come up here! Come up here!"

"No, I won't, neither! You leggo!"

"Come up, I tell you!"

"Hully Gee! I'll bust you in the eye!" bel- lowed the boy.

But he came up just the same. The detective released his hair and held up a warning hand.

"Stop that noise."

"What you want?"

"What do you suppose I want?"

The boy chuckled.

"Hully Gee! I s'pose you want to get out."

"And will make it well worth your while if you'll help me to do it. Understand?"

"Yair. How did you get in?"

Old King Brady pointed upward.

"Mother Beezee!"

"Yes."

"Blast her—bless her, I mean! She must be out, or my yell would have brought her here be- fore this."

"You know her?"

"Well, rather!"

"What's your name?"

"They calls me Rube the Rat."

"Because you crawl about under ground?"

"Yair. You've hit it."

"Five dollars, Rube and you show me the way out."

"It's a go, boss. Come on, but if you gimme away—"

"Which I never will. But I'll give you this."

It was a gold five-dollar piece which the de- tective happened to have about him.

"Bully for you, boss!"

Rube the Rat had never handled a gold piece before.

He tossed this one up, caught it on its de- scent, bit it, and thrust it into the pocket of the ragged trousers which encased his legs.

"She'd kill me if she knowed it, she would," he whispered, "but seein' as how you hain't a-goin' to tell, here goes."

He stepped through the round trap door and the detective followed him.

There was a ladder here.

It led down to a narrow passage below.

As they advanced along the passage the boy glanced nervously at a door on the left.

"Is that the way she comes out sometimes, Rube?" the detective asked.

"No, no! I was a thinkin' of something else."

"Whatt?"

"Funerals."

"Funerals?"

"Yair. I know what you want, boss."

"Hello! Your coming to my rescue was no accident then?"

"No. I know'd you was there."

"Well?"

"She was a nice gal, boss, an' she was mighty good to me. That's why I'm agoin' to tell."

"And so I would, Rube, so I would."

"You're a detective. I heard Mother Beezee atellin' Bob."

"Meaning Dr. Greenough?"

"A—r—n! Doctor me eye!" cried Rube, with an expression of profound contempt. "I wouldn't let him doctor me sister's cat, so I wouldn't."

"Go on—tell me about this girl who was good to you."

"You know'd her?"

"Oh, yes."

"Nana?"

"Yes, yes."

"They brung her in here dead airly this morn- ing and they had her buried by nine o'clock. Boo-hoo! Boo-hoo! Boo-hoo!"

They were the genuine, Simon Pure article, these tears that Rube the Rat shed.

"And they put her in that room?" asked the detective, kindly.

"Yair, and tuk her out again. They tuk her to the Evergreens, wherever that is, and it's my belief Bob Greenough pizened her, and just like as not, she hain't dead at all."

Here were revelations coming from a wholly unexpected source.

"Rube!" said the detective, quietly.

"What is it, boss?"

"Let you and me hurry out of here. We'll go the Evergreens. We'll find out whether Nana is dead or not."

"Will you, boss—oh, will you?"

"Yes."

"Come on, then."

Old King Brady had no notion of going on, however, until he had looked behind the closed door.

He so stated his intention to Rube the Rat.

"I don't care," replied the boy. "'Tain't nuthin' but an old lumber rooin, so far as I know."

Old King Brady burst in the door without dif- ficulty.

The boy's description of the place was quite correct.

Old furniture, old boxes, old champagne hampers—all sorts of old traps met his eyes.

Old King Brady gave a curious exclamation.

Many—in fact, most of the objects his eyes rested upon—were addressed to "J. McGroaty."

This was the ex-alderman of years gone by, whom Old King Brady had sent to Sing Sing for counterfeiting.

The saloon of the ex-alderman had been lo- cated on Cornelia street.

It was always suspected that he had a secret den somewhere in the neighborhood.

Old King Brady began to wonder if this was it.

He felt very certain of it after pulling over a few of the boxes.

There were plates of ancient counterfeit bills in one of the boxes.

Other things relating to the queer-making in- dustry were there too.

Rube the Rat watched the detective impatient- ly.

"Say, I wouldn't hang around here if I wuz you," he said, impatiently.

"Why not?"

"Fast thing you know some o' de gang will be down."

"Oh, there's a gang, is there?"

"Yair."

"What kind of a gang?"

"Don't ax me what I don't know."

"But you must know something about them. What do they do in this room?"

"Ax me something I know. They never come in this room, boss."

"Oh, there are other rooms?"

"Yair."

"And what do they do in the other rooms?"

"Drink an' smoke an' chuin."

"How did these things come here, Rube?"

"Blamed if I know. Dey wuz always dere; but, say, won't you come?"

"Yes," said the detective. "I will go now."

And Old King Brady followed Rube the Rat through various winding passages.

At last they came to a flight of stairs which brought them to a door.

Rube listened cautiously at the door.

"It's all right. Slide out," he whispered.

"Dey'll kill me for dis mebbe, but let 'em, I'm bound to know whether she's dead or whether she hain't. She was always very good to me."

It was still Bedford street.

Old King Brady found himself coming out of the basement door of a respectable-looking resi- dence a little below Mrs. Beezee's.

He hurried to Sixth avenue, Rube the Rat run- ning beside him.

It was a curious picture.

Rube was red-headed, bareheaded, barefooted and, indeed, nearly naked.

He winked and blinked in the sunlight like the animal for which he was named.

"Is it far to the cemetery, boss?" he asked.

"Miles, Rube."

"How much is dat?"

"Don't you know?"

"I dunno nuffin', boss. I lives down dere purty much all de time. They've starved me and beat me till I dunno nuffin' at all."

"Do you know what would have become of me, Rube, if you hadn't helped me out?"

"Oh, yair. Dey would have killed you and chucked you into the river."

"Who, Bob?"

"Bob! N-a-a-r! He hain't got spunk enough to kill nothin'."

Rube expressed tremendous contempt in this speech.

"Who then?"

Rube shuddered.

"I dassen't tell."

And Old King Brady did not press him. Inwardly he shuddered too.

"I've had a narrow escape," he thought.

"This poor boy must never return there. He has befriended me and I will be a friend to him, I—"

"Look out, boss!" breathed Rube, suddenly breaking in upon those meditations.

"What—what is it, Rube?"

"Look dere! Oh, don't let 'em get me! Don't!"

Rube pointed to the corner where two per- sons, a man and a woman, stood waiting for a car.

But the warning came too late.

There, staring at them with wide open eyes, stood Dr. Greenough and the ancient baby farm- er, Mother Beezee.

CHAPTER VIII.

REN AND THE BOOLE.

"BEN!"

"Yes—Ben!"

"Great heavens—no!"

"Yes—yes!"

"But how came you here?"

"I came to save you."

"To save me?"

"For that and nothing else."

There was a curious sound.

It struck Ben that the man he had addressed as the count was sobbing.

But it was only heard once.

Then in a firm voice came:

"Who sent you here, Ben?"

"Prof. Fogarty and Plug."

"Are they around?"

"They were—they have gone."

"But how did they come here?"

"In a tug up the Hackensack."

"And you?"

"While they were waiting for the drawbridge to open I dove down and came up the sewer."

"To rescue me?"

"Why, of course. What else?"

"What else, sure enough. Ben, you are a brave boy."

"I'm the same fellow I always was, Count."

"Pity you turned against us."

"I never was with you," was the bitter reply.

"Circumstances kept me in your company, but you know better than anyone else knows that I always wanted to be honest and—and—"

Now it was Ben who was sobbing.

He seemed completely overcome.

"Shut up! None of that, boy!" hissed the man, fiercely. "Have you got a light?"

"Yes."

"Show it then."

Ben turned on the lantern.

The man before him was tall, dark and pos- sessed of the frame of a giant.

He wore the usual convict garb of the Snake Hill Penitentiary.

His was a handsome face but a wicked face.

There was one other very marked peculiarity about it.

The features bore a most striking resemblance to Ben.

"Strange that you should have happened here on this very night," he muttered.

"Didn't you expect some one?"

"No."

"I thought you knew?"

"No. Fogarty sent me word that they would try to aid my escape, but he did not say how or why."

"Then your being here is only an accident?"

"The merest chance. I happened to find that one of the stones under my bed was loose. I raised it, and followed down the hole beneath it—that brought me here."

"From what I heard the professor say, it was through somebody's pull you were put in that cell."

"They've been working then?"

"Evidently."

"And you expected to come up to me—to rescue me from that den! Well, well! Ben, you're a strange boy."

"I told you before I'm no different from other fellows."

"Yes, you are, Ben. But never mind. We must be on the move."

"One moment, Count—Nana."

"Well, what about Nana?" demanded the convict, fiercely.

"Nana is dead!"

The count reeled.

He had to steady himself against the stone wall of the sewer before he could speak.

"Dead!" he breathed. "Dead—Ben! Have—have they killed her?"

"Some one killed her," replied Ben, in a hard voice.

"How—how did it occur?"

"They cracked the vault at Buckaloo's bank last night."

"No."

"Yes."

"Successfully?"

"They got their boodle."

"And where is it now?"

"On the tug."

"The tug which brought you here?"

"Yes."

"Who did the job?"

"Fogarty, Plug and Big Schmitz."

"A bad trio. Heaven help the vault door which they tackle, Ben."

"They found something behind that vault door they scarcely expected, Count," replied Ben, in the same hard tone.

"What?"

"The dead body of my sister Nana, and as Heaven hears me, I'll be revenged on the man who did that foul deed."

The convict's face was deathly pale.

It was plain to be seen that he was affected too deeply for words.

"She was there, and she fell out at Plug's feet when he blew out the lock," continued Ben.

"That's the way of it, Count—that's the way poor Nana died."

"Ben," said the count, eying the boy, "it has made an old man of you?"

"I feel old."

"But what were you doing there?"

"Don't ask me."

"You were not with the gang?"

"I say don't ask me."

"I'm afraid you were up to some funny business, Ben," was the dry response. "Well, I won't ask you. Well move on."

"Is there no danger of our being followed?"

"There's danger of our being followed at any moment, but I don't think it likely we will be followed until the guard goes his round again."

"When will that be?"

"In about half an hour. Show me the way, Benny; but there's one great big lion right square in our path."

"What do you mean?"

"Benny, I can't swim a stroke!"

"Great heavens, you don't say so!" gasped Ben.

He suddenly stopped short, for they had been walking back by the way he had come.

At the same instant a loud shout was heard behind.

"Great Caesar's ghost! There's a hole in the floor into the new sewer! The count has escaped!"

The cry came from a distance, but to Ben's excited imagination it was bawled in his ears.

"Too late to argue the point now," hissed the convict. "Ou, Ben, on!"

They dashed down the sewer together.

"There's a break on ahead here," breathed Ben. "I've got to put out the lantern."

"Ding—dong! Ding—dong! Ding—dong!"

Suddenly the sound of the prison bell was heard, dimly ringing out upon the night.

"That's for me," muttered the count. "That means an escape."

"Here's the break."

"Make a quick bolt across it, Ben."

"I came near being caught here before."

"Hark! They are coming down the sewer behind us. On, boy! On!"

Bang! Bang!

"Hil! There they go!"

Bang! Bang!

Lights flashed.

Shots came rattling down the sewer.

Just too late, however.

The lead rattled against the bricks, but Ben and the count were under cover and out of sight.

"I'm afraid we can't make it, Benny," said the count in a hollow voice.

"Let us hope for the best."

"And what am I to do when we reach the water?"

"I can carry you."

"Never, Ben!"

"Yes, if you'll do precisely what I say."

"You may rely on that. Ah, the fiends! They are coming! Faster, boy—faster!"

Loud shouts were heard behind them.

The sounds of the running footsteps along the sewer were plainer now.

All time for talk had passed.

It was the final struggle which lay before them.

Crack! Crack! Crack!

"There they go again, burn them!" breathed the count.

"Here's the water," whispered Ben. "Look out for yourself!"

"What am I to do?"

"Throw one arm around my body—so. Now keep your mouth tight shut and make no move of any kind, and we will rise as sure as the sun to-morrow."

"I understand."

"Hold on there, Count; you'll be drowned. You can't escape us!" bellowed a voice close behind them.

Now a light flashed through the sewer.

"There's two of 'em!" roared a voice.

Crack! crack!

Crack! crack!

The shots were rattling all around them.

"If you make one move you'll drown us both!" whispered Ben.

"Trust me, boy."

"Now, then, here goes!"

There was a splash.

Ben had lunged himself flat upon the water and was swimming.

With the grip of despair the count held on to him.

Soon the water was all around them.

The light vanished.

The sounds were heard no more.

Was it moments or hours—years—cycles.

To the count it seemed as though untold ages had elapsed between the time the water closed over his head and that blessed moment when Heaven's own fresh air struck against his face again.

Had he been unconscious?

Was he unconscious now?

"Count! Count!"

"What is it Benny? Oh, Benny!"

"Count! Count! Brace up. Don't you let go your hold!"

"I—I'll do my best, Benny."

Crack! Crack!

Ban! Bang!

"Out with the boats!"

"One of you get over on the marshes!"

"Lay down to the bridge there! Lay down to the bridge, boys!"

Lights were flashing.

Shots whistled by them.

Voices were bawling all about them.

And mingling with it all, making the horrid din more horrid still, was that jangling bell.

"Ding—dong! Ding—dong!" it rang out.

"Somebody has escaped!" it seemed to say.

"Somebody has escaped! Catch him! Kill him!"

And the count knew just enough to realize that the somebody in question was himself.

But even in that desperate moment, when he gave up all thought of rescue, came the cheery voice of the boy, Ben, in his ears:

"Brace up now! Drop flat!"

The count dropped.

Why, he was not in the water at all.

This was the marsh.

The tall flags were all around him.

Still the shots!

Still the voices!

What was all this?

Was he swimming, walking or flying?

Everything seemed to be all mixed up, when suddenly a hand came upon his forehead.

It was a cold hand.

Somehow it seemed to the count like the hand of Death.

The drift of his thoughts may be known by the cry he gave.

"Take it off, Nana! Take it off!" he yelled.

He thought it was Nana.

But now when he looked it was only Ben.

The boy's face was bent down over his.

The boy's hand was upon his forehead.

He was lying in the bottom of a leaky old boat.

All around him were the tall flags of the Jersey marshes, which spring up into wonderful growth with the first touch of spring.

And stranger than all the rest, it was broad daylight.

That night of many horrors had gone, never to return.

"Ben! Oh, Ben!"

"How do you feel now?" asked Ben.

"I—I don't know how I feel, boy. Have I been off the hook?"

"Oh, yes—for hours!"

"Hours!"

"Yes."

"Where are we?"

"Oh, we are up the marshes somewhere. I don't know just where we are."

"But how came we here, Ben?"

"By this."

"But the boat! Speak out, boy! Did I—did you—"

"Oh, I carried you—yes. It is nothing."

"Nothing! How far?"

"Oh, I don't know. They chased me a long time over the marshes, but I managed to give them the slip at last."

"Carrying me all the time?"

"Carrying you and hiding. Doing the best I could. Of course you know you're a pretty heavy man to carry a long way at a time, Count."

"I should say I was—I—should—say—I—was!" repeated the count, slowly. "Did you steal the boat?"

"Yes."

"Where?"

"Old mill I struck back there."

"How far do you imagine we are from Snake Hill?"

"Don't know, Count. I'm not acquainted here, you know."

"Nor I. But for that sneaking little crib I cracked in Jersey City, I shouldn't be even as well acquainted as I am. Ben, how did I behave?"

"What do you mean?"

"When I was under water."

"Why, you did first-rate at the start. Then you began to kick and struggle, and the result was you pretty near drowned yourself, and me, too."

"We had a tight squeak of it altogether, then?"

"Very, and it ain't over yet. They are still after us, and are liable to pounce down on us at any moment."

"And that's the how of it, Ben?"

"Count, that's all."

There was a certain dryness about Ben's way of speaking which seemed to say:

"Though fate has thrown me in with you, still I despise you. Yet we are here in the same boat. I shall save you if I can."

"Ben, you are a brave fellow and that's all there is to it," said the count at last. "You have saved my life and in saving it you have saved your own."

"Why, I suppose they'd have killed me too."

"You don't understand and I can't explain."

"You look pale, count—are you hungry?"

"Yes—no—I can't tell. Keep right on rowing, boy."

They were in one of the many narrow water ways which extend in every direction over the vast expanse of the Jersey meadows.

The count glanced down at his convict's suit; he knew his danger well.

"Ben," he said at last, "where were we to meet them?"

"At the old foundry."

"I thought as much."

"Yes."

"That was last night, of course?"

"Certainly."

"And there's no telling in which direction the old foundry lies, or whether we should find them if we reached it."

"All true."

"And these clothes! Oh, a man might as well have a ball and chain to his leg as these clothes."

"Have courage, count."

"By the living Caesar! if anything would make a fellow have courage, Ben, it's to be with you. Hold on! there's a railroad—a bridge—a house!"

It had all come in sight in an instant, for Ben had suddenly turned a bend in the stream.

"Back! back!" breathed the count.

Ben backed water.

In a few seconds the friendly reeds concealed them again.

"Hold up now. I have a plan, Ben."

"What is it?"

"You just keep mum. I'll have some other clothes in a moment. Oh, heavens! how weak I am."

It was with a great effort that he pulled off the convict's coat and trousers.

"Got any money, Ben?"

"A little."

"How much?"

"Two or three dollars."

"Hardly enough. Still it may do. Let me see—let me see. Kingsland—wasn't that the name?"

"I believe so. You know I was only there once."

"It was Kingsland. Now, then, go ahead,

boy. You say yes to my yes, and no to my no—that's all you have to do."

Rolling the discarded suit, he flung it among the reeds.

Then leaning over the side of the boat he dipped his hands in the water and thoroughly wet his head and neck.

Meanwhile Ben rowed straight for the railroad bridge.

He knew the count of old to be a man of many resources.

He felt the most perfect confidence that whatever the convict's scheme he could not better it.

In a moment they were in sight of the draw tender's little house upon the bridge.

Again they were in the flackensack. Their waterway had come to an end.

"Hello there, friend, hello!" shouted the count.

"Hello!" gruffly answered the man, who had come out up on the platform in front of the house.

"I've met with an accident back here."

"An accident?"

"Yes, I was in swimming. I managed to upset my boat and part of my clothes went to the bottom. Could you supply me with an old coat and a pair of breeches?"

"Well, I can know 'bout that!"

The long, lank Jerseyman looked very suspicious, nor was the expression of his face lost on the count.

"I lost all my money too," he added, wearily, "but my friend here has a few dollars. We'll give you what we've got if you'll accommodate me. Of course I can't do any more."

They were at the foot of the steps now and the count was about to land, but the man waved him back.

"Hold on there!"

"What's the matter?"

"The matter is, that there was an escape from Snake Hill last night, and I believe you're the man."

"You're off! Away off!"

"No siree. You're the man. Sheer off. Don't you come here."

"Ben," whispered the count, "you've got the revolver still?"

"Yes."

"Give it to me."

"For Heaven's sake, don't kill the poor fellow!"

"Not if I can help it, on account of your prejudices, my dear boy, and for no other reason. Give me the revolver, Ben?"

Ben quietly slipped the weapon into his hand. The bridge tender saw the action and darted back.

"Keep off—keep off here now!" he bawled.

But the count was not that kind of a man.

He leaped upon the landing steps and seemed to gain the top with a single bound.

Meanwhile, the man had gained the shelter of his house.

What happened Ben could not see—did not want to see.

He never moved from his position in the boat, but it is scarcely necessary to say that he strained his ears to catch every sound.

There was a loud outcry, banging upon a door, and then silence.

Soon after a train thundered by.

Now Ben knew that it was the Delaware, Lackawanna & Western Railroad that he was contemplating.

A moment later the count came bounding down the steps, still in his under-clothes.

He carried a suit of old clothes in his hand.

"I've tied the old sinner to a chair," he chuckled. "Now, then, Ben, row—row—row!"

The boat shot through the draw, and on they went up the river.

It was less reedy now, and they could see for a long distance.

Snake Hill was in plain sight.

The count put on the clothes and seized an oar.

"I'm a new man, Benny. I shall never forget you, my boy."

"Al! I wish you were a new man!" sighed Ben.

"Shut up! No sentiment. We're a hard lot. Fate is against us. We've all been crooks from way back."

"You speak as though I were some relation of yours, count," faltered Ben.

"Boy, the time has come when you should know the truth."

"I agree with you."

"From your earliest recollection you have been associated with me and other burglars."

"Yes—it is so."

"Did you ever stop to think why?"

"Have I thought of anything else for the last two years?"

"Blast it, no! All came from Nana's getting religion at that confounded camp-meeting."

"Say nothing against Nana."

"I—never! Far be it from me, Ben, for you two are the children of my brother—a bigger scoundrel than I ever dared to be, but my brother, still."

Ben looked gloomy.

He had suspected this for a long time. There was nothing cheerful in having his suspicions confirmed.

"So you are my uncle?"

"I am."

"And yet you would have killed me, or have let Prof. Fogarty or Plug do it, which amounts to the same thing. Why was this?"

"Why? Because you turned against us," said the burglar, fiercely. "You and Nana left the gang—you threatened to betray us."

"Well?"

"You know! But that's all over. You have saved my life to-night. I shall save yours if you do the right thing."

"Which in your estimation is to remain a burglar?"

"No; I don't ask that. I simply ask that you go away and leave us alone."

"I would have done it yesterday, but I will not do it to-day."

"Why not?"

"I shall never leave New York until I know how Nana came to be in that vault—until she is avenged."

Ben spoke with a fierceness of feeling which showed how deeply he felt.

The count regarded him gloomily.

"I don't blame you a bit," he said, "but you will raise new complications if you persist. You must let that matter alone."

"You know she came there?"

"I! Of course not. Haven't I been two months on Snake Hill? Didn't I strike it almost as soon as we came on from Chicago where we've been operating for some years? Who knows that better than you, boy?"

"But you suspect?"

"I do?"

"How? Why?"

"That I cannot tell you."

"How came it that you in the penitentiary was able to post the professor on the exact money in Mr. Buckaloo's vault—to give accurate directions for cracking a crib which you never saw?"

"Who says I never saw it?"

"Professor."

"Bah! Fogarty don't know everything. I did it, didn't I?"

"You did."

"And you, young man, I believe tried to give the snap away. Hold on! Don't turn red—don't deny it—don't say nothing about it. I don't want you to confess, and I don't want you to lie."

"I was going to say—"

"Don't say it. Look there!"

The Count pointed off to the left.

There upon the marshes, over near the Kingsland hills, stood a large brick building, more than a mile away.

"The old foundry, by gracious!" cried Ben.

"Yes."

"Do you intend to go there? But of course you do. There's no use of asking. I wish—"

"What?"

"That you would never see those fellows again."

The count laughed shortly.

"Now don't waste your efforts trying to convert me. It wouldn't be a bit of use."

"I suppose not."

"And keep on calling me 'count' like the rest."

"I shall have to; since like all the rest I don't know your true name."

"Don't call me uncle—that's what I mean. It's all none of our business."

"Very well. Shall we turn in here?"

"Yes. It seems to lead that way. I think it is the one we took before."

"I don't remember, but we'll soon know."

And Ben pulled around into another narrow arm of the flackensack.

In a few moments the reeds had swallowed them up once more.

On an island in the vast stretch of marsh land stood the old foundry.

Long since abandoned for the purpose for which it was originally built, this ruinous old structure had of late years become the resort of tramps and thieves.

It looked lonely and dismal enough when

Prof. Fogarty, Mr. Plug Moran and Big Schmitz arrived there in the night, but when Ben and the count came up in their boat the sun was shining brightly upon the scene, giving it an air of positive cheerfulness.

"Go on up there, Ben, and see how the land lies," said the count. "There might be somebody else there, you know."

Ben pulled the boat a little further to a place where the reeds were still thicker.

"Stay here; I won't be gone a minute," he said, jumping out.

He hurried up the bank and started over the ashes which covered the ground in all directions.

He had not gone a great way when curious sounds were heard.

A series of explosions.

Then a puffing and snorting.

It suggested some unknown machine in operation, but when Ben looked in through the sashless window, he saw that it was only the great Prof. Fogarty who was the author of these strange sounds.

Stretched on the floor were Plug Moran and Big Schmitz, sound asleep.

Seated near them, with his back against the wall, and his head hanging down upon his breast, was the professor, snoring lustily.

Beside him lay the canvas bag into which Ben had seen the burglars stuff the booty stolen from the vault in Buckaloo's bank.

The boy's heart gave a great bound.

Although brought up among crooks of the most crooked description, Ben had for some time been trying to be honest.

It was getting to be an old fight between him and these rascals.

Was there a chance to score a point here? Ben thought so as he looked.

Evidently Prof. Fogarty, left to watch while the others slept, had fallen asleep himself.

"They shan't have it if I can prevent," murmured Ben. "If I can return that money I'm bound to do it."

He climbed softly in through the window and stole toward the sleeping man.

The snorting, puffing and blowing continued.

Ben seized the bag and started for the door on the other side.

Ben had got the booty; but what would be the result if one of this precious trio should happen to awake?

CHAPTER IX.

THE DEAD ALIVE.

"WELL, what have you learned?"

"Absolutely nothing."

"That's disappointing."

"Very—to me."

"You have questioned the old woman carefully?"

"I worked over her for more than half an hour."

"And the young doctor?"

"Received equal attention."

"With equally unsatisfactory results?"

"Worse, if anything. I could get nothing whatever out of him."

"They are a strange pair."

"Very."

"They must know something about the business."

"It would seem so. They managed the funeral; in fact, seem to have been most active in the whole affair from the moment the young woman fell into their hands."

"What do you propose?"

"To visit the cemetery and see what can be learned."

"If the girl is dead and buried I don't see how you can learn anything without a post mortem."

"Possibly not, but I can see. Moreover, I can arrange for a post mortem, if necessary."

"Yes. You can do that. Call on the Brooklyn Inspector and have it attended to at once."

"That I can do and will. Has any one seen Mr. Buckaloo?"

"I saw him this morning, and had a long talk with him."

"He has no idea how the girl came to be in the vault?"

"None at all. He says he is ruined by the burglary, and offers a large reward in case the money can be recovered."

"Does he know anything at all about the girl?"

"Nothing."

"Yet I doubt it."

"Why?"

"Because she knew all about the scheme to rob him."

"That's no proof."

"No; but there is something else."
 "What?"
 "His bad character."
 "Ah! You know that?"
 "Yes. I made some inquiries about the bank-
 er before I went to the meeting place last night."
 "With what result?"
 "I'll tell you later. His reputation is shady
 at the best."
 "All right. Go in and win, Brady. Mean-
 time I'll look up the ancient baby farmer and her
 precious son on a charge of assault with attempt
 to kill."
 "Good! Perhaps some confession can be
 wrung out of them. I'll see you soon again."
 Here the conversation between Old King
 Brady and the police inspector came to an end.
 It was three o'clock in the afternoon when the
 detective left police headquarters.
 He left Mother Beezee and Dr. Greenough be-
 hind him.
 Rube the Rat was also left to the tender mer-
 cies of the police.
 Old King Brady had arrested Mother Beezee
 and the doctor on Sixth avenue that morning.
 The instant Old King Brady saw the pair he
 pounced upon them.
 Dr. Greenough had shown some fight, but was
 quickly overcome by the detective.
 Yet it might have been a hard matter but for
 Rube the Rat.
 Mother Beezee flew at the detective like a
 tigress.
 Then Rube took hold.
 He caught the old woman around the waist,
 and began yelling loud enough to be heard half
 a dozen blocks away.
 Of course a crowd gathered in a moment.
 Fortunately for Old King Brady a policeman
 was near, and came hurrying to his assistance.
 The result was success, and the prisoners were
 hurried to the nearest station.
 Later they were taken to Police Headquarters
 and the questioning alluded to took place.
 But it all amounted to nothing so far as solv-
 ing the mysteries of this most mysterious case
 were concerned.
 It was a little after four o'clock when Old King
 Brady presented himself at the gate of the Ever-
 greens Cemetery.
 "There was an interment here early this morn-
 ing—a young woman," he said.
 "There were several interments this morning,"
 replied the clerk behind the desk, coldly. "Have
 you the name?"
 "I cannot say what name it was made in, un-
 less it was Morris."
 "The clerk looked at his book.
 "No such interment."
 "But I have reason to know the person refer-
 red to was buried here."
 "I tell you there was no one named Morris
 buried here."
 "And I informed you at the start that I was
 not sure of the name."
 Old King Brady spoke mildly.
 He saw that the clerk was trying his best to
 drag him into a quarrel.
 He determined that he should not succeed.
 "I am a detective," he added. "Be good
 enough to tell me if a young woman was interred
 here early this morning. No matter about the
 name."
 "There were three young women interred
 here early this morning."
 "Which was the earliest?"
 "There was one as early as eight o'clock."
 "And the others?"
 "One came at nine and the other at a quarter
 to ten."
 "The eight o'clock one—who came with this
 corpse?"
 "There was an old woman with it."
 "Any one else?"
 "Yes, a young man."
 "That's the one I want."
 "I'm glad you know what you want," mut-
 tered the clerk.
 "How much did they pay you to throw the
 detectives off the track?"
 "What?"
 "Oh, you heard. Come, neighbor, there is
 no use delaying matters. You've got to come
 to it. If you don't tell me, there is some one
 higher in authority than you who can be appeal-
 ed to, I fancy."
 The clerk turned red.
 "What do you want to know?" he asked, in a
 subdued voice.
 "I want to see the permit for that funeral."
 "It is mislaid; I can't find it."
 "You'll find it now, or I shall make it my
 business to see that you are arrested inside of
 an hour."

Grumblingly the clerk pulled over a box of
 papers.
 Of course he found the permit.
 Equally, of course, he had been bribed to hold
 his tongue.
 He handed the paper out to the detective, who
 studied it carefully.
 The name was put down Hannah Morris.
 The permit was not signed by Dr. Greenough,
 as the detective had expected to see it.
 To his great surprise the signature was that
 of Dr. Sweeney, the well-known coroner and
 politician.
 "I want to go to the grave," the detective
 said, folding up the paper and putting it in his
 pocket.
 "Here, I want that!"
 "So do I."
 "But—"
 "You can't have it, my friend."
 "But I must, I shall lose my place."
 "You can't have it. I want to go to this
 grave."
 "She's not buried in a grave."
 "Receiving vault?"
 "Yes."
 "I want to go to the receiving vault."
 "You can't."
 "I must."
 "You shan't!"
 "I will."
 The clerk was furious.
 The detective was firm.
 What was to be done?
 He could not take the fellow by the neck and
 ring the truth out of him.
 Moreover he was off his own ground now and
 could not arrest him without running the risk of
 trouble.
 For a moment Old King Brady and the cranky
 clerk stood staring at each other.
 Then the clerk suddenly made a dart into an
 inside office and slammed the door.
 "What's that mean?" muttered the detective.
 He slipped through the door and glided around
 the building.
 "This must be the window of that room," he
 muttered, pausing before a pair of closed blinds.
 He could hear the murmur of voices behind
 the blinds.
 Crouching down so that not even his shadow
 should be seen, he crept under the window.
 Evidently the window was open at the top, for
 he could hear the voices with perfect plainness.
 One was the clerk's voice; the other was a
 voice which, to the detective, seemed very fam-
 liar.
 "He won't go away. I've got to do some-
 thing," the clerk said.
 "You want to be very careful with that man,"
 murmured the other voice.
 "Do you know him?"
 "Yes."
 "Who is he?"
 "Old King Brady, the detective."
 "The deuce!"
 "I knew him as soon as he spoke."
 "What's to be done?"
 "Wait—let me think. If we'd only had an-
 other hour."
 "We must do something quick. He's wait-
 ing outside there."
 "Yes, indeed he is," muttered the detective.
 "They little dream how near."
 Still he listened.
 He knew the other voice now.
 It was Dr. Sweeney, the coroner.
 The plot had taken a new and wholly unexpect-
 ed turn.
 The detective was utterly at a loss to account
 for the coroner's presence there.
 There was no apparent reason why he should
 follow up a woman who was dead and buried
 that Old King Brady could see.
 Then came the voices again.
 "Look here—decide quick! He is waiting,"
 the clerk was heard to say.
 "Can't you give him the wrong steer—take
 him to some other grave?"
 "No."
 "Try."
 "I dassent."
 "You must. We'll all be in the jug if you
 don't."
 "And you?"
 "I'm going through this window—you'll find
 me at the vault."
 "You mean to take her out?"
 "Yes, siree! They say she swallowed it, and
 I mean to know the truth."
 "Well, I'll do my best."
 Immediately the shutters opened.
 Old King Brady had barely time to crawl

around the corner of the building when a man
 leaped out.
 Had he been seen?
 The detective did not know.
 He saw Dr. Sweeney, however.
 It was the Harlem coroner and no one else
 who went hurrying off down the path.
 Old King Brady slipped into a thick clump of
 bushes and stole after him.
 Beyond the bushes was a hedge.
 Old King Brady crouched down and ran along
 the hedge.
 He could tell by the doctor's footsteps just
 how fast to go.
 "Wonder if the clerk thinks I've given up in
 disgust and got out?" he thought.
 But whatever the clerk thought he made no
 sign.
 Meanwhile Dr. Sweeney kept straight on.
 Soon he turned into a cross-path and Old King
 Brady had to stop, for the hedge stopped.
 He now found himself put to it to keep in the
 shadow and not be seen.
 Still he managed it.
 Through many winding paths the coroner led
 him.
 They were approaching the Ridgewood end of
 the cemetery.
 Here graves were scarce and trees plenty.
 At last Old King Brady saw the coroner pause
 before a very new-looking receiving-vault, not
 far from the public plot.
 The detective placed himself behind a big tree
 and watched him.
 It required no telescope to find out what Dr.
 Sweeney was doing.
 He sat down upon a big block of stone and lit
 a cigar.
 "He's waiting for somebody," thought Old
 King Brady.
 He was glad of the moment to rest and think.
 Of course to attempt to fathom the doctor's
 motive was to indulge in the purest surmise.
 One fact, however, stood out in bold relief
 from all the theories.
 Miss Morris had swallowed something which
 Dr. Sweeney wanted.
 To get that something Dr. Sweeney proposed
 to perform an autopsy.
 There could be no doubt of that.
 But what was the mysterious something?
 Who was Dr. Sweeney waiting for?
 Here the mystery came in again.
 Tired of waiting at last, Old King Brady began
 slowly crawling over the grass, not venturing so
 much as to lift his head.
 In this way he continued to get around be-
 hind the vault.
 Here he made a discovery on his own account.
 The bank against which this and the other
 vaults—for there was a row of them—was being
 built, had been dug away in order to give the
 workmen a better chance to operate.
 It was intended to fill in over the newly con-
 structed vault.
 Not only had this not yet been done but the
 stone work of the vault was still uncompleted.
 There was a wide open space in the wall over
 which a thick piece of canvas had hung to keep
 out the rain of the night before.
 Wondering if Dr. Sweeney knew this Old King
 Brady softly loosened the canvas and pushed it
 aside.
 The way lay open to him now.
 Feeling pretty certain the door must be lock-
 ed or the coroner would have gone in, Old King
 Brady crept into the vault.
 It was pretty dark here.
 Still there was light enough to show Old King
 Brady that only one coffin was in place in the
 niches.
 He knew that it must be the coffin containing
 the body of the unfortunate girl.
 What was to be done?
 While Old King Brady stood pondering, it
 seemed to him that he heard a curious rattling
 sound in the niche which contained the coffin.
 Was it fancy?
 At first he thought so, then all at once came
 another sound which told him that it was not.
 Proceeding unmistakably from the coffin came
 a low moan.
 It brought ghastly thoughts to Old King
 Brady.
 But it also aroused him to instant action.
 Was the dead alive?
 Did that coffin contain a living instead of a dead
 body?
 Old King Brady seized hold of it and dragged
 it softly out.
 All doubt vanished on the instant.
 Again came the moaning sound, and too dis-
 tinctly to be misunderstood.
 It required more strength than the average

man possesses to get that coffin down upon the floor.

Yet Old King Brady did just this.

Clutching one end of it, he drew it gently out of the niche and allowed the other end to slide down the wall upon his knees.

In this way he managed to lower it to the floor of the vault.

Still it was not accomplished without some noise.

At last the coffin slipped and fell a few inches.

Old King Brady listened breathlessly.

Had the coroner heard?

If so he had not heeded.

Again the moaning sound, louder now and far more distinct.

Ready for instant action in case of surprise, Old King Brady dropped down beside the coffin.

Out came a screw driver.

In a moment the coffin lid was raised.

"Heaven help this poor creature!" murmured the detective.

There was the mysterious woman in black lying before him—he knew her at a glance.

The eyes were open and staring, but the light in them was the light of madness.

Buried alive!

What more horrible thought?

Strong men have been driven mad by far less than this.

Old King Brady bent down and raised her.

"Great guns! What's this?"

Suddenly the vault door was flung open letting in a flood of light.

There stood Coroner Sweeney and a tall man in black.

The sight which met their astonished gaze was the detective kneeling beside that coffin.

He had partly raised the recumbent form and had one arm around her while the other grasped a cocked revolver.

"Stand back! Let no one interfere!" he shouted. "I propose to save the life of this poor girl or perish in the attempt!"

CHAPTER X.

STARTLING DEVELOPMENTS.

"HELLO!"

"I am here."

"You've been gone a thundering while, Ben, it seems to me."

"Time seems long when one is waiting."

"No, no! It was long. What have you been doing?"

Ben made some trivial excuse.

It seemed to satisfy the count, however.

That noted Chicago burglar was in a particularly pliant mood just now.

"Are they there?"

"Yes, and asleep."

"All hands?"

"Yes."

"The coast is clear, then?"

"Oh, yes!"

"We'll put the boat in among the reeds here out of sight."

The count leaped out and began to drag the boat up on the bank.

"I wouldn't do that," said Ben, carelessly.

"Why not?"

"It's safe enough where it is."

The count looked at the boy suspiciously.

"Why, Ben, how pale you are!" he said.

"Am I?"

"Why, yes!"

"Well I've been through enough to make me feel as pale as I look."

"Sure! What an unfeeling wretch I am not to have thought it."

He pulled the boat out of the water altogether and ran it in among the reeds.

Then together they started up the bank.

Soon the snoring sounds became audible.

"That's Fogarty," laughed the count.

"Yes. He's snoring."

"Puffing like a grampus, but I'll give him a start."

He drew the revolver which Ben had given him and deliberately fired twice.

Instantly the snoring ceased and a scrambling followed.

"Burning blue blazes! Is it you?" called Fogarty, suddenly appearing at the sashless window.

"Ha! My bold professor of the art of burglary, you look well in a frame," cried the Count. "Where's brother Plug and Dutch?"

But a loud yell was the only answer.

"The bag! The bag!" bellowed Fogarty.

"Burning blue blazes, the bag?"

"What's the matter with the man?" cried the count leaping through the window.

Up started Plug Moran and Big Schmitz.

"Count!" gasped Plug. "Well, by Gosh!"

"Where's the bag! Where's the bag!" roared Fogarty, running wildly about the inclosure.

"Vat de deuce! You don't vos go yumping about like a chicken midout no head for nothings," cried Big Schmitz.

But the quicker Plug gave a groan of dismay.

"You long nosed Mick! Don't you dare tell me the boodle is gone! Don't you dare!" he roared.

"Burning blue blazes! It was here a minnte ago!"

"You've been asleep."

"You lie—I haven't!"

"I say you have."

"Lies—lies! I haven't been asleep at all!"

"But the bag—"

"Some one has stolen it."

"How could that be if you haven't been asleep? Oh, you're a pretty watchman! I might a-knowned what to expect for trusting you."

Then for a few moments there was a terrible row.

Nobody ever stopped to inquire how the count had escaped.

It was nothing but bag—bootle and boodle—bag.

Meanwhile Ben sank down in a corner and lay there like one all beaten out, as indeed he actually was.

Prof. Fogarty protested by all that was good and holy that he had never closed his eyes.

The count boldly contradicted him.

"He was snoring like a blessed old pig when me and Benny came up the hill," he asserted.

"Then there was every chance for some fellow to sneak in and grab the bag," Plug declared.

They went at it hammer and tongs.

One thing Ben noticed.

The count made no mention of his having been there alone before they came up together.

Now exciting as all this was—and it was none the less exciting to Ben than the others, tired Nature proved too much for the boy.

He found himself dropping off twice, and by a mighty effort roused up again.

But there came a third time when he did not rouse up.

Although he knew his life was in the greatest danger Ben went fast asleep.

He never knew how long he had slept, but what awakened him finally was some one shaking his arm.

"Ben—oh, Ben!" breathed a voice in his ear.

Ben started up all in a tremble.

There was Prof. Fogarty bending over them.

The others were nowhere to be seen.

"Say, Benny, I want to speak to you. Wake up, my boy!"

"Professor."

"Yair."

"Ah! I am in the old foundry still! I dreamed—"

"Well, well! What did you dream, Benny? What did you dream, lad? That you found me boodle bag?"

Ben gave a start.

"No, I didn't dream that."

"I was in hopes you did."

"No, I dreamed Nana was alive."

"Ah, poor Nana! A fine girrul! A fine girrul, me bye!"

Ben staggered to his feet.

"Where is the count and the rest?"

"Sure the count and Plug is tarking over in wan of thim little sheds outside there."

"And Dutch?"

"He's gone fuder up de island to see if annybody's coming. We are all alone, me bye—all alone. That's why I waked you up."

"Because you wanted to talk to me?"

"You're right I do!"

"I know by your face, professor. I can always tell when you've something on your mind."

"Well, I've got a big something now, lad. Something as big an' no bigger than a bag, wid \$80,000 boodle into it. Dat's what's de matter wid me."

Ben was silent.

He began pacing the floor.

"Benny—Benny, lad!"

"What is it?"

"I'm going to do you a big favor."

"Well?"

"They are plotting agin you."

"The count?"

"An' Plug."

"That's an old story."

"Ah, but they mane to make it a new wan, faith—they mane to do you up now."

"No! Not the count?"

"Yes, just the count."

"But I have just saved his life."

"Bah! What does he care for that? You don't know him as I do, Benny."

"Well, I guess I ought to."

"Come with me and listen and see if you do."

"Where?"

Fogarty pointed through the open door to a little brick shed in the rear of the foundry.

"There."

"Are they there?"

"They are."

"Come on."

"Now it's a big favor I'm doing you, Benny."

"What?"

"To put you on to this."

"And?"

"I expect you to do as much for me in return."

"I don't see how I can do you any favor."

"Arrah! an' the time may come when ye can, lad. The time may come."

Ben looked as he felt, very much troubled.

He followed Prof. Fogarty out of the building, however.

"Did you find the bag?" he asked, innocently, as they crossed the open space which lay between the foundry and the little shed.

"No, Benny, I did not find the bag."

"I heard you talking about it as I fell asleep."

"Yes; I believe I did mention it," said Fogarty, dryly. "Not another word now."

He led the way round the shed.

As he walked on tip-toe Ben followed his example.

Now came a similar discovery to that of Old King Brady's at the receiving vault.

The wall was all crumbling away.

Holding up his finger, Fogarty took his position under the break.

"Listen! Listen!" he breathed.

"I tell you we've got to do him up!" said the voice of Plug Moran.

"Who says so?" asked the Count, sneeringly.

"I say so!"

"And I say no!"

"But Buckaloo says 'yes.'"

Here was a revelation to Ben.

Mr. Buckaloo, the plundered banker, on intimate terms with the gang!

He was amazed.

The intimation he first had of the robbery came from visiting the premises one night a short time previous in the company of Prof. Fogarty and Plug.

There they had met the janitor of the building in Jauncey Court through which they escaped.

This man was Fogarty's cousin.

He seemed to have the run of the buildings on the Court, and took the burglars down into Buckaloo's bank by way of the roof.

Now this visit accounts for the knowledge Ben possessed of the plot.

The Jauncey Court janitor pointed out the closet door communicating with the next building, and gave them a key of the outer door of said building, to be used in case of an emergency.

Plug took the key.

Next day it was missing.

He never dreamed that Ben, who had been his pupil in the art of picking pockets, had taken it.

Yet such was the fact, and the use he made of it the reader knows.

Thus, having assisted in all these elaborate preparations, it is no wonder that Ben was surprised to hear Plug speak as though Mr. Buckaloo had known all about them too.

And while something of these thoughts were flashing through Ben's mind, the conversation behind the wall was going straight on.

"Well, it strikes me I ought to have something to say about this," said the count. "The boy is my nephew, I guess."

"Guess he is."

"Is he to be slaughtered without my being consulted?"

"Slaughtered! What do you want to use such a word for? He'll be done up nice and quiet."

"I object."

"He betrayed us."

"You don't know it; according to your own admission, you don't know it."

"We have every reason to believe it."

"It may be true—still he's my nephew."

"And you are one of us. You have got to obey the orders of the boss."

"I don't know whether I will or not. How came Nana in the vault?"

"Blest if I know. Buckaloo can probably tell."

"It's a strange business."

"Very."

"Where's the baby?"
 "In the hands of Mother Beezer."
 "Then all is arranged?"
 "All arranged to wipe out that branch of the family at one sweep. You're to put in your claim and scoop in the property."
 "And divide a million with the gang. It's hard!"
 "Hard! What in thunder!"
 "It's mine anyhow when they're all dead, ain't it?"
 "Count, you're the strangest feller in the world. You wouldn't have known nothing at all about it if Buckaloo hadn't looked it up for you."
 "Well—well. Never mind. When is Buckaloo to be here?"
 "Oh, along toward noon. Thunder! There'll be a row when he finds the boodle's gone."
 "Strange about that business."
 "Nothing strange about it!" hissed Plug. "I could explain it blamed quick."
 "How?"
 "The professor!"
 "What! You don't think he took it?"
 "I'm blamed sure he did. The row he kicked up was all put on. He never went to sleep at all, but he did hide the bag while I was snoozing, worse luck."
 And all this came into the ears of Ben and Prof. Fogarty as plainly as into those of the count.
 Ben could feel Fogarty's grip upon his arm. He could almost hear the professor thinking "burning blue blazes."
 "Very well, Plug," said the count, after a few moments' silence. "It will have to be as you say."
 "I tell you there's no help for it."
 "None. The boy must die."
 "But what's to be done about this boodle? Buckaloo will be here, and—"
 Ben heard no more after that.
 Prof. Fogarty pulled him away then.
 He never spoke, but hurried Ben across the open space back to the old foundry and around behind it where, unless there should be a regular search made for them, they were not likely to be observed.
 Ben wondered what was coming next.
 He found out as soon as Fogarty stopped.
 "Benny, did you hear?" breathed the professor.
 "Yes."
 "Have I done you a big favor, or haven't I?"
 "You have."
 "You and me was always friends, Benny."
 "Always got along well enough, professor."
 "D'ye think I'd be after letting them do ye up, bye?"
 Ben was silent.
 "Let me tell you the Count is your uncle, and—"
 "I know all that."
 "He told you?"
 "Yes."
 "It's a shame! You're a brave lad. Where would he find another what wud go up a dirty sewer at the risk of his life to save him from the jug?"
 "There are others."
 "Let him find 'em! Let him find 'em, I say! But they shan't kill yer, bye. We must wurruk."
 "I'm ready."
 Prof. Fogarty's voice dropped into a whine.
 "Say, Benny, I did yer a big favor. Now I'm goin' to ax wan of you."
 "Well?"
 "It was you who tuk that bag."
 "It?"
 "Yes; I know yer. I've not been watching your face for nothing. Give it up to me, that's a good lad. Give it up and we'll divide."
 For a moment Ben looked steadily at the professor.
 "Come!" he said at last.
 "Sure an' I will. Come on. Come on!"
 Without speaking, Ben led the way down the bank to the reed grown channel behind the old foundry.
 Prof. Fogarty was trembling with expectation.
 From the start it had been his intention to steal the bag if a good opportunity offered.
 Was such an opportunity close at hand?
 "Where is it? I don't see nothing of it," he breathed, as they neared the shore.
 "Professor, I did take it. I found you asleep and I walked off with the bag," said Ben.
 "I knowed it. That wasn't the first time you was up there."
 "No."
 "Where is it? Where is it, lad?"

"Hold on! I took it because I am trying to be honest. I—"
 "Honest me eye! The bag, bye! The bag!"
 "Because I was determined to take tack the plunder to Mr. Buckaloo—"
 "Mad! Yer mad! Buckaloo is wan of us! That job was all arranged."
 "I know it now, and knowing it don't care who has the boodle."
 "Then give it to me. I'll take good care of it. Burning blue blazes! I'll build seventeen hundred and fifty churches and live honest till the day of judgment, so I will, if ye'll only give me that bag."
 "You shall have it. I want nothing more to do with it. I found the bag in your charge and I give it back into your charge."
 "Wurruds! Wurruds! Too many wurruds. When the count eddicayed you it was a bad job. Gimme the bag and no more turk now. I want the bag!"
 Ben sighed and led the way back among the tall flags.
 There was no sense in his risking life to take the plunder from one member of the gang and give it to another.
 "There it is, professor," he said, pointing to the boodle bag which had just come into view lying in a slight depression in the marshy ground.
 Prof. Fogarty pounced upon it.
 "Arrah, you darlint!" he cried. "Sure, I have you now. Benny, lad, sneak around there and get the boat if ye can. We'll light out while there's time, and— Och, murther! Oh, the thafe—oh, the thafe of the wurrud!"
 "What's the matter?" demanded Ben.
 For Prof. Fogarty, opening the bag while speaking, suddenly gave a cry of dismay as he held up one of the packages of bills.
 "Matter! Why, it's no money—it's queer!"
 "Queer?"
 "Ay, queer, lad! We've been fooled—sucked in—deluded, so we have! It's a lot of Jamsey McGroaty's ould queer, what hain't seen the light of day this ten years."
 And Prof. Fogarty just laid down on the ground and howled.
 But he quickly recovered himself.
 The howling process was too dangerous.
 Hastily he examined the contents of the bag as he had not thought to do on the previous night.
 It was perfectly evident that a trick had been played upon them.
 Instead of good money the bag was stuffed with counterfeits.
 At least so Prof. Fogarty declared.
 The burglar was furious in his rage.
 He seemed to be suddenly seized with the idea that Ben was responsible for it.
 "You little snoozer!" he yelled, turning suddenly upon the boy and seizing him by the throat.
 It was a serious business.
 Fogarty's long fingers were choking him.
 Ben yelled murder.
 Then suddenly the bushes parted and there stood Plug and the count.
 "Help! Help!" bawled Ben.
 "Let go, you fool!" hissed the Count.
 "We've been watching you. Let go and we'll settle it. Now's as good a time as any to kill this boy."
 And thus speaking, the Count drew Ben's own revolver and thrust it in the poor boy's face.

CHAPTER XI.

"MAD, MY LORDS! MAD!"

"BACK!"
 "K—k—k—kill him! Kill him, or he'll kill us!"
 "Back! Back, or I fire," repeated Old King Brady.
 With one arm still around the moaning girl, the detective thrust his revolver toward Dr. Sweeney and his companion.
 It was a desperate situation.
 Sweeney had drawn a pistol even as he burst into the vault.
 Three times he snapped it at the detective, bawling out every sort of vile imprecation upon him as he did so, but for the excellent reason that the bold coroner had neglected to put cartridges into the chambers, the revolver declined to go off.
 The detective could have shot him a dozen times if he had wanted to.
 But Old King Brady was not that kind of a man.
 He wanted to save life now, and this was his only thought.

"Get back!" chimed in the tall man. "That pistol of yours is no good."
 This was at the very start.
 As the detective drew his revolver the man ran out of the receiving vault.
 But Dr. Sweeney held on and tried it again.
 Then it was that the detective shouted.
 "Blame you! I'll get square, Brady!" bawled the coroner.
 He flung the useless revolver at Old King Brady's head, and bolted through the vault door. Slam, bang went the door.
 Dr. Sweeney could be heard locking it.
 Did he know how the detective managed to effect an entrance?
 Evidently he did not, for when Old King Brady, lifting the groaning girl from the coffin, pushed aside the canvas and stepped out, neither the coroner nor his companion were there.
 "Oh! oh! Save me!" moaned the girl.
 She did not seem to be more than half-conscious.
 When Old King Brady spoke soothingly to her, she kept right on calling for him to save her.
 What was to be done?
 To return by way of the cemetery gate was only to court trouble.
 With the girl in his arms, Old King Brady plunged into the woods behind the vault.
 No sign of Dr. Sweeney or the tall man yet.
 But before Old King Brady had gone far, the mystery of their silence was explained.
 "Boo—woo—woo!"
 Suddenly a hoarse barking was heard.
 There was a rustle among the underbrush behind him.
 "Sweeney's bloodhound Mac, by thunder!" murmured Old King Brady.
 He had known Dr. Sweeney slightly for some years.
 Now it suddenly flashed over his memory that the doctor was a noted lover of dogs; that he had exhibited a magnificent Siberian bloodhound in the dog show the year before.
 Was this dog with him now?
 Again came the baying, as if in answer.
 Something must be done instantly.
 Old King Brady saw that.
 He laid the girl down upon the grass, and, drawing his revolver, stood waiting.
 The barking came again.
 So did the bloodhound.
 There was a deep bay and a sudden rush.
 Out of the bushes the dog came bursting.
 He stood as high as a calf as he bounded towards Old King Brady, but he lay as low as ever a dog lay a moment later on.
 Bang!
 Straight at the bloodhound's eye the detective's aim was directed.
 The dog gave one wild yell and leaped high in the air, dropping dead at the detective's feet.
 "Great Scott! He has killed the dog!" shouted a voice back among the trees.
 "I may as well make a clean sweep of it," muttered the detective. "I can't and I won't be chased by those two men."
 He dashed back in the direction of the voice, firing as he went.
 He could hear them running, but somehow did not manage to get a sight of them.
 In a moment he was in sight of the receiving vault again.
 Dr. Sweeney and his companion were not there.
 "They've lit out," thought Old King Brady.
 "It was enough for them that the dog got a dose of cold lead. They didn't care for one themselves."
 He hurried back now in the direction from which he had come.
 The girl was still there.
 She was sitting upon the grass looking wildly around.
 "Hush!" she whispered, holding up her finger. "Hush!"
 Old King Brady stopped.
 "Do you hear them?" he whispered.
 "I hear a million voices!"
 She spoke in low, sweet tones, but strangely tinged with sadness.
 "I hear a million voices; they are whispering all around me! The air is full of them. They say: 'Nana! Nana! Why didn't you stay in the grave?'"
 "Mad!" murmured Old King Brady.
 She caught the word.
 Staggering to her feet she faced him and began gesticulating dramatically.
 "Aye! mad, my lords! Mad as the hare in March! Call in the chef. Let the hare be killed! Let us all feast upon the bones."
 "There, there! You are nervous!" whispered

the detective trying to take her arm. Come with me!"

But Nana drew away. "Bones! A wilderness of bones lies all about us. Let them be boiled and given to the dogs. Ha, ha! The seven wise men call me. I must go."

"Yes. Don't you hear them hollering over there?" said the detective. "Come, my dear! Come! If the seven wise men want us it would be very impolite for us to refuse to go."

She assented to this. Taking her arm the detective hurried her through the woods in the gathering shadows. What had become of their pursuers?

He could neither hear nor see them, yet somehow he felt certain that they were pursuing him still.

"Don't you remember me? Don't you know who I am?" he asked the girl as they hurried on. "You are the knight of the golden feathers; you rescued me from the tomb."

"You had a hard time there, my poor child."

"Hard time! No. The seven wise men came and told me stories."

"There, there! Don't excite yourself."

"Never! I am awfully and horribly calm. Each one sat on his coffin and told his own story."

"Were they interesting?"

"No, dry. Very dry. Oh, dear! I don't seem able to walk any more, and I can't tell why."

"You are weak. Here, let me carry you."

"That is right. The true knight should carry his fair lady. Ha! You are rather old for a knight, and your nose is altogether too long. No, you are not handsome. Not at all."

She spoke drowsily. As with many insane persons, sleep seemed to come upon her suddenly.

As Old King Brady lifted her in his arms her head dropped upon his shoulder just as a child's might do.

Thus she went to sleep while the detective hurried on.

He had not gone far before he came to the high fence which surrounds the cemetery of the Evergreens on the Ridgewood side.

It was too high to climb, and there was no gate to be seen.

Old King Brady placed his burden on the grass and went to work to see what could be done.

There would have been no trouble in his climbing the fence alone.

But to get the mad girl over was another matter.

At length he found a place where one of the palings was broken, and with some little trouble he managed to kick out another.

"That's the idea. I can get her through now," he murmured.

He crawled through himself to try it.

Whiz! Bang!

Suddenly came more trouble. Came in the shape of a huge stone flung by some unseen hand.

It struck Old King Brady in the back of the head.

The detective fell across the break in the fence, and lay there like a log.

"By thunder! You did do it," breathed Dr. Sweeney, suddenly coming into view from among the trees.

The tall man followed him. His face was flushed with triumph.

"I told you I could do it."

"And I didn't believe you."

"I've done it. Is he dead?"

"I'll tell you in just one minute," said Dr. Sweeney, bending over the body of the detective.

He made a careful examination, and reported that the detective was not dead.

"He is only stunned," he said. "You did your work well."

"And is liable to revive at any minute."

"Yes, indeed, and he as fresh as ever. I know him of old. The cat with nine lives ain't in it alongside Old King Brady, the detective."

"How easy it would be to put a ball through his heart if you hadn't gone and made that infernally stupid blunder about your revolver!" muttered the tall man.

"Bah! I was full. I thought I loaded it and I didn't."

"It's unfortunate."

"Not at all."

"Why so?"

"There's probably the same revolver in his pocket that he scared you with a moment ago."

"I was no more scared than you were."

"We were both scared. Do you want to kill him?"

"I—no, indeed!"

"I thought not."

"Suppose you try it—murder is more in your line than mine."

"Thank you for the compliment," replied the doctor, dryly. "I may have sent a few poor wretches over the great divide in my time with the wrong medicine, but it was done without knowing it. I'm not a professional murderer, if you please."

"He ought to be put out of the way. He's mixed up in our matters."

"You can do it. I'll hold my tongue."

"Ha! No. Not much, doc. I'm not fool enough to put myself in your power. I know you too well."

They talked further, but neither of them would take the responsibility of killing the detective. As a compromise they carried him back among the bushes and there hung him down.

Old King Brady never moved.

"It was a bad blow," muttered the doctor. "I wouldn't wonder if after all he died. But come, we've fooled with him long enough. We must get back to the girl."

And they hurried off through the woods. When they came to the place where Old King Brady had left Nana, they found her lying upon the ground fast asleep.

This, however, they did not understand at all. They believed at the start and they believed still that the girl was dead.

"Come, let's carry her on to the house—quick!" muttered the doctor.

He seized her by the shoulders, but dropped her before his companion could take her feet.

"Great Scott, man! she's alive!"

"You don't mean it!"

The tall man staggered back.

"She is!"

"Confound the luck!"

"She's only asleep," chuckled the doctor, who seemed to see something very funny in the surprise.

"It can't be."

"It is, though."

"But—"

"Blast it, man! There's no but about it. The girl is simply alive. Don't you suppose I know?"

"Alive or dead, the job has got to be done. Here, help me, Jim!"

Dr. Sweeney caught the shoulders and held on this time.

The tall man took the feet. Together they carried the unfortunate girl through the break in the fence, and found themselves alongside the tracks of the Manhattan Beach railroad.

"How far are we from Mother Beezee's?"

It was the stranger who put the question. Dr. Sweeney laughed.

"Only a little way."

"Down the track?"

"Yes."

"I shall be glad when we get there—she's thundering heavy. Come on."

"You expect to find Mother Beezee at her country seat waiting for us?"

"Well, I expect to find her there—yes."

"You won't."

"Why not? She promised—"

"Mother Beezee was arrested this morning. She is now in the Tombs."

"Arrested!"

"You heard me."

"By whom?"

"Old King Brady."

"Blast that man."

"He did it."

"Well, Dr. Greenough will be there ready to lend us a hand."

"No, indeed, he won't."

"Why won't he?"

"Because he was arrested, too. Hold on! Don't you let her fall."

"Well, well, well! And how did you know all this?"

"Telegram came to the cemetery from Bob."

"Bad job."

"Yes."

"Old King Brady must have come out right away after he arrested them."

"It looks so."

"It's a pity we didn't finish him up while we had the chance. You can say what you like, but Old King Brady is a very dangerous man."

There was silence for a few moments. Meanwhile the two men kept steadily on over the railroad ties.

"Where's the house?" asked the tall stranger at last.

Dr. Sweeney nodded his head in the direction of a small cottage which stood alone near the track, at no very great distance away.

"That belongs to Mother Beezee."

"Yes." The stranger shuddered.

"A vile business. I hate to have to use such dirty tools," he said.

"You refer to her baby farming?"

"Yes, of course."

"Many is the child she's starved to death. There's one particular one we wish was starved just about now."

"It has got to be removed by some means. I depended on the old woman or Bob."

"And I depended particularly on Bob," said the doctor, "but there ain't either one of them available. I'm sure I don't know what we shall do."

They had reached the house by this time. "There's some one in there," said the doctor.

"Don't you see the light burning up-stairs?"

"Yes. I suppose the old hag keeps help to look after things when she is in the city."

"I suppose she does. Look out for dogs. Great Scott! I'd like to have got back on that old scoundrel for shooting poor Mac! No such dog in America. Never was—never will be!"

"Nonsense!" growled the stranger, pushing open the gate. "The woods are full of em South. I've helped hunt down many a nigger with 'em in my time."

"No, sir! No such dog as mine."

"Why in the mischief didn't you take your revenge by doing up the detective then? You had every chance and I shouldn't wonder a bit if he had come to by this time and was following us now."

They laid the girl down upon the stoop as Dr. Sweeney growled out some unintelligible answer, and at the same time pulled the bell.

After a brief wait a window was heard cautiously opening overhead.

"Who's there?" called a female voice through the closed blinds.

"We were to meet Mrs. Beezee here. We want to come in," called back Dr. Sweeney, in guarded tones.

"Mrs. Beezee ain't here."

"We know that."

"She's been arrested."

"We know that, too. Let us in."

"Dussent."

"Who are you?"

"Gussie."

"Who the mischief is Gussie?" growled the stranger. "Burst in the door, Jim. We can't stay here on the steps with this girl."

"Gussie, you know me, my good girl," said the coroner persuasively.

"No, I don't."

"Hi dar! Yes, you do."

"What in the world, Sweeney! You speak like a nigger!" muttered the stranger.

"When one talks to niggers one gets to speaking like them," replied the coroner quickly.

"Nigger, be blowed! Why, the girl's red-headed. I can see her plain enough."

"I say she's a nigger."

"And I say you don't know what you're talking about."

"Oh, dry up! Let's drop it. I'm going in here—now see."

Dr. Sweeney began beating furiously on the door.

There was no result for a few moments.

After that the girl suddenly appeared behind the blinds again.

"Go 'way! Go 'way! You shan't come in here!" she shrieked.

"But we must come, Gussie. We've got a sick lady here. We can't stay on the stoop all night."

"You shan't come in, I'll set the dogs on you first."

"They shall go in. Open that door, Gussie."

A man suddenly appeared coming around from behind the house.

"Bob—Bob Greenough!" cried the doctor.

"What's left of him," was the reply.

And indeed the new-comer presented a sorry sight.

He was all in rags and looked very different from the nobby young doctor Old King Brady had met in the morning.

"Open that door, girl, or I'll cut your heart out!" he hissed. "Open it before the cops catch me, for they are close at my heels."

"Cops! Great heavens, no!" gasped the stranger.

"Yes, Buckaloo, cops," chuckled Bob, who seemed to be drunk.

"Hush! For Heaven's sake don't mention that name!" breathed the stranger.

"Ha, ha, ha! We're afraid, are we?" laughed the doctor.

"Don't get mad, Buckaloo," chuckled Bob—

"don't get mad!"

"Mad, my lords—mad!" shrieked a voice at their feet, and poor Nana, coming out of her trance, or swoon, or whatever her strange condition might have been, rose up before them.

"Great Scott! This won't do!" gasped Bob. He put his shoulder to the door, and would have burst it open.

But, as it happened, Gussie turned the key at that very moment.

"Don't—don't make any noise!" pleaded Mr. Buckaloo.

Then, at that very instant, the door flew open. It let Bob in with it, bringing him in sudden and violent contact with Gussie.

Down went Gussie with a yell and Bob on top of her.

Bob in his fall made a grab at the doctor, who went sprawling on top of him.

Alas! for Mr. Buckaloo's desire for quiet.

"Mad, my lords! Mad!" shrieked the girl. She would have rushed off down the stoop but Mr. Buckaloo seized her.

Gussie and Bob were making a terrible clatter when Mr. Buckaloo dragged the mad girl inside and slammed the door.

For a moment the noise continued; then all was silent.

A moment after that and a tall figure rose out of the ditch on the other side of the railroad.

It was Old King Brady.

Like a man half blind he staggered across the track and approached the house.

"Heavens, what a gang!" he murmured. "They're pretty near finished me. Can I stand up against them? We shall see."

CHAPTER XII.

BEN MORRIS MEETS A FRIEND.

SPLASH!
"Thunderation! He's drowned himself!"

"Look out! He'll rise again!"

"Shoot him—shoot him as soon as he shows his nose! There's no safety for us now while he lives."

And Mr. Plug Moran bent over the water, while the Count, revolver ready, stood watching for Ben to rise.

A sudden dash, a rush through the reeds and a plunge into the narrow arm of the Hackensack, which set in around the little island upon which the ruined foundry stood.

This is what happened immediately after the attack on Ben and Prof. Fogarty.

But before it took place two shots were fired. One missed Ben; the other took the professor in the arm.

The confusion which followed the yells of the wounded burglar gave Ben the chance which he had just taken.

Plug and the Count rushed after him.

The tail flags gave Ben some little advantage, and now he was gone.

They waited, but the boy did not rise.

"You must have winged him," said Plug.

"I guess he's drowned."

"I tell you I didn't hit him," snarled the count.

"Then where is he?"

"Dead, most likely. The curse of Heaven will come upon me for this job."

The count was deathly pale.

A perspiration had broken out upon his forehead.

Still they waited.

Still nothing was seen of Ben.

"It couldn't be helped," said Plug, at last.

"We can't have a traitor around."

"No, but—"

"He's your own flesh and blood."

"And saved my life at the risk of his own."

"Still he was a traitor."

"A traitor to what? Plug, there is but one end to all this."

"Shut up! No croaking."

"And that's the gallows! Come, let him live if he's still alive."

"No!"

"Yes! I say yes! Not a word, or—"

The count's manner was too threatening to be misunderstood.

Plug muttered something and returned to Fogarty.

"Ah, you've fixed me, byes!" groaned the old man, who lay writhing in agony upon the ground.

"And if we haven't, we'll finish the job," snorted the count. "Here, Plug, let's have a look at the boodie."

But Plug was already looking at it, and now he dropped the first package taken from the bag with a yell of dismay.

"Sold—sucked in!" he yelled.

"What! What!" cried the count, snatching the package from his hand.

"Queer!" he cried. "Queer, by thunder! and old queer at that!"

In his rage he flung the package at Prof. Fogarty's head.

"Plug, this is Buckaloo's work!" he hissed.

"Now for revenge! By the jumping Judas, I'll have that man's life!"

But Ben was not dead—not injured in any way.

Trained from his earliest infancy as a burglar's "kid," Ben Morris was just as sharp and spry as it was possible for a young man to be.

Moreover, Ben had the great advantage of being a splendid swimmer and diver.

Swimming under water was his especial forte.

When he dove into the salt creek, he went down with the deliberate intention of putting as great a distance between himself and his enemies as possible.

When he came up it was close to the bank and many yards away from the point where he had made his perilous dive.

But even then nothing but his head came out. It was among the flags and perfectly concealed from view.

There for a long time he remained, holding on to the bank and watching Plug and the count, whom he could see plainly.

"It's no use talking," he murmured, "men like them are bad all the way through. As to gratitude, why they don't know what the word means. Nana was right. Poor Nana! I've got something to live for now if I hadn't before."

It was revenge he was thinking of.

No boy ever loved a sister more than Ben Morris loved his; and no man or boy ever had a better one.

To Nana's good influence alone was due Ben's determination to be honest and pull himself up out of the horrible associations among which his life had been spent.

Now Ben only partially comprehended the deep plot in which he was mixed up.

It was the same with the count and Plug.

As for Prof. Fogarty and Big Schmitz, they did not know much beyond the fact that a plot existed, of which the scheme of Mr. Buckaloo to have his bank burglarized was a part.

But Ben was destined to know more of the plot before very many hours had passed.

At the end of one hour Ben found himself tramping wearily over the marsh, heading for the Seacaucus station on the Delaware, Lackawanna and Western railroad.

He had watched his chance, crawled ashore and under cover of the flags made his escape.

Now Seacaucus station is at the foot of Snake Hill, at the very gate of the grounds surrounding the penitentiary and other county buildings.

It was with fear and trembling that Ben stood on the station waiting for the train.

He was without a hat and his clothes wet, corn and plastered all over with mud.

The station agent eyed him very suspiciously and then began to question him.

But Ben told a plausible story which allayed the man's suspicions for the moment.

"I'll send up to the penitentiary for some one to come down and look at him," thought the agent. "There'll be half an hour yet before the train comes."

Now if this plan had been carried out it would probably have sealed Ben's fate.

There was a wire connecting with the penitentiary for this very purpose.

The station agent gave the call but just then he had a call himself, for the Lehigh express came thundering up and to his amazement stopped at his station—something it had not done before in six months.

A hot box was the cause.

In a moment the fire was extinguished, and the train went on its way.

When the station agent looked for Ben he was gone.

Then over the wire flew a message to Hoboken to hold the hatless boy who would arrive by the Lehigh express.

But the hatless boy never arrived.

Ben dropped off at the tunnel.

Two hours later he crossed the Jersey City ferry unchallenged and with a new hat on his head.

A few moments later, and he was as effectually lost in the crowded streets of the great city as though he had been in the desert of Sahara.

Ben went straight to the house in Bedford street and pulled the bell.

He lived here with the rest of the gang. It was all the home he had.

He ran up the steps and pulled the bell.

In a moment a frightened-looking woman appeared in answer.

"Oh, you must go away! You must go away!"

she breathed. "Mother Beezee and the doctor have been arrested."

"Arrested!"

"Yes. The police are in the house now, and—here he comes! Skip, Ben—skip!"

The way Ben flew down Bedford street was a caution.

He caught sight of the bluecoat coming through the hall, but he never knew whether he was followed or not.

When he stopped running at last he was somewhere on Hudson street.

Here he paused, utterly discouraged; utterly at a loss what to do.

And if he felt so then, when the shadows of night came creeping over the great city he was even worse.

The afternoon had been spent wandering about the streets.

He was no wiser in regard to Nana's fate than when he left the old foundry hours before.

Shortly after nightfall, on the same principle that the moth flutters back to the candle, which will cause his death, Ben went back to Bedford street.

He was almost a stranger in New York.

Only a few months before this the entire band had come from Chicago.

There was not a solitary person in the whole city to whom the boy could appeal save one.

This was this one who Ben was after now.

He did not seek Mother Beezee's door, however.

There was a light burning in the old woman's window when he slipped by the house.

Probably the police were still there.

It was not likely that they knew all its secrets, however.

Ben felt comparatively safe when he slipped in by the door lower down the block, through which Rube the Rat and Old King Brady had come out.

Ben knew the ropes here.

No one challenged him.

In a few moments he was in the underground den.

It was dark, silent and deserted.

Ben lit a match and touched it to the gas burner in the hall at the foot of the stairs.

As he did so a yell rang out and something shot past him.

"You shan't get me!" shouted the something.

It looked like a bundle of rags struggling in Ben's hands.

"Rube! Rube! don't you know me?"

"Ben!"

"Yes."

"By golly! I sneaked back here puppose, hoping you'd come."

It was Rube the Rat.

True to his name, he had crawled back into his hole.

But what was the matter with the police that those whom Old King Brady had believed to be closely watched had been suffered to escape.

"I'm here, Rube. What's the matter with everybody?"

"Ben, the hull blame biz is busted."

"Yes!"

"Mother Beezee was took in, so was Dr. Bob."

"I know."

"They had me a-lookin' round police headquarters, but I lit out when they wasn't lookin'."

"Arrested too?"

"Naw. Witness."

"And you skipped?"

"You bet. Oh, Ben, it's dreadful about Nana, ain't it?"

"Yes, Rube."

"Dead and buried!"

"Buried already!" gasped Ben, greatly overcome.

"Yair. This morning. Hullly gee! Dr. Bob run her out in no time."

"Where was she buried?" asked Ben, hoarsely.

"Evergreens Cemetery."

"Never heard of it. Do you know where it is, Rube?"

"Do I? Well, now, I just do; and I know more than that."

"What do you mean?"

"Did you ever hear that Mother Beezee had another place out there?"

"Never!"

"Well, she has."

"I don't care. Rube, my heart is broken!"

"Well, yer better mend it again blame quick, for there's something else for you to know."

"What do you mean?"

"Baby Jim."

"Rube!"

"Baby Jim, I say. Them as killed Nana will kill him, and I know something, Ben."

"Rube! For Heaven's sake—"

"Naw—for the sake of a big pot of boodle, Ben, they're going to kill Baby Jim out there this very night."

CHAPTER XIII.

DR. SWEENEY AND DR. BOB.

"WELL, this is something like it," declared Dr. Sweeney, as he lit a fresh cigar. "We'll take a little comfort now, and it's near time, for I'm about beat out."

And Dr. Sweeney poured out another glass of whisky from a black bottle which stood upon the table.

"How's that, Bob?" he demanded of Dr. Greenough, who sat upon the other side of the table blinking at him like an inebriated owl.

"That's all right if you say so, Doc."

Dr. Bob seemed to have something the matter with the vocal chorus.

A sort of temporary paralysis, so to speak.

"Where's Buckaloo?" asked Dr. Sweeney, looking around.

"Dunno!"

"He was here a minute ago."

"He's gone—where the deuce has he gone to?"

"He must have gone up-stairs to see how the girl is getting on."

"Guess not."

"You seem to know!"

"Ha, ha! Look! He's gone down."

Bob began laughing and seemed unable to stop.

He pointed under the table.

There lay Mr. Buckaloo all in a heap.

"Must have slipped out of his chair," chuckled Bob. "Ho, ho, ho! I thought we could put him under the table—eh, doc?"

"Ha, ha! Bet your sweet life, Bob."

They laughed and shook hands over it and had another drink on the strength of it and acted altogether about as silly over it as drunken men usually do.

But a less intoxicated man than Dr. Bob would have seen several things not one of which was visible to the eyes of the young ambulance surgeon.

He would have seen that Dr. Sweeney did not drink the stuff he pretended to drink.

That he kept his hand over the glass—that there was nothing poured out when he pretended to pour it half full.

And all this time Dr. Sweeney was watching Dr. Bob as a cat would watch a mouse.

If he had any scheme for using the young man he had gone about as far as was safe.

A drink or two more and Dr. Bob would surely follow Mr. Buckaloo under the table.

Dr. Sweeney saw all this and stopped just in time.

"That's enough now, Bob," he declared, when Greenough put out his hand for the bottle.

"Not at all. Give me another ball."

"No, I won't. That's enough, I say. We've got business on hand."

"Not to-night."

"Yes, to-night."

"Less wait till to-morrow."

"No, to-night."

"I say less wait till to-morrow."

"Pshaw! You ain't so drunk but what you can do it."

"Drunk—not Who says I'm drunk?"

Dr. Bob made a feeble attempt to straighten himself up.

"Of course you ain't. That's why I say to-night."

"Well, what do you want me to do?"

"We want that *poor mortem*—that's what we want," was the low-spoken reply.

Drunk though he was, Dr. Bob started.

"Look here, none of that, you know. She ain't dead."

"It makes no difference."

"It makes a blame sight of difference."

"No!"

"Yes."

"Look out, Bob Greenough, I can break you."

"By Godfrey, I'm pret'y thoroughly broken now!"

"You'll be worse if you make an enemy of me."

"Do you threaten?"

"Oh, no. I only state in the mildest possible terms that if you refuse you will find yourself in Sing Sing—that's all."

"Bah! You think you are a big man because you happen to be a coroner."

"My dear boy, I'm big enough for you. Quite big enough."

Dr. Bob began to sober up.

"Look here, Sweeney, what's the meaning of

your sudden interest in this case?" he demanded.

"Ha, ha! You're beginning to wake up."

"Blamed if I understand it. You and me are old friends, and when I gave you that tip this morning I never dreamed—"

"Of finding me mixed up in your business."

"Exactly so."

"There are more things in heaven and earth than we have dreamed of in our philosophy, Horatio."

"Quit that. Come out flat-footed. I managed to get bailed out this afternoon and hurried out here to attend to some business of my own, I find you and Buckaloo here with that girl, and—"

"Stop! Stop! There's no use going over all that. Did you once think how I happened to be in the Chambers Street Hospital just when you wanted me?"

"No."

"That fact alone ought to be enough to show you that I know more about your business than you are aware of. You were drunk when you came here. You are drunker now. The best thing you can possibly do is to put yourself in my hands."

"For what?"

"For business. You and your friends, the count and his gang, had a nice little plan to get hold of those millions, but—"

Dr. Bob leaped to his feet.

"What do you know?"

"You fool! What do you suppose I'm here for? You're drunk. Otherwise you would not be so blind."

"You know all?"

"Yes, and more than you do."

"Then your presence here is no accident, as you claimed awhile ago?"

"Not at all. Your mother could have told you that."

"Mother went and took a big dose of morphine after she was arrested, blame her! She tried to tell me something, but I could not make out what it was."

"She and I understand one another, Bob."

"Well, out with it—out with it!"

"You know the Count, of course?"

"Well, rather."

"You know he is Nana's uncle?"

"Of course."

"He found out by the merest accident, shortly after he located his gang at your mother's house, that Nana, Ben and the baby Jim, son of their dead sister, were entitled to an estate worth more than a million."

"Well, I know all that."

"Of course you do. Now hold on. All this information came to the count through the death of an old lawyer who had the matter in charge and had been fattening on this property for years."

"I know, I know."

"It was concealed from Nana and Ben of course. The matter was talked over between the count and myself and we came to the conclusion that inasmuch as he was the next heir after these children the best thing to be done was to put them quietly out of the way. For that reason he made a bargain with you to—"

But right here Dr. Bob interrupted by bringing his fist down upon the table with a bang.

"By thunder! You do know!"

"Did you think I didn't?"

"I never dreamed you know. How did you find out?"

"By a very simple process, my dear fellow. I happen to be the doctor who was called in when old Simons died."

Dr. Bob looked blank.

"Then you are the man who heard his confession, who first gave the count the steer?"

"I am the identical individual."

"But that don't give you any hold on the matter. The count is the only man who could get the papers."

"True."

"And he got them."

"Just so."

"Without the papers you can do nothing."

"But I have the papers."

"Hello!"

"You begin to understand."

"The Count is in Snake Hill!"

"Exactly. That's more of my work."

"You had him sent there?"

"I worked that little racket to the queen's taste."

"And the papers?"

"I persuaded him to give them up to me when he found that he was convicted."

"Well—well!"

"You have seen the papers?"

"Yea; he read them to me."

"You know that Buckaloo has to sign the transfers, as one of the executors?"

"Thunder, no!"

"Then the Count only showed you part."

"It begins to look so."

"He told you about a crysolite cross?"

"He said that such a cross would have to be produced before the estates could be recovered, and that he could produce it."

"He did not tell you how and where he expected to get it?"

"No."

"Then the fact is what he told you is only a very small part of the whole?"

"And you know the rest?"

Dr. Bob, Buckaloo and I are old chums. The whole thing is in our hands, I've got the papers, the count is in the penitentiary. Plug and Prof. Fogarty only know a part of the business, and not at all enough to enable them to act."

"Well!"

"The cross next. We alone know where it is. The count never had it and never could have got it. Unless it is shown the other signature necessary to obtain control of these estates cannot be obtained."

"Where is the cross?"

"Ah! Now we are coming to it. That same crysolite cross is in the stomach of that crazy girl up-stairs, Dr. Bob Greenough, she swallowed it last night."

"Swallowed it! What nonsense! Great heavens, man, it would have killed her long ago."

"All the same she swallowed it and it didn't kill her."

"But I can't believe it."

"Just as you like. It's in her stomach, though."

"And this is the great secret that you have been hinting at. This is why you are so anxious to have me commit murder?"

"You've hit it. Now you know the truth."

For a few moments there was profound silence.

Though not sobered by the revelation just made to him, Dr. Bob at least acted like a sober man.

"Then the whole business is in your hands?" he asked.

"Yes, and yours too."

"Wha—what do you mean?"

"I mean just this. You were hired by the Count to dispose of Nana, of Ben and the baby."

"Great heavens! You know that too?"

"Ay, and more," breathed Dr. Sweeney, leaning over the table.

"When you found Nana in your ambulance you thought you had been saved the trouble."

"That's so."

"You thought she was dead, but you found she wasn't, and you were horribly disappointed—why?"

"You who know so much ought to know that."

"I do."

"Well?"

"Through your mother the count had promised you \$5,000 when the girl died, \$5,000 for Ben and \$2,000 for the baby. Therefore you gave Nana a dose of morphine when you found she was not dead in the hope of harrying her off."

"By heavens! You can't prove it! You can't prove it!" cried Dr. Greenough, springing to his feet.

"I can."

"How?"

"I have proof."

Dr. Bob looked decidedly sick. His face was as white as a sheet.

He danced nervously about the room as he asked:

"Well, what do you want?"

"Ah, you are ready to come to terms?"

"Yes."

"Well, then, doctor, my modest request may be stated in a few words—I want the crysolite cross."

"In other words, you want me to do murder."

"An ugly word."

"That's what it amounts to. Doctor, I'm in a bad position. Mother is in the hands of the police. The old baby farming business will be brought up against her, and—"

"And she is pretty sure to be sent up."

"Almost certain, unless we can buy her off. I confess to you that there was no bailing out in my case. How could there be when there was no examination even? I used my political pull and escaped—that's all."

"I understand. You are liable to be arrested."

"At any moment. Especially if Old King Brady, the detective, should happen to get his eyes on me."

"There's no danger of that."
 "Why not?"
 "I've settled him."
 "Not dead."
 "As good as dead. Come, doctor, you'll perform the operation."
 "Why don't you do it yourself, doctor?"
 "Why, my dear doctor, I confess to you that I am no surgeon—I am not able to do it."
 Dr. Bob looked very nervous.
 "If you can prove to me that you have the papers I'll do it," he breathed, "that is, provided I can see some surety of getting my share."
 "What do you consider your share?"
 "One quarter of the property."
 "Ridiculous!"
 "It must be that or nothing."
 "But I agreed with your mother—"
 "My mother and I are two different persons, as you will soon find out if you have dealings with us. It's a quarter or I won't work, doctor. I little dreamed this morning when I gave you that tip we'd be squabbling over thousands before—what's that?"
 "Noise under the table—Brother Buckaloo coming to life."
 So said Dr. Sweeney, but Dr. Bob was not satisfied.
 He took up the lamp and looked under the table for himself.
 There lay Mr. Buckaloo in a profound slumber.
 Yet the noise had been sharp and distinct.
 "Guess it don't amount to anything," said Bob, who, through the intense interest that had been aroused in him, had become pretty well sobered up. "Is it a go, doctor?"
 "Well, yes. I suppose I shall have to yield, although I think your demand exorbitant."
 "Not a bit—not a bit!" exclaimed Dr. Bob, who had shown himself a good bargainer.
 "Let's see your papers. And if you are agreeable to my terms, there is nothing to hinder us from going right to work."
 "How do you know I have them with me?"
 "Oh, I'm sure you have."
 "Doctor, you're a shrewder man than I gave you credit for."
 "You thought to drink me crazy. No, sir! It can't be done. Let's see the papers."
 "You shall see them. We'll settle the business at once."
 Dr. Sweeney took a small package from his pocket and laid it upon the table.
 He was just untying the red tape which held it together, when to the intense amazement of both himself and Dr. Bob a tall form suddenly rose up between them, covering Dr. Sweeney with one revolver and Dr. Bob with another.
 "Gentlemen, I'll trouble you for those papers!" cried a clear ringing voice.
 "Old King Brady, the detective!"
 Dr. Sweeney and Dr. Bob pronounced the dread name simultaneously.
 Both started back and Dr. Bob lost his balance.
 Over went his chair backward, sending the inebriated ambulance surgeon sprawling.
 At the same instant the hand of the detective closed upon the papers and the lamp was suddenly extinguished.
 "Good-evening, doctors. Sorry to have troubled you, but business is business. Let me advise you to drop your little game."
 Spoken in the dark these words sounded almost like a ghostly warning.
 Profound silence followed.
 Neither doctor for a moment dared to speak.
 Was the detective still there?
 They no more knew than they knew how he came to be in the room.
 The door was locked, the windows were fastened.
 If ever two men felt certain that they were enjoying a private conversation these were the two and yet there was the detective whom Dr. Sweeney had confidently boasted was effectually but out of the way.
 "Doctor! Doctor!" breathed the coroner, at last.
 "Well."
 "Light the lamp."
 "Light it yourself."
 "Mr. Brady, a word with you."
 The unsteadiness of Dr. Sweeney's voice showed how greatly he was alarmed.
 There was no answer.
 "Has he gone?" asked the coroner.
 "Blest if I can tell you."
 "Mr. Brady!" called the coroner again.
 Still no answer.
 Now Dr. Sweeney ventured to strike a match.
 They were alone.
 Alone, at least, but for the presence of the

drunken banker Buckaloo, who still lay in a profound sleep under the table.
 Mysteriously Old King Brady had appeared among them, and with equal mystery he had departed, yet the doors and windows still remained as securely fastened as before.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE BLACK DOCTOR UNMASKED.

"CAN you imagine how Old King Brady got into the room?" asked Dr. Sweeney, after every square inch of the apartment had been searched in vain for some trace of the detective.
 No. Dr. Bob could not imagine.
 And he so stated.
 The two doctors stood there looking very blank.
 The papers had vanished and with them all chance of the success of their plot apparently.
 And yet in spite of all while they stood there talking Old King Brady was within hearing—was listening to every word.
 It was all very simple.
 The only trouble was that Dr. Bob did not know quite as much as his mother.
 Had the old baby farmer been on hand she would have known just where to look.
 She would have pushed aside the table and moved Mr. Buckaloo.
 Then touching a secret spring she would have revealed a trap right under the table.
 This would have disclosed an entrance to an unsuspected cellar beneath the house.
 Now of all this Dr. Bob was ignorant.
 He, like every one else who did not know the ropes, imagined there was no cellar beneath the house, because there was no visible sign of it either inside or out.
 But Old King Brady was better posted than Bob.
 Recovering at last from the effects of the stone, the detective followed on after the plotters as has been already shown.
 When he came in sight of the house and heard all the racket which preceded Dr. Bob's appearance, he watched and waited in the calm assurance that he held winning cards of which these men never dreamed.
 He knew the house of old.
 Here, years before, he tracked the ex-New York alderman, James McGroaty, who subsequently proved to be one of the most expert queer-shovers of the age.
 McGroaty was arrested and sent to Sing Sing for a long term, from which sentence death shortly brought release.
 At the time he was believed to be very wealthy, but when a search came to be made for his property no trace could be found of it.
 Mrs. McGroaty was just dead at the time, and the children—there were two girls and a baby boy—were too young to have any knowledge of the matter.
 Later a brother of the ex-alderman appeared, and there was further search for the property.
 It resulted in nothing.
 Then the brother disappeared and the children with him.
 After that the public promptly forgot the McGroatys.
 Even Old King Brady did not know that the alderman's housekeeper, having changed her name to Beezee, continued to live right on in one of the houses which McGroaty was believed to have owned.
 But now the memory of all these matters came back to the detective when he discovered that he was standing before the very house which had figured so prominently in the affair.
 "I rather think I know how to get in here," the detective chuckled.
 He walked over to a shed in the rear of the house and broke open the door.
 Here in one corner he discovered the secret trap which he had used years before.
 Time had changed nothing.
 The harmless little house was a snare and a delusion, being fairly riddled with secret passages.
 Only two persons survived who knew these.
 One was Old King Brady, the detective, and the other Mother Beezee.
 The trap in the shed led directly to the concealed cellar.
 Thus when Dr. Sweeney and Dr. Bob began their conversation they began it in the presence of an unseen witness.
 Old King Brady, the detective, as usual was on hand.
 He was listening to them now.
 Calmly seated on a barrel, with his ear to a skillfully arranged tube, which, hidden in the fireplace in the room above, caught every word

that was spoken, he was listening to their talk and hearing it all as plainly as though he had been in the room with them.
 "What's to be done?" Dr. Sweeney was asking.
 But Dr. Bob didn't know.
 "You have no idea how he got here or where he went to?"
 Dr. Bob had not the faintest idea.
 They searched the room again—went all over the same old ground, but they did not find the trap.
 At last Dr. Sweeney spoke:
 "Look here, Bob, there's just one thing to be done. I've shown the papers. They know I have them. Let's get the crysolite cross, and see what we can do with that fellow. He may sign without demanding the papers again."
 "Sign what? Ain't the document to be signed with the rest of the papers that infernal detective stole?"
 "No. He has it."
 "Who is this mysterious he?"
 "If I told you that you would know as much as I do."
 "But he'll get there ahead of us."
 "It ain't sure."
 For a moment Dr. Bob hesitated.
 "Come! I'll do it and take the chances," he exclaimed. "I don't know what to think about this detective business."
 "What do you mean?"
 "I mean that I begin to think that we have been both deceived. That it wasn't the detective after all."
 "Pshaw! I've known Old King Brady too long for that," said Sweeney, and they both left the room.
 "Now then," murmured the detective. "I shall take one of those fellow and let the other go, for it is impossible for me to handle both. Which shall it be?"
 He jumped off his barrel and hurried to the furthest corner of the cellar.
 Here was a secret staircase leading to the rooms above.
 We have mentioned already that the house was of peculiar construction, but we have yet to tell that the walls of all the larger rooms were double.
 Old King Brady had already had a look at poor Nana.
 The drugged girl was sleeping quietly when he saw her in the room directly over that in which the conversation between the two doctors had taken place.
 Slipping noiselessly up the stairs, the detective pressed his eye to a carefully arranged peephole and peered through into the room.
 It was dark.
 He could not see Nana, but he thought he could hear her breathe.
 But there was no time to investigate.
 He was surprised that the two doctors were not already there ahead of him.
 Softly he opened the secret panel and slipped in under the bed.
 Nor was he a bit too soon.
 Almost in the same instant a key grated in the lock, the door opened, and Dr. Sweeney and Dr. Bob stole in.
 "She sleeps, poor thing," muttered Bob. "It does seem a shame, doctor."
 "Pshaw! What's one life more or less. Wait till you've practiced as long as I have and you will not hesitate."
 "I won't kill her—I swear I won't. You'll have to do that."
 "Very good! I'll do it. A few morphine pills will do the business—she need never know."
 "She was a quiet thing. It seems hard."
 "Don't funk now, doctor, at the last moment."
 "But how did she come to fall into Buckaloo's hands? How did she come to be in that bank vault? Do you who know so much know that?"
 "Indeed I don't. Here, let's have a little light on the subject."
 "No, no! She may wake."
 "No fear," said Dr. Sweeney, as he lit the gas. "Ah, that infernal detective! How I wish I had been less squeamish and given him a few of these pills when I had the chance."
 He drew from his pocket a medicine case and spread it open upon the bureau.
 From this he took two or three small pills and advanced toward the bed.
 But the sleeper did not get the pills.
 Suddenly two strong hands clutched Dr. Sweeney's legs and pulled.
 Although a full-fledged New York coroner, duly elected on the straight Tammany ticket, Dr. Sweeney was but human.

When his legs were pulled forward toward the bed, there was no help for it—his body had to go backward.

Suddenly violently Dr. Sweeney was thrown against the washstand, and thence to the floor.

With a cry of terror, Dr. Bob would have bolted out of the room, but unfortunately Dr. Sweeney had bolted the door, and locked it as well, and the key was even then in his pocket.

"Hold! Don't you dare move, doctor!" shouted the detective.

He seemed to rise at Dr. Bob's very feet, and there was the revolver ready to enforce obedience to his commands.

Dr. Sweeney, stunned by the fall never moved. Now all this happened in an instant.

The next and Old King Brady had clapped the handcuffs upon Dr. Bob.

"That settles your part in the case, my friend," he said, quietly.

Dr. Bob used bad language—very.

"Sit down and be quiet," ordered Old King Brady. "We must see if this scoundrel is dead."

"Not he," muttered Bob. "He's too hard-headed for that."

"I believe you! Oh, you're a precious pair."

Old King Brady arose and satrating a towel with bay rum from a bottle which stood on the washstand proceeded to apply it to the coroner's forehead.

Now a very singular thing happened.

Dr. Bob watching the operation saw it all. Wherever the wet towel touched the face of Dr. Sweeney his white skin seemed to vanish.

"Holy Gee!" cried Dr. Bob, forgetting his professional dignity at the strange sight.

Nor was Old King Brady less astonished.

"For heaven sake what does this mean?" he exclaimed.

He gave Dr. Sweeney's face a wipe downward with the wet towel.

A long streak of black followed the wipe.

"He's a nigger! A nigger!" bawled Dr. Bob.

"By the living Caesar, this is great!"

"What—what's the matter?" gasped the coroner, suddenly coming to his senses. "Hyar, you stop dat. Hi, dar, I—"

He panted suddenly.

With one leap he was on his feet and a razor in his hand.

So suddenly had he leaped up that he managed to overturn Old King Brady.

At the same time Dr. Bob leaped upon the detective and struck him squarely over the temples with his manacled hands.

"Don't—don't slash him! I've done the business!" he breathed. "There's no use of covering the floor with blood."

And most effectually, it would seem, had he done the business, for Old King Brady never moved.

It was a peculiar scene.

There stood Dr. Sweeney looking like a negro minstrel, with a half washed face.

He still clutched the razor and was breathing heavily.

For Dr. Bob, handcuffed though he was, had managed to seize the detective's revolver.

There was an ngly look on his face, which warned the coroner to be calm.

"You'd better put up that razor, doctor," said the ambulance surgeon.

"When you drop that gun maybe I will!" the coroner growled.

They glared at each other in silence.

"Pahaw!" exclaimed Dr. Bob. "What's the use of our quarreling? Nigger, or no nigger, the game is in our hands."

Dr. Sweeney gave a great gulp.

"What do you mean by calling me a nigger?" he hissed.

"What do I mean? Look in the glass."

Dr. Sweeney turned toward the mirror.

"Unmasked at last, by thunder!" he breathed.

"You are a negro!" breathed Dr. Bob.

"You see!"

"A negro—and named Sweeney! By heavens, it is great!"

His eyes were upon the doctor's hair.

It was short, black and curly.

Unmistakably the wool of a negro. Dr. Bob wondered how he ever could have been deceived.

"What does it mean?" he breathed. "It's none of my business, of course, but—"

But Dr. Sweeney by this time had recovered himself.

Black or white he was a shrewd and dangerous man, and he showed it now.

"Yes, I am a negro," he said, slowly, at the same time shutting up the razor and putting it in his pocket. "I am a negro. What then?"

"Well, it's none of my business, I suppose," muttered Bob, letting down the hammer of the revolver.

"Excuse me; but it is your business, doctor."

"As you please."

"I shall explain."

"I am curious to know the truth, but more than that I would like to get those bracelets off my wrists."

"I'll attend to that first."

"I wish you would."

Silently the black doctor bent over Old King Brady.

"Here are the papers," he muttered, as his hands went deftly through the detective's pockets.

He thrust the papers in the loose pocket of his coat, and in a moment straightened up with the detective's bunch of keys in his hands.

Dr. Bob was free in a few seconds.

"Is he dead?" he breathed.

"I think he is," said the black doctor, after a brief examination.

"But we can't take any chances. We must finish him."

"Here, this will settle him."

Dr. Sweeney's hand trembled as he did it. He seized the medicine case, opened it, took out a bottle, opened the bottle and forced half a dozen capsules into the detective's mouth.

"What is it?"

"Five grains of najendie."

"That will settle him if there's any life left, but—"

"What?"

"We can't take any chances."

"Not a chance."

"We must dispose of him so that he will never come to the surface again."

"What do you propose?"

"There is the well in the yard."

"Deep?"

"Yes, indeed."

"We'll do it! We'll talk when it's done."

Dr. Sweeney then unlocked the door, and together they raised the unconscious detective and carried him from the room.

It was fully ten minutes before they returned, Dr. Sweeney locked the door and dropped into a chair.

"Still sleeping," he murmured, looking at the girl.

"Yes, We have it all our own way now."

"All our own way if you decide to stick to me."

"I shall do it."

"You will not betray me?"

"I have all I can do to mind my own business. I shall not interfere with yours."

"Good! You will not regret it. Confound my carelessness! It's all my own fault. Look here."

He went to the washstand, and, taking up the bay rum bottle, saturated the towel with its contents and washed his face.

Now most thoroughly was the mask removed.

"What is it?" asked Dr. Bob.

"A secret preparation, the ingredients of which are known only to myself."

"And which you won't tell me?"

"Excuse me—no."

"Soluble in alcohol, but not in water?"

"That's it. Doctor, I have worn that mask successfully for thirty years."

"But how—"

"How did I come to adopt it? It's a long story. I was the body servant of a most skillful chemist in Richmond, Virginia, as a boy. He taught me my business, and through him I learned the secret. I knew my color would stand against me always, and I determined to be a white man. How well I have succeeded, you know."

"It seems incredible."

"It's true, though. With that face I went through the medical college. I have figured in all sorts of public positions, but never once was I betrayed until now."

"Yet your speech just now—"

"Once in a while when I am excited I forget myself, but not often. Enough! To-night I am the black doctor. It is well, for we are about to do a black deed. Ha, ha! I'm rather glad than otherwise that some one knows the truth, for it is a relief to be natural just once."

"I suppose so. Shall we go to it?"

"Yes."

"Now?"

"The sooner the better. With the girl Gussie drugged, Buckaloo dead drunk and the detective at the bottom of the well, it is not likely that we shall be interfered with now."

They removed their coats and prepared for business.

Dr. Sweeney produced a case of instruments, and spread them out upon the bureau.

"I wonder what his name really is," thought

Dr. Bob, as he eyed these preparations. "Bless my soul! there never was a truer saying than that one half of the world don't know how the other half lives."

"There you are, doctor," said the coroner.

"Ready?" faltered Bob.

"Yes."

"Ain't you going to give her the 'morphine first?"

"How much has she had?"

"Since morning when I gave her the first dose about four grains."

"How much the last dose?"

"Half a grain."

"She sleeps sound. I doubt if she needs it."

"Still you better do it. Give her a couple of grains, and we'll wait fifteen minutes for it to act. There'll be no danger of the poor thing suffering any after that."

"Well, all right, if you say so," assented Sweeney.

And the black doctor took four capsules and forced them between the lips of the sleeping girl.

"It was as Dr. Bob had said—a black deed, sure enough."

And as if Heaven itself frowned upon such evil doings, at the same instant a heavy clap of thunder was heard without.

It rolled and rattled, causing the frail structure to tremble as it rumbled away over the city of the dead.

CHAPTER XV.

THE GHOST IN THE WELL.

"SAY, Ben, it's getting terrible dark."

"So it is, Rube, but we must be almost there."

"Mebbe you took de wrong path."

"Balsam avenue was what the man said, but I don't see the big iron ball."

"No, nor the marble baby in de glass case."

"Let's see, we'll come to a sign soon."

And the two boys hurried on along the narrow path.

Soon they came to one of the iron signs which in the Evergreen cemetery tell the names of the paths.

It was not Balsam avenue.

"A mistake, sure enough," exclaimed Ben Morris, for it is no one less than our hero and Rube the Rat of whom we are speaking now.

Hours had passed since Ben for the second time went to Bedford street.

Following his fixed determination he made Rube guide him to the cemetery.

They arrived at the great gate just in time to see it close for the night and to be told that they could not come in.

Ben was in despair.

He was so hungry and so tired and so oppressed by all that had occurred, that Rube, if he had but known it, was nearer dealing with an insane person than he was aware.

One fixed idea seemed to have taken possession of the young man, and that was to see his sister's grave.

What was to be done now!

To go back was something Ben utterly refused to consider.

He could climb the fence easy enough, but how to find the grave when it was done?

Now right here fortune favored him, for out of the cemetery came two grave-diggers, looking not at all like the far-famed grave-digger in Hamlet, but very much like two newly-arrived delegates from the Emerald Isle.

Ben tackled the grave-diggers.

He understood just how to handle them.

He took them into the nearest beer saloon, and those who know the lay of the land around the gate of the Evergreens need not be told that he did not have to go far.

When they came out of the beer saloon Ben knew, or thought he knew, just where the new receiving-vault was located, for, as it happened, these two grave-diggers were the very ones who had put poor Nana's coffin in.

Ten minutes later Ben and Rube were in the cemetery.

No closed gate could keep them out.

They had been very careful to follow the directions given them by the grave-diggers.

They were to follow a certain path so far, then turn into another certain path, and follow that so much further.

After that they were to come to a certain army officer's monument, with a huge iron ball on top of it, and beyond that the statue of a baby under glass.

It was all very plain when they heard it, but it all seemed very much muddled now.

As Rube the Rat plaintively stated they could not find the cannon ball nor the marble baby in the glass case.

Balsam avenues also seemed to evade them. There was fir avenue, larch beach, oak and chestnut avenues—everything but balsam, and that was not to be discovered anywhere.

By this time it was quite dark, and a gathering storm made it even darker.

Just then they suddenly came to the end of the cemetery.

Before them was the fence and beyond the fence the railroad, and beyond the railroad, away off in the distance, the little country seat of Mother Beezee.

"Great golly!" cried Rube, "there's the ranch!"

"What do you mean?" demanded Ben.

Then Rube explained that Mother Beezee, bothered by the police in her baby farming business in Bedford street, had for some years been conducting it in the house now before them.

"You've been there often?" asked Ben.

"Many a time. Blame funny house it is, too."

"How?"

Rube gave a strange chuckle, but would not tell what he meant.

After that they spent over an hour looking for the receiving vault.

At last Ben gave it up.

Either they had been directed wrong, or he was excessively stupid.

It was perfectly evident that they were lost among the tombs.

Just about the time they arrived at this conclusion, they suddenly found themselves at the fence again, in about the place where they had been before.

"By golly! here we are again!" exclaimed Rube.

He peered through the pallings and kept right on talking about the baby farm.

Suddenly it occurred to him that Ben was not answering.

He looked around.

Ben was lying on the grass stretched out at full length upon his face.

Hope having given place to despair Ben had suddenly collapsed.

He had fainted dead away.

But it was only for a few moments—moments which seemed like hours to the despairing Rube.

After that Ben was Ben again, but he was very much shaken, and sat there upon the bank the very picture of despair.

"Say," suggested Rube, "let's go over to the house. There ain't nobody there but Gussie. She'll give us some grub and you can go to sleep for a little while."

And they went.

It had begun to rain when they entered the yard.

A sharp lightning flash, followed by a clap of thunder, told the nature of the gathering storm.

Ben had revived somewhat, but was still feeling pretty sick.

The house was dark, save for a solitary light burning in the window which Rube declared was the window of Mother Beezee's own room.

"I don't think we had better go in here," said Ben. "I'd rather go back to the city."

"But where shall we go?" asked Rube, dolefully.

Here was the rub.

It seemed lolly to think of going back to Bedford street. Where should they go, sure enough?

The boys leaned against the curb of the well and talked it over, but could come to no conclusion.

Meanwhile, the rain had stopped again but the thunder and lightning continued.

"Pshaw! Let's go in!" exclaimed Rube at last. "It is nobody but Gussie and you won't mind her."

"Well, perhaps we'd better; but I'm awful dry, Rube. Let's get a drink of water out of this well if there's any in it."

"It used to be dry, but there might be water in it now."

There was a bucket and windlass attached to the well and the boys let it down.

But instead of striking water the bucket was suddenly seized by some unseen power and the rope violently agitated.

At the same time a deep voice was heard calling from the bottom of the well.

"Hello, up there! Hello!"

"Good golly! Ghosts!" gasped Rube, letting go the rope and starting back.

"Nonsense! There's some one in the well!" exclaimed Ben.

But Rube would not come near.

Ben leaned over the curb of the well and called down.

The answer came promptly:

"Hello, friend! Will you pull me out?"

"Who are you?" demanded Ben, much mystified.

"A fellow creature in distress. For the love of Heaven pull me out!"

"Here, Rube! There's a man down there. He must have tumbled into the well. We must pull him out!" declared Ben.

He seemed suddenly to have become as well as ever.

He only needed something to arouse him from the despair into which he had fallen.

Rube responded, and they went to work on the windlass together.

In a moment a man's head and shoulders appeared above the well curb.

"Old King Brady, the detective!"

Ben nearly let go the rope in his amazement as he gazed out these words.

"Hold on! Hold on, Ben Morris!" said the detective. "Don't you let me drop!"

Ben held on, and the old detective, as spry as ever, leaped out of the well.

"Boy, give an account of yourself!" he exclaimed. "How—heavens! Why, here's my old friend, Rube the Rat! He has saved my life again."

CHAPTER XVI.

RESCUE AND CAPTURE.

"AND is that your story?"

"That's my story."

"Boy, I have wronged you—give me your hand!"

That is what Old King Brady said to Ben Morris five minutes after the detective came out of the well.

For Ben had related in a general way the happenings of the last few hours.

One important point he omitted entirely, however.

This was all mention of Snake Hill and a certain individual called the count.

And there was the old detective looking down upon him as calmly as though there were no such things in life as handcuffs and morphine pills.

Of course Old King Brady knew all about the blow from the handcuffs.

But if the handcuffs were hard the detective's head was harder.

As for the morphine pills, Old King Brady knew nothing about them.

Could he have known the actual truth, he would have known that the black doctor, in the excitement of the moment, had made a mistake and administered the wrong capsules.

Doctors often make mistakes.

Generally the mistakes of doctors do harm, but in this instance it was just the other way.

The capsules administered by Dr. "Sweeney" to the detective were perfectly harmless, for the excellent reason that they had nothing in them but air—they were waiting to be filled.

Now it was enough to breed black despair in the heart of any man to find himself in the situation that Old King Brady found himself in when consciousness returned to him at the bottom of the well.

But it was not to be for long.

Twice the detective had tried to climb up, falling back each time, when he heard the voices of the boys talking at the well curb.

What happened after that the reader knows.

Once more, by a combination of events which seemed almost miraculous, the detective's life had been saved.

"Now, then, I have something to tell you, Ben Morris, which will open your eyes," said the detective, kindly, as they stood under the little shed behind the house watching the rain, which had again begun to descend.

"What is it?" Ben asked.

"You say the young lady who called upon me is your sister?"

"She was."

"You believe her to be dead and buried?"

"Why, I know she is dead, Mr. Brady, and—"

"You are wrong. She is not dead—at least, I hope not. She is in the hands of two black scoundrels in that house."

"What!"

Ben made one bound, and would have run out of the shed had not the detective caught him.

"Wait, young man; haste will accomplish nothing. We must save your sister, but in order to do it we must be calm."

"What shall we do—what shall we do?"

"You and I will go into the house and do our best. Rube!"

"Yes, boss."

"I don't know how you escaped, you rascal, but I'm glad you did."

"Rats can crawl troo small holes, boss."

"Do you know this neighborhood?"

"Like a book."

"Run down to Broadway. Near Moffat street you will find a livery stable. Hire a coach and let them drive you to the corner of Pilling street and Bushwick avenue. There wait till I come."

"Great gosh! No one won't be fool enough to hire me no coach!"

"Yes they will when you pay in advance—here."

And the detective slipped a bill into the boy's hand.

Rube was off like a flash.

Old King Brady had already searched his pockets.

He had two other revolvers beside the one Dr. Bob had taken and he knew they were both safe.

He gave one to Ben and opening the door of an outhouse connected with the shed, motioned to the boy to enter.

Now in this outhouse was the hidden trap-door which communicated with the secret cellar.

There was nothing to prevent Old King Brady from going straight back to the room from which he had been removed.

Meanwhile matters in the room had advanced slowly.

The dose given Nana had been from the same box which supplied Old King Brady.

Of course it did the girl no harm, and as the effects of the morphine previously given had now nearly spent itself, no worse opportunity for the operation could have been selected.

The ten minutes were increased to twenty.

Still Nana did not breathe to suit the doctors. Hence their hesitation.

"What in time is the matter?" muttered Dr. Bob, after an examination. "Her heart beats stronger every minute. She acts for all the world like a person who was waking up."

"It can't be," persisted the black doctor.

"Sure your pills are fresh?" asked Bob.

"I never make mistakes, doctor!" declared Sweeney, with a great show of insulted dignity.

"Well, just examine her heart for yourself."

Dr. Sweeney bent over the patient, and was in the midst of his examination, when suddenly to Dr. Bob's intense astonishment he tumbled over backward.

"Help—murder! Some one's got my legs!" he yelled, as a fearful thunderclap shook the house.

Dr. Bob sprang to the rescue.

Bang! went the back of the black doctor's head upon the floor.

"Move and you are a dead man!" called a voice from under the bed.

"Holy Gee!" roared Dr. Bob, springing back in spite of the injunction.

For there under the bed were two faces peering at him, and the gleaming barrels of two revolvers pointed directly at his head.

All this in a second.

Then out leaped Old King Brady and Ben.

"Cover him, boy!" breathed the detective, indicating the black doctor, who not as badly stunned as before was trying to rise.

Ben jumped upon the black doctor.

Literally sitting down upon him he pressed the revolver against his head.

By this time the detective had Dr. Bob by the throat.

"Old King Brady! Great heavens, what is this?" gasped Sweeney.

But the detective's answer was to seize the handcuffs from the bureau where Dr. Bob had tossed them when Sweeney took them off.

They were snapped in their old place in a second.

"Gentlemen," said the detective, "I am here again. The least trouble you make me the less you will have yourselves. Ben, take care of this fellow. I'll take your man now."

The black doctor was completely cowed.

"For heaven sake, Brady, be merciful!" he whined; "only for me you'd be a dead man now."

"Bah! What nonsense. Get up!"

Dr. Sweeney arose heavily.

The detective proceeded to tie his hands behind him.

He then searched both men thoroughly.

Of course the papers came back into his possession then.

Not a word was spoken.

Old King Brady would not have it.

He felt that there had been talk enough.

"Get over there!" he said, roughly pushing the black doctor toward the window so that Ben could keep him covered with the other hand.

"May I speak a word?" asked Dr. Bob, who had been twice told to hold his tongue.

"What do you want? Speak quick!"

"I'll turn State's evidence against that black scoundrel. The jig is up; it's every man for himself."

"What's that? Let me get at him!" suddenly bawled the black doctor.

He leaped up.

Naturally Ben sprang in front of him.

But the coroner, instead of leaping forward, suddenly turned, flung up the window and leaped out before either of his enemies could raise a hand to prevent.

Bang! Bang!

Both Ben and Old King Brady fired.

Both missed.

The black doctor's bold move had succeeded. He was gone.

Perhaps Old King Brady might have leaped after him, but at the same instant Nana sat upright on the bed.

"Ben! Ben!" she screamed. "Save me, Ben!"

And who could blame Ben Morris from hurrying to his sister's side?

Not Old King Brady certainly.

This made it necessary for him to give his attention to Dr. Bob.

And the result was that when the detective did get down into the yard below the black doctor had disappeared in the darkness and storm.

But Old King Brady did not care.

He knew well that Dr. Sweeney's political influence was great.

Once he restored his mask and brought his political pull to bear it would certainly be a dangerous business to attempt to unmask him.

"Perhaps I can get along without it, and strike him later when I have made sure of the McGroaty million," thought Old King Brady as he returned to the room above.

He had tied Dr. Bob to a chair and there he found him upon entering.

Ben held Nana in his arms and was talking to her in low tones.

"She's all right, Mr. Brady!" he exclaimed, as the detective entered. "She is not mad, as you said."

"You poor child!" said the old man, stroking her forehead. "How you have suffered! Don't try to say a word now. We will leave this place as soon as the rain is over."

And he left the brother and sister alone together.

Picking Dr. Bob and the chair up bodily, he carried them out into the hall and shut the door.

Here he carefully questioned the ambulance surgeon.

The replies received were sullen and unsatisfactory.

One thing was settled, however.

The detective's belief that Dr. Bob knew next to nothing about the business was confirmed.

Half an hour after that there was not a cloud in the sky, the storm having vanished in the north-east.

Traveling over the ties of the Manhattan Beach Railroad a singular procession could have been seen moving.

There was Dr. Bob and Old King Brady, arm in arm.

Following them came Ben, with Nana leaning heavily against him, while bringing up the rear was a sleepy-looking girl, with something wrapped in a shawl cuddled in her arms.

The girl answered to the name of Gussie when the detective spoke to her.

As she pressed the baby against her breast she called it "Jimmy."

Ben and Nana knew it as their dead sister's child, who, as they supposed, had been placed with a respectable wet nurse upon their arrival in the city.

Great was their surprise when Old King Brady brought it into the room in his arms, followed by the blinking Gussie, who was so heavy with her drugged sleep that the detective had all he wanted to do to arouse her.

Such was the procession which appeared at the corner of Baswick avenue and Pilling street.

"Hello! here they come," shouted a ragged urchin, ranning down the bill, which occupied that corner in those days.

Of course it was Rube the Rat.

"De coach is all ready for you, boss," he declared. "It's right down here."

He led the way down Pilling street.

There stood the hack, which had ventured no farther on account of the bad condition of the street.

Old King Brady opened the door and helped his charges to enter.

First Nana and Ben, then Gussie and the baby.

For Dr. Bob and himself to squeeze in was impossible, and then there was Rube to be thought of besides.

"Ben, you take care of them," said Old King Brady. "Rube can go on the box with the driver, and I'll take this fellow along with me by the cars."

"Oh, yes; don't bother about me, I beg," said Bob. "Anything goes for me to-night. I'm ready to walk across the ferry if you wish, but for Heaven's sake take me some place where I can get a drink."

"That's all right, Mr. Brady," said Ben, "only there's one thing in the way. Where are we to go?"

"I'm coming to that. You have money?"

"Less than two dollars."

"Here are ten. Go to the Astor House and present my card. Do not leave the hotel till you hear from me."

He slammed the door of the coach and they were driven down Pilling street to Broadway, around which corner they soon disappeared.

"Did I hear you remark that you wanted a drink?" asked Old King Brady, turning to Bob.

Now Bob was close to the detective, and for an excellent reason.

Not only was he handcuffed, but he was also fastened to the detective's arm.

"Well, yes, I don't mind, seeing it's you," replied Bob, who looked very forlorn.

"Perhaps we'll strike something at the ferry."

"What ferry?"

"Williamsburg."

"Are you going that way?"

"It's the shortest."

"Where are you taking me?"

"Well, really, I'll not trouble myself to tell you, but there are a few things I'd like to have you tell me, young man."

"Oh, I must answer all your questions, and you are to answer none of mine."

"You understand the situation."

"I know that you can't make me talk unless I choose. What's to hinder me from being as dumb as old Buckaloo, who you left drunk under the table back there in the house?"

"Nothing. I can't make you talk. You are quite right about that," replied the detective, quietly.

"But I will talk if you will promise to let me turn State's evidence," whined Bob.

"I'll do my best to arrange it so."

"Fire away then. What do you want to know?"

"One thing above all others. Who is the party that has to sign the release of the McGroaty estates?"

"Ha—ha! Now you've got me. You mean the mysterious 'he'?"

"I mean the mysterious 'he!'"

"I don't know. Sweeney wouldn't tell me."

"You have no idea who he may be?"

"Not the least."

"Do you suppose your mother knows?"

"She may, but I doubt it. I surely do not."

"Do you want to make a confession to me?"

"You are said to be a fair man, Mr. Brady. I'm in trouble. Show your fairness to me. What is your advice?"

"I advise you not to do it."

"I'll follow your advice and won't. Now is that all?"

"Yes."

"I'm going to ask you a question or two. Of course you'll answer or not as you please."

"Well?"

"It's only from curiosity I want to know, for it has bothered me."

"Well?"

"How did that girl come to be shut up in Buckaloo's bank vault? You had a long talk with her. I suppose she told you?"

"She did. You have no rights in the matter whatever, but as there is no particular reason for keeping it secret, I will answer. She was put there by Buckaloo himself."

"Ah! How?"

"You see, the poor thing was trying to separate her brother from the burglars, with whom their lives had been spent."

"Yes, I know."

"She called on me and gave me warning of the proposed robbery."

"Is that so?"

"Yes. She thought she was most secret in her movements, but for all that she was followed by a wretch named Fogarty—one of the gang."

"Ah! I know him."

"He frightened the poor thing into telling

what she had done, and an attempt was made to kill the brother at the place where he was to meet me—the attempt failed."

"But about the bank?"

"I'm coming to that."

"Without the consent of this girl's uncle, who is, I believe, in the penitentiary on Snake Hill, New Jersey, Fogarty did not dare to injure the girl, so after thoroughly frightening her, he let her go."

"Ah, I see! And she went to Buckaloo."

"Yes, with a view of heading off the burglary she did. It was a bold action—a brave one. She little dreamed, however, that Buckaloo was one of the gang who were plotting to defraud her of her rights."

"Well, it was so."

"I know it."

"If you know it, blest if I see why you left him back there."

"Bless my soul, man, I couldn't carry him on my back, could I? He'll sleep awhile yet. He may find that he has company provided he don't wake too soon."

"Well, well. Go on."

"Well, the girl was received by Buckaloo in his private office. It was late in the day—they were alone. Suddenly he pounced upon her and demanded the crysolite cross you were so anxious to get."

"Ah!"

"There was a struggle for the possession of the cross. The girl called for help, but none came. As a ruse she made him believe that she had swallowed it."

"What! She didn't!"

"No, she didn't."

"Great Scott! You know this?"

"Positively yes."

"Then if I—"

Dr. Bob paused with a shudder.

A useless crime seemed more terrible to him than one which would have accomplished his ends.

"If you had cut her up you would not have found the cross."

"I've been lied to—fooled."

"No, no! When Buckaloo came to you—"

"How did you know that?"

"Guessed it. I see I guessed right."

"He claimed he didn't know how she came to be in the vault."

"He lied, for he chloroformed her and no doubt put her there himself."

"Ah! She don't remember that part of it?"

"No. She remembers nothing from the moment he sprang upon her with the saturated handkerchief until she came to her senses in your ambulance. So that's the way that the matter stands."

"I'll be blamed if I understand it fully yet."

"Nor I; but I suspect Buckaloo had a reason for not daring to interfere with the operations of the burglars if he knew they were coming, which I am satisfied he did, or else he was detained and was not able to get there on time."

"I knew nothing of all that."

"No, but your friend, the black doctor did. It is my belief that Buckaloo went for him, but it all worked differently from what they expected. But enough of this. I shall tell no more. Will that car never come?"

They had been standing on the corner of Pilling street and Broadway waiting for the surface car, for this was before the days of the elevated railroad in that part of Brooklyn.

"It's coming now I think," said Bob, looking up the street, and indeed the jingle of bells could be heard.

It was a lonely neighborhood there at the corner of Pilling street and Broadway—very.

There was not a soul in sight.

Behind them was a fence, part of the remains of a little blacksmith shop, which has long since disappeared.

Tired of standing at the corner the detective drew back, and they leaned against the fence, for the car was still some distance away.

Again Dr. Bob brought up the question of his being allowed to turn State's evidence.

But the detective would say nothing definite.

He could not.

"When will you know?" asked Dr. Bob.

"Who'll decide?"

But Old King Brady never answered the question.

Whack! Whack! Whack!

Suddenly an arm reached down from the top of the fence.

The arm clutched a short club which was brought down three times with crushing force upon Old King Brady's head.

"Great Scott, look out!" roared Dr. Bob, who expected to get a dose too. But the warning came too late. Old King Brady dropped like a stone. Of course he pulled Dr. Bob down with him. "That's business!" cried a man, leaping down from the fence, club in hand. "Merciful heavens, the Count!" gasped Dr. Bob from the ground. "Yes, the Count, you cur!" hissed the man. "Burning blue blazes! Give it to him!" called another man, suddenly appearing on top of the fence.

It was Prof. Fogarty. Behind, or rather, beside him now, came into view the ugly features of Mr. Plug Moran. "Beat his head right off, Count—beat it off!" he hissed. "State's evidence, is it? Don't you leave a bit of breath in his body! Let him have it right now!" The count, seizing Dr. Bob by the throat, raised the club above his head.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE BLACK DOCTOR AGAIN.

"Now, while these fresh misfortunes were happening to Old King Brady, the coach, with its curious load, was rattling down Broadway.

At the present writing Broadway is one of Brooklyn's chief thoroughfares, but at the time of which we write it was a street badly paved, worse lighted and of interminable length, with a few stores here and there, and handsome country houses built in the midst of trees and flower gardens scattered along its length for more than three miles.

For quite a distance everything inside the coach went swimmingly.

Nana and Ben told each other their respective stories, and a general comparing of notes was had.

Meanwhile Nana had taken baby Jim in charge, leaving the girl Gussie to go to sleep in the corner, which she did instantly.

"I have great hopes, Ben, great hopes," murmured the brave girl. "If Mr. Brady can only succeed in his plans, you and I will not only be free from the gang forever, but will find ourselves very rich besides."

"It's too good to be true, sister," was Ben's reply. "It was all a mistake our coming to New York with the count. We ought to have remained in Chicago, where we had friends."

"Ah! but how could we? He would have killed us."

"He has tried to kill us now. He is a treacherous and desperate man. I hate to think of him as my uncle, but I suppose we must do it."

"I suppose so; but—"

"But what, Nana?"

"That is the one part of the story which I find hard to believe. Mr. Brady has gone over the whole matter with me. He says we are the children of the count's brother, a man named McGroaty, who was a New York alderman—"

"I know. Arrested for counterfeiting and all the rest. I've heard the story, too."

"Who told you, Ben?"

"Prof. Fogarty."

"Did he seem to believe it?"

"He did."

"I suppose it must be true, but I find it so very hard to believe it. I have been thinking—why, Ben, what is this?"

Suddenly the carriage had turned into private grounds.

Ben peered through the window.

They were whirling up a tree-lined avenue.

"Surely something must be wrong," the boy thought.

He dropped the window and shouted to the driver to know where they were going.

But there was no answer.

Even Kube was silent.

"What is the matter?" asked poor Nana, pressing baby Jim against her breast.

At the same instant the carriage stopped, and a shrill whistle sounded.

Following the whistle came a rush and a scramble, then the loud baying of bloodhounds.

By the time Ben got the door open—and he opened it as fast as possible—up rushed four huge Siberian bloodhounds, as big as calves, barking around the carriage.

Ben shut the door in a hurry.

Nana screamed, the baby began bawling, and even Gussie joined in the chorus, suddenly waking up and adding her share to the racket in the shape of a succession of startling yells.

Down from the box jumped the driver, but no Kube the Rat appeared. Now Ben had hardly looked at the driver when they entered the vehicle.

Nor had Old King Brady, except to notice that he was a colored man.

But Ben looked sharp at him now, as he thrust his head in at the hack window.

"Young people, this is my country mansion!" he said. "Walk in! Make yourselves at home! We shall go no further to-night."

Then Ben knew him.

"Dr. Sweeney!" he gasped.

"Ay, the black doctor! Your friend Brady little dreamed that I live two lives. He never guessed that the livery stable where he sent for the coach belongs to me. Walk in, young Benjamin! Walk in, my dear, and bring the baby with you—my little game has been slightly upset, it is true, but it is not lost, by any manner of means."

If the sudden transformation of a harmless hack driver into that desperate scoundrel, the black doctor, was a surprise to Ben and Nana, equally surprised must Old King Brady have been when he came to his senses lying upon the cold ground.

He was not alone.

Near him he could distinguish in dim outline, for it was very dark, the forms of several men seated beneath the old shed which also covered him.

It was impossible to make out their faces, but the detective could hear what was being said, and he soon recognized the voice of Dr. Bob Beezee—the name Greenough was one to which the ambulance surgeon had no possible right—among the rest.

"Tripped again!" thought the detective. "Too bad! A shame! I am afraid this is a bad box and one which I shall find it hard to get out of."

He was almost in despair when he found that his hands were tied and his legs in the same condition.

But the detective had been in similar plights too many times to despair of finding a way out.

"Have they been through me? I suppose they have," he was thinking, when as if in answer he heard Dr. Bob say:

"Yes; those are all the papers I know anything about, but he ought to have the crysolite cross somewhere, and if you expect to succeed with this mysterious 'He' you ought to have that, you know."

"Burning blue blazes! I say he hain't got it!" snapped the voice of our old friend, Prof. Fogarty, which was not recognized by the detective, since he had not the pleasure of that gentleman's acquaintance.

But he did recognize the voice of Plug Moran as that of one of the bank burglars.

"I say he hain't got it about him, I looked too," said Plug.

"Gentlemen," spoke the Count, whose voice the detective of course had never heard, "there is no use in our squabbling over the cross. We simply can't find it. Good luck threw us in the way of our friend the doctor, and we want to make the best of it. Remember we have our revenge against that scoundrel of a Buckaloo to think of, and we have the estates which prove so profitable to my late brother, the alderman, and which he took such extraordinary pains to conceal. Now then, the question is what shall we do?"

That Old King Brady was all attention after this speech need scarcely be said.

"Now look here," said Dr. Bob. "I've been working in the dark trying to help you in this business, Count, and I suggest mildly, but firmly that having got myself into a big lot of trouble by doing so, I won't do another blame thing unless you tell me the whole story."

"Hah! In order that you may turn State's evidence, dear boy!" drawled the count.

"Pshaw! You jump at conclusions. You only overheard part of what I said."

"Burning blue blazes! It was enough!" cried Fogarty. "Don't you trust him, count."

"Bah! I'd sooner trust him than you any day. I've passed over that little slump of yours about the boodle, professor, but I haven't forgotten by any means."

"No. We hain't forgotten not by no means," put in Plug.

"Hold your jaw," breathed the count. "We can't quarrel now. The professor and I will settle that matter later. We came out here to this God-forsaken region hoping to get our paws on Buckaloo. We couldn't find Mother Beezee's ranch, but we did find Bob and he has promised to take us where we can find Buckaloo. I say let us trust Bob, but if he goes back on us why, then—"

Here the count made a peculiar gurgling

sound, as though some one were having their throat cut.

It must have made Dr. Bob feel decidedly uncomfortable, for he hastened to swear eternal fidelity in the most emphatic language, which the count received only by a contemptuous grunt.

"That's all right," he added. "Now then, you say you know where Buckaloo is at the present moment."

"I do."

"And according to you is just as likely to be found there an hour from now as at the present moment?"

"Yes."

"Well, then, here goes; I shall tell you about these estates, for we are all in the same boat now. If we are to meet with success we have got to strike one sharp, sudden blow and win, otherwise we ain't in it, and that's a fact."

"I'm all attention, count."

"You have heard of my brother, ex-Alderman McGroaty, of course."

"Well, rather. My mother was his house-keeper."

"Just so. He was captured and sent to his doom by that long-nosed scoundrel over there; his business was broken up, and in course of time he died."

"I know all that."

"You know all that; well, hold on to it. Perhaps you also know that although supposed to be a very rich man, my brother left no particular property that any one could ever find."

"I know that, too."

"Good enough."

"He did leave three little children—two girls and one boy."

"That I know, also."

"Burning blue blazes! If he knows so much what's the use telling him any more!" growled the professor.

"Shut up!" hissed the count. "Let me alone to tell my own story in my own way. Bob!"

"What is it?"

"You, in common with the rest of the world, believed those children to be my brother's."

"Well, I always heard so. Mother told me so."

"Well, they are not."

"What! They are not?" cried the professor and Plug in one breath.

"Will you two dry up? No, they are not. They were the children of my brother's old business partner, a man named— Well, no matter what his name was. He died suddenly many years ago."

"This is all news to me!" exclaimed Bob.

"As it was to me until quite recently. Buckaloo gave me the steer. The whole story is not known to me, but the upshot of it is, the father of these children had committed a mysterious crime in England. He came here; he made money. He left a million in New York real estate and claims to more than a million in England. After his death my brother, who was really a bachelor, conspired with Buckaloo to conceal the property. They fattened on it for several years. They deceived even me. I believed my brother's story of a secret marriage and that these were his children. I believed the property was his and tried to get it when he died. I failed. For years afterward these children were in my charge. They grew up among us, but they were most emphatically another breed of cats. We could not make a burglar out of Ben, nor anything but a saint out of Nana. As for Julia, the sister, she married and died, leaving the baby behind her."

"Burning blue blazes! How long-winded you are!" growled Fogarty.

But the count, without heeding the interruption, went straight on.

"Then we came here and I took the matter in hand again. I suspected the truth and went for Buckaloo. I made a compromise with him. He had long acted as the agent for my band, handling bonds and stolen securities for us. I went to him and arranged for him to give up his banking business which no longer paid, and join us outright. He agreed to this and it was by his own suggestion and that of a friend of his, one Dr. Sweeney, that the bank burglary was arranged."

"Dr. Sweeney! Ah! Sweeney!" blurted Bob in tones of deep contempt.

"What's the matter?" demanded the count.

"Dr. Sweeney!"

"Well, what about Dr. Sweeney? Don't sit there repeating his name like some blasted poll parrot."

"You never dreamed when you were dealing with Dr. Sweeney that you were dealing with a nigger, I suppose?"

"Nigger! Nonsense!"
 "Nigger, some sense—in every sense!"
 "Bab! You're drunk!"
 "No, sir! It's a fact."
 "Don't give me no such ghost story. The whole amount of it is, Bob, to bring my story to an end, Sweeney and Buckaloo played me for a sucker. They had the papers, and they alone know who the mysterious agent of U. S. English property is. As for the American million, that is controlled by the same person. These two men have grown rich out of the income of this estate, plundering these children, and, if they tell the truth, deceiving this agent. What we want is to get hold of this agent—this mysterious 'He'—and present our proofs of the death of the children. Then, according to the terms of their father's will, the American estate goes to the heirs of my brother, who, as I said before, was his old business partner. I am the only heir left that I know anything about. Consequence is, the whole business will come to me."

The Count paused.
 "Is that all?" asked Dr. Bob.
 "It is."
 "Then the whole business boiled down amounts to just this. If you can put your finger on the mysterious 'he,' produce them papers, the crys-olite cross and proofs of the children's death, you get this big boodle."
 "That's it."
 "And you say Buckaloo and Dr. Sweeney alone know who this mysterious 'He' is, and where he can be found?"
 "That's it."
 "And I know where Buckaloo is."
 "So you say."
 "I do. I can prove it."
 "Well?"
 "It seems to me," said Dr. Bob, with a half chuckle, "that the game is kinder in my own hands."

"Don't brag! Do the square thing."
 "What'll you give?"
 "It's share and share alike."
 "How much does it all amount to?"
 "What's the use of talking?"
 "I'd like to know."
 "The papers tell."
 "Yes. Dr. Sweeney read off a lot of stuff in the shape of an inventory."
 "Just look 'em over and see," said Bob.
 The count at last consented, though not until considerable further argument was had.
 He produced a dark lantern and lighted it.
 Then he took out the papers he had taken from Old King Brady's pocket.
 It was quite a sizeable package.
 Around it was wrapped a sheet of paper yellow and time worn.

Upon this paper there was writing over which the count placed his hand as he untied the red tape.
 Bob was all attention.
 Prof. Fogarty and even the imperturbable Ping drew near.
 But the count when he pulled off the paper gave an exclamation of rage and dismay.
 "Tricked! Fooled by that rascally detective!" he bawled.

The package was made up of nothing but a lot of old newspapers.
 "If that snoozer is still alive, by Heaven I'll cut his heart out!" cried the count, springing up.
 "There must have been one of his pockets we missed."
 He seized the lantern and hurried to the spot where they had laid Old King Brady.
 "Gone!" he breathed.

"Burning blue blazes! Sure he was never dead at all at all!" echoed Prof. Fogarty.
 Evidently Prof. Fogarty was right, for Old King Brady had disappeared, leaving the carefully tied cords behind him in a little pile.
 They thought then that the detective had been playing 'possum from the start.

They felt that if they had left the old man his weapons he would probably have made things lively for them.
 They were sure of all this when half an hour later, guided by Bob, they entered Mother Beezee's deserted ranch.

For Mr. Buckaloo had vanished, and lying upon the table was a sheet of paper upon which these words were scrawled:
 "Not this evening, gentlemen. Ha, ha! Oh, no!"
 Did Old King Brady leave the paper on the table?

The count thought so.
 He was right.
 It was not often that the detective indulged in such pleasantry, but on this occasion he did it.

There was some storming on the part of the burglars.

Then, seeing the game lost, they started to retire.

The count opened the door and stepped out.
 To his horror, there stood Old King Brady and a dozen members of the Brooklyn police force in full uniform.

"Burning blue blazes!" gasped Prof. Fogarty who was right behind the count.

"Gentlemen, I shall have to trouble you to take a little walk with us down to the station-house," said the detective, covering the count with a revolver. "You are wanted there on important business. Count, let me advise you next time you search a man's pockets, to search thoroughly, and when you tie knots, to tie them tight."

CHAPTER XVIII.

FOOLED BY BABY JIM.

"WHAT'S THIS?" gasped poor Nana, at the sudden announcement made by the Black Doctor when the carriage stopped before the old tree-hidden mansion in Broadway.

"Treachery!" cried Ben.
 He would have sprung at the Black Doctor's throat if he had been given the chance.

But he wasn't.
 There were the ever-ready revolvers—two of them this time.

There also were the dogs barking furiously—half a dozen of them it seemed to Ben.
 Nana, moreover, caught her brother's arm and held him back, while Gussie yelled in terror at sight of the dogs, and Baby Jim, shaken up by the general excitement, gave forth a series of prolonged and dismal howls.

"Come now, no nonsense!" said Dr. Sweeney, whose face was now as black as the ace of spades. "You can save a big lot of trouble all around by getting out of the carriage quietly."

Ben saw nothing for it but to yield.
 He got out himself, and helped Nana and Gussie to alight.
 Meanwhile, Dr. Sweeney ordered back the dogs.

"Get down off that!" he shouted to Rube the Rat, who sat quietly on the box.

"Can't!" said Rube.
 "Oh, I forgot I've tied you."

"Yair."
 Ben glanced at Rube suspiciously.
 Had he allowed himself to be tied?
 Had he known all about it from the first?
 And indeed it began to look very much that way.

It was Rube who was sent after the carriage. He had come back with the Black Doctor. He must have known.

Ben reflected.
 But with two women and a baby relying upon him for protection, Ben found himself perfectly helpless.

There was nothing for it but to submit.
 "Up there!" ordered the Black Doctor, pointing to the piazza.

Ben took his sister's arm and helped her up the steps.

Gussie and the baby followed; Rube, whose legs had been released, brought up the rear.

Dr. Sweeney opened the house door with a latch key and ushered them into the dark hall.
 "Who dar? Who dar?" called a shrill voice over the banisters.

"It's only me, Debby," replied the Black Doctor, meekly.

"On'y you! Lan' o' goodness! Should t'ink dar was fo' hanner an' fo'ty fo' ob yo'. Are you drunk ag'in, ole man?"

It was humiliating—very.
 Evidently this was Madame Sweeney.

It needed no electric light to tell Ben what the speaker's color was.

"Now, my dear, yo' jes go right back to bed!" called the doctor. "I'll see you later on."

"Won't do nuffin ob de sort! Who you go dar? Who you bring home in kerridges at midnight? Didn't I hear a baby squeakin? Tell yo' what 'tis, I'll tear yo' wool out, ole man!"

"Help us! Help us to get away from this wicked man!" called Nana. "Whoever you are, help us, and the Lord will repay you."

The mischief was done.
 Confusion worse confounded was the result of Nana's pious appeal.

"Hold your tongue, girl!" hissed the doctor.
 "Deb, you go back to bed or I'll kill you!"

He struck a match and lit the hall gas.

Then Ben sprang upon him and with one blow felled him to the floor.

"Fly, Nana, fly!" he called.
 "Not without you, Ben!"

Fatal hesitation!
 Ben could not go.
 The black doctor, though fallen, clutched at Ben and pulled the boy after him.

At the same instant a stout colored woman, dressed only in her night gown, came rushing down-stairs.

While Gussie yelled murder and Baby Jim roared, she joined in the fight.

Woman-like, she took the side of her husband, whom she had threatened but a moment before.

She seized poor Ben, rolled him over, and pounded him till he was almost insensible.

Nor could Rube render any assistance, for his hands were tied behind him.

The interference of his wife brought victory to the doctor.

He was on his feet in an instant, and began flourishing around with his revolver again.

"In there! In there, every one of you!" he roared, as he flung open a door alongside of them.

There was nothing for it but to go in—all but Ben, who was down.

The doctor followed and lit the gas, Debby, meanwhile, held Ben.

Hastily locking a door at the other end of the room, Dr. Sweeney seized Rube by the collar and dragged him out again, and locking Nana, Gussie and the baby in.

"Hold him, mother! Hold him till I can tie him!"

"I'm a-holding on, yo' bet!" cried Debby, "cause I see on yo' side when dere's a flight, ole man, but somebody's got to explain dis yere baby bizness, or dere be de debbil's own row between yo' and me."

The Black Doctor made no answer.
 He knew the woman's jealous disposition but too well.

Tying Ben's hands behind him with a strong cord, he took the boys by their respective collars, and ran them down-stairs into a dark cellar.

"Now, then, you stay here till I get ready to put you somewhere else," he growled, and in a moment was gone.

Ben listened to his retreating footsteps with a sinking heart.

"Well, this is a nice business!" he exclaimed.
 "Oh, Rube! I didn't think this of you!"

"Think what?"
 "That you would betray me."

"I didn't."
 "What's the reason you didn't?"

"Ben, I wouldn't do such a thing!"
 "Do you mean to tell me that you didn't know that man was Dr. Sweeney?"

"No."
 "I don't believe it."

Poor Rube began to blubber.
 "Now, looker here, Ben. You and me were always friends. I wouldn't go back on you," he declared.

"Then you were fooled, too, I suppose?"
 "Gosh, yes!"

"Was the doctor in the livery stable when you got there?"

"I suppose he must be."

"What happened?"
 "When I got to the stable?"

"Yes, of course."
 "Wal, I went in."

"Oh, phaw! Go on."
 "I axed the man for a carriage."

"Told him Old King Brady sent you?"
 "Yair. He told me to told him dat."

"What did he say?"
 "Who?"

"The livery man, stupid."
 "He axed me over again."

"Well!"
 "Den he said wouldn't it be better to drive right up to Mother Beezee's?"

"Oh! He seemed to know Mother Beezee."
 "Yes."

"What did you tell him?"
 "Told him that I always obeyed orders, even if I broke owners, an' we must go right to de corner of Bushwick avner and Pilling street, and nowhere else."

"Then what did he do?"
 "Snid I could have the hack if I paid for it."

"Which you did?"
 "Which I did."

"And then?"
 "Then he went and got the carriage and this man was onto it and by gosh, Ben, that's all I know about the business, so help me gracious."

"It's enough," groaned Ben. "I suppose he attacked you just before we got to the house here?"

"Yair. Cotched me by de throat and held on like grim death till he'd tied my hands."

"Which reminds me," sighed Ben, that mine

are tied at the present moment. I was so anxious about it all that I never thought."

"Gosh, Ben! You speak just as though you could untie them if you wanted to."

"Why, so I can! I'd be ashamed of myself if I couldn't."

"But how?"

"You shall do it, Rube."

"Me! Why, mine are tied, too!"

"All the same you shall untie mine. Here."

Ben got hold of Rube's shoulders and felt for the knots.

Then he tackled said knots with teeth which had engaged in that kind of business before.

Of course he succeeded.

But it took time.

Fifteen minutes at least.

"Hooray! you've done it!" cried Rube, as the cords fell away.

"Hush!" whispered Ben.

"What's the matter?"

"That noise—I thought I heard it again."

It was a curious sound—something like a cat scratching—that they had heard before.

Now they listened.

All was perfectly still.

"Guess we was mistaken," said Rube. "Don't think it amounts to nothing."

"Probably some rat in the cellar," said Ben.

"Now, then, young fellow, there's a knife in my pocket, you know what to do."

"Yes, you bet."

And Rube did it.

He cut the cords about Ben's wrists and the boys were free.

Meanwhile the racket overhead had quieted down.

All through the beginning of it the voices of Dr. Sweeney and his colored wife had been heard quarreling in the hall.

While this lasted Ben felt safe on Nana's account, but now that it was over he found all his former anxiety returning.

"Rube, we must get into that room up-stairs—we must get to Nana!" he declared.

"Hadn't we better wait?"

"Not a minute."

"You hadn't got a match?"

"No."

"Nor me, which is too blamed bad, 'coz why, this here cellar may be full of niggers all a-listenia' to us, for anything we know."

"Let's tackle the stairs," said Ben. "Come on."

But where were the stairs?

The boys had become so turned about that they could not find them.

Meanwhile, as they wandered about in the darkness they lost each other.

"Rube, Rube! Where are you, Rube?" called Ben.

At the same instant came a scuffling sound—then a sharp cry—then the slamming of a door.

"Rube! Rube!" called Ben.

No answer.

All was as still as death.

Fearing the worst—guessing what was true, that he had been separated from his companion, Ben made a dash forward.

He was close to the stairs and did not know it.

He struck violently against them and fell headlong on the steps.

Meanwhile, what became of Rube?

Ben was right.

Hands in the darkness had suddenly seized poor Rube.

They took him by the throat.

A handkerchief went into his mouth before he knew it and he was dragged forward.

Rube tried to cry out, but made poor success of it.

Then the door slammed and the boy found himself facing Dr. Sweeney in a dimly lighted room.

"Ha, ha!" chuckled the Black Doctor. "I thought I had made no mistake. I knew I had caught the right boy."

He whipped the handkerchief out of Rube's mouth and still clutching his throat held him off at arm's length.

"Well, my son! Well, well!" he chuckled.

"Hain't your soul! Don't call me that! No nigger is my father, gosh blame you!" snarled the struggling Rube.

"Keep cool! Keep cool!"

But Rube stormed, struggled and used very naughty words.

It took a show of the coroner's pistol to calm him down.

"You're a fool!" hissed the black doctor.

"Do you want to make ten dollars instead of fighting me? Because if you do, now is your chance."

"What do you mean?" demanded Rube.

"Ten dollars!"

"For what?"

"To light out and never show up again."

Rube's eyes sparkled.

Ten dollars!

It was more money than he had ever had in his whole life.

"Better say just what you want me to do, boss."

"Oh, it's plain enough. I want you to git."

"For ten dollars?"

"Yes."

"Well!"

"And never show up again. You're a nuisance—you bother me—see?"

"Yair!"

"And you'll do it?"

"You bet."

"Now mind. I'll send you to Sing Sing for life if you cross my path again."

"Wou't never do it, s'help me!" said Rube, drawing his finger significantly across his throat.

"Then the cheapest thing for me to do is to pay you and get rid of you," said the Black Doctor.

He pulled out his pocket-book and handed Rube two five-dollar bills.

"They're good, boss?"

"Why of course. Come."

He led the way up-stairs, opened the hall door and pushed Rube out into the darkness.

"Git now! Git before the dogs catch you!" he chuckled.

And Rube vanished.

Was the boy treacherous?

Had he been bribed?

The black doctor thought so as he shut the door and returned to the buck of the house.

"Now to tie up young Ben again," he muttered. "The rascal! Good I happened to think of listening to them. I'll go down the regular way this time instead of the kitchen stairs."

There were two flights of stairs leading down to the black doctor's cellar.

One from the kitchen, the other from the hall.

It was the hall stairs that had been used to take the boys down by, and the door connecting with them was the door Dr. Sweeney opened now.

Never, in the whole course of his long and mysterious career, had the black doctor made a bigger mistake.

He had disposed of his wife before this.

Lighting a lantern, he unlocked the cellar door.

Whack!

Thud!

Something struck the black doctor.

Something very much in the shape and size of Ben.

The black doctor went down.

The lamp fell crashing to the floor, and shivered into a thousand pieces.

It was a wonder that it did not set the house afire.

The oil ran over the floor, but the blazing wick did not happen to strike it.

Instead, it sputtered and went out.

But before the last glimmer of light vanished, Ben's knees were upon the black doctor's chest, and his hand upon that desperate villain's throat.

"Surrender!"

"You young skunk! Ah, how I would like to—"

"But you can't. Surrender!"

"Yes—yes!"

"I am armed! Be careful. Move and you are a dead man."

This was a fiction.

The Black Doctor thought so at the time, but he could not feel sure.

He never moved.

Then Ben began the hand tying operation.

With the cord which had been used upon the Rube's feet he tied his hands securely.

Right here was where Ben's mistake was made—where the results of his inexperience came in.

He did not even search for the coroner's revolver.

In the first pocket he touched was a bunch of keys.

This was what Ben was looking for.

He seized them eagerly and groped his way to the room in which Nana was confined.

The only precaution he took was to thrust the doctor's own handkerchief in his mouth to prevent him from raising the alarm.

Opening the door he called Nana's name softly.

There was no answer.

"Nana! Nana!" Ben repeated.

Then as silence still reigned he struck a match.

The room was untenanted.

The open window told the story.

Nana and Gussie had flown.

But when?

Had they been gone long?

Ben sprang toward the window.

Even as he made the move he heard the negro coming down the stairs.

She had heard the noise and was shouting for her husband.

Instant action was needed now.

Ben jumped out of the window.

At the same moment the wail of a child was heard out on the grounds.

It was baby Jim, of course.

Poor baby Jim!

His plaintive cry foiled Nana's plan of escape.

Boo! Woo! Woo!

In an instant all the dogs were barking.

One sprang upon Ben.

Nana's screams, and Gussie's wild yells of terror told the Black Doctor just what to do.

For freed by his wife the rascally coroner now came dashing through the window.

"You young wretch, you'll die for this!" he hissed, as he thrust the revolver almost down Ben's throat.

CHAPTER XIX.

MR. BUCKALOO MAKES HIS LAST STRIKE.

"AND you have the papers?"

"Yes."

"I mean the originals."

"Yes."

"I want no copies such as you sought to palm off upon Dr. Sweeney."

"No; I understand."

"If I will take you to your office in Wall street, will you give them up?"

"No."

"Now, don't play with me. I mean cold business."

"So do I."

"But you said—"

"I said I had the papers and that I would give them up. They are not in my office, however."

"Ah! Now we begin to understand each other."

"Might have before if you hadn't been so thick."

"Never mind about paying compliments. That's time thrown away. You will put the papers into my hands if I permit you to turn State's evidence?"

"That's it."

"I have rejected one offer of that sort this evening," mused the detective, "and I am not sure whether I ought to accept yours or not."

"You will suit yourself."

"Well, I usually try to. The question is how much you know about the plot of the black doctor."

"I know it all."

"That being the case I shall probably be able to arrange matters, Mr. Buckaloo."

"Very well."

"Always providing the papers prove to be the originals."

"I tell you they are the originals."

"And I was about to add: 'You will take me where I can put my finger on the mysterious 'He.''"

"Ha, ha, ha! You may find it difficult to do that, even though I give you the proper steer."

"What do you mean?"

"Mr. Brady, you are a very smart man."

"Don't flatter. I told you not to flatter."

"But smart as you are you are not sharp enough to put your finger upon a man after he is dead."

"Do you mean to say—"

"Oh, no! I don't mean to say anything."

"But you—"

"Pardon me. I didn't."

"Stop this nonsense! Speak out, man. Say what you do mean?"

"I mean that the last time I saw the mysterious 'He,' as you call him, that aged and penurious individual was lying at the point of death."

"Hello! When was that?"

"Several days ago."

"And he may be dead now?"

"He may."

"His name?"

"No, sir! That's my stronghold. Make your bargain with me, Mr. Brady, and then, and not until then, will I reveal the name of the mysterious 'He.'"

And Buckaloo, the banker, leaned back upon the old settee in the Bushwick avenue station

house, looking as positive and determined as only a drunken man can look when he wants to assume that dignity which whisky has taken away.

"Oh, that's it, is it?" said the detective.

"Yes."

"And these papers are in the hands of a friend of mine."

"To whom you will take me?"

"On your promise to let me turn State's evidence."

"It's not for me to decide that. I promise you I will do the best I can to bring it about."

"What a cowardly lot of curs are connected with this case," he thought.

"I'll be satisfied with that," declared Buckaloo.

"Shall we go now then?"

"If you please."

"But where do we go? Where is your friend's place?"

"South street near Peck Slip."

"We'll hardly find him there at this hour."

"What's the reason we won't?"

"It's so late."

"Bah! He never closes."

"Oh! He keeps a saloon! I see!"

"Yes."

"Then we'll go."

And they went.

This conversation took place after Old King Brady and the officers brought in the count and his gang.

First Old King Brady dragged the drunken banker out of the room where the Black Doctor had left him, and then with his officers lay in wait for the count and the rest.

It was not until the count, Prof. Fogarty, Plug and Dr. Bob were safely placed that the detective tried to question Mr. Buckaloo.

It took time to straighten the man up. At last, however, he succeeded, and his questioning met with the above result.

Now the cells in the Bushwick Avenue station house were but crude affairs, and within hearing of where Old King Brady and the banker sat.

As the detective started with Buckaloo a general howl of dismay went up.

"Hey! Say! I'll turn State's evidence. Don't forget your promise!" called Dr. Bob, putting his nose between the bars.

"Burning blue blazes! What does he know?" called Prof. Fogarty, with his nose a little further projected. "What, now, Brady! What! If ye want the illegint State's evidence it's mesilf I'll take, and don't forget that same."

They were, as the detective had said, an unusually cowardly lot, these men.

He heeded none of them of course. Hurrying Mr. Buckaloo over to Broadway, he took the first car for the ferry.

He had been gone but a few moments when the door of the station house opened, and a ragged, frightened-looking boy looked in.

It was Rube the Rat.
"Is old Mr. King Brady here, boss?" he asked of the sergeant.

The sergeant scanned the strange figure narrowly.

"Just gone, boy. What did you want?"

"To see him."

"You're too late."

"Where did he go?"

"To New York."

Rube looked horribly disappointed. He was afraid of the police.

He did not dare to tell the sergeant what he wanted to tell—what he ought to have told, for fear that he would be locked up.

Therefore when he found that the detective was not on hand Rube made a bolt out of the door and vanished, while the sergeant was telling him to remain.

Nor did they catch him, although two officers were sent after him in a hurry, as the sergeant felt that he might prove to be an important witness in the case.

But Rube ran across lots, and after leading them a pretty chase was lost in the darkness.

All of which did not look very much as though Rube the Rat had been very badly bribed with the Black Doctor's two five-dollar bills.

Meanwhile, Old King Brady and Mr. Buckaloo were slowly jogging down Broadway in a ramshackle horse car, which made a noise like a threshing machine in full operation.

As Mr. Buckaloo seemed drowsy, Old King Brady let him snooze away in one corner.

At last they reached the ferry, and in due time were landed in New York.

All the way Mr. Buckaloo's drowsiness continued.

He claimed that he had been drugged.

This of course, was possible, but Old King Brady scarcely believed it.

He suspected the banker of course, but he did not dream of actual danger from a prisoner whom he had so well in hand.

"Now, then, where is the place?" he demanded, as they started down South street.

"Near Peck Slip as I told you. Oh, heavens, Mr. Brady, how strangely I feel!"

"How do you mean?"

"It seems as though the whole top of my head was coming off."

"That's because you have got what is commonly called a 'head' on, ain't it?"

"No, not at all. I've been drugged—that's what's the matter—drugged!"

"Who drugged you?"

"Must have been Dr. Sweeney. He robbed me of the copies of those papers."

"The Black Doctor, eh?"

"Why do you call him that?"

Banker Buckaloo looked perfectly innocent. It could do no harm, and just for his own satisfaction Old King Brady determined to reveal the truth.

He wanted to see how the banker would take it.

To know how successful the coroner had been in concealing his secret among those whom he claimed as his friends.

"You and Dr. Sweeney have been pretty thick," he said, carelessly.

"We know each other well, of course."

"Then I can't see why you should wonder at my calling him the Black Doctor."

"What do you mean?"

"Can't you guess?"

"No."

"Suppose I should tell you that Sweeney was no Irishman, but a negro."

"Nonsense! You're crazy!"

Banker Buckaloo's surprise was too genuine to be misconstrued.

"It is a fact."

"Impossible. I don't understand why you say so."

"No. Well, you'll find out later that I am right. But you seem better now."

"Not at all. Only you've shaken a little life into me, by your astounding statement."

"Which, as I said before is true."

"I can't believe it. I have known Sweeney intimately for years, and—but here we are, Mr. Brady. This is the place."

They were near the corner of South street and Peck Slip.

Like all parts of the water front of the great city this was a dangerous point in the early morning hours.

Just now there was no one in sight.

Mr. Buckaloo opened the side or house door adjoining a notorious longshoremen's den.

The place was ostensibly closed.

A faint light seen above the drawn shade, however, seemed to indicate that there was some one on hand inside.

"We go in here," said Buckaloo, as Old King Brady seemed inclined to hold back.

"Is this the place?"

"Yes."

"Excuse me. It's hardly to be expected that I should venture alone with you into such a place at this hour."

The banker shrugged his shoulders.

"How am I to get the papers if I don't go in?" he asked.

"That's true also. I can suggest a compromise."

"Suggest it."

"The officer on the beat shall go in with us."

"But that will spoil the whole business."

"Not necessarily."

"I tell you it will. Barney will fight shy of us all."

"Meaning the proprietor here?"

"Meaning the bartender in whose hands I placed those papers for safe keeping."

"Bless my soul, man, if he knows you and you gave him the papers, what—hello! It's settled now."

Old King Brady meant the discussion.

And most emphatically was this settled by the sudden opening of the door.

The face of a man was thrust out and then just as suddenly drawn back again.

The man was the very person they had been discussing, the officer on the beat.

"Caught, by thunder! Never mind. It will work just as well," murmured Old King Brady.

"Officer, I am Detective Brady of the Central Office. Open that door please," he added aloud. The door was opened.

The policeman had already recognized Old King Brady.

He knew that it was useless for him to attempt to hide his identity.

"I heard a row inside dere, an' I went in to see what the matter was," he declared.

"Yes, I know. A word with you," said the detective. "Mr. Buckaloo, you will not move if you know when you are well off."

Mr. Buckaloo was between two fires.

He made no effort to move as the detective drew the policeman a little to one side.

"What's about this place?" asked the detective.

"Nothing perticuler."

"Do you know the bartender?"

"No."

"Officer, I want you to understand one thing—I am a man who minds his own business, and have no time to look after my neighbors' affairs. Help me out, if you can, by answering me truly."

"Sure, Mr. Brady, I wouldn't answer you false."

"About this bartender?"

"He's a quiet fellow."

"You just left him?"

"Yes."

"Do you know the man with me?"

"No."

"He wants me to go in there with him."

"Well?"

"It seems important to the success of my case that I should go. Is it safe, think?"

"Why, sure! No danger at all."

"Still, I want to be on the safe side, for it would be a very serious affair if this man should escape."

"Anything you say I'll do, Mr. Brady."

"Just guard the door. In case I am not out in ten minutes come in."

"All right, sir; it shall be done," replied the officer.

Now usually this was quite sufficient. It would have been low but for one thing.

This policeman was for many years Mr. Buckaloo's coachman.

It was the banker who put him on the force.

It was the black doctor's "pull" which had put him on this beat.

"Well, are you ready now?" sneered Mr. Buckaloo, as Old King Brady returned to his side.

"Yes; I am ready now."

"Glad of it. We'll finish this job up. I feel sicker than ever and want to get somewhere I can lie down."

He led the way into the barroom.

There were a dozen or more loafers inside. Old King Brady wondered why they kept so quiet.

Had he but known that the place was headquarters for a gang of notorious river thieves he would have understood the whole thing.

"Let me do the talking," whispered Buckaloo.

"It will save time and bother."

He nodded to the bartender.

"Barney, a word with you."

Barney was at the end of the bar in a moment.

"What is it, Mr. Buckaloo?" he asked, in tones of deep respect.

And well he might be respectful. Buckaloo not only owned the building but the business.

"B. Fagan," the name over the door, was a mere fake.

"I want those papers out of the safe."

"I'm afraid I can't open the safe. The boss ain't in."

Old King Brady caught the wink which passed between them.

"In or out I shall have to have the papers, Mr. Buckaloo," he very emphatically said.

"Try my key, Barney. I know the safe came from the same shop where I bought mine."

The key was produced.

Of course it opened the safe.

Old King Brady had never expected any other result.

"These are the papers," said Mr. Buckaloo. "Shall we go in the back room and examine them?"

"No," said the detective. "We'll examine them here."

And he did so, using the end of the bar for a table upon which to spread them out.

These were evidently the original documents.

They referred to the private matters of the late ex-Alderman McGroudy.

None were dated later than the commitment of Alderman McGroudy to Sing Sing.

There was his will, a schedule of his property and other documents.

Then came the will of the dead business partner.

It all seemed as "straight as a string," as the saying goes.

"How do you find them—all right?" asked Buckaloo, as the detective folded up the papers and put them in his pocket.

"All right!"

"Have a drink, then, and we'll get out."

"No; we'll get out without the drink. Come."

"All right! I— Oh, beg pardon! There's one point I want to show you."

"About what?"

"Just pull the papers out and I'll explain."

Here was the fatal blunder.

As Old King Brady thrust his hand into his coat pocket a heavy sandbag descended.

Every man in the den knew Buckaloo.

A wink had been sufficient and the deed was done, for Old King Brady fell to the floor like a log.

Consternation was on the face of Barney.

"For heaven's sake let's get him out of here, boss," he breathed.

"At once," hissed Buckaloo. "Got a bag?"

"Yair."

"Fetch it."

The bag was now fetched.

It was a big one.

So perfectly did Old King Brady's body fill it, that one might have suspected that the bag was made for the express purpose of drowning detectives.

Meanwhile, Buckaloo had re-possessed himself of the papers.

He did not put them back in the safe, however.

Instead, he concealed them upon his person. Just then the policeman dashed in.

Mr. Buckaloo simply held up his hand.

Then the policeman looked out and was seen no more.

"Barney, this is my last strike," breathed the banker.

"Yes, boss."

"You know who this man is?"

"Yes. Old King Brady the detective."

"He arrested me, Barney."

"Well?"

"You know."

"Yes."

"All right. I'm half dead. I'm going upstairs to lie down and— thunder! How did that boy get in here?"

There was a ragged dirty boy seated on one of the barrels.

No one knew him—no one had seen him come in.

"Where'd you come from?" demanded the fellow with the sand-bag seizing the boy and giving him a violent shake.

The boy began to blubber.

"I was asleep down dere behind de bar'l, boss," he whined.

"Who are you?"

"I hain't nobody."

"Rats!"

"Dat's it."

"What?"

"Rats."

"Do you mean your name is Rats?"

"Yes."

"How long you been here?"

Rats scratched his fery head.

"Guess it was about four o'clock when I come n, boss."

"Oh, fire him out—fire him out!" cried Buckaloo. "We have no time to fool with a boy like that."

Then Rats was fired by Barney.

Seizing the boy by the back of the neck, he ran him through the hall and kicked him into the street.

"He's only some dock rat or another," he declared, when he came back.

"You're sure?" asked Buckaloo, anxiously.

"Certain. How could he have got in with fr. Mularky at the door."

Now this was an unanswerable argument.

But for all that the boy had slipped in behind he said Mularky.

Moreover, he had hidden in the hall as that guardian of the peace had retired.

Once in the street he glided across to a pile of pork barrels near the New Haven pier and rouched down.

His eye never left the side door of Fagan's sion once.

Presently he saw four men emerge, carrying a heavy load between them.

It was the bag.

Old King Brady was in it.

Had Mr. Buckaloo's last strike then succeeded? Here was a fine ending for the detective's hard work.

And Rats, from behind the pork barrels, saw it all.

But Rats did not stay behind the pork barrels.

When they carried the bag down to the end of the then uncovered pier he was close behind them.

Splash!

Over went the bag.

Weighted as it was with a heavy stone, even Rats could not have plunged in and saved the detective, as the reader no doubt expects him to do.

* * * * *

It was just four o'clock when the door of the Oak street station opened, and a tall man and a ragged, red-headed boy entered.

The sleepy sergeant roused up immediately.

"What in the world! Old King Brady!" he exclaimed.

"Yes."

"And looking like a drowned rat."

"No—no! Here's the drowned rat. Ho, ho!"

And Old King Brady put his hand almost affectionately upon the shoulders of the boy beside him.

"The long and short of it is, sergeant, this boy has three times saved my life," he said.

"So?" said the sergeant.

"Yes. Once from starvation, once from the bottom of a well, and—"

"And once out of a bag which got caught onto a spike down at the end of the Peck Slip pier, chimed in Rube, who under no circumstances could keep quiet long.

Brave Rube!

His was an important part in this case.

A few moments of explanation followed.

Then while Old King Brady was telegraphing Bushwick on the old printing machine which preceded the telephone the sergeant was busy inside the station.

In a moment a little squad of officers hurriedly left.

"Raid the old mansion in Broadway near Gates avenue," the detective was spelling out as they passed from the station.

Yes, Rube the Rat had done it.

Rube came over in the next ferryboat after Old King Brady and Mr. Buckaloo.

The brief parley at the door of Fagan's den just gave him time to see the detective enter.

As for the rest, Rube saw the bag hanging to the hook.

It would have been all up with Old King Brady but for this particular Rat.

Half an hour later there was a great commotion in the Oak street station.

Buckaloo, the banker, very drunk, was being dragged in.

Behind him came Barney, the bartender.

"This is—a—hic—a outrage!" gurgled Buckaloo, who could scarcely stand.

"I'm a banker—a respectable banker. I am a Wall street—I—hic—I'm a friend of Doc Sweeney's. I'll break every man in this blamed establishment, by thunder! Yes, I will."

"Keep quiet," said the sergeant. "What's your name?"

"Moses Brown."

The sergeant wrote in his big register.

"What's your name?" he asked of the trembling bartender.

"Barney Fagan."

"You're the proprietor of the saloon on South street?"

"Me name is on de license, but it's not a dollar I have in it, boss."

"Who then?"

"Him!"

He pointed to the banker.

"Liari!" bawled the banker.

"Mr. Buckaloo, that will do!" the sergeant said.

"Who says my name is Buckaloo? I told you Brown."

"I have entered it Buckaloo on my register."

"Who says so? Who says so?"

"I say so."

A tall form stepped suddenly in front of the banker.

"Old King Brady! Great heavens!"

"Yes. Old King Brady!"

"Not dead?"

"No. I'll trouble you for those papers, Mr. Buckaloo. Your last strike has failed."

CHAPTER XX.

THE MYSTERIOUS "HE."

"Is Dr. Sweeney in?"

The speaker was an aged man, bent double, to all appearance with years and infirmity.

He was dressed in a suit of rusty black, his long, white beard reached almost to his knees, his whole appearance was striking to a degree.

It was nearly noon on the day following the happenings detailed in the last few chapters.

The old man was addressing the coroner's clerk, who presided over the outer office in the coroner's palatial residence on West Fifth street near Fifth avenue.

Here Dr. Sweeney lived and attended to an extensive office practice.

Of late years the doctor had refused to go out and visit patients, but each day saw a heavy business done at his house.

"The doctor is not receiving to-day," said the clerk, shortly. "He is not well."

"I think he will receive me," replied the old man, in mild tones.

"I think not."

"Just say to him that I am from Mr. Mullion."

"Mullion?"

"Yes."

Grumblingly the clerk took in the message. Somewhat to his surprise he was ordered to show the visitor in.

Dr. Sweeney's face had resumed its customary whiteness.

He sat at his desk in an easy attitude, looking like a man who was at peace with himself and the world.

And why not?

The black doctor felt happy.

He had left Ben, Nana and the baby prisoners in the lonely old mansion where he lived with his colored wife and family, in Broadway, Brooklyn.

This woman had no more idea that her husband, who ruled her with a rod of iron, was Dr. Sweeney, than the doctor's patients had that he was a negro.

That she would keep the prisoners safe the doctor felt well assured.

As for Old King Brady, the coroner did not fear him.

His political pull was enormous. He had already arranged to have the detective arrested on a false charge as soon as he appeared.

Now such a proceeding would be impossible.

But we are speaking of many years ago.

"Ah, Ambrose! You came from Mr. Mullion?" asked the black doctor.

"Yes, doctor. He has received your letter."

"Ah!"

"He wishes to see you."

"So? I will call in course of the day."

"He wishes to see you at once. He directed me to say that he has thought over your proposition."

"I thought he would."

"That he is an old man and cannot much longer enjoy the property."

"Much he ever enjoyed it."

"He enjoys its possession?"

"Yes. Well! He says he will assign to the children without the exhibition of the cyanite cross belonging to the girl Nana as provided by her father, the son of the late Earl of Banksdale, known in this country as John Scarborough."

"Good!" cried the black doctor, springing from his seat.

He had never a doubt of the genuineness of the messenger, for here was mention made of matters which he believed known to himself and Buckaloo, the banker, alone.

"I'll go," he said.

"I have a carriage waiting for you outside. You must come now. Mr. Mullion is very weak to-day. He is liable to drop off at any moment."

"No time like the present," said the doctor.

"We will go now."

Had the black doctor's plot succeeded? It looked very much like it then.

Was Mr. Mullion the mysterious "He" hinted at in the different conversations overheard by Old King Brady?

It looked very much like that, too.

The black doctor was in a very comfortable frame of mind when he entered the waiting carriage, and, in company with Mr. Mullion's messenger, was whirled away down-town.

No wonder.

He thought his plot had succeeded.

Long a confederate of Mr. Buckaloo in various crooked operations, he had become possessed of the secret of the missing McGroarty millions, which never were the property of that once noted counterfeiter.

Mr. Buckaloo never dreamed that Mullion was the doctor's patient.

Such, however, was the case.

Now Mullion was a miser.

Few knew him.

Not one of the few began to possess the influence over him that Dr. Sweeney had.

Moreover, Dr. Sweeney had been admitted to Mulligan's room by the aged attendant, who was at his side a hundred times.

Why then should he feel other than well satisfied with himself when the carriage stopped before an ancient brick structure on Bedford street, not a stone's throw from the house which McGroaty, Mother Beezee, and later the count and his gang had made their headquarters?

The ancient alighted ahead of him and opened the door with a key.

It was dark in the big front room.

But it was always dark there.

"Sit down," said the ancient.

The black doctor sat down.

"Come in when I call," said the ancient.

"He's very low to-day."

Thereupon the ancient departed, leaving the black doctor alone in the darkened room.

"He's always low—always just going to die," muttered the man of mystery. "Such as he never die. Bah! The fool! If I had my clutches on these millions years ago, the world would have been at my feet. With this money I might have run for governor, even for president of the United States. Just fancy it! A nigger—ah, what satisfaction—a nigger president, I—What was that?"

He paused in the midst of his soliloquy, for it seemed to him that out from one of the dark corners of the room came a sound very much like a chuckle.

But no—it could not be.

He had been in this room only the day before. He had been in the habit of coming here for years, for the mysterious "He" was a good paying patient and one of the few that Dr. Sweeney still went out to visit.

Still the sound worried him.

He walked to the corner and looked about behind chairs and a sofa, but could see nothing suspicious.

"I'll light the gas," he muttered. "How infernally dark it is! I—Hell! Ambrose—ready?"

The old man known to him under the name Ambrose entered suddenly.

"Yes, he will see you," he slowly said.

"Say, Ambrose, is anybody here?"

"Yes."

"Flames and furies—who? What? Is this a trick?"

"What is the matter? You are here—I am here."

"Pshaw! get out of the way. I'll go in and see your master. I'll fix it up with him this time, Ambrose, and you, my good fellow, shall know no different than though he was alive."

And he believed in his ability to do it.

The loss of the papers did not trouble him a bit once he found that he had escaped from the detective's clutches.

And for an excellent reason.

Copies of the original, stolen from Mr. Buckaloo, were still in his possession.

The copies he had made the year before, when his plot had been in a very different shape.

That plan failed.

He still kept the copies.

He meant to use them now.

"Well, how do you feel to-day?"

The black doctor, rubbing his hands, bent over a bed upon which lay the form of a man, even older and more patriarchal looking than Ambrose himself.

Nothing but the head was visible.

It was a snow-white head—it was the head of the old miser, Moses Mullion.

It was also a head which Dr. Sweeney had seen many times before. Yet it seemed to him that somehow he had never seen it looking so white as now.

"Mr. Mullion—Mr. Mullion!" he called.

There lay the mysterious "He."

Why was there no answer?

The black doctor was really a good deal of a physician. He began to suspect the truth.

Out went his hand.

It touched the white head.

"Dead! Great Heavens! Dead!"

He started back with a suppressed cry.

Even as he did so some one threw open the widow blind and let a flood of light into the darkened chamber.

Had it been possible for the black doctor's plastered face to turn white it would have done so then.

The room was full of people.

There was Ben Morris.

Also Nana Morris, with the crysolite cross suspended about her neck.

Ditto the baby.

Likewise Ambrose in the very act of removing a white wig and beard.

"Old King Brady, the detective!" gasped the black doctor, as two policemen appeared at the parlor door.

His hand went back, but Old King Brady's went forward.

"Don't do it, doctor," he said, thrusting a cocked revolver under his nose. "The game is up. Your plot has failed!"

Yes, the black doctor's plot had failed!"

Truth told, it had never been anywhere near success.

Mr. Mullion was already dead, when Old King Brady, acting upon information received from the banker, Buckaloo, had entered the house earlier in the day.

Buckaloo, captured dead drunk in Mother Beezee's ranch by the detective, had upon being taken to the station house made a full confession, as we have said.

It involved few details not already touched upon.

Sufficient to say that it gave Old King Brady the name of the mysterious "He" and the key to the whole situation, as we know.

The detective's sudden appearance at the old baby farmer's ranch was very simple.

He had managed to draw his hands out of the bonds and creep away.

There was then a police station on Bushwick avenue.

Here he went and was given plenty of help.

With the police he went to Mother Beezee's, with the result already described.

Nor was there any mystery about the appearance of Ben, Nana and the baby.

The black doctor thought he had bribed Rube the Rat to light out, and give him a chance to carry on his infamous schemes.

Rube took the money but did not light out.

Feeling that these young folks would be better off in a private house than a hotel, Old King Brady sent them to Mrs. Beezee's in Bedford street upon their rescue from the Black Doctor's house.

Why not?

The baby farmer and her precious son were in the Tombs.

Then, because he loved the dramatic, Old King Brady had them in at the finish that they might have the true story of their parentage.

He had interviewed Ambrose, and knew that Mr. Mullion was dead.

But the best part of it was Miser Mullion left a full written confession in the hands of Ambrose, who gave it to Old King Brady.

It told the story and did the work.

Determined to back his counterplot against the Black Doctor's plot, Old King Brady laid his plans and made up like Ambrose.

It worked.

The Black Doctor bit.

The bite sent him to Sing Sing, with his true character exposed, for in the examination certain criminal charges came up.

These served to convict him.

He is in Sing Sing to-day.

Awful was the rage of Tammany at finding that a negro by the name of Sweeney had successfully imposed upon them for years.

Sing Sing was a good place for the black doctor.

It would not have been safe for him to appear on the streets.

Mr. Buckaloo is there also.

The count is there.

Plug Moran is there. But Prof. Fogarty and Big Schmitz are not there.

Big Schmitz was never captured.

Prof. Fogarty developed a huge pull.

The Governor of the State of New York pardoned him.

Why, no one ever knew, and when Fogarty is asked—for he keeps a respectable saloon now—he always answers:

"Burning Blue Blazes! none of your blame business. I'm as honest as the rest of you!"

Prof. Fogarty's largest trade is among the politicians.

Did he tell the truth?

Ben Morris and Nana do not live in America—neither does Baby Jim or Gussio, nor Rube the Rat. Ben and Nana have changed their name.

The are very rich now.

They belong to the nobility.

Ben is Earl of Bankadale, a peer of the realm.

He owes it all to Old King Brady the detective, whom he has richly rewarded for his persistent work in the great case known in Yew York police annals as THE BLACK DOCTOR'S PLOT.

[THE END.]

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