

SECRET SERVICE

OLD AND YOUNG KING BRADY, DETECTIVES.

Issued Weekly—By Subscription \$2.50 per year. Entered as Second Class Matter at the New York Post Office, March 1, 1899, by Frank Tousey.

No. 120.

NEW YORK, MAY 10, 1901.

Price 5 Cents.

THE BRADYS' OPIUM JOINT CASE; OR EXPOSING THE CHINESE CROOKS. BY A NEW YORK DETECTIVE.



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CHAPTER I.

TWENTY THOUSAND DOLLARS GONE.

At four o'clock in the afternoon of February 10, a cold, raw wind was driving the falling snowflakes through the streets of New York in blinding clouds. It was so gloomy that the lights were lit in the office of Secret Service Headquarters, and the steam radiator diffused a comfortable warmth through the private office occupied by the Chief of the division.

The telephone bell rang sharply, and the official in question answered it.

"This is the office of Ranger & Martin, stock brokers, No. 10 Broad street, said a voice in reply to the question of who was speaking.

"Well," demanded the Chief. "What do you want?"

"A detective, and at once, if you please."

"For what purpose?"

"To investigate a mysterious robbery in this office."

"I'll have a man down to see you in a quarter of an hour."

"Very well. Thank you. Good-bye."

And the speaker rang off.

Hanging up the receiver, the Chief touched an electric press button. A side door almost immediately opened, and a detective strode in. He was James Brady, a tall, powerful, white-haired man, wearing a blue frock coat and white felt hat, a standing collar and an old-fashioned stock. There was a keen expression in his deep-set eyes, the thin lips and square jaws denoted a fund of great determination, and

there was an immobile look on his clean-shaven face which gave no clew to his emotions.

He glided over to the Chief's desk, saluted and asked:

"Want me, sir?"

"Ah! Old King Brady!" exclaimed the official in pleased tones, for this man was the best detective on the force. "I am glad you were here. A call just came in on the telephone for an officer, and I want you to take the job."

"What is it?"

The Chief explained.

In conclusion, he remarked:

"I was surprised to hear of a robbery occurring in the great financial center. It is very unusual. As that section of the city is strictly kept clear of professional crooks, the robber must be a novice."

"Of course," assented the old detective, nodding, and taking a chew of tobacco. "Professionals rarely dare venture below the Dead Line. If any are caught south of Fulton street, we pull them in on general principles."

"Where is Harry Brady, your partner?"

"In the other room."

"You'll take him with you, of course?"

"Oh, yes. We always work together, you know. That boy is going to make a clever detective. I never thought he would do so well when I made his acquaintance some time ago, and humored his ambition by teaching him my profession. The lad is a wonder. He is smart, courageous, sly and a hard worker. All these elements will make him succeed. As a matter of fact, he tries to excel me in every way. I have an affection for him."

The Chief laughed and nodded.

"Yes," he replied, "the boy is very keen. Since you and he have been working as partners, you have made the name of the Bradys cordially dreaded by all the crooks in Gotham. You deserve credit for it."

"Call the boy in, and give him your instructions, Chief."

"No need. You can manage this case your own way."

"Then we'll start right off to see the brokers."

And so saying, Old King Brady passed into the room he came from.

His pupil, Young King Brady, was in the apartment.

The boy was a fine looking fellow, less than twenty years of age, and possessed of a strong physique.

He gave Old King Brady an inquiring look, and asked:

"What did the Chief want?"

The veteran explained the case, and Harry looked pleased.

"Glad we've got something to do," he remarked. "Times are too dull. I am actually getting rusty for the want of employment."

"Put on your coat, and we'll go down to see the brokers."

The boy complied, and they left the Central Office and went downtown. Upon reaching the Broad street stock brokers' place of business, they entered the big white stone building and ascended to the fourth floor in the elevator, pushed open the office door, and entered.

It was a large square room, with two windows, a red carpet on the floor, some pictures on the walls, and several desks scattered about.

The partners each sat at desks placed back to back, an old bookkeeper named Samuel Peabody stood at a high desk in a corner posting his ledger. Gertie Lane, the stenographer, sat before her typewriter, and Joe Harris, the office boy, was putting a book in the big safe.

In one corner of the room stood a busy stock ticker, to the tape of which Frank Ranger referred every few moments. George Martin arose when the Bradys entered, and asked what they wanted.

The detectives observed that he was a tall, portly old gentleman, with a gray beard on his kindly face, and then their glance wandered over to Ranger. He was a much younger man, of dark complexion, with a closely trimmed brown mustache and piercing black eyes.

Old King Brady handed over his card.

The moment Mr. Martin read what their business was a smile of pleasure stole over his face, and he exclaimed in hearty tones:

"Ah! The detectives we sent for! Glad to meet you, gentlemen. Come in."

A railing divided the entrance from the office, and he opened the gate to admit them, and Ranger glanced around at the officers and arose.

When the detectives were seated, Old King Brady said politely:

"Will you kindly tell us how you were robbed?"

"It's a most mysterious piece of business," replied Mr. Martin. "This gentleman is Mr. Ranger, my partner. He will give you the details."

Frank Ranger shook his head with a gloomy look on his face, and exclaimed:

"You may as well tell the story as long as you've begun it, George."

"Very well," assented the old gentleman. "There isn't much to it, Mr. Brady. On Monday (yesterday) we received ten thousand dollars in cash from a customer, and I put it in the safe at three o'clock, locked the door, and one hour later we all went home. When my partner opened the safe this morning the money was gone."

"Queer," muttered Old King Brady.

"Very," assented Mr. Martin. "We were greatly puzzled and worried over it, for the safe had not been tampered with, and nobody but Ranger and I knew the combination to open the door."

"In what denomination were the bank notes?"

"All in bills of one hundred dollars each."

"Arranged in packages?"

"Yes. Two packages, each one bound with a paper strap."

"Did anybody see you put the money in the safe?"

"Not a soul. Ranger and I were alone in the office at the time."

"What part of the safe did you deposit the money in?"

"This little cash drawer."

The detectives examined not only the drawer, but the entire safe.

When they finished, they saw that it had not been forced open.

"Harry," said Old King Brady, "make memorandums of these points."

"I've already done so," replied the boy, showing a notebook he had been writing in during the foregoing dialogue.

The two brokers were keenly watching the pair, and Mr. Martin now said in low, earnest tones:

"What do you think of the disappearance of that money, gentlemen?"

"We are not yet prepared to express an opinion," Old King Brady answered.

"Now I am going to tell you the strangest part of the story."

"More to it, eh?"

"Yes. We had to make good the loss of our customer's money, for he wanted us to purchase stocks with it at a moment's notice. For this reason it was necessary to have an equal amount of cash on hand. Ranger drew a check for ten thousand dollars, and cashed it. He brought the money from the bank in one package, copied the numbers, and put it in the safe himself, locked the door, and privately told me it was there. In neither instance did anybody except my partner and I know that the money was in the safe. At noon Ranger went out to his lunch. The bookkeeper, the stenographer and the office boy followed him. I remained until Ranger returned. Then I went out, and got back at three o'clock. Ranger had not left the office during my absence. You can see by this that the safe was guarded since the money was locked in it, every moment of the day by either my partner or myself. Yet, when we opened the

safe, an hour ago, the second ten thousand dollars of our own money had disappeared."

The Bradys were thunderstruck.

They gazed at each other, and then at the brokers, in deep silence.

A most puzzling mystery confronted them.

"It's all very strange," said Old King Brady at length.

"You may well say so," replied Mr. Martin earnestly. "We can't account for it. In fact, we are intensely puzzled. We sent for you to see if you could not fathom the mystery and recover our money."

"Why didn't you notify us when the first ten thousand dollars vanished?"

The brokers colored up, but made no reply.

The way they glanced at each other with an almost savage ferocity, though, aroused the suspicions of the detectives.

It was quite evident that the pair were withholding something from the Bradys in connection with the case.

And that it was something unpleasant was quite plain to be seen.

CHAPTER II.

DEAD IN AN OPIUM JOINT.

"See here, Mr. Martin," exclaimed Old King Brady, "you are keeping something back. We want to know why the police were not notified earlier of the robbery. If you don't want to make a clean breast of the entire matter, we won't do anything about the case."

This threat startled the partners.

They darted a quick glance at each other, and Ranger growled:

"Go ahead and tell the whole thing, George."

"I hate to exhibit our childish folly," replied Mr. Martin, hesitatingly.

"Never mind about that. They must have all the facts."

"Very well," was the reluctant reply. "I'll own up, Mr. Brady. The reason we didn't notify you earlier was because the loss of the money made my partner and me ill-humored. We accused each other of knowing where the money went. That led to a bitter quarrel, of course; but it was quite natural that we should be suspicious of each other, because nobody but ourselves knew the money was in the safe, and we could not, under the circumstances, very well suspect or accuse any one else."

"That's very true," assented Old King Brady.

"Of course," Mr. Martin went on, with a troubled look, "we were so angry and excited we did not think of calling in the police at first; and when I did finally suggest it as the best way of solving the problem, Ranger objected. He said you might think either one of us was the guilty party, as there was absolutely no evidence of anybody else having had anything to do with the matter."

"Naturally," acquiesced the old detective.

"Well, you know the whole thing now. We would not

have let you know anything about it, had not the second robbery taken place right after the other. It made us so desperate over our loss that we had to swallow our prejudice and ask for your aid."

"Well, gentlemen," said Old King Brady, "you have given us a pretty hard job. But we will do the best we can for you. I won't guarantee that we will find the thief; but you can depend that we will make a strong effort to run him down."

"We can ask no more than that of you."

Old King Brady now turned his attention upon the book-keeper, who was a small, thin man with white hair and a sparse mustache.

"Mr. Peabody, the gentleman wants to speak to you," exclaimed Mr. Martin.

"Eh, me? Yes—well, what is it, sir?" stammered the old clerk, as he thrust his pen behind his ear, turned toward the detective, and pushed his spectacles upon his bald head.

"A plain, simple, honest old fellow," thought the detective; then he added aloud: "While you were in the office to-day, did you notice if anybody opened that safe?"

"Only this morning, sir, when the first loss was discovered, sir."

"Who opened it?"

"Mr. Ranger, sir."

"And who opened it this afternoon?"

"Mr. Martin, sir."

"Are you quite sure it was not opened between the time Mr. Ranger locked it this morning and the time it was opened this afternoon?"

"Positive, sir, positive; unless—unless——"

"What?"

"It may have been opened during the noon hour, while Mr. Martin was alone in the office, sir," said the book-keeper, hesitatingly.

"I didn't touch it," exclaimed Mr. Martin, angrily. "Neither did anybody else. It ain't likely I'd rob myself of my own money, is it?"

"Half your money, you mean!" growled Ranger, coldly.

"Never mind! It doesn't matter," said Old King Brady, seeing that they were liable to quarrel again. "See here, boy!"

"Well, sir?" asked Joe, who was a bright lad of fifteen, with big, blue eyes and ruddy cheeks. "Speaking to me, sir?"

"Yes. What's your name?"

"Joe Harris."

"Did you know that money was in the safe?"

"No, sir. And neither did Gertie Lane," protested the boy.

"Is that a fact, miss?" queried the detective of the pretty stenographer.

"I'm sure I didn't know anything about it," replied the girl, and she pushed a dark ringlet of crimped hair back from her white forehead, and added in troubled tones. "My employers never tell me when they have money in the safe."

The old detective had merely questioned the office assistants to draw them out, so he could study their dispositions.

He felt quite well satisfied that they were all innocent of the theft.

Then he spoke to the two partners again, asking a few necessary questions, and turning to Harry, he finally remarked.

"We may as well go. We can learn no more here."

Wishing the brokers good-day, they departed and descended to the street.

When they were at a distance from the building occupied by the brokers, a grim smile stole over Harry's face, and he exclaimed:

"Do those men imagine we are insane?"

"Who, Ranger and Martin?" said Old King Brady.

"Of course. Can't you see that old Mr. Martin, with his kind, benevolent face and good, fatherly bearing, is only an old thief?"

"I admit I had suspicions, but not of him."

"Who do you suspect?"

"Ranger. He looks like a villain. Didn't you notice that he rarely smiles? Beware of a man like that."

"I don't agree with you about his character."

"We can only prove our suspicions by watching both."

"Of course. You shadow Ranger, and I'll keep my eye on Martin."

"Very well; and we'd better begin at once. Change your appearance so they won't know us when they emerge from their office."

They stepped into an adjacent hall.

Each one was provided with clever disguises, which they could assume without much difficulty in a great hurry.

When they emerged there was a startling alteration in their looks.

Old King Brady's head was covered with a red wig, and a mustache and side-whiskers of the same hue adorned his face.

His big felt hat was rolled up in his pocket, and he now wore a bicycle cap; his coat was turned inside out, changing its color, and he wore a pair of eye-glasses with gold rims.

"Think I'll be recognized?" he chuckled.

"Your own mother wouldn't know you," replied Harry, smilingly.

"And you have lost your identity completely."

His allusion was correct, for Young King Brady was apparently a tough citizen of the worst stamp in looks and bearing.

His coat looked frayed and threadbare, a peaked cap was pulled down over his dirtied face, a scrubby little mustache covered his upper lip, and a handkerchief of uncertain color was bound around his neck.

With a black eye and an old clay pipe stuck in the corner of his mouth, the boy assumed a swaggering air and a husky voice.

The detectives took up a position from whence they could see Ranger and Martin when they emerged from their building.

It had grown dark, and the snow still fell thickly.

Within a quarter of an hour Ranger emerged, jumped into a waiting cab, a silk hat on his head and his collar turned up, and was driven off.

Old King Brady glided swiftly along in pursuit of him.

Five minutes afterward George Martin came out.

He hurried over to the Third Avenue elevated railroad station, followed by Harry, and boarded an uptown car at Hanover Square.

The old broker wore a black Fedora hat, and a heavy ulster.

The train carried them up to Chatham Square, and to the boy's surprise the old gentleman alighted and went down into the street.

Harry remained on the platform a few moments, and his astonishment was increased when he saw the old broker dart into Pell street, and hurry along the narrow, dirty thoroughfare, going direct into Chinatown.

"What in thunder can the broker be doing in this low neighborhood?" muttered the astonished young detective.

He hastened down to the street, so as not to lose track of his prey.

Darting along in hot pursuit of his man, he saw him pause before an old brick rookery, the store in the basement of which was occupied by a small, dingy laundry, whose sign-board bore the name Ting Fang.

Harry recognized the place as the most infamous opium joint in the city.

His amazement was increased when he saw George Martin suddenly open the store door and disappear inside.

"Good gracious!" gasped the boy. "Can he be an opium fiend?"

He rushed up to the store and peered into the dimly-lighted room through a window.

It was deserted; but a clock on the wall struck seven.

Young King Brady entered and glanced around.

There was a wooden partition, with a door in it, at the rear.

Just as the boy started to go toward it, he heard a wild scream in the tones of Mr. Martin's voice, and the broker shouted in frenzied accents:

"You've killed me!"

There came the sound of a heavy fall.

Rushing to the door, Harry flung it open.

A large room, fitted up as an opium smoking parlor, was before him. There was not a soul in the dimly-lighted room except Mr. Martin, and he lay upon his back on the floor in the middle of the room.

A dagger was buried in his bosom to the hilt.

Harry ran to his side and peered down at him.

The old broker was dead.

CHAPTER III.

MR. RANGER'S QUEER MOVEMENTS.

"Good gracious, Harry, what are you doing here?"

Young King Brady glanced up from the corpse upon

hearing this exclamation behind him, and saw his partner entering the opium joint.

Surprised to see Old King Brady there, the boy replied:

"I might ask you the same question."

"I traced Frank Ranger to this neighborhood."

"And I followed George Martin to this place."

"How odd! Who is that lying behind you on the floor?"

"The man I followed."

"What's the matter with him?"

"He's dead."

"What?"

"Murdered."

"Jerusalem! Let me see."

He approached the corpse and critically examined it. The cause of George Martin's death was quite apparent.

"Stabbed to death!" he commented. "Who did it?"

"I haven't the remotest idea."

"Explain the circumstances."

Harry told all that happened to him.

When he finished, the old detective shook his head with a very grave look on his face, and remarked in dry tones:

"This case is developing rapidly."

"See if we can find a motive for the deed."

"You examine the room, and I'll attend to the corpse."

The boy nodded and walked away, examining everything in the dive in hope of gaining a clew to the culprit.

In the meantime, Old King Brady drew out the dagger and scrutinized it carefully. It was a double-edged weapon, with a thin blade and a gutta-percha handle, having a brass guard and a brass ball on the end.

The blade was eight inches in length, frosted on both sides, and in the frosting, amid a beautiful scroll, was the Spanish word, "Muerte."

It meant "death."

That the weapon was of Spanish make was evident.

Old King Brady put it in his pocket for future use.

He next examined the narrow slit it made in Martin's breast between the fourth and fifth ribs, and observed that the knife had been driven in and downward at an angle, piercing the victim's heart.

Death must have occurred almost instantly.

The detective next searched the dead man's pockets.

He produced a pen-knife, a bunch of keys, some cigars, a match box, a small pocket book containing some change, and a big packet of bank-notes.

Counting the money, which was in bills of one hundred dollars each, he found that there were just \$10,000 in the roll.

A paper strap bound them together, and upon it was written with blue pencil:

"\$10,000, Bank of Commerce, February 10th."

Old King Brady was greatly excited by the latter find, but went right on examining the dead man's pockets.

Nothing more came to light.

Just then Harry finished his investigations, and joined his partner, asking:

"What did you find?"

Old King Brady showed him, and then said:

"Robbery was not the motive of his assassin. If it were, he would have taken this money from the dead man's pockets."

"Apparently," replied the boy. "But I say, isn't that rather a large sum of money for that man to be carrying about in his clothes?"

"It has led me to suspect it is the money missed from the safe of Ranger and Martin to-day," answered the veteran. "Take out your note book, and we will compare these bills with the entries you've made in your book of the money stolen from the brokers."

Harry did as his partner requested.

When Old King Brady called off the numbers on the bills, the boy found that he had them all marked in his book from a list Ranger gave him.

Having compared all the bills, the boy closed his book.

"No doubt about the matter," he exclaimed. "This money is the last \$10,000 stolen from the broker's safe. As it was in Martin's possession, it shows plainly enough that he was the thief, as I suspected from the first."

"That effectually disposes of the mystery of the robbery case."

"Of course. It shows Martin up in his true light."

"But why was the old broker murdered?"

"That's a new mystery we've got to solve."

"Queer his murderer vanished so quickly."

"Wait here till I call in a policeman to guard the body, so we can try to find out who committed this crime," said Harry.

He left the room.

In ten minutes he returned with a policeman.

They left the man guarding the corpse, and glanced around the room.

Besides the entrance by which they came in from the laundry, there was only one visible means of exit from the joint.

It was a small window in the rear.

"The culprit must have escaped that way," said Harry, pointing at it. "He could not have gone out through the laundry without passing me. In that case I would have seen him. Martin was alive while I was in the laundry. I ran in here a minute after he was killed, and yet his murderer was gone when I entered."

"He must have moved very swiftly."

The boy flung open the window.

It opened on a yard in the rear, but strange to say, it was covered with iron bars about four inches apart.

For a man to have passed out that way was utterly impossible.

"How mysterious!" exclaimed Harry.

"By Jove, it's puzzling!"

"How did the criminal get away then?"

"There must be a secret exit from here."

"See if we can find it."

They went in different directions, and examined the thickly-carpeted floors and heavily-draped walls in search of a secret exit.

Despite the great care they took, they found nothing to indicate that there was a secret passage leading from the smoking parlor.

The curious feature was that in all this time not a person entered.

Old King Brady was not deceived by their want of success.

When they finally met in the middle of the room and compared notes, the old detective exclaimed:

"Our want of success don't worry me any."

"Why not?" demanded the boy, in some surprise.

"Simply because I'm positive such an exit does exist."

"On what ground do you base such a firm belief?"

"In the first place it stands to reason that somebody must have been in here to kill Mr. Martin. The man did not commit suicide. If the murderer didn't pass you in making his exit, he must have gone out some other way. That way is veiled in mystery. But it must exist. It's only a question now of finding the exit to clear up the problem of where the murderer vanished to so suddenly and mysteriously."

"I quite agree with that view of the case."

"In the second place," continued Old King Brady, "there is, as you know, an underground Chinatown, which the outside world knows little or nothing about. It's a pretty well established fact, however, among the detective fraternity, that most of the villainy the Chinese practice is done out of sight. The whole of Chinatown is tunnelled. Once you get the hang of their subterranean passages, you can go from one end of this quarter to another without emerging into daylight. It's my firm belief that this room is connected with these underground passages. The murderer took advantage of his knowledge of them to escape from here, you can depend."

"Mr. Martin not having been the victim of robbery, must have fallen before the knife of an enemy," said Harry.

"It would appear so," responded Old King Brady. "But then, perhaps your sudden entrance here scared a would-be thief away."

"That's very doubtful, as I came in immediately after the man was killed, and did not see a soul leaving the place."

"We must investigate his private life outside of this place to-morrow."

"Very well. And I intend to fathom this mystery if I can," said Harry, resolutely. "Now, how about your chase after Mr. Ranger?"

"Well, I tracked his carriage from Broad street to Doyers, the street behind this one. He disappeared in the hallway of a tea store. I searched that house from top to bottom without finding him. The yard of the tea store abutted against this house. Thinking he had gone through the yard and thus passed out through this house, I came around here to investigate this theory, when I met you."

"How queerly those two partners have acted to-night. Could it have been by some prearrangement?" muttered Harry.

"Heaven only knows," replied the old detective.

Just then they heard the street door of the laundry open,

footsteps crossed the store, the door was pushed open, and a Chinaman entered.

He was a medium-sized man in native costume of silk, and the moment the Bradys observed his lean face, Harry exclaimed:

"It's Ting Fang, the owner of this joint!"

"Just the person I wish to see," said Old King Brady, and striding over to the Chinaman, he grasped him by the arm and exclaimed: "Ting Fang, you are my prisoner!"

CHAPTER IV.

THE PRETTY TYPEWRITER.

A cry of alarm escaped the proprietor of the opium joint, and he recoiled, glaring at the disguised detective with an ugly expression upon his yellow face. Then he gasped, in excited tones:

"Whatee want? Ting Fang notee do nosing, allee samee, so be."

"Where have you been for the past half hour?" fiercely demanded the old detective, tightening his grip on the other.

"Lestelant, habee suppee."

"Do you usually leave this place deserted?"

"No habee blisness, why stay?"

"Oh, humbug! What are you giving me?"

"You no believee me?"

"Certainly not."

"No helpee."

Old King Brady pointed at the corpse.

"Didn't you kill that man?" he thundered.

"Nope," replied the Chinaman, unmoved.

"But you know who did?"

"No sarvy, allee samee."

"As it's useless to try to make you confess, I'm going to pull you in, Ting Fang, and charge you with the murder."

"No, no! Me no murdee him!" protested the Chinaman.

"We'll see about that in court. Come on!"

He began to pull the Mongolian toward the door, and Ting Fang began to yell and struggle to resist him.

His cries brought a score of Chinese crooks rushing into the place, and when the prisoner spoke to them, the whole crowd charged on the two detectives and tried to rescue the opium joint keeper.

The next moment the Bradys were fighting.

Out shot their fists, hitting the yellow crooks right and left, and in return they received many hard blows.

The policeman had been looking on in astonishment at their temerity. He now drew his night stick and gave a whoop.

"Clear ther throok!" he yelled. "Sthop, ye spalpeens. Bejabers, I'll break ther heads av ivery wan av yez! Pat Connors is again ye, an' be ther poker an' Moses, there'll be a wake in Chaneytown ter-morrer!"

And crack—bang! went his locust.

Every time it flew around it hit a head.

Yells and imprecations arose on all sides from the horde, and they scattered and fled in all directions.

In the scuffle Ting Fang escaped.

The detectives and the policeman chased the whole gang out the door, and just then an ambulance came clattering up to the building.

The policeman had summoned it by telephone before he entered the building at Harry's request.

Out jumped the surgeon, and his appearance brought the Bradys to a pause, for the Chinese crooks were out of reach.

"Any one hurt here?" queried the surgeon, bustling in carrying a satchel.

"Where are you from?" asked Harry.

"Bellevue."

"We've got a corpse."

"Shall I take it to the Morgue?"

"By all means, if you are going back."

"I'll get a stretcher. What's the case?"

He drew out a note-book, and Harry explained matters, which the surgeon jotted down, as was necessary.

The murdered man was then carried out and was driven away.

The policeman went off to report the case, and the Bradys remained in the joint for several hours, hoping Ting Fang would return so they could capture and question him.

But the sly Mongolian had spies lurking around, who posted him about the detectives' doings, and he remained safely under cover.

Finding that they could not accomplish anything by remaining there any longer, the Bradys took their departure.

They hurried home and went to bed, as the policeman had been instructed to turn in a report of the crime at headquarters.

On the following morning after breakfast, the Bradys gave their chief a detailed account of the case.

They then went down to Ranger's office.

As the broker was in, the detectives engaged him in conversation at once.

"Have you heard the news?" queried Old King Brady.

"About Mr. Martin?" asked the broker, with a frown.

"Yes," assented the detective.

"I read the account of his death in this morning's paper."

"What do you think about it?"

"I've come to the conclusion that he was a victim of foul play for the purpose of robbery," replied Mr. Ranger, decisively.

"You are mistaken. He was not robbed; in fact, he was a robber."

"How do you mean?" asked the broker, in puzzled tones.

"None of his money or jewelry were missing. On the contrary, we found in his pockets the last ten thousand dollars stolen from your safe."

"What?" gasped Ranger, in startled tones.

"It's a fact. He is the one who stole that money."

"Good heavens, can it be possible?"

"We have already proven it."

"You amaze me, Mr. Brady!"

"It's quite evident," said the detective, "that he opened the safe at noon time yesterday, abstracted the money, and put it in his pocket. We have recovered it, and found the bills tallied with the description of those which you gave us."

"I feared he was the pilferer."

"So he told us. You suspected each other."

"Well, the guilty man is exposed, as he deserves."

"Have you any idea what object he had in going to Chinatown, and penetrating one of the worst opium joints down there?"

"None whatever, unless it was that he is a drug fiend."

"Did you ever suspect him of being one?"

"Yes. Some time ago I became suspicious of him, and traced him to the Chinese quarter. In fact, last night I went up to Doyers street from here in my cab, to see if he had gone there. I entered one of the dives and had a talk with the keeper. After finding that he was not there, I left the place and went home. He must have gone to another joint, as I see he was found in Pell street. Had I met him, I was going to let him see that I knew his weakness, and I intended to point out the folly of his course, and try to induce him to give it up."

The Bradys glanced significantly at each other.

What Ranger said explained his movements of the previous night.

As he probably did not know that Old King Brady had been following him, his admission had great weight with the officers in clearing him of their suspicions of crooked work on his part.

Finally Old King Brady said:

"I know you were in Chinatown."

"You do?" echoed Ranger, in tones of surprise.

"Oh, yes. I followed you from here."

"What for?"

"Simply as a matter of business."

"Did you see me enter that joint?"

"I did, and I lost track of you there."

"You surprise me."

The old detective laughed quietly, and replied:

"You must never be surprised at anything we do."

Ranger bent a keen glance upon the old detective for a few moments, and finally asked, in curious tones:

"Do you know who killed Martin?"

"Not yet," Old King Brady answered. "But we are going to find out. Can you tell us anything about his private life?"

"Yes. He was a single man, without a relative in the world, and he lived alone at the Fifth Avenue Hotel. He had five thousand dollars invested in this business, which is gone. He made about ten thousand a year, and he never had a cent, as he was an inveterate speculator and opium fiend."

"Had he any enemies?"

"None who would murder him, that I know of."

"How about his character?"

"Above reproach, excepting for the bad habits I've mentioned, and the pilfering you have already discovered."

"Have you any idea why he robbed the firm?"

"I suspect that he lost money speculating, and became so desperate to retrieve his losses that he stole to get himself out of trouble."

"You merely suspect this?"

"That's all. I don't know as a positive fact."

"Who did he associate with mostly?"

Mr. Ranger smiled in a peculiar manner, pointed at Ger-tie Lane, the pretty typewriter, who had been intently listening, and said meaningly:

"Only that girl. It was he who brought her here."

"Ah!" said the old detective, glancing at her keenly.

He noticed that her face was as pale as death, and her hands shook violently, as if she were suppressing some great emotion.

The peculiar actions of the girl startled and amazed him.

"Miss Lane," he exclaimed, "I'd like to speak to——"

But before he could complete the sentence the girl fell to the floor in a dead faint.

CHAPTER V.

ARRESTING THE CHINAMAN.

The sudden collapse of the girl threw every one in the office into a fit of great excitement, as no one could understand what made her faint.

Old King Brady lifted her head from the floor, Harry brought a bowl of water from the wash basin, and Mr. Ranger, Joe, the office boy, and Samuel Peabody, the old book-keeper, crowded around them looking on curiously.

Laving the girl's throbbing temples with the water, the detectives finally revived her, and sat her up in a chair.

She glanced at them piteously a few moments, and then burst into tears.

The detectives did not interrupt her until she had relieved her overwrought mind, and then she cried in sobbing tones:

"Oh, he is dead—dead!"

"You mean Mr. Martin, of course?" said Old King Brady.

"I mean my best friend on earth!"

"What was there between you and him that his death should so affect you?"

"I cannot—I dare not—tell you, sir," sobbed the agitated girl.

The detectives were greatly mystified.

It was evident a secret of vital importance existed between this girl and the murdered man; but they could not fathom its importance.

"See here, Miss Lane," exclaimed Old King Brady, in gentle but firm tones, "I want you to tell me all about the friendship existing between you and George Martin. It is absolutely necessary for us to know so that the ends of justice may be attained."

"My lips are sealed!" replied the pretty typewriter, resolutely.

"You are making a grave error in being so obstinate."

"I cannot help it, sir. No matter what the result may be, I shall say nothing. In fact, I cannot. Please ask me no more questions."

"But I must. You are defeating the law."

"No, no, leave me out of the matter, I beg of you, Mr. Brady!"

"Impossible. I may have to arrest you on suspicion of being concerned in that man's death, if you don't speak out!"

A suppressed cry of alarm escaped the girl.

She started to her feet, trembling like an aspen, and gasped:

"My goodness, I hope you do not think I killed him?"

"I do not say that," replied the detective; "but I must confess it is my belief that your knowledge of George Martin may help us to fathom the strange mystery of his death. If the man was such a good friend of yours, I should think you would be glad to give us any information that might lead to the capture of his assassin."

The girl wiped her forehead with her handkerchief.

She was intensely agitated, and pondering deeply.

Presently she formed a resolution, and said in tones of decision:

"I can say nothing. Do with me as you will."

Old King Brady was hardly prepared for this.

He thought she was weakening.

Harry winked at him and nodded his head toward the door.

Understanding that the boy intimated that he should leave the girl alone, the old detective said to her:

"I'm sorry you are implicated in this case, Miss Lane. You may regret your silence some day. Perhaps it will go harder with you if we have to find out your secret from some other quarter. For the present we will not molest you. Good-day, all."

And they departed.

Reaching the street, Harry said:

"As it was pretty plain that all our questioning would be of no avail, I thought our best tactics would be to shadow the girl. We can find out all about her without letting her know anything about the matter. Then we might be better prepared to make any necessary charges."

"I anticipated your plan, Harry."

"She may know a great deal about that man."

In the street they met an officer from the downtown office, and after giving him a description of the girl, they asked him to shadow her if she attempted to leave the broker's office.

The detectives then went up to Chinatown.

Neither one was disguised.

Upon reaching Pell street, they proceeded to Ting Fang's joint, and observed a couple of Chinamen industriously working in the laundry.

They glanced up at the Bradys.

Without saying a word to them, the officers strode into the rear room. It was illuminated by some colored Chinese lanterns, and a couple of Mongolians lay in two of the bunks smoking opium.

Ting Fang was waiting on them.

Never expecting a daylight call from the detectives, he was taken off his guard when the Bradys strode in.

The rascal recognized them at a glance.

He assumed a bland smile to hide his uneasy feelings, extended his hand, and said in jovial tones:

"Heyo, Blady."

"Ting Fang, I'm glad to meet you," said the old detective.

He grasped the Mongolian's hand, and before the dive-keeper knew what his purpose was, he snapped a handcuff on his wrist.

"Wow!" gasped Ting Fang, in alarm. "Whatee do?"

"You are wanted at headquarters," replied Old King Brady.

Harry grasped the Chinaman's other arm, and the rascal groaned.

"You slipped through our fingers very cleverly last night," said the boy, in grim tones; "but we knew your capture was sure to occur later on."

"Whatee poo' Ting Fang do?" gasped the Chinaman. "Lunee joint? Me pay plenty money you letee go, Blady."

"We don't want your money, we want you, my boy."

"Dat you here las' ni'?" demanded the Chinaman.

"Yes. We were disguised, that's why you didn't know us; but your nose is pretty well swelled up, I see, and that came of my fist hitting it when you and your pals were fighting to get away from us."

The Chinaman scowled angrily.

It was useless to say anything, however.

He knew very well that once he had the Bradys after him, it was utterly useless to hope to keep out of their clutches.

With a resigned sigh he remarked:

"Me go 'long."

"You'd better," was Old King Brady's grim reply.

They led him out, and he and the two laundrymen chattered rapidly a few moments, while he was passing them.

Going out into the street, the Bradys took him to headquarters, and locked him in a dark cell.

Here they left him all the morning.

After an interview with the chief, they sent for a Christianized court interpreter, and told him what they wanted.

With this man, they returned to the prisoner's cell, and according to the detective's instructions, the interpreter said to Ting Fang in his native language:

"You are in serious trouble. The detectives have charged you with the murder of that broker in your establishment."

"But I am not guilty of the deed," replied Ting Fang.

"Can you prove it?"

"Of course I can. At what hour was the man killed?"

"The clock was striking seven."

"At that hour I was in Chop Wing's restaurant in Mott street."

"Will he testify for you to that effect?"

"Certainly. Ask him."

"Who was in charge of your place during your absence?"

"Nobody."

"But the street door was not locked."

"It was locked. I locked it myself."

"Then how did it happen to be open when Mr. Martin went in?"

"It wasn't open. Mr. Martin had a latch key to get in, and probably used it. This may seem surprising to you, but there was a very good reason for him having such a key."

"What reason?" demanded the interpreter, curiously.

"He was my business partner in the opium joint."

"What? Can it be possible? Was that fact generally known?"

"No, for Mr. Martin wanted me to keep the matter a secret. There are many opium dens in New York run with the capital of white men."

"Can you prove your partnership with that man?"

"Easily, as we had legal papers drawn up to that effect, one of which I have, while the other was retained by Mr. Martin, and will be found among his personal effects."

The interpreter told the detectives what Ting Fang said.

It astounded them, of course; but it left them as much in the dark as ever about the identity of the broker's murderer.

In order to test the prisoner's veracity, Harry went away to question Chop Wing, the restaurant keeper, and to procure the partnership documents.

Meantime, Old King Brady tried to find out from Ting Fang if there were not secret exits from his opium joint; but the Chinaman steadfastly denied that he knew of the existence of such passages.

In due time Harry returned, and met his partner in the outer office.

"Well?" queried Old King Brady.

"Chop Wing declares Ting Fang was in his restaurant from six o'clock until nearly half past seven, so he has an alibi proven," replied Harry. "And here," he added, holding up a legal document, "is bona fide evidence that George Martin was Ting Fang's business partner in the opium joint and laundry."

CHAPTER VI.

FOOLING THE OPIUM FIENDS.

The evidence Harry gathered from Chop Wing that Ting Fang was in his Mott street restaurant from six to seven thirty seemed genuine.

And when Old King Brady saw the partnership agreement between the opium joint keeper and George Martin, he realized that the prisoner may have told the truth about the matter.

At any rate it would account for the broker having a key to get in the joint during Ting's absence to supper, and

showed why the old broker was seen so often in the slums of Chinatown by his partner.

It was quite natural that Martin did not want any one to know that he was interested in such a low business.

As Old King Brady had Martin's keys, he resolved to see if one fitted the lock of the laundry door in Pell street.

And as no more information could be gained from the Chinaman, they finally left headquarters and went down to Broad street.

Ting Fang was then sent to Blackwell's Island for ten days on a trivial charge, to hold him.

Meeting the spotter who had been watching the broker's office, the Bradys found that Gertie Lane had not yet come out.

Dismissing the man, they watched for her in the upper hall.

The strange emotion of the girl, her obstinate refusal to tell the secret of what existed between her and Martin, and many other little points made the officers resolve to watch her closely.

It would be a hard job to worm her secret from her, they feared; for it was evidently something of great importance.

About four o'clock the office door opened, and they saw Mr. Ranger appear in the doorway with an ugly look upon his face.

"Miss Lane," they heard him shout, angrily, "you are discharged!"

"Oh, Mr. Ranger," pleaded the pretty little typewriter, "for mercy's sake do not send me away. I do not know what I shall do if you turn me out! My living depends upon the salary you pay me. If I'm deprived of that I shall have absolutely nothing in the world to live on."

"I don't care anything about that," was the heartless reply. "I'm not keeping a charitable institution for the support of poverty-stricken stenographers. I don't want you here, and never did. It was that old scoundrel, Martin, who kept you employed here against my wish. Now that he's gone, I'm going to get rid of you entirely. I've paid you for your week in full, and you can get another job somewhere."

"But, Mr. Ranger——"

"Shut up! Your whining ain't going to have any effect upon me!" shouted the broker, savagely. "You've put yourself in a bad light in this office by having a secret intrigue of some kind with my thieving partner. If you had been an honest girl, you would not have made a secret of your intimacy with Martin, when the detectives tried to find out from your lips why you were so deeply interested in him."

"You do not know what actuates me, sir."

"What of it? The case was urgent. You wouldn't admit anything when a few words from you at the right time might have put matters aright, and could have led to the recovery of all the stolen money perhaps. I have no sympathy for a girl of your character. And I'm mighty glad to get rid of everything and everybody pertaining to the

man who robbed, swindled and duped me as my delectable partner did. Now, get out!"

The girl left the office.

He banged the door shut after her.

In the hall she burst into tears, for her heart was very heavy with grief, and she could not control her emotions any longer.

Remaining in the hall long enough to wipe the tears from her eyes, she finally descended in the elevator.

The Bradys had preceded her.

When she reached the street she glanced around in a bewildered way for a few moments, and strode away over the snowy pavements.

The detectives followed her.

She seemed to be uncertain for a while which way to go, and walked along with her head bent, as if deeply thinking.

Finally she made her way into Broadway, up which she strode to Park Row, and she passed up that thoroughfare to the Bowery.

Here she paused hesitatingly a moment, and then turned into Pell street.

The Bradys were amazed to observe this.

"By Jove, it's queer!" Harry muttered. "Where is she going, I'd like to know?"

"See there!" exclaimed Old King Brady, pointing excitedly.

"Good gracious! Into Ting Fang's opium joint."

"Can she be a fiend, Harry?"

"No, no, she has not the marks of one!"

"Then why should she go into such a place?"

"Perhaps to learn more about the way Martin was killed."

"We can quickly find out by following her."

They glided over to the laundry and peered in.

It was deserted.

Then they went in.

Passing back into the joint, they glanced around.

Gertie Lane was nowhere in view; she had vanished as suddenly and completely as if the earth had opened and swallowed her up.

Once more the Bradys were mystified.

They observed that a couple of Ting's friends were waiting on a dozen or more opium fiends, who were lying in the bunks smoking.

A rapid yet thorough search of the place failed to reveal to the detectives any sign of the missing girl.

None of the inmates of the joint paid any heed to them, as most of the smokers were in various stages of stupefaction from using the noxious drug, and the attendants thought they were a pair of fiends.

"She isn't here," said Harry finally.

"I'd like to know where she disappeared to," Old King Brady answered.

"I'm going to solve that riddle before I quit this place."

"Come outside. I've got George Martin's bunch of keys. I wish to find out if any of them fit the door of the laundry, as Ting Fang said it would."

They walked out of the joint.

Pausing at the outer door, Old King Brady drew out the keys.

Trying them in the lock one by one, he found that one of the keys really did fit the door, and, nodding to Harry, he said:

"Ting Fang told the truth."

"In that case Martin must have been his partner."

"Really, I'm quite convinced of it now."

"Come back into the laundry. I'm going down into the cellar to explore it in search of a means of exit from the opium-smoking parlor."

In a corner of the room stood the cellar entrance.

Opening the door and lighting their dark lanterns, the Bradys groped their way down a rickety flight of half decayed stairs.

Ten feet below they reached the cellar.

It was dark and foul-odored.

When they flashed their lantern lights around, they observed that the cellar was filled with all sorts of rubbish.

Rats ran away squeaking before their approach.

The detectives passed around exploring the gloomy place, and suddenly noticed that one wall, on the south side, was made of wood.

As the whole place was whitewashed uniformly, they might not have noticed the wooden partition had not Young King Brady accidentally fallen against it, and heard a hollow sound.

"Here's what we are looking for," said the boy.

"See where it ends."

"In the east wall."

"And it commences thirty feet from the front of the house."

"Just about that."

Old King Brady took some careful measurements, and finally said:

"This wood must partition off a hidden corridor."

"We can break into it," said Harry.

"It isn't necessary. I've got the entrance located. Let's find the door."

"Upstairs?"

"Of course."

Up they went, and they passed into the smoking room.

Old King Brady had a certain spot measured off with his keen glance, and going over to the wall, he muttered:

"This is the place where the exit should be."

"But the walls are covered with red cloth."

"See if you can't find a door in it."

"No. I've already looked until my eyes ache."

"Then I'll force one of the Chinks to expose its location. You keep your eye upon every one who runs to this corner."

And so saying Old King Brady planted himself before the door leading into the laundry, drew his pistol, and began to fire it over the Chinamen's heads.

"All hands surrender!" he yelled. "You are under arrest."

For a moment there was a deep silence. Then several of

the Mongolians put out the lantern lights, leaving the room in gloom.

Harry anticipated this, however, and hearing the hurrying scuffle of sandals over the floor, he suddenly flashed his lantern light upon the section of the wall his partner had indicated.

He saw a large opening in the wall.

All the inmates of the joint, scared back to their senses by the firm belief that the place was being raided by the police, were fighting and scrambling over each other in a wild, frantic effort to get out through the opening and escape.

"There's the secret passage now!" laughed Harry.

And they both made a rush for it.

CHAPTER VII.

STEALING OLD KING BRADY.

Harry had drawn the mask over the reflector of his lantern so that when he and his partner reached the opening in the wall the room was in gloom.

As a result they became mixed up in the scrambling crowd of opium fiends and went tumbling through the opening with the horde.

They heard the last man who passed through close the secret door.

Finding themselves in a narrow passage, the Bradys fought to remain where they were and let the frightened gang pass them.

In a few moments more they were alone.

"Old King Brady, are you here?"

"Yes; what's left of me."

"I'm going to flash the light."

"Go ahead. We must be alone."

The boy unmasked his lantern and sent its rays around.

It was a landing at the top of a flight of stairs where they stood.

Hemmed in on each side by walls, they were in a narrow passage.

Not one of the crowd remained and everything was silent around them.

"This must be the place into which the murderer of George Martin vanished," commented Harry. "And the girl Gertie must have gone in here, too."

"No doubt," assented the old detective, as he took a fresh chew of tobacco. "Ting Fang is a liar. He swore that there were no secret exits from the smoking parlor, and we've disproved his allegation."

"I wonder where this passage leads to."

"Let us explore it and find out."

They descended the stairs and pursued a long, narrow passage.

It led them underground for a great distance, and was broken at short intervals by numerous heavy doors, all of which were locked.

At the end of the passage they encountered another flight of stairs, and ascended to the platform at the top.

Here another secret door was found and as the mechanism for opening it was on the inside, they quickly passed through.

The Bradys found themselves in a small room, and heard the clatter of dishes, and the rattle of knives, forks and spoons.

Passing through a door, they found themselves in a Chinese restaurant.

The floor was bare and dirty, tables and chairs were ranged along each wall, upon which red streamers were hanging, covered with Chinese pictures and writing. Several Chinese waiters were supplying a mixed crowd with chop suey and similar Oriental dishes.

Fortunately no one saw the officers emerge from the room.

Taking chairs at a table, they called a waiter, and Harry asked him:

"Whose place is this?"

"Chop Wing," answered the Chinaman.

"Bring two plates of chop with mushrooms."

"Allee light."

And away scudded the waiter.

When he was out of earshot, Old King Brady said:

"Here's where Ting Fang was at the time Martin was murdered."

"Yes. But was he really here from six till half-past seven?"

"There's the problem. Now, he may have been the one who killed the broker. To make an alibi, he could have come here via the underground passage and no one would have been the wiser."

When the waiter returned Harry asked him:

"Did you see a girl in blue pass through here from Ting Fang's place less than a quarter of an hour ago?"

"Yep. Gone way," lied the waiter.

"Alone?"

"Nope. Gottee Chinaman."

"Who?"

"No savvy he name."

"Where did they go?"

"Out inee stleet."

The waiter went away, and Old King Brady said:

"It's impossible to believe a Chinaman. If I was sure that fellow was not lying I'd feel tempted to go and look for her."

"We must be on Mott street now."

"Yes. Did you see all the doors opening into the passage we followed? They give ingress to the cellars of other Chinamen's cellars. The girl may have gone into one of those openings."

Harry glanced around.

There were several of the Chinamen in the restaurant whom they had scared out of Ting Fang's opium joint.

They were keenly watching the officers, for they recognized them as the men who frightened them away.

"We are spotted!" muttered Old King Brady.

"Then we had better not venture back in the tunnel, or those coolies would carve us into mince meat."

"Come out and we'll try the street."

They arose to go, but a big crowd of jabbering Chinamen obstructed their way, and one of them demanded in impertinent tones:

"Wheree go, young fieller?"

"That's our business," the old detective replied coolly. "Stand aside!"

"No! Me no——"

"Stand aside, I say!"

And Old King Brady let him look down the barrel of a revolver.

The Chinaman slunk away, and called off his friends.

Finding a passage clear, the detectives started for the door, passed some of the gang, and reached the sidewalk.

Suddenly some one struck Old King Brady a powerful blow behind the ear, which staggered him.

The next moment the whole crowd made a rush for the detectives, and in an instant more they were struggling for their lives.

Never expecting such treachery, the Bradys were taken totally off their guard by the Chinese crooks.

At the first onslaught both were knocked down.

By dint of hard struggling, though, they got upon their feet again, aching all over from the terrific blows they received.

"Don't let them get you down again, Harry," shouted the old detective.

"No danger," panted the boy. "I can hold my own."

With fists doubled up, and their muscles drawn, the Bradys struck at their foes straight from the shoulder.

Both were scientific fighters.

They warded off many a hard knock aimed at their heads, and with swings, jabs and uppercuts knocked their enemies right and left.

They were a score pitted against them.

As every one of the Chinamen was armed with a weapon of one kind or another, and the detectives depended exclusively upon their fists, it was an unequal battle.

But it was exciting while it lasted.

Three of the yellow skinned villains rushed at Old King Brady, and he hauled off his right fist, swung it square in the face of the first man and knocked him flat on his back.

Around came his left hand, catching the second man on the jaw with the force of a pile driver, causing the Chinaman to yell, pause, grab his jaw with both hands and hop up and down with pain.

The third man reached the old sleuth.

He struck the gallant fellow on the forehead with a bottle and sent Old King Brady to his knees in a dazed condition.

In the meantime Harry was having his own troubles.

One of the Chinamen attacked him with a cart rung, and the boy tore it out of his hands and knocked the Mongolian into the gutter with it.

With a good weapon in his hands, the boy's temper rose, and he charged on the crowd and swung the rung for their shaved heads.

Several heavy blows were struck.

Down went every man he hit.

Just then some policemen, having heard of the fight, drew their clubs and came charging on the crowd from Park Row.

The Chinamen were alarmed.

A rush for the restaurant followed.

By the time the patrolmen reached the spot the whole crowd had disappeared into the building, leaving Harry in possession of the field.

The boy smiled and glanced around.

He now saw the policemen coming.

But he missed his partner.

Old King Brady had disappeared.

"What has become of him?" thought the boy.

There was only one inference for him to make, and that was that Old King Brady was in the hands of the Chinese, and had been carried into the restaurant with them.

Up came the policemen just then and one of them recognized the boy.

"Hello, Young King Brady! What's going on here?" he asked.

"My partner and I had a scrap with a bunch of Chinese crooks."

"Where is Old King Brady?"

"Blest if I know. But I think the gang must have carried him into that restaurant with them just now."

"Do you want us to help you to find out?"

"By all means, if you will."

"Lead the way. We will follow you."

"Come on then."

And so saying, Harry dashed into the building, followed closely by the three policemen.

CHAPTER VIII.

CAUGHT IN THE FLOOD.

A rapid search of the restaurant failed to reveal any trace of Old King Brady, or any of the crooks against whom the detectives fought.

No one but the proprietor and his help were in the place.

All the policemen were surprised.

"Where could that crowd have gone so suddenly?" one of them asked.

"Perhaps this fellow can tell us," answered Harry, seizing Chop Wing.

"Ow! Lettee go!" roared the yellow man in alarm.

"Tell us where those Chinamen went!" replied Harry sternly.

"Chop Wing notee know," protested the Mongolian.

"Of course not," sarcastically said Harry. "But I think I can find them. Come on, boys," he added turning to the policemen.

And he passed over to the secret door in the wall, and led them through, his dark lantern flashing its rays far ahead.

Down in the passage they heard voices, and the hurried patter of footsteps retreating ahead of them.

Young King Brady was far in advance of his companions. Just as he was passing one of the sidedoors, a pair of hands shot out of the aperture, seizing him by the throat.

The boy was choked.

A cry that rose to his lips was stifled.

The lantern fell from his hands to the floor and the light went out.

In the gloom he was seized by other hands and was suddenly jerked through the doorway and was pinned to the floor.

He struggled to get free, but was helpless.

Over half a dozen unseen men held him down.

The boy felt them binding his hands and legs, and then one of them stuffed a gag in his mouth, and fastened it.

He could neither speak nor move.

The door leading into the vaulted passage was shut and locked, and the startled policemen retreated.

They had not seen what happened, and being left in the gloom, they feared an attack which they could not resist.

One of them called the boy repeatedly.

Receiving no reply, they finally went back the way they came from, fearful of getting murdered by the Chinese crooks.

Meantime Harry was carried away in the gloom.

A door opened and a dazzling glow of light shone through.

They brought him into a room.

It was brilliantly illuminated, and the boy observed that it was a gambling den of the kind in which fan-tan was played.

A number of Chinamen sat at the tables playing, and some others crowded around the prisoner, jabbering excitedly.

Harry made good use of his eyes.

The boy saw that he was in a cellar.

It had board walls, floor and ceiling, all whitewashed, and was very poorly furnished.

At one end of the room a Chinaman was sitting at a sort of desk, writing some peculiar characters in a book, and counting with the aid of an abacus—a frame with balls strung on wires.

Some of the Chinese were smoking pipes with long stems, others were eating rice with chop sticks, and a few were sleeping.

Harry's captors held an excited conversation with the others, and finally carried the boy to a water-tight door at the front of the cellar.

A padlock was opened, revealing a vault behind the door, and they carried the boy in and laid him down.

Retreating from the damp, foul-odored place, they locked the door again and left him in the gloom.

He was a prisoner.

What his fate was to be puzzled him.

"It's a gambling den," he thought, "and it must be located somewhere in Doyers street, if I am to judge by the distance from Mott street I traveled before those Chinks nailed me."

The gloom was intense.

A cold dampness struck a chill through him.

He laid there awhile thinking over the situation, when he heard the squeaking of rats and felt several of the rodents run over him.

A few moments later one of them bit him.

The boy was startled.

"They may try to devour me!" he thought.

Alarmed at this ugly prospect, he sat upright.

This movement scared the rats away, and the boy struggled to his feet. Bound as he was, he knew that an attack from the beasts would prove fatal, as he could do nothing to defend himself.

A few moments afterward the boy heard an odd sound.

It seemed as if some one were moving about near him.

He listened intently and became quite nervous.

"There's somebody here besides myself!" he muttered.

Just then a hand touched his face.

The boy shrank back.

He feared an assassin had been left in the place to kill him, and he drew back against the wall.

The next moment a voice demanded:

"Who is this?"

It was the voice of Old King Brady!

The boy recognized the familiar tones at once, and a thrill of joy passed over him and he made a sound through his nose.

In a moment more the old detective lit a match, held it up, and recognized his pupil.

"By thunder, it's Harry!" he cried. "Bound, too. Here, I'll release you."

Out came his knife, and he cut the boy's bonds and gag off.

Harry's relief was intense and he cried:

"By jove, this is an unexpected pleasure."

"So they captured you, too, eh?"

"Yes. Some policemen and I were hunting for you when they nabbed me."

"Too bad. They hit me on the head and knocked me senseless. Then they must have put me in this place. I recovered and finally succeeded in getting rid of the bonds that held me. Then they brought you in."

"This must be a vault under the sidewalk."

"It is. I've found that out some time ago."

"Any way to escape?"

"Over head there's a coalhole covered with an iron lid, but it's beyond my reach. If you could get up on my shoulders, you might lift it up, and we could then get out."

"Hark! What's that noise?"

"Some one coming in."

"Lie down quick and pretend to be fastened yet."

They separated, just as the door opened.

A moment later the proprietor of the fan-tan joint came in, followed by half a dozen of his friends.

One of them had a candle and the proprietor carried a big wrench.

They merely glanced at the two prisoners, as they were intent upon a plan they had formed to kill the Bradys.

Using the wrench, the Chinamen unscrewed the cap of a water main, projecting through the front wall.

It spurted a huge jet, drenching the men who stood near the pipe, and, seizing the cap, the gang fled.

They swarmed out of the vault.

Pulling the water-tight door shut, they locked it.

Left alone, the Bradys hastily arose, for the water was flooding the floor and wetting them to the skin.

"They intend to drown us!" muttered Old King Brady.

In their haste to escape from the vault, the Chinese had left the candle burning on the top of the water pipe.

It lighted the vault.

Harry seized the candle.

"Won't the water escape from here through the crevices around the door into the cellar?" asked the boy.

Old King Brady examined the door and shook his head.

"No," he replied. "The doorway must be water-tight. I don't see any water getting out that way. This may be an old trick of theirs."

"We'd better get out of here as soon as possible," said Harry. "The water is rising rapidly, and it won't take long to fill this small place."

"It's up to my shoe tops now."

"Such a queer trick to play on us."

"Oh, Chinamen always do things by contraries."

The old detective planted himself beneath the coal hole.

Glancing up at it, he said:

"Climb upon my shoulders and see if you can raise that lid."

The boy complied and found he could touch the iron easily enough.

He exerted all his strength to push it upward, but found that it held fast, and that he could not budge it an inch.

After several attempts, and finding that he could not do anything with it, he got down, with a serious look upon his face.

"Can't move it!" he announced.

"What!" gasped Old King Brady, in startled tones. "You must."

"It's beyond my strength."

"Then we will perish in this place like rats in a trap."

"Can't be helped," answered the boy. "I can't lift it."

The water kept rising higher around them every moment and an anxious, worried look crept over the old detective's face.

CHAPTER IX.

THE GIRL RETURNS.

"Can't we stop the water from flowing out of that pipe, Harry?"

"I doubt it, as the Chinamen took the screw cap with them."

"Couldn't we plug it with a coat?"

"Might try."

Old King Brady stripped off his jacket.

He tried to stuff it into the mouth of the pipe, but the force of the water kept blowing it out the moment he let go.

There was a very heavy pressure on.

Seeing that it was almost impossible to keep the pipe plugged, the old detective finally became desperate.

By this time the water had risen as high as their hips.

Old King Brady became restless and muttered wistfully:

"If we only could fasten the coat in."

"There's absolutely nothing here to do it with."

"Do you think you could hold me up to the coalhole?"

"Yes. I'm strong. Are you going to try to remove the lid?"

"I am much stronger than you."

"Come over here then."

They waded over to a spot beneath the opening.

Harry was watching the door.

If any water escaped around it, the percentage was so small that it showed no material effect on the quantity that entered the vault.

This fact convinced him more than anything else that the door was perfectly water-tight and held the flood in.

The boy braced himself under the coalhole.

When Old King Brady climbed upon his shoulders, his weight almost forced the boy to the floor.

Young King Brady pluckily braced up, however.

His partner was pushing and straining furiously to raise the iron cover, and the boy asked:

"Can you move it?"

"I'm afraid not. It seems to be rusted in."

"If you don't, our doom is sealed, Old King Brady."

"Confound those murderous Chinamen!"

He pushed and strained, but all to no purpose; the lid of the coal chute failed to move, and he finally gave up trying.

When the old detective again stood on the bottom, the water had risen to his bosom, and the boy said to him:

"We can only avert absolute drowning by holding a plug in the water pipe. Where's your old coat?"

"Lost somewhere under the water."

"Take mine, then," said the boy, pulling it off.

They made their way to the pipe, and stuffed it again.

In this manner they were enabled to check the influx, and Old King Brady stood over the pipe, using both hands to hold in the plug.

For a while there was a deep silence.

A moving object on the surface of the water now met Harry's view, and raising the candle he observed that it was a joist.

An idea flashed across the boy's mind.

He eagerly seized the timber and exclaimed:

"Just the thing!"

"For what?" asked his partner.

"To use a battering ram on that coalhole cover."

"Ah! That's a good suggestion."

"Help me to manage it."

Old King Brady let go the coat and the water pressure blew it out of the pipe and the stream gushed in again.

With the joist in their hands the detectives went over to the iron cover and began to strike upward with the end of the joist upon it, using all their strength.

Blow after blow followed.

Suddenly the lid was forced upward.

A shower of dirt came down upon the detectives, but a thrill of joy passed over them when they saw a way to freedom open.

The water in the vault was then so deep that it would soon have risen over their heads, and Harry exclaimed:

"We were just in time!"

"I'll go up first, Harry."

"Very well. Hang onto the edge of the opening when you remove the lid and I'll climb up your body and get up in the street. Then I'll take you by the wrists and pull you up."

This plan was followed.

Old King Brady stood on the boy's shoulders.

From there he could easily reach the iron cover, and, pushing it aside, he grasped the edge of the flagstone and Harry climbed up his body.

When the boy got out, he pulled his partner up.

They were thus freed from danger.

Neither of them remained there long.

Replacing the coalhole cover, they hurried away.

In half an hour, clad in dry clothing and fully armed, they returned to the fan-tan joint with a platoon of policemen.

The door was battered down.

In rushed the officers and led by the Bradys, they reached the gambling den and pounced on the yellow crooks.

The Chinamen were taken completely by surprise.

Every one of them thought the Bradys were drowned in the vault.

Their astonishment was intense when they beheld the detectives alive, well, and out of their prison.

When the crowd was marched away to the police station, the water purveyor's department was notified and the influx into the vault was stopped.

The Bradys then went home.

On the following afternoon, while they were at headquarters, Old King Brady said to his young partner:

"I'm puzzled to know what became of Gertie Lane."

"Her disappearance in the opium joint was certainly mysterious," the boy replied. "Suppose we go and hunt for her?"

"Just what I was going to suggest."

"Wait till I find out where she lives. She may be home."

He went to the telephone and rung up Frank Ranger.

After a brief conversation Harry returned to his partner.

"I've got her address," he announced.

"Where did the girl live?"

"In a furnished room on Fourth avenue."

"Got no family?"

"Apparently not."

"We may find out something about her at her residence."

They hastened away and soon reached the place in question.

It proved to be a house, all the rooms of which were let furnished and the woman who owned it met them at the door.

"Miss Lane?" said she, in answer to their question. "Oh, yes, I know her. She lives here. But she isn't home. Didn't come home last night at all."

"Are you sure?"

"Yes. I just came from her room."

"Is she in the habit of disappearing?"

"No. At home promptly every night by six."

"How long has she lived here?"

"Over a year."

"Did she have any callers?"

"Only one."

"Who was it?"

"An old gentleman named George Martin."

"Indeed! Did he call often?"

"Very. But why ask these questions?"

Harry exhibited his badge and replied:

"She's involved in a legal case we are on."

"Oh! You're detectives, I see."

"Yes," assented the boy.

"Has she done anything wrong?"

"Not a thing! Can we examine her room?"

"Certainly. Come in."

She led them up two flights of stairs to a pleasant room, and the Bradys observed that it contained the pretty stenographer's trunk, while there were some dresses and other clothing hanging in the closet.

Hanging on the wall was a picture of George Martin.

Nothing of a suspicious nature was discovered.

Finally Old King Brady said to the landlady:

"We are satisfied and will leave here, madam."

"Hark!" said the woman. "Some one is coming up-stairs. It sounds like her walk. Just wait a moment."

They listened intently.

A few moments later the door opened.

Gertie Lane walked in, looking pale and miserable.

A startled cry escaped her lips when she saw and recognized the Bradys and she recoiled a step, and demanded excitedly:

"What are you doing here—in my room?"

Old King Brady bent a keen, searching glance upon her.

"We've been hunting for you since you disappeared in Ting Fang's opium joint," he replied coolly.

The girl gave a cry of alarm.

CHAPTER X.

THE TYPEWRITER'S CONFESSION.

Old King Brady's startling words produced a strange effect upon the young girl, and she darted a look of alarm at him and gasped:

"Then you know——"

"We know you were discharged by Mr. Ranger," said the old detective sternly, "and we followed you to the opium joint. We saw you go in, and when we followed you, like magic you had vanished."

"Well?" she gasped. "And then?"

"A search was made, but you were not to be found. We demand to know what you—a respectable girl—were doing in that low place."

"I decline to tell you, Mr. Brady."

"Why should you? Are you a slave to the opium drug?"

"That is my affair—not yours."

"Indeed! Then you are bound to make a mystery of it, eh?"

"I simply wish to keep my own counsel."

"Miss Lane, your actions were highly suspicious."

"Hasn't a person the privilege of acting as one pleases?"

"Yes. But I wish to tell you that your friendship for Mr. Martin is of such a peculiar character that it leads us to infer that you may know something about the cause of his death."

"Nonsense! Humbug!" said Gertie, with a nervous laugh.

"Call it what you will, we retain our suspicion," exclaimed Old King Brady in nettled tones. "Why don't you be frank and honest about the matter? It can do you no harm, can it?"

"It might."

"Now, see here," began the old detective angrily.

"Tut—tut!" she interposed quietly. "Don't get mad. I merely wish to mind my own business. It isn't hurting anybody."

"Do you know anything about the Martin murder?"

"Not as much as you do."

"Hadn't he any enemy who sought his life?"

"None that I'm aware of."

"Who do you think killed him?"

"Some Chinaman."

"Which one?"

"That's hard for me to say."

The Bradys whispered together a few moments.

Presently, Harry said to the girl:

"Miss Lane, can't you give us some information about Martin?"

"What do you wish to know?"

"Why anyone should kill him?"

The girl thought for a few moments deeply.

She could arrive at no conclusion evidently, for she said:

"No. I don't know why anyone should wish to murder him."

"That crime was not done for nothing."

"Of course not. When he entered the opium joint he may have had a quarrel with someone. In the heat of passion he may have been stricken down by——"

"No! You are wrong. There was no quarrel preceding his death."

"Why are you so sure of that?"

"Because I entered the laundry right behind him. He passed into the opium joint just a few moments ahead of me. He was not in there more than a minute before I heard his assassin kill him. So you see, there was no time for a quarrel."

"You surprise me."

"Those are the plain facts just the same."

Gertie turned away and thought again.

Finally she asked Harry:

"Do you know whether Mr. Martin left any money?"

The detectives were puzzled at this question from her and wondered why she asked such a question.

Harry shook his head, however, and answered:

"I don't believe he did. Mr. Ranger told us he was an inveterate stock speculator. He robbed the firm, as you know, of the ten thousand dollars. He had five thousand dollars capital in the concern. As the second ten thousand he stole was recovered, I need not mention that. But, as he got away with ten thousand, he practically withdrew his own capital and five thousand belonging to his partner in addition. That leaves his interest in the firm wiped out, and him five thousand indebted to the concern. Hence, he left nothing, unless he had a private accumulation of money somewhere that no one knows anything about."

"But had he such an interest anywhere?"

"We know of one possession of his."

"And what was that?"

"He was Ting Fang's partner in the opium joint."

"Are you sure of that?"

"Positive. We've seen the legal evidence of it."

"Well, I was told by him once that such was to be the case."

"Did you go there to find out?"

"Yes. That's really what brought me there last night."

"What did you discover?"

"Nothing, as Ting Fang is locked up."

"Of what interest would it be to you to know this?"

The boy shot this question at her pointedly, and fixed a sharp searching look upon the girl, before which she quailed.

He made her very nervous.

Young King Brady observed it and smiled quietly.

"See here, young lady," he remarked. "Don't it strike you as being rather queer that a stenographer should be so deeply interested in her employer's private affairs?"

The girl's face turned crimson, and she stammered:

"No. I don't see anything strange in that."

"Well, we do," said Harry emphatically. "And so would anyone else knowing all the circumstances as we do. It's very evident to us, Miss Lane, that behind all your secrecy you have some potent reason for your way of speaking. In fact, I've already got a suspicion of what it is. We are your friends. Why don't you confide in us fully, and perhaps we may be able to be of great assistance to you."

"You are very kind, Mr. Brady, but I had better keep my secret."

"No! No! Speak out. It will be for your own good."

The girl hesitated a moment longer.

Then she suddenly came to a resolution.

Going over to her trunk, she opened it, rummaged in the contents, and finally withdrew a paper.

Returning to Harry, she handed it to him, and said:

"Read that."

The boy complied.

It was a wedding certificate.

The paper declared that Gertie Lane had been married to George Martin for over a year!

Harry was not surprised.

He suspected this.

Giving the paper to Old King Brady, the boy said:

"I expected this."

"Now you understand my interest in the dead man, Mr. Brady."

"Yes. It clears up a mystery. Did anybody know about it?"

"Not a person. We agreed to keep it secret."

"Why?"

"At Mr. Martin's request."

"Had he any special object in so doing?"

"That we will never know."

"Well, the only asset he left you was his interest in that opium joint."

"It was to ascertain that which brought me there."

"What became of you when you disappeared in that place?"

"I went down in the underground tunnel and entered a private room, where I slept until to-day. The Chinaman in charge of the joint could not tell me anything about Ting Fang's business with my husband. I've been left destitute by George's death."

"I see. Do you know anything about those rooms which open on the underground passage?"

"Yes, indeed. I know about all of them."

"What are they used for?"

"Nothing but crooked work. Some are hidden opium dens, others are gambling resorts, and another is used for counterfeiting."

"Who told you?"

"Mr. Martin."

"How can we enter them?"

"With my pass key. Here it is. It fits all the doorlocks." She handed him a curious looking key, and the boy said:

"We can make good use of this key, Old King Brady."

"I hope so," answered the old detective. "I'd like to expose the Chinese crooks and this is our chance to do so."

"Don't mention me as having betrayed them," said Gertie in earnest tones. "If you do, the Highbinders will run me down and murder me for giving them away."

"You can depend on our discretion. Moreover, we will try to secure your rights," said Harry.

And a few minutes afterward they both left her, and hastened back to the Central Office to get ready to expose the Chinamen.

CHAPTER XI.

TRACING THE DAGGER.

"I never knew that any counterfeits were circulated from Chinatown before," said Harry that night to his partner, at headquarters.

"Neither did I until yesterday," replied Old King Brady, as he drew a silver quarter from his pocket, and handed it to the boy. "I got this in change in a store I was in down there. What do you think of it?"

Harry examined the coin carefully.

Balancing it on his nail, he struck the rim.

A clear metallic ring was emitted.

"This is a good piece of money," said the boy. "You have given me the wrong coin, I guess. The stamping, milling and ring are perfect as far as I can see."

"How about the size?"

"Same as any coin, ain't it?"

"No. A little smaller."

"But it's silver."

"Of course it is."

"Do you mean then to say it's a counterfeit?"

"I do."

"How do you make that out?"

"I'll tell you what the treasury experts say. This coin is a finely executed counterfeit, as far as looks go. The metal is fine silver, the stamping and milling are almost perfect and it sounds right. But, as it only costs the counterfeiter about ten cents to produce this coin in as good silver as the mint uses, he makes fifteen cents on each coin he passes. The result is that he uses nearly as much silver as the government does and makes a good big profit on the money."

"Even by giving pure silver?"

"Yes."

Harry was astonished.

"This is a new wrinkle to me," he exclaimed.

Old King Brady smiled and shrugged his shoulders.

"You've got a great deal to learn before you die," said he.

"That's just my opinion."

"Do you believe these coins are made by the Chinamen?"

"I do, as the treasury agents have already observed that a good many of them came from that district. The Italians about Mulberry Bend, near Chinatown, have long been the men who made the bad coins. But these spurious pieces did not come from the Italian district. There are too many pushed out of Chinatown for any one to mistake about where the mint is located."

"In that case they must come from the place Gertie Lane described."

"Can't we pull the place?"

"Yes. I've already made arrangements to do so."

"What plan have you formed?"

"Ten Secret Service men will meet us at ten to-night in Pell street. We shall gain ingress to the tunnel through the

opium joint, use the key the girl gave us to get into the mint, and pull the place."

"Good enough! If we keep on at this rate it won't be long ere we completely clean up Chinatown of its crooked element."

"The only thing exasperating me now," said Old King Brady, taking a fresh chew of tobacco, "is that we seem to make no headway in locating the murderer of George Martin."

"We haven't got a clew to follow," replied Harry.

"That dagger ought to lead us to some conclusion."

"It might," admitted the boy. "Suppose we hunt around the Chinese quarter and ascertain if any such weapons as that odd dagger are sold there."

"That's a plan worth trying. Come on."

And they left the Central Office and went downtown.

When they reached the Chinese district, they went up one street and down another in search of a cutler's store.

None was found.

Two hours were thus spent fruitlessly, when they finally gave it up.

"It's useless," said Old King Brady, with a sigh, as they paused in front of a curio store in Mott street. "We may as well abandon all hope of finding any——"

"Hold on!" interposed Harry excitedly.

"What now?"

"See there!"

He pointed at the window of the store before which they stood.

It was filled with Chinese and Japanese vases, fans, umbrellas, dolls, beadwork and other native articles.

Among the odd collection were some Chinese swords, made of brass coins, metal helmets, steel spear heads, and some clumsy looking big bowie knives.

Old King Brady glanced at the goods keenly.

"You think——" he began.

"I think he may sell daggers such as killed Martin."

"Let's go in and try him."

They entered the store, and found it to be a curious place, with huge jars standing on strange pedestals, bamboo portieres, with grotesque birds, beasts and fish worked in beads in the center, hanging on the walls; black screens embroidered in gold around lurid Chinese pictures, ranged at one side, and shelves burdened with Joss images and other curiosities.

A smiling little fat Chinaman stood behind the counter.

"Howdy," said he, nodding and shaking hands with himself.

"Good evening," replied Old King Brady. "You the boss?"

"Yep," assented the storekeeper. "Wantee bly some sing?"

"We are anxious to get a souvenir of Chinatown."

"Plenty sings here," said the Chinaman, waving his hand toward the shelves.

"Yes. You have got a large assortment of things. But

we'd like to get a sword, or a gun, or a dagger of some peculiar pattern."

"Allee light. Me showee."

He took a number of weapons from boxes under the counter, and the Bradys examined and commented on them with great interest.

Finally, though, Old King Brady said to the dealer:

"Nothing here seems to suit us. Haven't you got any pretty daggers?"

"Oh, yep. China daggel, allee samee?"

"Well, yes. But we saw one in another store we rather liked. I think it was Spanish, for it had a Spanish name on the blade."

"Me know. Yep—habee one allee light. See."

He took down a box and opened it.

There was a dagger inside exactly like the one which they found buried in the body of George Martin.

Harry nudged his partner with his elbow.

Old King Brady carelessly examined the knife.

"Why!" he exclaimed, in tones of surprise, "this is exactly like the dagger Ting Fang had in Pell street. Do you know him?"

"Ting Fang? Oh, yep. Me knowee he."

"Did you sell him his dagger?"

"Yep."

"When?"

"Long 'go. Two week. He sen' yo' here?"

"Of course he did. But, how much is this?"

"Flee dollee."

Old King Brady bought the dagger.

After looking at other things the Chinaman wished to show them, they left the store and walked silently to the Bowery.

Old King Brady finally said:

"I guess we've got the murderers located, Harry."

"More than likely Ting Fang killed his partner to get entire possession of the opium joint."

"That's one incentive for the deed."

"You drew the shopkeeper out beautifully."

"I don't know what impelled me to suggest to him that Ting Fang purchased one of his daggers. It was merely a venture on my part. I really had no suspicion he did buy one. At any rate it transpires that I accidentally said just the right thing."

"That don't prove Ting Fang's guilt."

"Certainly not. But it puts him under suspicion."

"Old King Brady, we'd better arrest the shopkeeper now."

"What for?"

"Fetch him to headquarters and make him admit all he knows."

"Very well. We can get his affidavit anyway."

Returning to the store they found the Chinaman in conversation with his business partner, and placed him under arrest.

He was intensely astonished of course.

As he could not help himself, however, he had to go with them, and they brought him up to headquarters.

An interpreter was sent for.

When he arrived the prisoner was put on the rack.

All he said was reduced to writing and he readily signed and swore to his statement, as he did not know what it was for.

The man admitted that on a certain date Ting Fang had bought such a knife from him as the one that killed Martin.

Having secured his affidavit, they released him.

The Chinaman hastened away, and the Bradys went downtown in time to meet their posse for the raid.

Having gathered their forces, the Bradys marshalled them into the opium joint and drove out the manager and his patrons.

They then descended into the tunnel with lighted lanterns and passed along until they reached the door of the counterfeiter's den.

CHAPTER XII.

ESCAPE OF TING FANG.

Old King Brady had the pass key Gertie Lane had given him, and as his men had their instructions, he inserted it and opened the door.

A dark passage was revealed.

The detectives crept in silently as ghosts.

About twenty feet ahead a door stopped them.

Hearing sounds coming from the other side of it, the Bradys paused and listened at the panels.

"Chinamen talking," Harry whispered.

"Hear the pounding of presses and clinking of metal?"

"Distinctly. The place must be in full operation."

"We'll catch them red-handed."

"How about this door?"

"We'll have to smash it down."

"That will give some of them time to escape."

"Perhaps. Watch for a staircase and run for it."

"I understand."

"Jack, got that ax?"

"Yes," assented one of the detectives.

"Knock this door open."

"Stand back out of my way."

The detectives moved aside and the Secret Service man swung his ax and brought it with a fearful crash against the door.

One blow did the work.

The lock was broken and the door flew open.

In rushed the officers with drawn revolvers.

They found themselves in a small, brilliantly illuminated cellar, in which there was a complete counterfeiting plant being operated by at least a dozen Chinamen.

Crucibles in a furnace at one side were melting up bars of refined silver, men were casting the fluid in molds, others were stamping the coins with dies, and a Celestial was working a milling machine on the edges of the money.

The sudden and unexpected entrance of the detectives

put a stop to their work instantly, and wrung cries of alarm from their lips.

In a moment there was a scene of wild confusion.

Old King Brady shouted at them:

"You are under arrest!"

Some of the Chinamen attempted to run.

Observing this Harry cried in loud, stern tones:

"I'll shoot the first man who stirs!"

Panic-stricken as the Mongolians were, the young detective's words merely increased their terror.

Some fell on their knees on the floor and bowed their foreheads to the bare boards, others rushed for the stairs, and the big Chinaman at the crucibles shouted something to his companions.

Then he seized a pair of tongs, and lifted one of the largest crucibles, which was filled with melted silver.

"Look out!" shouted Harry to his friends when he observed this action. "He's going to throw it!"

The detectives scattered.

Harry raised his pistol.

But ere he could discharge it, the Mongolian let the crucible fly.

It whirled through the air, sending out a shower of the molten metal, a few drops of which spattered some of the officers.

It burned so painfully they cried aloud.

Crash! went the crucible against the wall, where it was smashed to pieces, and the remainder of the metal it contained was dashed in every direction.

The Chinaman saw that he had failed of his purpose to badly injure the detectives and seized a second crucible.

Harry was furious.

Aiming his revolver at the man, he fired.

With a wild yell of pain the Chinaman fell, writhing to the floor with a bullet buried deeply in his shoulder.

Desperate, the other Chinese, who were armed, drew their pistols, and begun to blaze away in the direction of the officers.

To defend themselves the detectives were compelled to fire back.

Cool and calm, they were good marksmen.

The excited Chinese could not fire straight.

For a few moments there was a hot exchange of shots, and the shouts, yells and curses that rent the air made a regular Bedlam.

Old King Brady had dashed for the stairs and left a man to guard the broken door leading into the tunnel.

It was well he took these precautions.

Some of the counterfeiters, who were too cowardly to stand and fight, had made a furious rush for both exits.

But the officers' pistols drove them back.

Cornered like rats in a trap, they became wildly desperate.

Some of them rushed at the detectives, and wounded as they were, grappled the officers in an effort to overcome them.

After that fight none of the detectives despised the fight-

ing qualities of the Chinamen, for they displayed a high form of courage.

With almost man for man pitted against them, the detectives grappled their heathen foes, and a rough fight ensued.

Men clasped in each other's arms were rolling on the floor, other couples were clinched and struggling in the middle of the room, knocking over the furniture, and in a distant corner Old King Brady was holding a man in subjection by keeping him covered with his revolver.

Harry was in the thickest of the fray.

The boy was in his glory when he had a chance to pocket his pistol and attack a Mongolian with his fists.

Several blows were exchanged, the boy's antagonist wielding a heavy club with which he was trying to brain the boy.

Watching his chance, Young King Brady dashed in at him and gave the man a blow on the jaw that knocked him down.

Springing on top of the man, Harry grasped his arms, pulled them behind his back and handcuffed him.

One after another the crooks were subdued.

Not one of them escaped.

Every man was captured.

"We've won!" cried Old King Brady.

"How many prisoners?" queried Harry.

"Twelve," said his partner, counting.

"Others may come in. Let's wait."

They bunched the prisoners and examined the plant.

Everything was found to be most perfect, the presses, dyes and milling machine being made with infinite care and skill.

A large amount of silver bullion was found.

In a closet were thousands of coins, finished and "aged," ready for passing on the unsuspecting public.

The detectives got everything ready for removal.

An hour afterward the door leading to the house above was opened and four Chinamen came down in the cellar.

The detectives pounced on them.

Every one was captured with scarcely a struggle.

Upon searching them the detectives found evidence that they were the men who "shoved the queer."

An officer was left to watch the place and a wagon was sent for to carry away the prisoners and their plant.

It was then seen that the house overhead fronted on Pell street, and was a four-story tenement, the store of which was occupied by a Chinese grocer, who sold rice, wine and similar products of the Flowery Kingdom.

The prisoners and their outfit were taken away.

When the Bradys reached headquarters with a report of the affair the Chief had some very bad news for them.

"You've done well to bag the fan-tan players and the counterfeiters," said he, "but you've come too late with your suspicions of Ting Fang being the slayer of George Martin."

"Why so?" asked Old King Brady anxiously. "We've got the opium joint keeper safely locked up, and we can confront him with the evidence of his guilt, and force——"

"You can do nothing of the kind. He is out of jail."

"What!" gasped the detective. "Out?"

"Yes. Discharged to-day."

"How in thunder did that happen?"

It seems that Ting Fang has got some powerful political friends, who brought great pressure to bear upon the authorities and secured his release."

"That's bad. It's a pity he was only held on a petty charge. Had we brought a more serious accusation against the man we might have held him. Now we've got to run him down again."

"Do so by all means, Old King Brady," earnestly said the Chief, "for I really believe the man is guilty of murdering Martin, after the evidence you have shown me. As money was not the object of the crime, the Mongolian was probably actuated by a desire to gain sole control of the opium joint business."

"We'll find Ting Fang if he's in the land of the living," declared Old King Brady, grimly. "And once we land him we shall either prove his guilt or his innocence, Chief."

And so vowing he departed with his boy pupil.

CHAPTER XIII.

BAFFLING THE ROBBERS.

The Bradys disguised themselves and haunted Chinatown for several days and nights after their conversation with the Chief.

Both felt confident that the Chinaman would return to his opium joint at once, but they soon learned their mistake.

Ting Fang kept secluded for some reason.

It made the detectives impatient.

One night, when they were lurking about the vicinity of his den they saw Gertie Lane, dressed in deep mourning, approaching.

"The girl again!" exclaimed Old King Brady, pointing at her.

"She's in mourning for her husband," Harry replied.

"Evidently, and she's coming toward the joint."

"I'm going to stop her and find out her plans."

"Very well."

When the girl reached the doorway in which the Bradys were crouching, Harry stepped out on the Pell street sidewalk in front of her.

He grasped the girl's arm and exclaimed:

"Miss Lane!"

"Who's this?" gasped the girl in startled tones, recoiling.

"Mr. Brady—the detective—disguised."

"Oh! I didn't recognize you, sir."

"I'm not surprised at that. We wish to speak to you."

"Is that your partner?"

"Yes. Step into the hallway out of sight, please."

The girl obeyed, and greeted the old detective pleasantly.

When safe from observation Harry asked her:

"Have you secured a new place yet?"

"Yes. I'm working for a Wall street broker as stenographer," she replied, "and I get twice as much as Ranger gave."

"I'm glad to hear it."

"Did you know I buried my husband's body from the Morgue?"

"That's news to us."

"Well, I did. I heard Ting Fang was discharged from the Island, and I've come down to try to effect a settlement with him for my husband's share in his business," said Gertie, with a sad smile.

"You ain't likely to find him there."

"Then I've had my trip for nothing."

"Not exactly. We are after the same individual. If you meet him sell out at any figure at once, for we are going to pull his joint just as soon as we lay our hands on him."

"Then I'd better get all that's coming to me before you rake him in again," said the young girl smilingly.

"By all means," assented Harry.

"Then I'll find him at once."

"He isn't in the place."

"Oh, he must be. If he is, I'll find him."

"We can't give up your pass key yet."

"Why not?"

"Because we've been raiding and exposing the crooks of Chinatown. Our only way to reach them is by means of your key."

"Who did you arrest?"

"The fan-tan gamblers and the counterfeiters."

"I'm glad to hear it. How about the rest?"

"We'll attend to them later."

They spoke to her again for some time and Harry said in conclusion:

"You penetrate Ting Fang's place and report to us."

"Very good, sir. I'll do my best to catch him, after I close my deal with him," said the girl.

And so saying, she entered the opium joint with the fearless air of one accustomed to such places.

This came of her often having been there with George Martin.

When the detectives were alone, Harry said:

"If that Chinaman is anywhere about this vicinity the girl will find him, as she knows all the ins and outs of Chinatown."

"She may decoy our man into our hands, Harry."

"Time will tell."

"It's fair to presume that Ting Fang will return here."

"Yes, indeed. But there are so many places in which he could hide himself that it's next to impossible to lay our hands upon him unless we have his location brought to light."

They remained silent a while.

Many people were passing to and fro.

They saw elegant carriages draw up before some of the vile opium dens and aristocratic people, who were slaves to the drug, alighted and went into the joints to lit the pipe.

Pallid people, who posed during the day as respectable

citizens, stole into those horrible smoking rooms, and lay down in company with Chinamen, negroes and loafers.

All sense of shame was gone from them.

It was a pitiful sight.

"I'd like to raid every joint in Chinatown," growled Old King Brady angrily, as he watched them.

"It would take a month to do it, there are so many," Harry answered. "Ha! What's that?"

He pointed at a drunken sailor who was staggering along in the hands of a well-known thief.

The latter had picked up the sailor on the Bowery, squandering a wad of bank notes, representing three years' pay, and, taking him in tow, steered him to Chinatown to rob him.

As soon as the Bradys saw the pair they knew just what was going to happen.

The crook was laughing and talking to the sailor, and making signals to half a dozen villainous Chinese pals of his, who were following.

"It's Bowery Kelly," said Harry. "He's going to have his Chinks attack the sailor. In the scuffle he means to rob his victim and run away, while the Chinese hold the man down."

"That's the plan exactly."

"I'm going to expose their game and save the sailor."

"Do so by all means."

Harry strode over to the pair and stopped them.

Grasping the sailor by the arm, he exclaimed:

"See here, my friend!"

"Ay, now, lad; what is it?"

"You are in the hands of a crook."

"Nonsense. He's a mighty good fellow."

"He's going to rob you, with the aid of those Chinese crooks."

The sailor laughed recklessly.

A roar of anger escaped Bowery Kelly.

He aimed a blow at Harry's head with his fist and shouted:

"Blast you, yer spoilin' my graft!"

Harry warded off the blow and punching the thief in the face, knocked him down. Then he asked the sailor quietly:

"Did you hear his admission of guilt?"

"Ay, ay!" cried the sailor, sobering up at once. "He's a fraud."

"Look out! Here come his yellow pals."

"By jingo I'm ready for them!" cried the sailor.

He was alive to his danger now.

The Chinamen came toward them at a run, and Old King Brady glided from the doorway and joined Harry.

"Two to one!" said the old detective.

"We can do them," replied the boy coolly.

"Ah! Another friend!" chuckled the sailor.

"Yes," assented Old King Brady. "Stand together, boys."

The crook Harry knocked over had arisen and joined the Chinamen.

As the whole crowd rushed at the gallant trio, they were met by a most determined resistance.

Most of the crooks were armed with clubs, stones and other weapons, but they were not given much time to use them.

Biff! went Old King Brady's fist against the face of the first Mongolian to approach, and the man reeled and fell.

Bang—bang! went both of Harry's knuckles, first at the white crook and then at his nearest Chinese friend.

They were knocked in two directions.

The sailor was dancing around, squaring off, and as two big Chinamen, armed with clubs, darted in at him, he dodged.

As they flew past, he grasped each one by his pigtail, and violently knocked their heads together.

There was a hollow sound and two yells.

One of them broke away, but the jolly sailor clung to the other one's queue with both hands, and whirled him around and around.

The unlucky Chinaman howled with pain.

He imagined his hair was being pulled out by the roots.

The other crooks quickly recovered.

Every one of them was rendered savage and spiteful.

They resolved to avenge themselves on the plucky trio, and several of them pulled ugly looking knives from under their blouses.

Encircled by an array of gleaming knife blades, and a ring of hideous angry voices, the detectives saw that matters were growing extremely desperate for them.

"They intend to kill us!" said Harry.

He made no mistake about their intentions.

CHAPTER XIV.

SOME OF THE STOLEN MONEY.

As the circle of Chinese crooks closed in around the Bradys and the sailor, the two detectives drew their revolvers from their hip pockets.

Leveling the pistols at their enemies, Old King Brady cried angrily:

"Drop those knives!"

Bowery Kelly was reckless.

Turning to his followers, he cried:

"Cut them!"

He dashed forward.

Bang! went Harry's pistol.

The crook dropped his dagger and fell to the sidewalk, uttering a groan.

Old King Brady fired low into the gang of Chinamen, and as five shots pealed out, several of the gang fell wounded.

The yells, pistol shots and fighting attracted a crowd of excited white men and Chinamen to the spot.

Some policemen came running into the dingy little street and scattered the crowd with their clubs.

Seeing what was transpiring, they rushed up to the Bradys and the sailor, and one of them shouted threateningly:

"Who started this row?"

The detectives displayed their shields.

"Secret Service," muttered Harry.

"Oh! Pulling this gang?"

"Yes. Send for the hurry-up wagon."

"All right. What's the charge?"

"Highway robbery."

Off ran a policeman to summon a patrol wagon, and the others fastened the Chinamen and Bowery Kelly.

When the wagon arrived, the prisoners were put in, and the sailor accompanied them to make a formal charge.

The crowd dispersed when they were gone.

Meantime the Bradys had caught sight of Gertie Lane coming out of Ting Fang's opium joint.

They followed her to Chatham Square.

Here Harry accosted her with:

"Miss Lane!"

She turned, saw him, smiled, and said:

"I've found Ting Fang."

"Good!" eagerly said the boy. "Where?"

"Underground, in a rice wine cellar, among a crowd of drinking Chinamen."

"Which door?"

"Third after you go down from the joint."

"Where's the house?"

"The old brick one in Doyers street with a carpenter shop upstairs."

"Can the cellar be reached from the building above?"

"No. You'll have to enter by the passage."

"Point it out to us."

She walked to the corner with them.

The street was illuminated with crimson and yellow lanterns, big crimson streamers with dragons painted on them and knots of red cloth bunched at the top of street signs.

It was some festal occasion.

She pointed out the building she spoke of.

When the Bradys noted the place, Harry asked Gertie:

"Why are you looking so happy?"

"Because I've sold out Mr. Martin's interest in the place to Ting."

"You did, eh?"

"He knew I was George's wife and didn't hesitate long. But he paid me for it with a very poor grace when I threatened to have him arrested if he refused to buy out the interest I inherited, and I got a pretty good price for it, too."

"How much did he pay you?"

"A thousand dollars."

"Cash?"

"Yes."

"Got the money?"

"I have."

"Let me see it."

"Here it is."

She drew out a wad of bank notes.

They were fastened together with a paper strap.

Harry keenly glanced at the blue pencil writing on it.

A startled look flashed over the boy's face and he gasped:

"Old King Brady!"

"Well?"

"This is some of the money first stolen from Martin & Ranger's safe."

"What?"

"It's a fact."

"How can you tell?"

"By the writing on this paper strap."

The brokers had given them an accurate description of the stolen money and Harry drew out his notebook and read off what he had written there.

The description tallied exactly with the looks of the paper strap.

Old King Brady observed it at once.

"You've made no mistake!" he exclaimed. "This is one of the packages."

"Ting Fang had it, remember. Where did he get it?"

"From Martin, of course."

"Just what I think."

"Miss Lane, when did your husband buy out an interest in the joint?"

"On the night before he was killed," replied the girl. "He told me he was going up to Chinatown that night to pay Ting Fang."

"Then when all hands left the office that night, he must have returned, stolen the \$10,000, and gave it to Ting to pay him."

"Probably."

"That he bought it with part of the stolen money is apparent."

"So it would seem, if this is some of it."

"How much did he pay the Chinaman?"

"He did not tell me."

"Poor fellow, his interest in the place was short-lived."

"Very. He and I used to come here often before he bought."

"For what reason?"

"He was an opium fiend. I have no doubt it was his craving for the drug that induced him to embark in this business. And I firmly believe that he was crazed with it when he robbed his own safe."

"Did he ever admit the robbing to you?"

"Never."

"Well, it's quite apparent that Ting Fang got his stolen money and then killed him to recover the interest he sold."

"Such a thing is probable."

"We can only get at the facts by capturing Ting again."

"You'll find him where I said."

"We've got to keep this money."

"Keep it?" she echoed in tones of dismay.

"Yes. Merely as evidence."

"Oh! Won't I get it back?"

"Yes. We can't swear it's the money stolen from the safe. All we can swear to is the wrapper. Old Ting Fang

may have taken the stolen wrapper from the original money and put it around some other bills of his own."

"I see."

"In that case you are bound to get this back later on."

The girl was satisfied with this.

She went home soon afterward and the Bradys returned to Pell street, intending to make an effort to capture Ting Fang.

The rice wine shop mentioned by the girl was a place patterned after the ordinary saloons to be found in the streets.

The only difference was that the Chinese drunkards who frequented them, spent their time filling themselves with not only the fiery liquid, but at the same time they devoured raw opium.

A combination of this kind gave the Mongolians a debauch which would have killed an ordinary white drinking man.

When the detectives entered the opium joint to gain access to the cellar, they found the place dimly lit by one big lamp.

A crowd thronged the place.

Business was unusually brisk that night.

Old King Brady glanced about and whispered to the boy:

"As we must not let these fiends know what we are up to you open the panel when I put out the light."

The boy nodded and strolled over in the corner.

Old King Brady approached the lamp.

It stood on a table in the middle of the room.

The Chinaman who was running the joint for Ting Fang stood near it, cleaning out the bamboo stem of an opium pipe.

Old King Brady grasped him by the shoulders and gave him a push.

A startled exclamation escaped the man as he reeled back and bumped into the little table heavily.

The table went over and the lamp smashed on the floor.

Gloom filled the room.

Away glided Old King Brady, uttering a chuckle of satisfaction.

Reaching the panel he found it open.

Harry had gone through, and the old detective followed and closed the door.

CHAPTER XV.

IN THE RICE WINE JOINT.

Down into the gloomy passage hastened the detectives, flashing the glow of their dark lanterns ahead of them.

When they reached the bottom and glided ahead, Harry counted the doors.

"First—second—third. Here it is."

They paused, produced the key and unlocked the door.

Going along a branch tunnel, they reached a small wooden door, from the other side of which came the sounds of a wild revelry.

There was the unearthly squeaking of a one-string, long-handled fiddle, interrupted at intervals by the weird beating on a drum.

Above it rose the queer admixture of guttural and nasal sounds that made up the words of Chinese, and the scuffling of sandals on bare boards.

The door was not locked.

Old King Brady quietly opened it and they peered in.

A singular scene met their view.

In a small room, filled with tables, chairs and couches, were thirty or forty Mongolians. Some sat at the tables drinking rice wine and eating crude opium; others lay on the couches smoking the drug, and others were racing around waving their arms and yelling.

"Looks like a Chinese lunatic asylum!" said Old King Brady.

"Most of them are half crazy from the wine and opium."

"See anything of Ting Fang?"

"Yes. There he is over near the bar."

"He's drinking, isn't he?"

"Yes. And it's going to be a dangerous task to take him from among that crowd of half insane heathens."

"They may give us some trouble, but we want that villain so badly we must not let anything stop us."

"I'm ready to risk a dash for him."

"Keep your gun handy in case of necessity."

"Go ahead."

They darted into the resort, and most of the Mongolians were so distracted and stupid from the effect of their potations they paid no heed to the Bradys.

But the two musicians saw them.

"Here come two strangers!" one yelled in his native tongue.

The owner and Ting Fang glanced up with startled expressions.

"White devils!" exclaimed the opium joint keeper with a scowl.

"How did they get in here?" gasped the owner.

Upon observing that Ting saw them, the Bradys lost no time in hurrying over to him.

Harry seized him by the collar.

"Ting Fang," he exclaimed. "I want you."

"Wha' for yo' wantee?" demanded the Celestial.

"To go back to jail, of course."

"You copee?"

"We are."

"Pullee joint?"

"No. But we want some information from you."

The rascal looked very uneasy and began to violently fan himself and jabber in Chinese with the keeper of the "boozing-den."

After a while he turned to Harry, and to the boy's astonishment, he said:

"Allee light. Me go. Putee blacelets on?"

"Not if you behave."

"Ting Fang no lun way. Ting Fang belly goodee man. Boss Chinaman glot big pull, allee samiee Melican boss."

"So we discovered when we found you had escaped," said Harry, in dry tones. "Just come this way."

He started to lead Ting Fang out through the passage, when Old King Brady stopped him, saying:

"Hold on. Don't go that way."

"Why not?" queried the boy in surprise.

"Too dangerous to attempt to take him out through the opium joint. All his friends there would make a desperate attempt to rescue him."

"But there's no other way of getting him out."

"There must be."

"Recollect what Gertie told us about there being no way of getting up through the building in which the carpenter shop is located."

"She said so, but there's no telling."

Ting Fang's slant eyes glittered.

He heard what they said and was disappointed.

The rascal had quietly been figuring on being rescued by his friends, for he knew he could not depend on the madmen in this place.

Other subtle plans flashed over his tricky mind.

He concealed his anger.

The name of Gertie aroused his curiosity and he exclaimed:

"Yo' learn ffrom Glertie I be downee dis place?"

Harry darted a warning glance at Old King Brady.

"I don't understand you," he replied innocently.

Ting Fang was an astute Chinaman, however, and he hissed angrily.

"Yo' no foolee Ting. He know, so be."

Harry had no desire to provoke this man.

There was a likelihood that he might notify the High-binders to kill the girl for telling what she knew.

The boy therefore said:

"How are we to quit this place through the store above?"

"Me showee."

The Mongolian led them to a hidden door in the wall and opened it.

A dark passage was revealed.

Ting Fang stepped into it, and beckoned them to follow.

Just as they were about to comply, the door suddenly banged shut, and they heard a mocking laugh behind the panel.

Young King Brady uttered a stifled cry of dismay and exclaimed:

"Baffled!"

His partner tried to open the secret door, but it resisted.

"Guess we've lost him, Harry."

"Can't we burst open the door?"

"Yes. But he will be gone."

"We may follow and trace him."

"I'll get something to smash it."

He hastened over to the bar and picked up a heavy sledge hammer.

The owner of the dive bent a queer look upon the boy and asked innocently:

"You want anything?"

"Oh, no," answered the old detective. "Still, now I come to think of it, you might tell me where Ting Fang went."

"He gone. No sarvy where."

"If you did you wouldn't tell me."

The Chinaman smiled and shrugged his shoulders.

Picking up the hammer, Old King Brady returned to the hidden door, and with a few blows, smashed it open.

He and Harry passed through the opening.

Their dark lanterns showed them that they were in a tunnel and when they followed it, they found it led them to a door.

It was fastened, and Harry said:

"Got to break this down."

"I'll get the sledge."

Old King Brady brought it in.

A few lusty blows smashed in the second door.

Seeing a flight of stairs, they ascended.

They found themselves in the store of a tea importer.

It was a well-stocked store and several finely clad Chinamen of the better class were attending to the place.

They glanced at the Bradys in surprise, and one of them said in good English:

"Why! Where did you come from?"

"The secret passage below," replied Harry.

"We know of no such thing, sir."

"Don't be a liar," said Harry angrily. "Ting Fang just came up here from the same place and you knew it, too. We are after that man and we demand his immediate surrender."

"We know Ting Fang," said the clerk politely, "and we saw him pass through here a while ago. But he hurried out into the street and we asked no questions of him. Therefore, we can't surrender him."

"He being your countryman, you will doubtless protect him," said Harry. "It is, therefore, useless for us to expect you to aid us. But we will run the man down sooner or later, anyway."

And so saying, they hastened out into the street.

The three policemen who formerly had aided them were outside and the detectives made their identity known to them.

"Did you see a lean Chinaman in silk costume just leave here?" Harry then asked them, and one of the officers answered:

"Yes. He rushed across the street into the Chinese theatre."

"Thank you. If you'd like to raid a rice wine joint, get some help, enter the tea store, open the rear door and go down in the cellar. A passage will lead you into the joint and the place is filled with Chinks."

"We'll do it," laughed one of the officers.

He hurried away to make his preparations.

The Bradys went over to the ramshackle old building in which the Chinese theatre was located and purchased two tickets.

Passing into the auditorium, they glanced around at the motley assemblage of Mongolians gathered to see the play.

They were looking for Ting Fang.
And they were not long kept in suspense.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE CHINAMAN'S RUSE.

The interior of the Chinese theatre was very peculiar, the auditorium was shrouded in gloom, while the elevated stage was brilliantly lit up.

Some of the spectators were seated, others leaned against the walls and a few were wandering about, watching the play listlessly.

A Mongolian was going about the audience with a basketful of pastry, pieces of sugar cane, candies, nuts and fruits, selling them.

Upon the stage a singular drama was in progress.

Chinese plays resemble novels—each night a chapter is performed, so that a single drama will last from twenty to fifty nights.

A couple of musicians sat on the stage, producing mournful music on native instruments, drowning the actors' voices at intervals, and playing whenever their fancy led them to do so.

The gorgeous costumes of the performers were quite striking and their acting was very primitive, the performance being mostly dialogues and recitations of a monotonous character.

The Bradys took no interest in the drama.

They merely wanted Ting Fang.

And they soon saw him.

He was crouching in a gloomy corner, talking to some friends when the officers came in, and he saw them as quickly as they saw him.

A startled look flashed over his yellow face.

He rose to his feet and darted toward a door under the stage, and his friends glanced around at the two detectives.

"Going to give us the slip again, Harry."

"Follow him—quick!" panted the boy.

They ran down the aisle and the audience glanced at them, wondering what caused them to run in that fashion.

Reaching the door, the detectives rushed in.

They found themselves under the stage.

Some Chinamen were there making some new scenery.

"Where did the man go who just entered?" Harry asked them.

"Not know, boss," replied one, shaking his head.

"Tell the truth, you dog, or——"

"Me not know. Nobody 'lowed here. Yo' go out."

"We are officers and we'll stay."

"No, boss. No 'lowed, me tellee."

He tried to bar their advance, but Harry pushed him aside.

The boy was in no humor to brook any trifling and he cried:

"Stand aside, or I'll run you in."

Seeing their badges and realizing what they were, the man obeyed.

The Bradys rushed around under the stage, searching for Ting Fang, but saw nothing of the opium joint keeper.

He had vanished rapidly and completely.

As the space they were in was very small, and there were no hiding places, the detectives were puzzled.

"He certainly isn't in here," said Harry, when they met.

"I'm satisfied of that," Old King Brady replied.

"There are only two more places to search."

"Namely?"

"The actors' dressing room and the stage."

"Where is the former?"

"On the other side of yonder door."

"Search it."

Going over to the door they pushed it open.

A small room was revealed, lit by one gas jet.

The detectives glanced around, and saw an actor dressing for a female part, using from the numerous costumes scattered on the floor, table and wall hooks such things as he needed.

He stared in amazement at the detectives and demanded:

"What you want?"

"Did a Chinaman just came in here?" asked Harry.

"No."

"Are you sure?"

"Of course I am. Who was he?"

"A fellow named Ting Fang."

"Don't know him."

"That's queer. How many actors on the stage?"

"Nine."

"You make the tenth man, do you?"

"In this company."

The officers thanked him, and left the dressing room.

When they arrived outside, Young King Brady remarked quietly.

"As Ting isn't here and there's no rear exit, he must be on the stage."

"There's absolutely no other place he could go to hide, Harry."

"Let's go right up and nail him."

"There'll be a fuss when we do."

Outside there was a small flight of stairs, by means of which the actors got up on the exceedingly high stage.

The Bradys ascended and paused at the top.

As there were only a few properties on the stage and no scenes but one dividing it in two, there was little chance for Ting Fang to hide himself there, they observed.

A simple curtain cut off a view of the stairs from the stage and the Bradys drew it aside and peered through.

Before them were the Chinese actors, going on with their performance.

One, representing an Emperor, sat on a gilded throne, five coolies, who acted as supes, stood in a row at one side, and three, taking female parts, were kneeling before the Emperor, apparently pleading for the life of a bound prisoner

in ragged clothing, who stood with bowed head as if condemned to die.

The Bradys failed to see Ting among them.

"Our man isn't here, Harry," said Old King Brady.

"Apparently not. Nor can I see a hiding place."

"Now, where the deuce did he stow himself?"

"I'm rather puzzled to know."

The old detective glanced at the troupe of actors keenly.

An odd expression flashed across his face, and he asked the boy:

"Have you looked over those performers?"

"Every one of them."

"See Ting among them?"

"No. They are all costumed for the drama."

"Don't you notice anything strange?"

"Can't say I do. What are you alluding to?"

"The number of people on the stage. There are ten."

"Ah! I see. The actor down stairs said there were only nine."

"That's the discrepancy. How do you account for it?"

"He must have made an error."

"Possibly. Here he comes. Ask him."

One of the two musicians struck a deep-toned gong, and the performer to whom they had spoken came rushing up stairs.

As he was passing Harry exclaimed:

"I say——"

"Got no time. I must go on."

"Wait just a moment."

"You must excuse me. I can't."

And on the stage he hastened and the Bradys went down stairs.

Passing out into the auditorium, Harry remarked:

"It's useless to wait for him. He may be detained on the stage several hours before we could speak to him."

"Let's watch near the door."

They took up a favorable position and waited.

The actor who just then had gone on the stage had challenged the Emperor to fight, and they were then at it.

As the Bradys watched the combat, they saw the actor's sword strike the Emperor's hat and knock it off.

His white whiskers came off with the headgear.

And the Bradys saw that he was Ting Fang.

A grim smile crossed their faces as the rascal hastily picked up his hat and whiskers, and readjusted them on his head.

"He's a cunning rascal," muttered the boy. "Going behind the scenes, he must have hastily disguised himself, and taken up his position on the stage among the performers. A few words to them, no doubt, explained matters and all hands are aiding him to elude us."

"That's about the way of it," assented Old King Brady, nodding and taking a chew of plug. "But he's exposed now."

"We can wait for him to come out, now."

"Not here, though," answered Old King Brady. "He has doubtless got some of his friends watching us. They

will keep him posted about our movements and he won't leave the theatre until he knows we are gone."

"If we attempt to arrest him in here we might get mobbed."

Old King Brady pondered silently a few moments, and finally arrived at a conclusion, for he said:

"I'm unwilling to let him get out of my sight a moment, Harry. We must risk a fight against this whole houseful of Mongolians to capture that man. He's a very slippery customer, and it would be fatal to our design to let him escape us now that we have got him so cornered that he cannot get away."

"Very well," said the boy. "Get up on the stage again, and——"

"There he goes off now."

"We can capture him under the stage, then."

They made a rush for the stage door, but just then they were seen and one of Ting's friends turned off the gas.

The theatre was wrapped in dense gloom.

CHAPTER XVII.

CAPTURE OF TING FANG.

The Bradys paused in their wild rush for the stage when the lights went out.

"Some friend of Ting Fang saw us and did this on purpose," muttered Harry.

"Let's wait outside for him," replied Old King Brady quietly.

They left the theatre, after groping their way to the door, and hid themselves in a doorway opposite the building.

The Chinese audience soon came filing out into Doyers street, and jabbering over the sudden extinguishment of the lights, scattered and went away.

Keenly watching every one who emerged, the Bradys remained hidden from view, until the last man departed, without seeing the opium joint keeper.

"Are the actors among them, Harry?"

"No, Old King Brady. They've got to come out yet."

"Well, he wasn't among those we saw emerge."

"No. I'm positive of that."

They waited, and finally saw the performers appear in the doorway.

One of them came out ahead, peered up and down the street, said something to his companions and the whole crowd emerged.

In their midst the detectives saw Ting Fang!

"Attack them!" muttered Old King Brady.

"We can't get him," objected the boy.

"Certainly not, if we don't try."

"It will be a surer way to shadow him till they leave him."

"No. I won't wait."

"You'll regret your impetuous haste."

Old King Brady made no reply, but suddenly rushed out into the street and dashed headlong at the crowd.

There was no alternative but for Harry to follow him, and the boy ran along, regretting his partner's impatience.

The Chinamen saw them.

As the detectives reached the crowd, the actors seized them, and during the struggle that ensued, Ting Fang ran away.

Pitted against ten active men, the Bradys had their hands full.

They were simply overwhelmed by sheer excess of numbers.

When Ting Fang was safely gone the performers stopped fighting and then ran away to avoid arrest, leaving the detectives on the ground.

Up jumped the Bradys the moment they were released.

At a glance they saw that the opium joint keeper was not among their adversaries and realized that he had been escaping while the performers were keeping them engaged.

To run after the Chinese actors was useless.

When they beheld the situation, Harry remarked dryly:

"Well, we've lost our man, thanks to your obstinacy."

"I was a fool," growled the old sleuth regretfully.

"Oh, I expected it," said the boy. "However, it's too late to growl now. The best thing we can do is to look for him again."

"He will keep hidden closer than ever now."

"No doubt. That will increase our trouble. Gertie Lane won't know where to tell us to look for him this time."

They strode away and began the hunt.

It carried them among all the crooked joints kept by the Chinese, but they found nothing of their man.

On the following day they tried a new tactic.

Swearing out warrants for the keepers of every joint in Chinatown, they planned an enormous raid on the Chinese crooks.

They hoped to find their prey in the dragnet thus thrown out.

When night fell several hundred policemen and detectives descended on the Chinese district in a body.

Under the Bradys' direction the biggest raid that ever took place was carried out on a gigantic scale.

Scores of prisoners were pulled in.

When the excitement was over, the Bradys went from one police station to another, examining the prisoners who had been brought in by the wagon load.

But Ting Fang was not among them; the clever rascal had managed in some unaccountable way to elude the police.

It disappointed the detectives greatly.

So far as their personal design went the plan was a failure and they went home very much disgusted over the matter.

"We've got to originate a new plan," said Old King Brady, as they rode uptown. "Ting has baffled us again."

"He's the slickest Chinaman ever let loose in New York," the boy answered. "And it's hard to tell where to look for

him now. He may be hidden in any of the joints about the city with some of his friends."

"Well, we've raided his hop-factory and he won't open it again. Moreover, the rice wine joint was pulled, and we've yanked in a bunch of Chinese cardsharps and opium smugglers."

"The raid has cleaned up Chinatown, all right," Harry remarked, "but we've gained nothing by it. The murder of George Martin remains unavenged. With the evidence of the man who sold him the dagger, the evidence of the paper band strapped around the \$1,000 he gave Gertie Lane, and the fact that we know he would gain sole control of his joint with his partner dead, we can convict that man of the crime."

"Our evidence is flimsy at best, Harry."

"Very true, but we know enough now to convince us of Ting's guilt. That's all we need. Once we get hold of him again I am quite confident we'll wring a confession from him easily."

On the following day they met Gertie in the street and told her what had happened.

She had no idea where Ting might now be found, and they left her to go on her way to the Wall street broker's office where she now worked.

The Bradys had a very difficult task ahead to discover the whereabouts of the Chinaman, but they set about it with a will.

During the ensuing week they haunted all the resorts Ting Fang would have been likely to frequent and shadowed every one who they knew was acquainted with him.

Their perseverance was finally rewarded in the following manner:

Harry had been persistently watching the Chinaman who had been running Ting Fang's opium joint during the latter's absence before the raid, from which the man escaped.

The boy noticed that he made frequent trips to a Chinese laundry in East Nineteenth street, near Third avenue.

Hiring a furnished room in a brick house on the opposite side of the street, Young King Brady watched the laundry out of his window.

On the following Saturday night he saw a cab pull up before the door and the Mongolian he had been shadowing alighted.

The man passed into the store.

A few minutes afterward he emerged, accompanied by another man, clad in the garments of an American.

But despite this rig Harry observed by the glow of store light that his head was shaven and he at once inferred that he was a Chinaman.

The pair entered the cab and Harry rushed into the street.

He saw the carriage go swiftly down toward the East River.

Running after the vehicle, he traced it to the Twenty-third street ferry.

It went aboard of a boat ahead of him and the passenger

gate was closed when he reached the ferry as the boat was unmoored.

Determined not to lose his man, the young detective dashed through the wagon gangway, heedless of the yells of the ferrymen, and just had time to jump aboard the boat as it left the pier.

When he recovered his breath he glanced around and saw that the cab he was pursuing was the only vehicle on the boat.

Walking over to it with his dark lantern in his hand, he suddenly flashed the rays into the cab through the side window.

The light gleamed on the faces of the occupants.

One was Ting Fang.

The moment after Harry saw this his pistol covered the Mongolian.

"I've got you, Ting Fang!" he cried. "Get out of there quick!"

The startled Chinaman was badly frightened.

"No shootee Chinaman!" he yelled.

"Obey me, then!"

"Yep! Me get out."

And trembling like an aspen, out he got.

"Raise your hands!" cried Harry sternly.

"Ting no fightee!" gasped the rascal obeying.

The boy thereupon called out the other man, and handcuffed the pair together with one pair of irons.

He then ordered them back into the carriage.

"When we reach Brooklyn," said he to the driver, "I want you to go back to New York on the Grand street ferry-boat and drive us straight to Secret Service Headquarters. Do you understand?"

"What for?" demanded the driver.

"They are under arrest."

"Oh! I see. Very well, sir."

And this plan was followed.

Old King Brady was at headquarters.

He was surprised and delighted when he saw the boy come in with the prisoners, and when they were locked up, he said:

"Our task will end when we make him confess."

"That's the hardest part of the job," replied Harry.

"We'll see about that to-morrow," exclaimed Old King Brady.

And so saying, he walked away with the boy.

CHAPTER XVIII.

CONCLUSION.

On the following night Ting Fang sat in a gloomy cell on the edge of his cot with his face buried in his hands.

Outside a number of unseen men were gathered, consisting of the Bradys, an interpreter, the Chief of the Secret Service, several officers and Mr. Ranger.

The oppressed Chinaman heard a deep groan and glanced up.

Upon the wall he saw a picture reflected from a magic lantern outside.

It was a photograph of George Martin.

With a yell of alarm the Celestial bounded to his feet.

His teeth were chattering and his eyes bulging with fear.

Glaring at the picture he yelled frantically in his native tongue:

"I'm haunted! Take it away! Take it away!"

"You killed this man!" exclaimed the interpreter in deep bass voice.

"No! No!" raved the wretched Chinaman, cowering back.

"I'll prove it. See!"

A photograph of the dagger struck the wall as Martin's picture faded away, and Ting Fang began to swear and howl:

"What is this? What is this?"

"The knife with which you murdered your partner."

"Oh, why am I tortured so?"

"Admit that you killed Martin."

"No! No! No!" shrieked Ting Fang.

"Then the Arch Fiend will bear you to the lower regions for lying. When he appears you must go with him and never see your forefathers again!"

As this solemn warning was uttered, the light suddenly went out.

The densest gloom prevailed again.

Suddenly a ghostly figure of pale fire appeared in the corridor outside the cell door, and advanced toward Ting.

It was the interpreter, wrapped in a sheet saturated with phosphorus.

Ting Fang, overwhelmed with horror, glared at it, on the verge of collapse.

He did not know that they were working the famous Third Degree on him, in order to get his frenzied mind wrought up to a high pitch of excitement.

Just as the spectral figure reached the door it suddenly faded away.

The sweating and trembling prisoner was on his knees groaning.

He heard the cell door open.

Up blazed the electric lights.

Divested of his ghostly apparel the interpreter bustled into the cell.

"Ting Fang, I'm a lawyer, sent by your friends to defend you in court," said he in brisk, businesslike tones.

"Oh, I am so glad!" gasped the Chinaman, arising.

"I know the charge against you. But I cannot defend you successfully unless you tell me the exact truth about the matter. Did you really stab Martin, or not?"

Eager to save himself, and mentally weakened by the strain through which his nerves just passed, Ting gasped:

"Yes; I killed him."

"For what reason?"

"In order to regain a share in the business I sold to him."

"And when you cut him down, where did you go?"

"Hearing footsteps in the laundry I hastened into the secret passage, got out in the street and returned to the laundry, entering just as if I had not been there before."

"You prepared an alibi with Chop Wing."

"I did."

"But you found Martin had a wife and had to pay her for her husband's interest in the business after all, didn't you?"

"Yes."

"Where did the money come from with which you paid her?"

"It was part of the money Martin gave me for his interest in the store."

The interpreter had learned enough to convict the villain, and he soon afterward left Ting Fang and told the others what was said.

A clear case was thus secured against the villain.

When his trial occurred, later on, all the evidence was produced.

The fact was established that George Martin was the thief who had robbed his own firm, but as he was dead he could not be punished.

Ting Fang's confession condemned him, and he was sentenced, sent to Sing Sing and was electrocuted.

Gertie received the one thousand dollars back which she got from him, and ultimately married another man.

Mr. Ranger was satisfied, now that the puzzling mystery

about the firm's money was cleared up, and became sole owner of the brokerage business.

The good work done by the Bradys added to their fame. By exposing the Chinese crooks they had cleaned up Chinatown, and put an end to much of the lawlessness which existed there for so long a time.

But with the ending of the opium joint case, other work very quickly engaged their attention.

They were put on new work, and it proved to be of such an exciting nature that we have embodied it in another story.

The details will be given in our next number.

As we have not parted with the famous detectives entirely, let us hope that the recital of their new case will be of as much interest to our readers as this story was.

THE END.

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