

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 Toussy.

No. 170.

NEW YORK, APRIL 25, 1902.

Price 5 Cents.

THE BRADYS AND THE OPIUM RING;

OR, THE CLEW IN CHINATOWN.

By A NEW-YORK DETECTIVE.



"There he lies, you see, Miss Oliver," said Old King Brady, throwing back the curtain. "Will you believe me now?" At the same instant Ah Gow pressed the electric bell.

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CHAPTER I.

THE MYSTERY OF THE FALL RIVER BOAT.

One fine spring morning when the Fall River boat, Priscilla, was in the act of making her landing at New York, a coupe was driven rapidly down the pier.

Two men sat inside.

One was tall and elderly and wore a long-tailed blue coat, buttoned tight around his body, and a broad-brimmed white felt hat.

The other was a young man dressed in the prevailing fashion.

The Priscilla was just warping into her berth when the coupe reached the end of the pier.

The two gentlemen sprang out.

They stepped upon the stringpiece along which the boat was grinding its way.

"Now, Harry, watch your chance!" the elder whispered.

"All right, sir. Suppose they throw us back?"

"They must not. They shall not!"

"But in case——"

"Jump, Harry! Jump!"

The two men sprang aboard the Priscilla.

This was all irregular and not allowed.

The crowd on the pier expected to see them roughly received.

Instead, the officer in charge opened the gangway and let them through.

"You are Old King Brady, the detective?" he said to the elder man.

"Yes; and this is my assistant, Young King Brady," was the reply.

"So I supposed. When you showed your shield I knew you at a glance."

"Thank you for opening the way for me."

"Don't mention it. Whom did you wish to see?"

"The purser, please."

"Step right inside. You will find him in his office."

The big, sliding door was slightly opened.

The two Bradys made their way through the crowd behind to the purser's office.

The ticket-window was closed.

"What shall we do?" asked Young King Brady. "It seems to be shut up."

"We will go to the side door and knock, Harry," was the reply.

They did so and the door was immediately opened.

"We are the Bradys, detectives," Old King Brady said.

"I suppose you have heard our names?"

"Oh, yes; often enough," replied the purser.

"We want a few moments' conversation with you, sir."

"I am busy making up my accounts, gentlemen."

"Can't help that. We must act now. It is an important matter. Read this."

Old King Brady handed the purser a telegraphic despatch.

"Arrest Richard Ronalds, defaulting cashier, Meta-

comet Bank, Boston, on arrival Fall River boat," was the way it read.

The despatch was signed by the chief of the Boston police.

"Rather blind," said the purser.

"It was followed by a telephone message giving a full description of the man," Old King Brady replied.

"Ah, indeed! How much did he get away with?"

"Thirty thousand dollars."

"What do you want me to do?"

"To permit us to stand at the door and watch the passengers as they pass out."

"Certainly. Come with me. I'll fix that."

The big boat was now gliding down alongside the pier.

Aided by the purser the two detectives were permitted to take their stand outside and watch the passengers as they came off the boat.

On the Fall River Line it is customary to give up tickets as you leave the boat.

Thus the passengers are obliged to pass through the door, one at a time, delivering their tickets to the uniformed officer who stands outside.

Old King Brady stood on one side of the gangplank and Harry on the other.

There were nearly a thousand passengers on the big boat that morning.

This is nothing unusual for the Fall River Line.

The Bradys closely scanned the features of each man who passed them.

It takes a long time to empty the big boat.

The Bradys still stood by the gangplank when the doors were finally thrown back.

"That's all, gentlemen," said the first officer, who had been collecting tickets.

"Strange!" murmured Old King Brady.

"You have not seen your man?"

"No."

"Describe him to me."

"He is short, rather thick-set and wears a black mustache, curling at the ends. About thirty years of age."

"Well dressed?"

"Yes."

"High hat and patent leather shoes?"

"Yes, yes!"

"Always smoking?"

"That is the man. You know him it seems?"

"There was such a man on board last night. I recognize him by the curling mustache."

"But no such person left the boat."

"I did not see him."

"Perhaps he disguised himself, Mr. Brady," Harry remarked.

"It is possible, but I think I should have known him even in his disguise," was the reply.

"You are a good hand to see through disguises, governor."

"I have had much experience. Let us go to the purser again."

They returned to the office.

"You did not find your man?" said the purser as he admitted the detectives.

"No," replied Old King Brady. "Listen to the description. Perhaps you will be able to give us help."

"Why, I do remember a man with a curling mustache," remarked the purser when Old King Brady had finished the description.

"Ah! I was in hopes so."

"He asked to have his stateroom changed and I did it."

"Do you know the number of the room you gave him?"

"It is on my list."

"Please examine the list and let me know."

The purser did so.

"It was Room 322," he said.

"Can we go to that room?"

"Certainly. I will go with you."

"Thanks. Still I do not wish to take up your time."

"I have my list made up now. I am not in the hurry I was."

The Bradys and the purser ascended to the gallery deck. Stateroom 322 opened off one of the outside corridors.

"Ha! This room is locked!" cried Young King Brady, trying the door.

"It should not be," said the purser.

"Not if the occupant has gone ashore," added Old King Brady.

"Under what name was this room taken?" Young King Brady asked.

"It makes no difference," said the old detective.

"Probably not. He would be apt to give a false name."

"The name," said the purser, "was Smith; so you can judge for yourself."

"False, of course, if he is our man," said Old King Brady, hammering on the door.

There was no answer.

The purser tried it, with the same result.

"This door must be forced," said Old King Brady.

"Unless it is bolted on the inside it will not be necessary," replied the purser.

"You have another key?"

"Oh, yes. I will get it; remain here."

The purser shortly returned with the key.

The door was not bolted and he immediately opened it.

"Ha! What's all this? What have we here?" Old King Brady cried.

"Great Scott! It looks like suicide!" exclaimed the purser.

An expensive alligator grip lay open in the bunk.

A fine silk hat lay in the upper berth and a pair of patent leather shoes were on the floor.

The window was wide open.

Young King Brady thrust his head out and saw that there was nothing to break the fall of a man down to the water below.

"Our man occupied this room last night," said Old King Brady.

He had been hastily running over the contents of the grip.

It contained only such articles of dress as a man traveling a short distance would be apt to take with him.

Several of these were marked "Richard Ronalds," and others with the initials "R. R."

"This is no suicide," said Harry.

"Evidently not," replied Old King Brady.

"Looks as though the man had changed his clothes and gone off in disguise," the purser remarked.

"What's in here?" demanded Old King Brady.

He shook the knob of a door on the side.

"That connects with the other stateroom," said the purser.

"These go together at times?"

"Yes."

"They did not last night?"

"No."

"Can you open the door? It appears to be locked."

"It is only bolted on the other side."

"And the door of 320 is open. Harry, go in and open this door."

Harry did so.

"Look here, Mr. Brady!" he cried.

"Ah! Blood!" exclaimed Old King Brady.

It was everywhere.

On the floor, on the sheets of the lower berth, on the marble washstand and other places as well.

"There has been a crime committed here!" cried Harry.

"Murder!" exclaimed the purser.

"And the body thrown through the open window, you think, no doubt," said Old King Brady.

"Can you question it?" asked the purser.

"I know it is not so."

"Know?"

"Yes."

"How do you know?"

"Look up there!"

"Merciful heavens! What is this?" cried the purser, looking up.

"Great Scott! Your eyes are everywhere, Mr. Brady!" said Harry. "Why didn't I see that!"

Up overhead was an air-box,

It connected with a row of inside staterooms across the corridor.

Ventilation was obtained by this long, square box, which was just about big enough to admit the body of a man.

Visible in the box was a human foot.

"There is the corpse!" said Old King Brady. "I do not care to handle it and spoil my clothes, nor do you. Call help, please."

The purser rang the electric bell sharply.

A colored waiter immediately appeared.

"Sam, call Felix," said the purser.

"Good Lawd! What's de mattah here, boss?" the waiter exclaimed.

"Murder is the matter," said the purser. "Be quick!"

The darky soon returned with another.

Old King Brady spread a sheet on the floor.

The two darkies removed their coats, and Sam seizing the foot drew it forward.

Felix assisted and the body of a thick-set man was drawn out and lowered upon the sheet.

The eyes of the darkies rolled and their teeth chattered.

The Bradys and the purser all exclaimed, in surprise.

It was only a body.

A body without a head!

It was clothed with shirt, underclothes, trousers and stockings,

On the tab of the shirt was the name, Richard Ronalds, marked in indelible ink.

"Murdered!" cried Young King Brady. "Governor, this is our man!"

CHAPTER II.

SEARCHING FOR A CLEW.

"There has been murder done here, all right," said Old King Brady, "but I do not feel sure that this is our man."

"How can you doubt it?" demanded the purser.

"With his name written right there on his shirt?" added Harry.

"Don't judge by appearances," the old detective replied.

"There can be no doubt about it," said the purser.

"But I see grave reasons for doubting."

"Don't agree with you. The authorities must be notified. This thing must be at once removed."

"Leave that to me. I will attend to it. Who occupied this stateroom last night?"

"That I can tell you because it is something unusual."

"In what respect?"

"It was occupied by a Chinaman."

"Ah!"

"Yes, sir. I remember it distinctly."

"His name?"

"I can't give it to you."

"Didn't you ask it?"

"No. I thought it would be no use, for I could not understand it."

"Yet the rules of the boat require you to ask?"

"Yes."

"You have made a great mistake."

"I see it now."

"This Chinaman must have got on at Fall River or you would not have been apt to see him."

"That is so. If he had come down from Boston by the train I should not have seen him."

"What was he like? Old or young?"

"Young."

"In Chinese dress?"

"No."

"You are sure he was a Chinaman?"

"Oh, yes. I saw his pigtail curled up under his hat."

"I saw a Chinaman go off the boat in ordinary clothes," said Harry.

"Yes," said Old King Brady, "and he carried a rough feed bag with him."

"He did."

"There was something round in the bottom of the bag."

"By gracious, so there was!"

"Doubtless it was the missing head."

"Pity you didn't come here first," said the purser.

"If our foresight was as good as our hindsight we should never make mistakes," replied Old King Brady.

"What is to be done?"

"I desire to be left alone here with my assistant for a short time."

"You will send for the coroner and have this thing removed?"

"Yes."

"It is necessary to act promptly. This room must be cleaned up before the boat starts to-night."

"It shall be done."

The purser left, then, taking the two waiters with him. Old King Brady closed the door.

"Now to search for clews, Harry," he exclaimed.

"Governor, why do you say this is not our man?"

"For one good reason, Harry."

"Name it."

"Not at all. Find it out for yourself."

"That's the way you always go on."

"I want you to learn, my boy."

"All right. I'll go at it."

"And I'll search for clews."

Young King Brady stood contemplating the headless trunk.

Old King Brady pushed about the stateroom, prying into everything.

"Ha! I have found something at last!" he exclaimed.

"What?" demanded Harry.

"Scraps of a letter here in the corner."

"Strange the murderer wouldn't have thrown them out the window."

"It is always so. They always make some break."

"You can paste the scraps together?"

"Sure; but that will do me little good as the case stands."

"Why?"

"Look at these scraps."

"Well, well!"

"You see?"

"Of course. Written in Chinese."

"I can have it translated."

"Easily enough. The clew may prove valuable."

"Or it may be worthless."

"Exactly. Have you discovered anything yet?"

"I can see no reason why this should not be Richard Ronalds."

"No?"

"No."

"And yet it is very plain that it cannot be he."

"I fail to see it."

"Harry, you must brighten up."

"You bear hard on me, Mr. Brady. Still, I cannot see what you mean."

"Do those clothes fit that corpse?"

"By Jove, Mr. Brady!"

"Ha! you are waking up."

"I'm wide awake now. They don't fit at all."

"Certainly not."

"The trousers are too short."

"Exactly."

"And too small around the waist."

"Certainly."

"A man would burst, buttoned in as tight as that."

"Decidedly."

"Same with the shirt."

"It was ripped at the shoulders by forcing it on."

"It is so. And from this you draw what conclusion, Mr. Brady?"

"What is yours?"

"That the corpse was dressed after the head was cut off."

"Just so. There are comparatively few blood stains on the shirt."

"And those that are there don't look right."

"Decidedly not. They were made by dipping the finger in blood and drawing it across the bosom."

"I see! I see!"

For a few minutes the two detectives contemplated the corpse in silence.

Then Young King Brady stooped down and searched the trousers pockets.

"Anything there?" Old King Brady asked.

"Not a thing."

"You agree with me, Harry?"

"That Ronalds dressed this corpse in some of his own clothes and abandoned the remainder, yes."

"It is certainly so. Thus disguised he walked off the boat, right under our noses."

"He must have stood in with the Chinaman."

"It doesn't follow."

"What's to be done?"

"Our clew lies in Chinatown, Harry."

"I quite agree with you. It can be found nowhere else."

"Let us separate. I will go to Chinatown and have this paper read."

"I would like to go with you and find out what it says."

"There is no use in two of us chasing the same dog. You go to the office and see if the mail has brought anything from Boston, bearing on this case."

"And if not?"

"Go to work on the missing head."

"And you?"

"I shall be guided by circumstances. Doubtless you will find me in Chinatown. If not, I will meet you at the office later in the day."

The two detectives separated soon after.

As usual, Old King Brady's judgment was correct.

In sending Harry to their office, which, at that time, was located in an old building in Park Row, he made no mistake.

A clew to the mystery of the Fall River boat was ready for Harry when he got there.

It was a decidedly handsome clew.

A young lady of considerable beauty was pacing uneasily up and down before the door.

She turned away as Harry approached, but turned back again as he put the key into the lock.

"Pardon me, sir; I want to see one of the detectives," she said. "Are you Young King Brady?"

"I am, miss," replied Harry. "Will you walk in?"

He ushered her into the plain little office and placed a chair.

"I was in hopes that I should find Old King Brady in. I have heard so much about his wonderful work," the young lady remarked.

"We work together, Miss—er——"

"Miss Oliver is my name. I am from Boston."

"Indeed! How can I serve you?"

"I am very anxious about a certain gentleman in whom I am deeply interested."

"To whom you are engaged to be married?"

"Sir!"

"Is it not so?"

"It is. I admit it. How did you know?"

"I read it in your face, Miss Oliver."

"You are shrewd, sir."

"It is my business to be shrewd. What is the gentleman's name?"

"Henry Trask."

Young King Brady made a note of it.

"State your case," he said.

"It is very simple," said Miss Oliver. "Henry Trask left Boston suddenly yesterday afternoon and I have reason to fear that he may have been murdered. I am almost crazy about him. That he started for New York by the Fall River Line I know, for he so told me. After he had gone I received a telegram which so alarmed me that I came on to New York on the midnight train to seek your aid."

"And you shall have it, miss. Kindly show me the telegram."

"One minute, sir. There was a defalcation in Boston yesterday."

"The Metacomet Bank. Richard Ronalds. \$30,000 stolen in a lump."

"You know, then?"

"Oh, yes."

"This Richard Ronalds is a scoundrel."

"So I should judge."

"He hated Mr. Trask. They had quarreled about—about——"

"About you?"

"Well, yes, sir."

"Ronalds was paying attention to you?"

"At one time."

"And you threw him over for Trask?"

"I preferred Mr. Trask."

"That's reason enough. Well?"

"They worked together in the bank, sir, and—and—oh, it is hard to say it, but a letter was left by Ronalds, accusing Mr. Trask of assisting him in the robbery. That is false!"

"Yes? And yet he left for New York at the same time?"

He left for New York because he was called here on important private business."

"Oh! What nature?"

"He did not tell me that."

"He called on you just before he left?"

"Yes."

"Well, and the rest?"

"The rest all lies in this telegram, Mr. Brady. Here it is."

Miss Oliver, opening her reticule, handed the telegram to Young King Brady.

It read as follows:

"Fall River.

"MISS NETTA OLIVER, 68 Shawmut Ave., Boston, Mass.:

"Tell Trask beware. Must not come to New York to-night. Danger of his life. ONG SING."

"And this you received too late?" asked Harry.

He copied the telegram in his memorandum book and handed it back.

"Yes," replied Miss Oliver. "I was out. I did not receive it until the New York train had gone."

"Did you do anything about it?"

"Yes; I telegraphed Mr. Trask in care of the Fall River boat."

"Was the despatch delivered?"

"I do not know."

"You received no answer?"

"No."

"Who is this Ong Sing?"

"A Chinaman."

"So I judge by the name."

"Yes, sir."

"How did you come to know him?"

"He lived in Boston and attended my Sunday School class."

"You taught a Chinese Sunday School class at one time?"

"I teach it now."

"Does Ong Sing know Mr. Trask?"

"Oh, yes."

"How?"

"Henry taught another class in the Sunday School."

"He was friendly with Ong Sing?"

"Oh, yes."

"What was Ong Sing?"

"Do you mean what was his business?"

"Yes."
 "I do not know, but he was not a laundryman."
 "Anything special you can tell me about him?"
 "He traveled a good deal."
 "Did he smoke opium?"
 "Oh, no, sir! He is a very good young man."
 "A Christian, I judge?"
 "Yes, sir."
 "When did you see him last?"
 "It is more than six months since I have seen him."
 "Or heard from him?"
 "Yes."
 "Now, Miss Oliver, may I ask you to describe Henry Trask?"

Miss Oliver complied.
 Short and thick-set, was the general description given.
 Young King Brady felt that there could be no doubt that he had identified the murdered man.
 Gently he broke his suspicions to the girl.
 A sad time followed.
 Young King Brady's sympathetic nature was deeply aroused.

He had another hard time on board the boat Priscilla, whither they then went.

The coroner, telephoned for by Old King Brady, had arrived.

Miss Oliver was shown the body.
 At first she fainted.
 Reviving, then she was induced to examine the body.
 She declared that Richard Ronalds and Henry Trask were much of the same build and general appearance.
 She could not identify the body positively as that of either man.

When asked if there was any one in Boston whom she knew who would be able to do so, she replied in the negative.

Both young men were from the West. Neither had relatives living in Boston.

Thus the mystery of the Fall River boat remained a mystery.

The body might be Henry Trask's or it might be that of an entirely different person.

Miss Oliver thought that it might also be Richard Ronalds.

Young King Brady, agreeing with his great chief, could not assert to this.

"I will take you to a hotel," he said to Miss Oliver. "It may be necessary for you to remain in New York several days. We must consult with Old King Brady, and, above all, we must, if possible, find Ong Sing."

CHAPTER III.

THE CHINESE LETTER.

Having disposed of Miss Oliver, whom he naturally regarded as a very important person in the case, Young King Brady started for Chinatown.

There Old King Brady had preceded him.
 No man in New York knew this mysterious slum better than the old detective.

He had many friends among the Celestials.
 When a man has a Chinese for a friend he has a friend worth having, as a rule.

Chinamen never forget an obligation.
 To get his letter read Old King Brady thought he knew just where to go.

Turning up Pell Street the detective entered a rickety tenement, passed through to a rear building and entered a dirty, opium den.

An old Chinaman, with big, horn spectacles, met him at the door.

"Blady!" he cried. "Welcome, Blady. What want now?"

"Your help, Long Lung," replied Old King Brady, shaking hands.

"You have him, Blady. Any'ing you want. Long Lung him help you alle time. Have a pipe and a shell of dope?"

Long Lung grinned hideously as he said it.
 It was the Chinaman's little joke.

"You know I never hit the pipe, Long Lung," replied Old King Brady. "I want you to read some Chinese writing for me, that's all."

"Mebbe you ask too muchee, Blady."

"Why do you say that?"

"See, Blady. Many kinds talkee in China, many kinds writtee, too. No allee samee; no, no!"

"I know that, still you can try."

"Yes, yes! Me try. Me speakee Quantong, talkee and readee Quantong, writtee—no odder klind, Blady. Too bad. Allee dlifent kinds. Allee same English, Ilish, Frenchee, Spanish—you know."

"Here it is, Lung. What do you make of it?"

Old King Brady pulled out the scraps of the torn letter and put them about on the table.

Long Lung shot one hasty glance at them and shook his head.

"No, no, Blady. No readee," he said.

"That's bad," said Old King Brady.

"No Chinee," replied Lung.

"It is not Chinese?"

"No, Blady."

"Then what the deuce is it? These fly tracks look like the real thing to me."

"Dat Manchu, Blady. North China talkee. Oh, yes."

"Well, then, it's up to you to find me a man who can read it, Lung."

"Me know no man. Me know Manchu woman around Mott Street—yes."

"Let us go to her at once."

Lung shook his head.

"Solly, berry solly," he said. "Her man no likee me. We no speakee. Her man Highbinder. Gee, Blady! Mebbe he kill me if me go see him girl."

"Bad enough," said Old King Brady. "And you know no one else?"

"No, Blady. Me find out, dough. Must be more Manchu somewhere in Chinatown. Come along."

"Hold on; first let's stick this paper together, Lung. Can you do that?"

"Sure, Blady!" replied Long Lung, and the way he snatched the torn scraps was wonderful, he did it so quickly.

The pieces were then mucilaged upon a sheet of paper and Old King Brady returned them to his pocket.

Long Lung got his hat and took the detective around to a little store in Mott Street, where tea and groceries were sold.

Here he had a long talk with a young Chinaman, and then they traveled around to Doyers Street and went on the stage of the Chinese theatre.

A rehearsal was in progress.

Several Chinamen in fantastic dresses were yelling at the top of their lungs.

At last Long Lung found opportunity to make his voice heard, and he called one of the performers aside.

Old King Brady listened impatiently to their jabbering.

"Well, Lung, what does he say?" he broke in with at last.

"Him Pekin Chinaman," said Lung; "him read Manchu, allee light."

"Good! Let him get at it. Why do you wait?"

"Him wantee flive dollar. Me say t'ree enough."

"Here, give him the five. I'm in a big hurry," said the detective, pulling out the bill.

This settled it.

The actor sat down at a table and rapidly wrote another series of fly tracks on a piece of paper.

"Look here!" cried the detective. "I can't read this any better than I could the other."

"No; but me can," said Long Lung. "Dat Quantong, Blady. Me readee him now."

It was very unsatisfactory.

Old King Brady felt that he had no guarantee that he was getting the real thing.

Long Lung adjusted his spectacles and glanced hurriedly over the paper.

It is not easy to read much in a Chinaman's face.

Old King Brady watched Long Lung narrowly.

He could make nothing out of him.

Not so the Pekin actor.

The man had a wicked grin on his face.

Old King Brady's suspicions were aroused by this.

"Hurry up! What are you waiting for, now, Lung?" he demanded.

The keeper of the opium joint muttered something about the writing not being plain.

Then he read, aloud, as follows:

"Plen, Chak. Good friend, I ship you ten boxes best Pekoe tea. Please send me the money as soon as you can. Your friend, Jim Lee."

To this he added Philadelphia and the date.

"No worth flive dollar, Blady," he said, with a grin.

Then crumpling up the paper he tossed it on the floor.

"Come, let's go," said the detective.

When they were half way across the room Old King Brady managed to stumble, and almost fell on his face.

He quickly recovered himself, however.

When he gained his feet the crumpled paper was in his pocket and neither Long Lung nor the actor ever knew.

Then the detective and the keeper of the opium joint went out on to Chatham Square.

"Good-by, Blady," said Long Lung, sweetly.

"Good-by, Lung; ever so much, obliged," replied the detective.

"Solly dat flive go for not'ing, Blady."

"Oh, that's all right."

"What you want?"

"You mean what case am I working on?"

"Yes."

"Oh, no case; just happened to pick that torn letter up and was wondering what it meant—that was all."

"Ha, ha! Go for not'ing, Blady. Good-by."

"Good-by, Lung."

As Long Lung put his hands in his sleeves and toddled off, Old King Brady shook his fist after him.

"You yellow rascal!" he muttered. "You will fool me, will you? I smell a mouse. That letter means a lot. Thank goodness I still have the original and the Cantonese translation, too."

The detective then started to go around into Mott Street where he knew of another person whom he thought he could work.

He had not gone far before he ran into Young King Brady.

"Ah there, governor! You're on deck, I see!" Harry exclaimed.

"I'm here."

"Anything doing?"

"Not much. How is it with you?"

"A lot."

"That's good. What do you know?"

"It will take some time to tell it."

"We had better get in somewhere so we can talk."

"I think so."

"Did you bring the mail?"

"Yes."

"Open it. Anything important?"

"Didn't have time to go through it."

"Very good. Let's go up the Bowery to the reading-room of the Occidental Hotel."

The Occidental is an old-time house where few people now go.

Here the Bradys picked out a quiet corner of the reading-room and compared notes.

"Your discoveries are of the highest importance, Harry," remarked the old detective.

"You think I did right in taking Miss Oliver to the hotel?"

"You certainly did."

"She will be apt to stand by us on account of her lover."

"Sure to."

"Do you think the dead man can be Henry Trask?"

"That is impossible to tell."

"It looks so to me."

"We examined every scrap of clothing in both state-rooms, you know."

"Yes; and there were no marks upon them to connect them with Henry Trask."

"Right; nor with any one else."

"Except Richard Ronalds."

"He is out of it."

"You think, then, that Ronalds certainly lives?"

"I do."

"I agree."

"He saw his chance to palm himself off as a dead man, and took it."

"That's what."

"He must have had powerful reasons."

"That is certain."

Thus the detectives discussed for some little time.

"Now give me the mail," Old King Brady said at last. He hastily went through the letters.

"Read that," he exclaimed, throwing one over to Harry.

"By gracious, that would be a good thing if we could collar it!" Young King Brady said.

"Yes; Government work always pays."

"The Chief of the Secret Service Bureau wants us to try and locate this opium ring."

"Yes."

"Know anything about it?"

"Not a thing."

"What do you propose to do?"

"Take hold."

"We can work it in connection with this case, all right."

"Naturally, since in this case our work lies in Chinatown."

"Any orders for me?"

"On the opium ring business, you mean?"

"That or the other."

"Not on that. I want to think, first. On the other I should say you want to trace up the missing head."

"A hard job."

"But you ought to be good for it."

"I'll try. Shall I go at it now?"

"Yes."

"And we shall meet where?"

"I cannot say. Better look for me in Chinatown when you want me, for there lies our clew."

Then the Bradys separated.

Old King Brady went back to Mott Street.

Information was needed, and the detective was determined to get it.

Everybody knows Old King Brady in Chinatown.

As he has always acted on the square with the Celestials his influence among them is great.

That morning Old King Brady visited as many as a dozen opium dens.

There is not much doing in the morning in the places, as a rule.

At each den Old King Brady put but a single question. Had anybody seen Dr. Ranlett?

In each case the answer was, "no," until the detective struck a particularly dirty den in Chatham Square.

Here the proprietor was a man who had been twice saved from Sing Sing by the detective.

He was not a full-fledged Chinaman.

Some said he was half French and half Chinese.

Others claimed that he was half Irish and half Malay.

The name under which he passed was Jim Long.

"You will find Ranlett in his room, most likely," he said, in answer to Old King Brady's inquiry.

"Good!" said the detective. "I was sure you could help me. What makes you think so?"

"He left here only half an hour ago."

"He was here all night?"

"Yes."

"Very dopey?"

"So, so. You can't down him. He is saturated with the drug. You had better be quick if anything is to be done with him."

"Why so?"

"Why, the man is liable to drop dead at any moment."

"I see. Where is he rooming now?"

Jim Long gave the address.

It was a few doors above the notorious Jim Lavelle's on the Bowery, over a certain store.

Having full directions, Old King Brady repaired to Dr. Ranlett's room.

He knew the man well.

Once he had been a surgeon in the United States Navy and he was a man of great intelligence.

Opium smoking had been his ruin and he was now a mere wreck.

Reaching the room which was located at the end of a dirty hall, Old King Brady knocked, again and again.

There was no response.

Peeping through the keyhole Old King Brady could see a man stretched upon a cot bed.

"There he is, deep in the dope as usual," muttered the detective.

Satisfied that it would be useless to attempt to arouse the doctor, Old King Brady proceeded to open the door with one of his skeleton keys.

"Wake up, Doc! Wake up!" he cried, shaking the poor drugged victim by the shoulder.

At last he succeeded in arousing him.

The awakening was terrible.

With a wild, maniacal yell the doctor sprang from the cot.

Whipping out a long, keen-bladed knife he made a lunge at Old King Brady's throat.

It is lively work seeking for clews in Chinatown.

Down there it is something doing all the time.

CHAPTER IV.

TRACING THE MISSING HEAD.

Young King Brady returned to the office and donned a suit of shabby clothes.

They had a cheap but half stylish appearance.

A gorgeous necktie, and up-to-date hat added, gave the detective the appearance of a tough young sport of the Bowery type, who only waited for the opportunity to become a sneak thief or crook.

Thus dressed, Young King Brady returned to the Fall River pier.

He hung around outside for a while, at last lighting on a boy who approached with a bundle of the noon editions of the "evening" papers under his arm.

"That's the fellow!" muttered Young King Brady. "I thought he would be along about now.

"Give me a World and a Journal," he said, stopping the young man.

As he put his hand in his pocket he managed to display his detective's shield.

"Want to earn this?" he asked, producing two dollars. "It goes for the papers if you say the word."

"Sure!" replied the newsboy.

"You know what I am?"

"Of course. Didn't you show me?"

"You're sharp."

"Well, some. Spit her out."

"It's only a few questions which I think you can answer."

"Fire away."

"You know what happened on the Priscilla last night?"

"Yep! It's in de pape's you bought."

"You were here selling papers this morning?"

"Yep."

"I saw you. Now, did you see a Chinaman come off the boat, carrying a feed bag in his hand or slung over his back?"

"Say, I did!" cried the boy, his eyes opening wide.

"Well?"

"Boss, was dat de head?"

"That's my suspicion. I am working on the case."

"Well, I never suspicioned nothing, and I seen de Chink get into de express wagon, too."

"Who's wagon?"

"Barney McIntyre's. Dere he stands, over dere."

"Thank you," said Young King Brady, and he handed over the two dollars.

"Say, do I get me name in de pape's?" called the boy, as he started away.

"Perhaps. What is it?"

"Larry Lyster."

"All right, Larry, I'll make you famous if I can."

With Barney McIntyre, the expressman, Young King Brady came straight to the point.

He showed his shield and demanded information.

"I took a Chink, with a bag, over to Chinatown this morning, yes," the expressman replied.

"It's the man we want," said Young King Brady. "Evidently he was afraid to walk through the streets with the bag, so he rode with you. Where did you leave him?"

"At the corner of Mott Street and Chatham Square."

"And you did not see which way he went?"

"No."

"What did he say to you?"

"He merely said that the bag was heavy and that he would give me fifty cents to carry him across town."

"Do you often carry Chinamen in your wagon?"

"Yes. The hacks won't take 'em, and when they have big bundles they can't get on the cars."

"Then there was nothing unusual in this man's engaging your wagon?"

"Not at all."

This discovery took young King Brady back to Chinatown.

Although one might think that Young King Brady had made an important discovery, the detective himself felt rather discouraged.

To trace a Chinaman anywhere from the corner of Mott Street and Chatham Square was a good deal like looking for a needle in a haystack.

Young King Brady strolled along Mott Street as far as Pell Street and then back again, wondering what he should do.

And if fortune had not favored Young King Brady the chances are he would not have done anything toward recovering the missing head.

Crossing over on the north side of the street he was strolling back toward Pell Street again when suddenly a handsome coupe came rolling along.

"Ah, there!" thought Young King Brady. "Slumming in the daytime! What's this?"

The coupe stopped at some distance ahead, in front of a house near the corner of Park Street.

A young Chinaman, in American dress, stepped out.

Turning, he assisted a lady to alight, and both went up the steps and entered the house.

The coupe immediately drove away.

For a moment Young King Brady stood like one paralyzed.

The young lady wore no veil.

One glance was sufficient to identify her.

It was Miss Oliver, of Boston, whom he had left at the hotel!

Young King Brady slid across the street and entered the house also.

Like almost all of the Chinese houses on Mott Street the front door stood wide open so there was nothing to hinder this.

But if the front door was open, all the other doors were shut.

Young King Brady went to the top story without seeing any one.

He was just about to descend when he discovered that the door of the front room on this floor was slightly ajar.

Peeping in he saw that this room was vacant and unfurnished.

Voices could be heard in the room beyond.

They seemed to come through the closet, the door of which was also ajar.

Young King Brady opened the door of the closet.

It was all he could do to keep from uttering an exclamation of horror.

There, standing on a shelf, was a human head with the back turned toward him.

"The missing head!" Harry gasped.

He stretched out his hand to seize it and turn it around.

At the same instant he received a stunning blow from a "blackjack" on the back of his own head, which sent him senseless to the floor.

CHAPTER V.

THE CLEW IN THE CLOSET.

"Doctor! Doctor Ranlett! Are you mad?"

Old King Brady, with one hand, clutched the wrist of the opium fiend, thus preventing the blow.

With the other he seized the man by the throat and pushed him back upon the bed.

It was easily done.

Dr. Ranlett, like other opium victims, had but little strength to oppose the powerful detective.

"Ah, Mr. Brady, is it you?" he gasped.

"Decidedly, Doctor. Do you want to kill an old friend?"

"I was dreaming. Thank you for saving me from crime."

"Say no more. You ought not to carry that knife."

"I shall use it on myself some day, Brady."

The poor wretch concealed it about him.

"Sit down," he said. "This is but a poor place, but it is the best I have to offer."

"Business is dull," remarked the detective, taking a rickety chair.

"Don't talk to me of business. As you know, I get a little practice in the joints when I am able to attend to it. I live—that is all."

"You are wondering why I am here?"

"Yes, of course."

"I want your help, Doctor."

"I have had yours more than once, Brady. You shall have mine for the asking. How did you get in? I thought I locked the door."

"So you did."

"Yet you are here."

"I took the liberty of opening it with a skeleton key."

"It's all right. Anything goes nowadays. I'm not wanted, am I?"

"Oh, no. It's only a letter I want read."

"Chinese?"

"Yes. You read it?"

"Some. There are as many languages in China as in Europe."

"So I am told."

"I can read Cantonese well, and some Manchu—that's the northern Chinese—that is all."

"I want some of both. Look here."

Old King Brady produced the pasted scraps and the actor's copy.

Dr. Ranlett studied them carefully.

His brows knit and a savage frown overspread his face.

"One is a copy of the other," he said.

"Yes."

"That's it."

"Is it about tea?"

"Tea? No, indeed! What made you think that?"

"No matter. Read it if you can."

"I can, but I don't know whether I will or not."

The doctor gave the detective a meaning look.

"It is important?"

"Very."

"You want to be paid?"

"Yes."

"Does it refer to the opium ring?"

"It does."

"You know the writer?"

"You read my thoughts—yes."

"Doctor, trust me. You shall be paid in accordance with the value this letter proves to me."

"You swear it?"

"I do."

"You will never give me away?"

"Never! You have my word."

"Enough. I will translate. This man, Ong Sing, is nothing to me, although he has, from time to time, employed me professionally."

"You know Ong Sing, then?"

"Better than I know you."

"He is a Christian Chinaman—a good young man?"

"He is a sly scoundrel! An opium smuggler, a High-binder!"

"Ha! His Christianity is but a blind."

"That is all. He would knife his best friend."

"Read the letter, please," said Old King Brady.

And he mentally added:

"I guess there's something doing this time. I fancy I am on the right track now."

"I'll write out the translation," said the doctor.

Producing a pencil he reversed the sheet upon which the scraps were pasted and hastily scribbled the following:

"Brother Ong Sing—Have the banker in Buffalo not later than Thursday. The big consignment of opium will be ready at Fort Erie that night and the cash must be paid before we can get it across the river. We are to meet at Ah Gow's. Forget not what I told you about the

Black Fox. Traitor he is and as a traitor he must die! That is your work, brother. See that it is performed.

"Your brother,
"JIM MOX."

"By Jove! that is something like it!" cried the detective.

"You have had it translated by some one else?" the doctor asked.

"By Long Lung, the joint keeper on Pell Street."

"Ha! he told you it was about tea?"

"Yes."

"He lies! Still, he is your friend, but he would not betray the opium ring."

"The ring is powerful?"

"Was very powerful at one time. A year ago they had a large consignment of opium seized."

"And lost heavily?"

"Yes."

"Which accounts for their wanting a banker."

"I don't understand that part."

"I think I do."

"Perhaps you will explain."

"I cannot now. I may later. What about the Black Fox?"

"That refers to some one of their American backers."

"A backer who has gone back on the ring?"

"Evidently."

"Can you think of such a man?"

"No—yes!"

"Who?"

"Did you ever hear of Dr. Patmore of Boston?"

"Advertises an opium remedy, doesn't he?"

"The same man. He is a fraud, and an opium fiend himself."

"Smokes in the joints?"

"In New York, yes. Never in Boston where he is known."

"Backs up the ring?"

"Possibly. I don't know."

"Would you know him if you were to see him?"

"Yes, indeed."

"Listen, Doctor, I am going to tell you something."

Then Old King Brady related the tragedy of the Fall River boat.

"So that's the case?" said Dr. Ranlett. "Serious business, Brady."

"Very. Can you put me on to this Ong Sing?"

"I think I can, but I must not be known in the matter."

"Your life would be in danger?"

"The Highbinders would do me in the joints, sure!"

"If you know their hold-out and will tell me, your confidence shall be sacred, Doctor."

"When it comes to murder I am not in it!" said the doctor. "Yes, I will act."

"You know their hold-out?"

"I know where it was. I doubt very much if it is there now. I heard they had given up the place."

"Where?"

"A house in Mott Street. Do you dare to tackle them on their own ground?"

"Yes, sir; I have no fear."

"I will show you the place. I will not enter, however."

"I shall not ask it. Hold on, man! What are you about? Surely you have had enough!"

The doctor producing a box of opium pills took four at once.

"I cannot live without them, Brady. It is too late to talk to a wretch like me," he said.

"You should taper off."

"Taper nothing. I tell you it is too late!" said the doctor, fiercely.

He put on his hat and was ready for the street.

The house to which he led Old King Brady was the identical one in which Harry had met with his mishap.

And thus it happened that when Young King Brady came to his senses and not so very much the worse for the blow, the old detective was bending over him trying to lift him up.

"Governor! Is it you?" Harry gasped. "What, why—oh, my head!"

"Brace up! I'll have help in a minute," the detective said.

"Wait! The clew in the closet—the missing head!"

"It is safe. I found it!"

"Thank heaven! but I rather think I can claim the honor of having found it, Mr. Brady."

"Decidedly. I'm going now."

"Is it safe for me to stay here?"

"The place is deserted."

"There were people in the other room a few minutes ago."

"There is no one there now."

"You are sure?"

"Keep cool, Harry. I'll be right back."

The detective speedily returned with Dr. Ranlett.

The doctor had been waiting on the corner anxious to learn what turn matters took.

"You are sure there is no one here, Brady?" he inquired, looking cautiously around.

"Positively no one on this floor," replied Old King Brady. "The one below may be occupied for all I know."

"The floor below carries a fan-tan joint open only at night."

"So much the better. Now, Harry, this is Dr. Ranlett; better let him examine your head."

Young King Brady was leaning against the partition. Naturally, he felt faint and sick.

The doctor examined him carefully.

"No fracture; only bruised," he said.

Producing a medicine case he took from it a vial containing a dark liquid.

With this he bathed Harry's wound.

Instant relief followed.

The fact was, Dr. Ranlett was a very skillful man.

"Do we talk?" Harry inquired, giving Old King Brady a meaning look.

"Freely. The Doctor knows all."
 Young King Brady told his story.
 "You cannot have been long unconscious," remarked the old detective, looking at his watch.
 He threw open the door of the closet.
 "There, Doctor! There is the clew we have found in Chinatown!" he exclaimed, pointing to the head.
 It stood on the lowest shelf of the closet, just as Young King Brady had first seen it.
 The back of the head was turned their way.
 "I do not care to touch it," said Dr. Ranlett, shuddering.
 "And you a surgeon!"
 "Perhaps that is the reason. I have handled so many dead and dying persons my nerves are shaken; and then suppose it should prove to be——"
 "The head of your friend, Dr. Patmore?"
 "You read my thoughts."
 "You don't have to touch it. Come into the other room."
 The rear room was as bare and vacant like the one in front.
 Here was a closet also.
 A sliding panel connected the two.
 This panel had been pushed aside.
 There stood the head in all its ghostliness.
 The hair was intensely black, so was the mustache.
 The eyes were closed and the features were of a ghastly hue.
 "The Black Fox!" cried Old King Brady. "Ong Sing has obeyed the command."
 "Dr. Patmore, the former head of the opium ring!" exclaimed the surgeon.
 "You are sure?" asked Young King Brady. "You knew the man?"
 "Well. There can be no mistake."
 "It is up to us to apprehend his murderer," said Old King Brady.
 He produced Dr. Ranlett's translation of the Chinese letter then.
 "It is all plain," said Young King Brady. "We have found the missing head and we know the murderer."
 "Go slow!" said Old King Brady. "We know nothing of the sort."
 "But Ong Sing?"
 "May or may not have done the deed."
 "This head was evidently severed with a razor."
 "I agree with you there."
 "Why was Miss Oliver brought here? Who struck me down? Where did those people who were in this room go?"
 "Questions, questions," said Old King Brady. "First, we must settle about the head."
 "You will take it to the morgue?"
 "Yes."
 "Then why not let me start on the search for Miss Oliver at once?"
 "Do so. We will meet later in the day."
 "Here is the bag in which the head was brought from the boat."

"It will do to take it away in. Doctor, you will go to the morgue?"
 "Excuse me, please," said the doctor. "I had rather not. If I am needed I will come, but let me out of it if you possibly can."
 "I think I can," said Old King Brady. "And I will try, on one condition."
 "Name it."
 "We want Ong Sing."
 "I will try and locate him; see me later in the day."
 Old King Brady then took the bag and went into the other closet.
 "Ha!" he exclaimed. "What have we here?"
 It was a little piece of red paper that he picked up off the floor.
 It was covered with Chinese characters.
 "More clews!" exclaimed Young King Brady.
 "Read it, Doctor," said the old detective.
 "Well, you are in luck!" cried the doctor. "You may well say that you have found the clew to all this mystery in Chinatown. It is right here."
 "What is it?" asked Young King Brady.
 "Listen," replied the doctor, and he read:

"Brother Ah Gow, of Buffalo—This will be handed you by the new banker. His name is Mister Bostonman. He will pay for the Hop. Treat him well. He hits the pipe. See that no harm comes, for sometimes he hits it too hard. Your brother, Ong Sing."

"And now," cried Old King Brady, "who is Mister Bostonman? Is he Richard Ronalds, or Henry Trask?"

"Ah!" replied Harry, "the mystery is not all swept away, it seems. It is up to us to find out."

CHAPTER VI.

WORKING IN BUFFALO.

Old King Brady went to the morgue and Young King Brady to the hotel to which he had escorted Miss Oliver.

The head proved to belong to the body taken from stateroom 322.

Dr. Patmore's office in Boston was called up on the telephone by the detective.

As he expected, word came back that the doctor had left the night before for New York by the Fall River Line.

An accurate description of the opium doctor was obtained.

It tallied in every particular with the corpse.

Thus Old King Brady was enabled to announce to the police that he had identified the dead man.

The later evening papers in both cities were filled with the account of the doctor's death.

Great praise was showered upon the Bradys, who with their usual promptness had identified the decapitated man.

At the hotel Young King Brady also found matters as he had expected.

A gentlemanly looking Chinaman, in American dress, had called upon Miss Oliver, in a coupe.

After a brief interview Miss Oliver rang for her bill, settled it and went away with the Chinaman.

Up to the time of Young King Brady's call she had not returned.

Later in the day the detectives met at the office.

A careful comparison of notes was had.

"Can it be possible that Miss Oliver is not what she seems?" Young King Brady asked.

"I do not think so," replied Old King Brady.

"Then what is your idea of her presence in the Mott Street house?"

"I think she was deceived into going there, expecting to meet her lover."

"You believe Henry Trask to be innocent?"

"I would not say that."

"What then?"

"I have nothing to offer in way of suggestion."

"Do you think the girl has returned to Boston?"

"You have talked with her, I have not. You should be the better judge."

"I cannot believe that she is crooked."

"I accept your judgment."

"My idea is that she has been inveigled into going to Buffalo by Ong Sing acting for Richard Ronalds.

"Mine is the same."

"Then we can do nothing?"

"We have no time to waste on the girl now."

"Decidedly not."

"Our work is to bring this crime up to the murderer and capture the opium ring."

"Yes. This is Monday."

"We have until Thursday to act."

Old King Brady went to a closet and took out a suit of clothes.

Evidently they had been designed for a man about Young King Brady's size, but stouter.

"These should fill the bill," he said.

"I am to play the part of Richard Ronalds?"

"Yes."

"You can make up my face from the description we have of the man?"

"Why not? I have his photograph here, just in by the last mail."

"Very well; I'll do my best. It means Buffalo?"

"Oh, of course."

"When?"

"To-night."

"But suppose these people have not yet left for Buffalo?"

"So much the better."

"It will give me time in which to lay my plans."

"That's what."

"And you will follow me?"

"Decidedly; but I want to-morrow in New York."

"Very well. I'll make up and take the first train."

To make up stout was no trouble at all for Young King Brady.

The old detective fixed his face.

"You'll do, all right," said Old King Brady, when the work was accomplished.

Harry looked in the glass, with the photograph in his hand.

"There certainly is a resemblance," he remarked.

"Of course there is. I know my business."

"I take the Chinese letter of introduction?"

"Certainly."

"And interview Ah Gow first?"

"Decidedly."

"I suppose I shall have to pretend to hit the pipe?"

"Undoubtedly."

"Have you any of those fake opium pills which I can substitute on the sly for the real hop?"

"Yes, here they are. Be very careful. Of course, you will insist on cooking the pill for yourself."

"Oh, sure; there is no other safe way."

"Certainly not."

Soon afterward the Bradys separated.

Young King Brady went to Buffalo by the evening train.

Arrived in that city he put up at a small hotel on Seneca Street.

Of course, he registered under an assumed name—not daring to use that of Richard Ronalds any more than his own.

That might have led to his arrest.

This, of course, would not have made much difference, but it would have brought delay.

It was Wednesday and Young King Brady felt that his best course was to devote the day to investigation.

First of all he had to look up the Chinaman, Ah Gow.

He had not the man's address, yet it seemed easy.

Young King Brady procured a directory.

There was but one Ah Gow given.

His place was a laundry on Washington Street, just above Swan Street.

The address being close to the hotel, the detective dropped around a few minutes later.

To his surprise and disgust he found the place closed up.

On the door was a "To Let" bill prominently displayed.

Young King Brady dropped in next door at a cigar store.

"He's gone, and I'm glad of it," the cigar dealer said.

"He owed me money and I would like to collect it," remarked Young King Brady.

"You will never do it."

"Why do you say that?"

"Ah Gow was a rascal."

"You seem to be very much down on him."

"No more than I am on all Chinks. He was a bad one, though."

"You don't know where he moved to?"

"No; he slipped out late, night before last."

"Ah, in the night!"

"Yes."

"Looks bad."

"He thought the police were going to jump his crew, I guess."

"And why?"

"Ah, come off; as though you didn't know!"

"Know what?"

"That Ah Gow kept a hop joint."

"Well, I own it. Perhaps you can steer me to another."

"Are you a hop fiend?"

"Yes."

"You don't look it."

"Why?"

"Hop fiends are generally thin about the face and yellow."

"Hitting the pipe never affected me that way."

"You never hit it very heavy."

"Perhaps not. But about the joint?"

"I'd be hurting my own business if I was to tell you. Hadn't you better buy some of my cigars?"

Young King Brady was in despair. He felt that he was losing precious time. While he was talking he stood near the window. Just then he saw a Chinaman slide out of Ah Gow's place with a basket on his arm.

"By Jove, there's something doing there after all!" he thought.

He hastily left the store and began shadowing the Celestial.

By taking the other side of the way this was easy enough.

The basket was a covered one and seemed heavy. But in spite of that the Chinaman took no care. He plodded on across the city, winding in and out among many narrow streets lined with factories, lumber yards, oil yards and the like.

Black Street, near the Fort Erie Ferry, was his destination.

Here Young King Brady saw him enter a laundry. The name on the sign had been painted out. The place looked as if it was on its last legs. The windows had been mostly broken and were boarded up.

A dried-up, withered-looking Chinaman, evidently an opium fiend, was ironing a shirt, inside.

All this Young King Brady took in at a glance as he walked past the place.

The building was a small one—a mere shanty.

Young King Brady saw that it could not be an opium joint on any very large scale.

He walked on and passed around the block.

By the time he returned to Black Street again he knew more.

Directly behind the laundry was a long, low, two-story house.

This house was evidently an old-timer. It stood in the middle of the block. The laundry building had been built in the front yard. The old house in the rear was apparently deserted.

Every window was boarded up and it presented a picture of ruin and decay.

"Just the place for a hop joint," Young King Brady said to himself.

He had made up his mind what to do as he walked along. His intention was to take the bull by the horns, so to speak.

In other words, to go boldly into the laundry and ask for Ah Gow.

The trouble was that of all people on earth, Chinamen are the most suspicious and perhaps the shrewdest.

It would be a great test for the young detective's make-up.

Then, again, if Richard Ronalds was already in Buffalo and had been to this place, the moment the detective presented himself the game would be up.

Still, something had to be done, and Young King Brady could think of no better plan.

So he crossed the street and walked boldly into the laundry.

The Chinaman at the ironing table never even looked up. He took up a fresh iron and hammered away on the bosom of the shirt.

"John, I want to see Ah Gow," said Young King Brady, familiarly.

"No Ah Gow here," replied the laundryman.

At the same time there was a stir behind the shabby red curtain which cut off the back room.

A yellow face peered out between the edge of the curtain and the partition.

Young King Brady caught one square look at it. That it was the face of the Chinaman with the basket there could be no doubt.

"Are you sure?" asked the detective blandly.

"No Ah Gow," grunted the ironer. "No know dat man."

"I was told I would find him here."

"Who tole you?"

"A Chink in New York, who is a good friend of mine, John."

"New York!"

"Yes."

"What name?"

"Ong Sing."

"Ong Sing!"

"Yes."

Just then the red curtain was thrust aside. The Chinaman who had carried the basket came out. His face was all smiles.

Yet there was a wary look about it, too.

"Hello, Charlie!" he said. "Know Ong Sing?"

"Sure!" replied Young King Brady.

He determined to clinch the business, hit or miss.

"I am, Mister Bostonman," he said.

Had Richard Ronalds been there before him? If so the game was all up.

Harry held his breath and watched the effect of his bold words.

CHAPTER VII.

OLD KING BRADY DETERMINES TO GET INTO THE OPIUM RING.

"There is but one sure way to do it and only one," Old King Brady remarked.

"And what is that, may I ask?" inquired the Chief of the Secret Service Bureau in New York.

"To get into the opium ring."

"Pshaw! it can't be done."

"Who says so?"

"I say so."

"I think differently."

"Be practical, Brady."

"I prefer to be successful."

"You usually are."

"My orders were to call on you for any funds I need in this fight."

"And they are at your service."

"You had better give me five hundred dollars."

"Will that be enough?"

"Plenty. I generally use my own money in these cases——"

"And you have plenty of it, I am told."

"I shall not starve if I never take another case, but in working for Uncle Sam——"

"He may as well pay the bills."

"Of course."

"You are right enough, there; but about this plan of getting into the opium ring?"

"I still assert that it can be done."

"How?"

"That is my secret. This money will buy my way into the ring."

"I hope so. The discoveries you have already made are highly important."

"I think so."

"If Young King Brady has as good luck in Buffalo as you have had in New York, there should be something doing by to-morrow night."

"Expect to hear it."

"You will telephone me?"

"Yes."

"Good enough. Well, I see you are off. Good day."

Old King Brady left the office of the chief and hurried to his costumer's in the Bowery.

"Mr. Margate, I want an entirely new disguise," he said.

"The whole shop is at your service, Mr. Brady," was the reply.

"Thank you."

"Not at all. You have been a good customer. It is only for you to choose."

"This is the style."

The detective drew a photograph from his pocket.

"Parsee merchant," said the costumer, taking it in at one glance.

"Yes. Anything doing in that line?"

"I think so. I'll see."

Mr. Margate pulled over his stock.

The required articles were soon forthcoming.

When Old King Brady left the shop his best friend would not have known him.

He wore black trousers, patent leather shoes, a black alpaca robe—half coat, half gown—buttoning close under the chin and hanging almost to his feet, while on his head was a snow-white turban of enormous size.

In addition to this his face and hands were stained a deep brown with a decoction known only to himself.

In short, Old King Brady looked the Hindoo to perfection.

Everybody stared at him as he walked down the Bowery.

And, indeed, as the old detective appeared then, he certainly was a very remarkable-looking man.

Old King Brady stopped just short of Jim Lavelle's saloon and ascended to Dr. Ranlett's room.

The doctor was in, and, strange to say, wide awake.

He was engaged in writing at a dirty table over which many sheets of paper were strewn.

"Who are you and what do you want with me?" he demanded, opening the door in response to the detective's knock.

Old King Brady bowed low, putting out his hands in Oriental fashion.

"I have ze honor of addressing ze great surgeon, Monsieur le Docteur Ranlett?" he said.

"Ranlett is my name. You are probably a Parsee from Bombay?"

"Yes, Docteur."

"What can you want with me?"

"Can we talk in my own language?"

The detective stepped in and closed the door.

"Certainly we can," replied the doctor, in the Parsee tongue. "What is it you wish?"

"You will have to speak United States if you want to talk to me, Doc," said the detective in his natural voice.

"I supposed you could speak Parsee, all right," he added, "but I'll be blest if I can."

"Brady!" gasped the opium fiend, sinking into a chair.

"Who else, Doctor?"

"But this is wonderful!"

"You never saw me disguised before?"

"No."

"It is no more difficult for a detective than for an actor."

"I suppose not. How about the head?"

"It fitted the body, Doctor."

"Poor Patmore! Still, it was certain that he would come to a bad end."

"That is opium's work."

"It is."

"Look out for yourself, Doctor."

"I am thinking hard, Brady."

"I thought you were writing."

"So I was when you came in."

"And the subject?"

"It is a work on the use of opium, which I hope to publish some day."

"Money will be necessary for that, Doctor."

"There's the rub."

"Perhaps I can help you out?"

"Do you mean it?"

"Sure!"

"But how?"

"Will you introduce me in my disguise to some prominent member of the opium ring if I give you two hundred dollars, Doctor?"

Dr. Ranlett rose and for several minutes paced the floor.

"Can I?" he said at last.

"I am satisfied that you can."

"I shall have to leave New York if I do it."

"Highbinders?"

"Yes."

"You fear them?"

"They will kill me sure."

"Would it not be better to leave New York and quit this life forever?"

"Ah, if I only could!"

"Doctor, I would like to help you to do that very thing."

"You are a good man, Brady."

"Don't say it."

"I owe you money now."

"Owe me more. Listen to my proposition."

"Well?"

"For this service I will pay two hundred dollars. That is, Government money."

"Yes."

"In addition, I will pay you five hundred dollars on your note to help you to publish your book."

"I will bless you until the last hour of my life."

"On condition——"

"Ah, I was afraid!"

"Hear me. That you taper off on opium and try to make a man of yourself again."

"I accept on condition, Brady."

"Well?"

"Don't give it all to me at once. Let it come little by little as needed."

"You are right. That is the best way."

"It is a bargain."

"You will introduce me to the opium ring?"

"Yes. When shall it be?"

"To-day; as soon as possible."

"What's to be the story?"

"I am a Parsee merchant just from Bombay."

"You will pass for that."

"I have opium to sell."

"Yes."

"I have brought it as far as Fort Erie, and do not know how to get it safely into the States because I speak no English—see?"

"I see. You will sell out cheap."

"Dirt cheap."

"At Fort Erie?"

"Exactly."

"It is a good scheme. It ought to put you in close touch with the Buffalo gang."

"That is what I want."

"Very well. Remain here until I return."

"May I read your manuscript?"

"Certainly."

The doctor left in a hurry.

Old King Brady read for the best part of an hour.

"This is a work of immense value," he remarked when the doctor returned.

"It ought to be."

"It is. You know your subject right down to the ground!"

"Ah, Brady, it has cost me my life to learn it."

"Better times are coming, Doctor. Well, what success?"

"It is all right."

"Good!"

"Who do I interview?"

"Ong Sing himself."

"Doctor, you are a wonder!"

"Oh, I thought I could find him if I tried."

"And Miss Oliver? Did you see anything of her?"

"Nothing. Of course, I could not ask."

"Certainly not. I feel worried about the girl."

"She is undoubtedly in great danger. But I do not see how you can mix up two many matters at once."

"That is so. Shall we go?"

"Yes; I promised to bring you right around."

They left the house and entering a cab, which the doctor had shrewdly engaged, were driven around the corner to a small, shabby dwelling on Park Street near Mott.

Dr. Ranlett led the way to the back room on the first floor, where they were admitted in response to his knock.

The room was finely furnished in the Chinese style.

An aged Chinaman, with a long mustache, sat in a bamboo chair.

Each button of his blouse was a diamond set in gold, and he wore a stone worth several thousand dollars on the top of his skull cap.

A young Chinaman, in faultless American dress, advanced to meet Dr. Ranlett and the detective.

"Ong Sing, this is my Parsee friend," the doctor said.

Was Old King Brady shaking hands with the murderer of Dr. Patmore?

He wondered, but he shook hands just the same.

The old Chinaman grinned and wagged his head.

If he spoke English at all he did not show it at any time during the interview.

"His name is Rahburnshee Singh," said the doctor, introducing the detective. "He speaks no English at all."

Ong Sing motioned them to be seated.

He clapped his hands and a Chinese boy brought in tea, sweetmeats and cakes.

Dr. Ranlett rattled off a lot of gibberish after they had eaten and drank.

It might have been pure Parsee for all Old King Brady knew.

His reply was the purest gibberish—he knew that.

“He says you can have the opium on your own terms,” the doctor said to Ong Sing. “He is very anxious to realize on it and get out of the country.”

“I should have to see it first,” replied Ong Sing.

More gibberish on both sides.

“He says he will meet you in Buffalo to-morrow, anywhere you say,” said the doctor.

“How will he talk to me? How shall I talk to him?” asked Ong Sing.

His English was perfect and the Chinese accent very slight.

“I will go with him,” said the doctor.

He had rightly interpreted Old King Brady’s meaning look.

“That is good.”

“You will buy for cash if the opium suits you?”

“Yes.”

“To what amount?”

“Any amount.”

“There is a good deal of it.”

“If a hundred thousand dollars was needed the money is ready.”

“That is all right. Then we meet in Buffalo?”

“Yes.”

“Where?”

Ong Sing wrote the address in English.

The name was Ah Gow.

The place was the laundry on Black Street discovered by Young King Brady.

Dr. Ranlett rose to depart.

“Wait,” said Ong Sing.

“What now?” asked the doctor.

Ong Sing took a card and scrawled Chinese characters upon it.

“You can read it, Doctor?” he asked.

“Oh, yes. It is a letter of introduction to Ah Gow.”

“It is. Meet me there. The money will be ready. I have only to approve of the goods.”

Dr. Ranlett and the detective then left the place.

They entered the hack and were driven back to the Bowery.

“Satisfied?” asked the doctor as they rolled through Mott Street.

“Perfectly,” said the detective.

“And the money?”

“Ah, Doctor, how about the pipe?”

“You are right, Brady. I must go to Buffalo.”

“To carry out this scheme to a finish it is absolutely necessary that you should.”

“Very well. Where shall we meet?”

“Remain in your room and I will call for you in a carriage.”

“Settled. What do you think of Ong Sing?”

“As to what?”

“The murder of your friend, Dr. Patmore.”

Dr. Ranlett shrugged his shoulders.

“He is a Highbinder, Brady.”

“It is enough.”

“Of course it’s enough. The Highbinders think no more of murder than we do of eating.”

“And yet he may not be guilty,” Old King Brady remarked.

“We have no proof,” said the doctor.

The conversation ended there.

The hack had stopped on the Bowery and Dr. Ranlett returned to his miserable room.

That night he started for Buffalo, with Old King Brady, on the nine o’clock train over the Erie road.

CHAPTER VIII.

MR. BOSTONMAN WALKS INTO THE JOINT.

Young King Brady’s bold move proved a perfect success.

The face of the Chinaman who had just entered the laundry was instantly wreathed with smiles.

“Mlister Bostonman!” he cried. “Ah, h’llo! Glad to see you. You gottee letter Ong Sing?”

“Sure!” said Harry.

He produced the red paper found in the closet with the head.

“Yes, yes!” cried the Chinaman, glancing at it. “Me Ah Gow.”

“Glad to see you, Gow. How’s hop?”

“Hop allee light. You likee smokee hop now?”

“Perhaps.”

“Good place, Bostonman.”

“Yes?”

“Oh, yes.”

“Is there time? When do we go across the river?”

“You know. When Ong Sing he come.”

“Thursday?”

“Yes, Thursday. Plenty time smokee hop.”

“Of course, of course. Wouldn’t mind a pipe or two; sometimes I smoke too much.”

“Yes, yes! Ong Sing he say dlat on letter—see?”

Ah Gow pointed to the red paper which he still held in his hand.

“Hello! Ong Sing has been telling stories about me.”

“True stories. No lies, Bostonman. Ong Sing he square man.”

“If he wasn’t you bet I wouldn’t be dealing with him. Gow.”

“Oh, yes, me know.”

“Sure; you’re a sly old fox, I’ll bet.”

Harry laughed as he said it.

Ah Gow laughed.

So did the shirt ironer.

The Chinaman seemed to take this as a huge joke.

“Come, Bostonman, hit pipe once,” said Ah Gow, starting for the room behind the red curtain.

"I must play the game out," thought Young King Brady, "but what shall I do if the real Mr. Bostonman comes?"

It was an unpleasant thing to think about, and Harry put it out of his mind.

Until the next evening there seemed to be nothing for it but to hang around.

Of course, it would not be safe to appear again as Mr. Bostonman unless he could head off Richard Ronalds and play the part he had assumed through to a finish.

Young King Brady resolved to see certain officials on the Buffalo police.

"Ronalds must never come here if it can be helped," he said to himself.

Still, to pull out at once would only be to excite suspicion.

Thus Harry could only follow Ah Gow.

The Chinaman, once he reached the back room behind the laundry, raised a trap-door.

Then they descended a ladder into the cellar.

An underground passage was discovered.

Up another ladder they climbed.

"We are in the rear house now," thought Young King Brady. "This is a slick joint."

They paused in an ante-room where an old, dried-up Chinaman sat on guard.

Whatever Ah Gow said to him it appeared to be entirely satisfactory.

The door was opened by pulling a string.

Ah Gow and Harry entered the joint.

It was a large room and very well furnished in the Chinese style.

Everything seemed perfectly new, and for a wonder the place was clean.

Ah Gow explained that the Pan-American Exposition was on for that summer and he expected a large trade from the "hop" fiends.

Just then there was no one in the bunks nor on the mattresses which were scattered about the floor.

"You comee here—private room," said Ah Gow, leading the way to another apartment.

In this room the furnishings were positively elegant. A softly cushioned couch was revealed when Ah Gow pulled aside a curtain.

"Fine!" said Harry.

"Good place smoke, huh?"

"Elegant."

"See, you shutee door—you allee lone. You wantee more hop you ringee bell."

"That's all right. I'll try a pipe now."

"Yes, yes. Gee, me know you rightee way quick."

"How?"

"Me have plicture, see?"

Ah Gow fumbled in his blouse.

Somewhat to Harry's surprise he produced a photograph of a stout, good-looking man.

It was the duplicate of the photograph sent to Old King Brady, and represented Richard Ronalds.

"It takes the governor to disguise a fellow," thought Harry as Ah Gow went into the other room for the opium "layout."

When he returned Ah Gow put the pipe and lamp upon a Turkish stool near the couch.

He placed there also a lump of opium on a playing card.

This is the invariable Chinese custom.

The card was the nine of spades.

Harry handed Ah Gow a dollar.

At first the Chinaman refused to accept payment, but at length he yielded.

"Havee good smoke," he said, and Harry was left to himself after declining the services of an "opium cook" to prepare the pill.

As soon as Ah Gow had departed Young King Brady took a hasty survey of the room.

There was one window behind a curtain.

It overlooked a fence which separated the old building from the yard of a store on the next street.

Young King Brady unfastened the window and drew the curtain.

He then continued his investigations.

In one corner of the room was a small sliding panel about breast high.

Harry gently raised the panel.

It communicated with the main joint.

Dropping it again in a hurry he entered the alcove and drew the curtain.

Removing his coat after the custom of opium fiends he lighted the lamp.

Then he lay down upon the couch and rolled his pill.

This sent the strong, pungent odor of opium all over the room.

The pill, however, went under the couch.

Producing one of Old King Brady's fake pills Harry smoked a few whiffs.

"I suppose I am booked here for at least an hour," he thought.

He looked at his watch and lay back on the couch.

The minutes dragged by slowly.

At last the door opened and Ah Gow drew the curtain.

Young King Brady lay back with closed eyes and never moved.

Ah Gow dropped the curtain and disappeared.

Fifteen minutes passed.

Suddenly Young King Brady was startled by the sound of voices in the joint.

"I tell you he's a fraud!" some one called out. "I am Ong Sing's friend. Read this!"

Young King Brady sprang up and pulled on his coat like lightning.

"The game is up," he muttered. "There isn't an instant to be lost!"

He stopped to cautiously raise the panel, however.

A man looking much as he looked himself was standing with Ah Gow in the joint.

But for the good prospect of downing the opium ring Young King Brady would have instantly arrested him.

As it was, there was nothing for it but to beat a retreat. Young King Brady threw up the window and climbed out.

Softly pulling down the sash he climbed the fence and dropped down into the yard on the other side.

Young King Brady hurried along the yard and entered the store by the rear door.

It was a butcher's shop.

"Hello! Where the deuce did you come from?" cried the butcher, who was cutting a steak at the chopping block.

"Hist! Hist!" said Harry, mysteriously.

"He's a crazy man!" screamed a woman standing at the block.

Harry confirmed her in this opinion by making a horrible face at her.

Then he ran out through the front door and sprang upon a passing trolley car.

Thus ended the adventure at the opium joint.

Young King Brady had succeeded in getting in and getting out again.

Nevertheless he felt very much chagrined over the whole affair.

It is a hard matter for a detective to work on two cases at once.

That is what the Bradys were doing.

Young King Brady deeply regretted that he had not been able to arrest Richard Ronalds.

He was not quite sure that he had done the right thing in letting the chance slip.

Reaching Main Street he returned to the hotel.

Here a despatch awaited him.

It was from Old King Brady and read as follows:

"Look for me in Buffalo, Thursday morning. Search for Miss O. at hotels."

"Here is something to do, and I'm glad of it," Young King Brady said to himself.

The same idea had already occurred to him.

•He would have made the search even if the despatch had not come.

Getting his dinner Young King Brady visited each of the prominent hotels in Buffalo.

Before during this he resumed his usual dress, first paying his bill and announcing that he was going to New York.

He met with no success.

No such person as Miss Oliver of Boston was registered at any of the hotels.

Harry now returned to his own hotel and engaged another room under another name.

Not the slightest suspicion dawned upon the clerk that he was talking to the stout man who had left two hours before.

Again Young King Brady went out on Main Street.

Evening was now falling.

He had a faint hope that he might run into Richard Ronalds.

As he had seen the defaulter through the panel it seemed as if he had made no effort to disguise himself.

Young King Brady dropped in at the Iroquois cafe and the cafe at the Tift House.

There was no one he knew in either.

At last he sauntered back down Main Street, turned into Seneca Street and entered the cafe at Broezell's Hotel.

It was all he could do to keep his face from showing his surprise.

There stood Richard Ronalds lined up against the bar, with three fast-looking young men.

All had evidently been drinking—they were at it now.

In addition, Ronalds' face had a yellowish pallor and his hand trembled.

"Hello!" thought Young King Brady, "he hit the pipe in Ah Gow's joint even if I didn't. This is great!"

He sat down at a table and called for a bottle of beer.

"You and I will stick together like brothers, for this night, if it is a possible thing," he thought.

It was a long wait before there was anything doing, however.

Ronalds seemed bent on drowning thought.

He treated several times, displaying a big roll of bills each time he paid his check.

Young King Brady patiently waited.

It was a case of shadowing, and he made up his mind to stick at it if it took all night.

At last he saw a well-dressed man saunter into the cafe.

As he passed on to the lunch counter the man made a slight gesture at Ronalds' companions.

Immediately they went out, taking Ronalds with them.

"That's the hotel detective," thought Young King Brady.

He went up to the man and carelessly displayed his shield.

The confidence was instantly returned.

"Regulars?" said Harry.

"Steerers," was the whispered reply.

"We call 'em cappers in New York. Who do they run for?"

"Barney Crow's faro bank on Main Street."

"So! They've got a fat bird to-night, I judge."

"That's what they have; and they will pluck him well."

Young King Brady got out as quick as possible.

He knew where the faro bank was located.

Therefore he steered straight for Barney Crow's.

He was sure that he would find the party there.

The men with Ronalds were only Buffalo toughs, and probably knew nothing of his business in town.

Young King Brady overtook the party on Main Street just above the Iroquois Hotel.

They were linked arm in arm and took up the whole sidewalk.

"That \$30,000 bids fair to change hands mighty sudden," thought Young King Brady.

Matters had taken a new turn.

To see the money stolen from the Metacomet bank of

Boston pass into the hands of a lot of card sharps was no part of Young King Brady's programme.

"I must get down to business," he thought as the trio turned in at Barney Crow's.

CHAPTER IX.

YOUNG KING BRADY COLLARS THE STOLEN CASH.

While Young King Brady was shadowing Richard Ronalds, Old King Brady was hurrying toward Buffalo over the Erie road.

It was an immense advantage to the two detectives that they could thoroughly trust each other.

Old King Brady sat comfortably in the smoking compartment of the Pullman car, talking with Dr. Ranlett.

He was not worrying, for he knew that Harry would do his best in Buffalo.

It was the same with Harry.

He knew that at the moment Old King Brady's presence was needed he would surely be on hand.

The young detective merely looked in at Barney Crow's.

As soon as he saw that Richard Ronalds was seated at the faro bank betting heavily, he pulled out again.

"I must get him away from those card sharps," he said to himself.

He felt sure that he knew how it could be done.

Harry hurried to a stationer's and purchased some ladies' note-paper and an envelope.

Next he went to the writing-room of the Iroquois Hotel and indicted the following note.

In so doing he used as a guide the Boston address which Miss Oliver had written for him at his request.

Harry would have made a most expert forger.

He could imitate any one's handwriting to perfection.

The note which he turned out read as follows:

"DEAR MR. RONALDS—Something has happened. I must see you at once. Please do not delay.

"Your friend, NETTA OLIVER."

Young King Brady's theory was that Netta Oliver was in Buffalo in search of her lover.

He felt certain that Ronalds knew this and that he had come West at his suggestion.

"If I am right, that will fetch him," thought Harry as he sealed the letter and addressed it.

Of course, it was all a chance.

Young King Brady was taking big chances that night.

Passing into the street he had a brief conversation with a cabman.

A ten dollar bill changed hands.

Young King Brady walked toward Barney Crow's.

The cab moved slowly in the same direction.

Passing upstairs Young King Brady slipped the darky at the door fifty cents and asked him to deliver the note.

Then he went downstairs again and stood in a doorway, watching.

He did not have long to wait.

Ronalds soon came stumbling down the stairs alone.

"Hi! Cab!" he called.

"Very sorry, sir. I'm engaged," said the cabman. "Get you another, sir. Wait!"

He called to an empty cab which was passing.

The driver responded and was soon moving away with Ronalds as his fare.

Young King Brady stepped from his concealment.

He was just about to jump into the cab when the two gamblers appeared and hailed the driver.

"Take them," whispered Harry, moving aside.

"All right, gents!" said the driver.

"Follow that cab. Ten dollars for the job," said one of the gamblers.

"Get right in," said the driver, and away they went.

Not leaving Young King Brady behind, however.

Oh, no; Harry was on the box with the driver.

"What's it all about, boss?" the driver asked.

"Merely trying to save a friend of mine from a couple of grafters," Harry replied.

"They are a bad lot."

"You know them?"

"Well, they would stick at nothing."

"Neither shall I to down them."

"You mean to arrest them?"

"No."

"You are wise. They have a big pull in this town and would make it warm for you, perhaps."

"I know my business."

Before long Harry had a chance to prove that to the driver.

Ronalds' cab proceeded for some distance up Delaware Avenue and then, turning several corners, stopped.

Ronalds alighted.

He was very drunk now and reeled against the driver as he paid him.

Still he seemed to know what he was doing.

He dismissed the cab and stood there unsteadily while it rolled away.

The place was a lonely one.

There were vacant lots on two corners and a house standing well back from the street on the third, while on the fourth corner a new house was being built.

"Just the place to do him up," said Young King Brady's driver.

Then a tap on the glass was heard.

It was the signal to stop.

"Wait here for me," whispered Harry.

He sprang from the box as the driver slowed down.

In a moment he was behind a pile of bricks in front of the new house.

Ronalds had started to cross the street.

Young King Brady saw the two grafters hurrying after him.

One of them had on a pair of brass knuckles, the other carried a black-jack in his outside coat-pocket.

Meanwhile Ronalds was reeling from side to side, having all he could do to walk.

"Heavens! they mean to do him! I must be quick!" muttered Young King Brady.

He came to the conclusion none too soon.

The two grafters were right upon their victim as Harry sprang out from behind the bricks.

Down came the black-jack, but it struck Ronalds on the shoulder instead of the head.

The intoxicated bank defaulter stumbled forward and fell on his face.

"Drop on it!" cried Young King Brady.

He fired a shot over the heads of the astonished grafters.

This did the business.

The two took to their heels, ran around the corner and disappeared.

Young King Brady was raising Ronalds when the cabman drove up.

"Oh, thank you!" muttered Ronalds, thickly. "You have saved my life!"

"Glad I was in time," replied Harry. "Hold on to me."

"All right. I—I'm sick."

"I see you are. Where do you live?"

"Eighty-five Walton Street," Ronalds stammered thickly.

Then with an attempt to brace up he immediately corrected himself.

"No, don't take me there. Call a cab," he said.

"All right. My cab is right here."

"You're a white man. You will stand by me?"

"I'll stick to you like a brother."

"Thank you, thank you! You shall be paid for this."

"I want no pay, friend. If I can help you I will."

"You are very good. Drive me to 120 Black Street. I—I have business there."

"Ah Gow's!" thought Young King Brady.

"This case is narrowing down," he added to himself as the driver helped him to get the drunken defaulter into the cab.

Harry got in with him, and, having given the address of the laundry to the cabman, they rolled away.

Young King Brady had already displayed his detective's shield to the driver.

He had also explained something of the situation and felt sure that the man could be depended upon.

Not having to trouble himself on that score he set to work on his man.

"Oh, if I only dared to round him up in the station!" he thought.

He tried to question the defaulter.

It was of little use.

Ronalds was entirely too far gone to answer questions.

In a few minutes he was quite unconscious.

"This is my chance to recover the stolen cash," thought Young King Brady.

He proceeded to go through the defaulter's pockets.

The result was startling.

From one concealment and another great rolls of bills were produced.

Aided by his pocket electric light Young King Brady examined them.

He found himself in possession of at least \$30,000 according to his hasty count.

The stolen funds of the Metacomet National Bank were in his hands.

He also took possession of various letters and papers.

He did not stop to examine these, but pocketed them for future use.

It was a great triumph for Young King Brady.

He leaned back and figured on his next moves.

"I guess the best thing I can do is to hold him for the governor," he muttered.

Then he added:

"Eighty-five Walton Street was where he wanted to go and that must be Miss Oliver's address."

His mind was now made up.

He stopped the cab and directed the driver to proceed to police headquarters.

Arrived there Young King Brady, leaving Ronalds in the cab, introduced himself to the officer in charge.

"I am Old King Brady's assistant. I have a man outside here whom I wish held until to-morrow when I expect my chief," he explained.

His request was granted without hesitation or a demand for explanation.

Old King Brady was as well known at Buffalo headquarters as he was everywhere else.

Ronalds was taken in and securely put away.

Well satisfied with his evening's work thus far, Young King Brady returned to the cab.

"Drive me to Eighty-five Walton Street and lose no time," he said.

It was as Young King Brady expected.

The place was a private boarding house, and the servant who answered his ring informed him that Miss Oliver was stopping there.

The detective sent up his own card.

In a few moments the Boston girl appeared in the parlor.

"Mr. Brady!" she exclaimed. "Is it possible that you are here?"

"As you see," was the reply. "Are we alone?"

"Quite. The boarders have all gone to a theatre party. I am the only one in the house."

"For which I am glad. Miss Oliver, why did you give me the slip?"

"I have done very wrong. I know it now," replied the girl in some confusion.

"You certainly have, after engaging me to undertake your case."

"I know it. I——"

"Wait. You know a few other things."

"Sir!"

"For one, that Henry Trask, your lover, was not murdered on the Fall River boat."

"Mr. Brady! I——"

"Wait! You saw the head of the murdered man while you were in company with Ong Sing."

"I did! I——"

"Did you see me struck down at that time?"

"You! They told me it was a policeman."

"Ha! Ong Sing told you?"

"Yes."

"And hurried you away?"

"Yes."

"And sent you to Buffalo?"

"Yes, yes! He told me that Ronalds was here and that Henry was with him."

"Very likely that is the truth."

"But Henry is no defaulter!"

"I know nothing of that. Is he an opium fiend?"

"Oh, no, no!, How can you say it?"

"Have you seen him?"

"No."

"Have you seen Ronalds?"

"Yes. He met me at the station and brought me here."

"Indeed!"

"Yes. Don't be too hard on me. He promised to bring Henry here to-night."

"Which he will not do."

"Why do you say it?"

"I say it because Richard Ronalds is now in the hands of the police."

"Ah!"

"It is so. Miss Oliver, you have had a narrow escape."

"I see it now. I did very wrong."

"You certainly were very imprudent. How did you come to fall in with Ong Sing?"

"I met him in the street and gave him my address."

"Why?"

"He said he could prove that Henry had not been murdered."

"And he called on you later and drove you to Chinatown?"

"Yes."

"And sent you to Buffalo to meet your lover?"

"Yes. You know it all."

"It was a plot of Ronalds' to inveigle you to Canada and force you to marry him."

"I fear so."

"So much for trusting a good, young Chinaman."

"Oh, Mr. Brady, what shall I do? I must find Henry Trask."

"Your devotion should be rewarded."

"You will help me to find him?"

"Yes, if you will leave it all to me and my partner."

"I will."

"You promise not to leave this house on any pretence without my permission for the next twenty-four hours?"

"Yes."

"On those conditions I will continue to work for you. Expect me to-morrow, and now good-night."

Well satisfied with the success of his evening's work, Young King Brady returned to the hotel.

CHAPTER X.

WORKING UP THE CLEWS.

When Young King Brady came down to breakfast next morning it was just six o'clock.

This was an early hour, but it would give him plenty of time to meet Old King Brady, he thought.

The first thing he did was to step to the newsstand and buy a copy of the Buffalo Morning Express.

That which met his eye as he opened the paper was an account of a wreck on the Erie road.

Harry hastily glanced down the column.

The wreck was a bad one.

The night express had collided with a freight train just beyond Binghamton.

No lives were lost, but the paper stated that traffic would probably be suspended all day.

"That settles me," muttered Harry. "More delay. Nothing doing for hours to come."

Meanwhile Old King Brady was trying to be patient at a hotel in Binghamton.

There was nothing for it but to wait.

The passengers on the express had been brought back to that city just too late to catch the trains which would take them to Buffalo by either the Lehigh Valley or D., L. & W. lines.

Thus it was nearly five o'clock on Thursday when Old King Brady and Dr. Ranlett reached Buffalo.

The detective had wired Young King Brady to meet him at the station, and Harry was on hand.

They repaired at once to the hotel and compared notes.

"You have done well," said Old King Brady; "although I have been tied up all day, I have done business, too."

He displayed several telegrams which had come to him in answer to despatches of his own to the Canadian authorities at Toronto.

They gave the old detective full authority to arrest any member of the opium ring—or, indeed, any one he chose, on Canadian soil.

"That's business," said Harry.

"I think so. What did you do with that money?"

"Banked it in my own name."

"Good! It is safer. Still, you may need to flash a roll."

"I have the fake roll, governor."

"That will be all right. Doctor, excuse me a few moments. I must have a word in private with my partner."

"Certainly," replied Dr. Ranlett. "I will go into the reading-room."

Later Old King Brady joined the doctor alone.

"Where is your partner?" was asked.

"He has disappeared for the present. We may run into him later. Let us go to our room."

Once in the room, to which his grip had been sent, Old King Brady transformed himself into the Parsee merchant once more.

"I am ready now," he said at last. "There is a cab at the door. Let us go."

"What about the hotel people? Won't they think it strange to see us go out?" the doctor asked.

"That is all arranged. Come right along," was the reply.

Entering the cab Old King Brady and the doctor were driven to Black Street.

"Wonder if we shall find Ong Sing here?" the doctor remarked on the way.

"Hard to tell," was the reply. "He may have come by some other line. He certainly was not on our train, as you know."

"I cannot understand what you mean to do, Mr. Brady."

"No?"

"No."

"I shall surprise you when I tell you, perhaps."

"Tell it."

"I had a plan when I reached Buffalo, now I am only going to look over the ground. I have given it all up."

"What do you mean?"

"What I say. I shall drop my present disguise immediately after my interview with the Chinamen in this joint to which we are going."

"You are a strange man, Brady."

"I hope I am a commonsensical one."

"Still you leave me in the dark."

"Why stick to one plan when you see a better one?"

"I begin to understand. Your partner——"

"Has done some very important work."

"Hence the change?"

"Exactly. Ong Sing will be disappointed in his Parsee. To meet him in Canada is my intention, but he will not see me dressed as I am now."

"This seems to be the place," said the doctor as the cab stopped at the Black Street laundry.

The detective and the doctor alighted, and the driver of the cab was told to wait at the corner.

The shirt-ironing Chinaman was alone in the laundry when they entered.

He motioned them to pass behind the curtain without saying a word.

There was no one in the back room, either.

The trap-door, however, stood invitingly open.

"That's the way to the joint, evidently," the doctor said.

"And it is equally evident that we are expected."

"Yes."

"I suppose we had better go on."

"I fear the Highbinders!" breathed the doctor.

"Trust me to protect you."

"You cannot know their power as I do. If Ong Sing suspects, we are lost!"

Old King Brady did not hesitate, however.

He immediately descended the ladder, walked through the secret passage and went up the ladder at the other end.

The doctor followed, trembling all over.

Fact was, the man was crazy for an opium smoke.

The old Chinaman on guard confronted them in the ante-room.

"We want Ah Gow," said the doctor.

The guard touched a bell and Ah Gow appeared.

Dr. Ranlett spoke to him in Chinese and delivered the letter.

Old King Brady made a profound salaam.

"Disss way, gentlemen," said Ah Gow. "I expect you."

He led them into the joint.

Several persons—men and women—lay in the bunks and on the mattresses.

It was all Dr. Ranlett could do to keep from throwing himself on one of the mattresses.

Old King Brady noticed his agitation and gave him a warning look.

Ah Gow led them through the joint and into a private room adjoining the one where Young King Brady had indulged in his fake smoke.

Here Ong Sing was discovered smoking a bamboo tobacco pipe.

"Ha, Sing!" cried the doctor, after the first greeting.

"You don't hit your own hop, it seems."

"Never when there is business doing," replied the King of the Opium Ring, for so Ong Sing, among his associates, was styled.

It was really wonderful what excellent English this man spoke.

Old King Brady, of course, was dumb, except for the gibberish, off and on, Dr. Ranlett pretended to translate.

"Now we are here and must settle this business," said Ong Sing. "Whereabouts in Fort Erie is this opium?"

"That," said the doctor, "is a secret which we cannot disclose."

"Then how am I to see it?"

"We will bring it to any place you may name, at any time."

"That sounds more like it."

"I will do as I agree."

"Were it anybody but you, Doctor, I would not talk freely as I do," remarked Ong Sing.

"You may trust me."

"It will be a bad day for you if I find that I cannot."

"I have no fears."

"You are sure your Parsee friend speaks no English?"

"You are not trusting me, Sing. Let us call this deal off and we will go."

"Don't be hasty."

"There are others who will buy this opium at the price we are prepared to offer it."

"Name your price."

The figure the doctor named was ridiculously low.

That the proposition now had more interest for Ong Sing was easy to see.

"Listen, Doctor," he said: "To-night we are to bring over other opium from Canada and we may as well bring yours at the same time."

"That's business."
 "Do you know Moestein's Hotel at Fort Erie?"
 "No; but I can find it."
 "It is but a short distance from the ferry. It is a place frequented by railroad men."
 "Yes. Well?"
 "At twelve o'clock a hearse containing the body of a man will start from that hotel."
 "I see."
 "You had better be there by eleven. Inquire for this party. Deliver the opium to him and later I will be on hand."
 Ong Sing handed Dr. Ranlett a card.
 Old King Brady glanced at it.
 The name it bore was Mr. Septimus Savage.
 In addition were the words: "Inspector of Customs."
 "Yes, yes," said the doctor, "I see!"
 "There will be no trouble," said Ong Sing.
 "The opium you intend to bring over is in the hands of this gentleman?"
 "Ask me no questions. Mr. Savage attends to the Canadian end of our business. That is enough."
 "Then there is nothing more that we can do here now?"
 "Nothing; unless you would like a smoke."
 Old King Brady trod on the doctor's toe.
 "Not now," he said hastily. "Like yourself, Sing, I don't smoke hop in business hours."
 "You didn't used to be so particular," replied Ong Sing, refilling his pipe.
 It was now time to withdraw.
 Old King Brady had obtained the clew he wanted.
 The doctor grasped the situation and rose to depart.
 As they passed through the ante-room they found Ah Gow talking with a stout man.
 He looked the original of the photograph of Richard Ronalds.
 Old King Brady merely glanced at him and they passed out.
 The cab was in waiting at the corner below, and they lost no time in getting in.
 "Well?" said the doctor as they rolled away.
 "It is well," replied Old King Brady. "It is all right."
 "You are satisfied?"
 "Quite."
 "Do I have to go any further in this business?"
 "I'll tell you in a minute, Doctor."
 "I think I know why you hesitate," chuckled the doctor.
 "Why?"
 "You want to read the note that stout man slipped into your coat-pocket as we passed out."
 "By Jove, Doctor, the hop hasn't quite done you up yet!"
 "Not quite."
 "You were sharp to notice that."
 "Ah Gow might have noticed it if I had not spoken to him as I did."
 "For which, thanks. I appreciated it at the time."
 "Who was that man, Brady?"
 "You did not recognize him?"

"Why should I, seeing that I never saw him before?"
 "Just so," said the detective drily.
 Putting his hand into his pocket he took out a scrap of folded paper and opening it read aloud as follows:
 "Better prepare Miss Oliver for the worst. Henry Trask is undoubtedly an opium fiend and in the hands of the ring. I believe the intention is to kill him, or, at least let him smoke himself to death. Do as you think best, but if you intend to close this business to-night, for the girl's own sake, I would have her on hand."
 "Humph!" exclaimed the doctor. "Well, well!"
 "What now?"
 "The stout man was your partner or pupil, or whatever he is?"
 "Yes."
 "He is as clever at disguise as yourself."
 "And as brave as they make 'em."
 "I believe you, Brady."
 "He risks his life going into Ah Gow's joint to-night."
 "You bet he does."
 "Yes," said the old detective; "but you don't know all."
 "And about me, Brady?"
 Old King Brady looked at his watch.
 "I shan't want you any more, Doctor," he said. "Here is your three hundred dollars."
 "Bless you, Brady! But you needn't pay me now. This scheme may not succeed."
 "Nevertheless you have done your work and are entitled to your pay."
 Cleaning up, at the hotel, and donning his usual dress, Old King Brady drove to Walton Street to interview Miss Oliver.
 Leaving him to break the truth to the faithful Boston girl as best he might, let us return to Harry at the joint.
 The study of Richard Ronalds' papers had given Young King Brady all the clews he wanted.
 To follow up these clews was his work now.
 It was a bold move on the part of Young King Brady to return to the joint.
 There he expected to interview Ong Sing.
 There was nothing for it but to carry out orders, however.
 "Either Ong Sing or Richard Ronalds murdered Dr. Patmore," Old King Brady had said.
 And then he added:
 "And it is up to you in this interview, Harry, to find out which."
 Young King Brady's suggestion was that he interview Ronalds in the jail and try to make him confess.
 Old King Brady opposed this.
 "Let him alone until we are through," he said.
 "He's safe enough," chuckled Harry.
 "Thanks to you, yes."
 "If he proves to be the murderer we know just where to put our finger on him."
 "That's it."

"Work it out of Ong Sing if you can," Old King Brady wound up by saying.

But although the old detective turned it off so easily it must be admitted that Young King Brady had before him a very difficult task.

He made up his disguise with great care.

Through the kindness of the Buffalo officials at headquarters he succeeded in getting the identical clothes Richard Ronalds had worn.

Probably no other detectives in the United States could have accomplished this.

At least not without giving some explanation of the case.

This Young King Brady was not even asked to do.

Thus he was able to present himself at the laundry with considerable confidence.

He was passed without question by the shirt ironer.

Even Ah Gow did not suspect.

He at once commenced talking about the fraudulent Mr. Bostonman of the day before.

Had he seen him?

Who was he?

Did he think he was a detective?

And so on through a long list of questions.

Young King Brady answered them the best he could.

This was what he was doing when Old King Brady and Dr. Ranlett passed out.

The letter had been prepared, and as Old King Brady brushed past him Harry slipped it into his pocket.

Even this, Ah Gow, half sodden with opium as he was, did not see.

"Can I see Ong Sing now?" asked Young King Brady, after they were gone.

"In there," said Ah Gow, pointing to the door.

It is not to be denied that Young King Brady opened the door in fear and trembling.

"Hello, Dick!" said the King of the Opium Ring.

He took an extra puff at his pipe, but did not rise.

"Hello, Ong!" replied Harry, in a hoarse, assumed voice.

"What's the matter?" demanded the Chinaman.

"With what?"

"Your voice."

"I've got cold."

"That's bad. You were full last night?"

"You bet."

"Trying to forget it?"

"Yes."

"Humph! Hard work, Dick."

"Yes."

"I can hear his death-cry now, when you stuck him in the throat!"

Here was a discovery!

"Don't mention it," shuddered Young King Brady.

"Why not?"

"Suppose we are overheard?"

"Rats, Dick! There is no one to hear."

"I don't know what I should have done if it had not been for you."

"And yet I made a mess of it."

"How so? I thought it was a neat job."

"Oh, I don't refer to cutting off the head, Dick. I did that all right."

Another discovery!

Evidently Ong Sing had no suspicions.

"What then?" Young King Brady asked.

"To putting the head there in the closet in our old quarters in Mott Street to be found by the detective."

"Well, you did it for the best."

"Sure. It was for your sake."

"How so?"

"How so? Did not the girl believe that Henry Trask had been killed in the stateroom?"

"Yes?"

"Yes. To persuade her to come to Buffalo I had to prove to her that Trask was not the dead man."

"I don't see how you explained it."

"Oh, I trumped up a story about accidentally finding the head in the closet when I went there with the idea of hiring rooms."

"Ong, you are a wonder!"

"I know my business. I never go back on a friend."

"You have been a good friend to me."

"I promised to bring the girl to Buffalo and put her in your power and I have done it."

"You have."

"Seen her, Dick?"

"Yes; last night."

"Did she listen to you?"

"Oh, I didn't try to make love."

"No; that is you. I would!"

"I promised to help her find Trask."

"Well?"

"It's up to you to say what is to be done next?"

"We will decide to-morrow. Trask will be here then."

"Perhaps she had better be allowed to see him."

"With his load of hop on? Yes, that will disgust her."

"So I was thinking."

"She will turn to you then, Dick."

"It is worth trying."

"Now to business. You have the money ready?"

"Here it is."

Young King Brady flashed his fake roll.

Ong Sing's eyes glistened.

"We will settle just as soon as I can get at our Buffalo agent," he said.

"That will be all right."

"You shall have six per cent. on your money for twenty-four hours' use."

"That's the bargain."

"You can't kick at that."

"I'm no kicker, Ong. I don't want to be nabbed by the detectives, that's all."

"No danger."

"Don't know about that. I heard the Bradys were working on the case."

Harry watched Ong Sing's face closely.

Now, if ever, was the time for him to show his suspicions, if he had any.

But Ong Sing puffed away at his bamboo pipe as contentedly as ever.

"I know that," he said.

"But you never mentioned it."

"What was the use?"

"How did you find out?"

"Ha! I shall not tell all I know. For one thing, Miss Oliver told me that she had consulted Young King Brady."

"So! She did, eh?"

"She did. Then did I not knock down Young King Brady in the front room at the old quarters in Mott Street? I thought I told you that?"

Young King Brady found himself getting into deep water.

"Let's have a pipe, Ong," he said. "I want to smoke."

"Thought you did not smoke in business hours?"

Ong's voice never changed, nor was there any change of expression in his sly face.

It was impossible for Young King Brady to tell whether he was suspected or not.

"I mean a tobacco pipe," he said.

"Oh," said the opium king, rising. "Well, you shall have it. One word, brother, as my Chinese friends say in their Pigeon English: 'Too muchee talkee, too little workee.' Let us have a smoke together and get down to business right away."

"The fellow who gets the best of that Chink has got to get up early in the morning," said Harry to himself as Ong Sing left the room to get the pipe.

CHAPTER XI.

GETTING CLOSE TO THE HOP.

Old King Brady's interview with Miss Oliver was a painful one.

Doubtless it did the infatuated girl good, however.

The old detective has a fatherly way with him when dealing with women in trouble.

He showed Miss Oliver certain letters written by Henry Trask to Richard Ronalds.

These Young King Brady had taken from the drunkard's pocket.

These letters referred to "hop sprees" the writer had been in with his friend, "Dick" Ronalds.

Still, in spite of this evidence, Miss Oliver refused to believe that her lover was an opium fiend.

"I should have to see him with the pipe and under the influence before I would believe it, Mr. Brady," she said.

"Perhaps you will see him so before long, miss," the detective said.

"Then I will believe it; and not until then."

"You do not want to believe it, Miss Oliver, and I do not blame you. Still you ought to know the truth."

"You are right," said the girl, bursting into tears.

"Have courage, daughter," said Old King Brady.

"I am trying to. Oh, I have tried so hard to believe in Henry and to save him!"

"Which reflects great credit upon you."

"Is there no way?"

"There is."

"Name it, sir. I will do anything."

"The one thing to do is to get him out of the clutches of the opium ring."

"But how?"

"You will be guided by me?"

"Implicitly."

"Very well. During the evening an elderly gentleman will call upon you, giving the name of Dr. Ranlett."

"Well?"

"He will take you to a certain place where I hope to meet you later."

"And then?"

"If I do meet you, then you shall know Henry Trask as he really is."

With this the detective departed.

Dismissing his cab at Main Street, Old King Brady went by trolley car to the Fort Erie ferry.

He had given Dr. Ranlett his instructions.

It was not necessary to see the opium fiend again.

Crossing the Niagara River in the little ferryboat, Old King Brady inquired for Moestein's Hotel.

It was near the ferry and easily found.

The hotel proved to be much such a place as Old King Brady had expected to see.

The detective, who had a small hand-bag with him, walked into the office and asked for a room.

"Well, I don't know," said the clerk, crossly.

"Don't know?"

"No."

"Isn't this a public house?"

"Yes."

"Then why can't I have a room?"

"We are full. We only have a few rooms. Everybody seems to be crowding in here to-night."

"I can't help that. I have an appointment with a gentleman here in the morning. I am willing to pay double price if necessary, but I must have a room."

The clerk stepped into the room behind the office and consulted a man who was sitting there writing at a desk.

The man turned and gave Old King Brady a searching look.

"Oh, he's all right, I guess," the detective heard him say. Old King Brady got the room then.

It was on the second floor at the end of a long corridor. As Old King Brady passed upstairs a weasel-faced man in the office, who was reading the evening paper by the fire, glanced up at him.

The glance was returned for a single instant.

But this was done behind the back of the clerk, and he never knew.

"Want supper?" asked the clerk who had personally shown Old King Brady to the room.

"No." was the reply. "I had my supper in Buffalo."

"Want to be called in the morning at any particular time?"

"No; I always wake up without calling."

"Well, good-night, Mr. Clark!"

This was the name which Old King Brady had signed to the register.

"Good-night!" he replied, and stood waiting for the clerk to go.

But the clerk seemed inclined to linger.

"Oh, by the way, there is something I ought to tell you!" he said, in a minute.

"What is it?" asked Old King Brady.

"If you hear any disturbance in the hall here during the night you need not mind."

"Thank you for telling me. What disturbance is there likely to be?"

"Why," said the clerk, "there was a man who died in this house yesterday. They are going to take the body over to Buffalo some time to-night."

"Ah!"

"Yes. Corpse goes East by an early train."

"Just so."

"Any noise you may hear will be carrying the coffin downstairs."

"I see. That will be all right."

The clerk departed then.

He had not been long gone before there was a light tap at the door.

"Come in!" called Old King Brady.

It was the weasel-faced man who entered.

He closed the door carefully behind him and turned the key.

"You are Old King Brady?" he said in a low voice.

"I am. You are Detective Maxwell, I presume?"

"That's me."

"The Chief of the Buffalo Police promised my assistant that you should be here."

"That's it. We are ready to help."

"How many are there of you?"

"Six."

"That should be enough."

"If all works well."

"All must work well. What do you know?"

"The dead man is in the second room from this."

"Alone?"

"So I suppose."

"You have not seen him?"

"No; but I have learned their plans."

"Well?"

"They intend to cross the ferry by the boat which leaves at half-past twelve o'clock."

"If we let them."

"That's what I want to get at. I think it would be best to let them get on to American soil."

"I agree with you. The seizure must be made on the American side if possible."

"Could you make it here?"

"Yes. I am so empowered by the Canadian authorities."

"Still it would be better to let them go across providing the customs inspector goes with them."

"That is the keynote to the whole situation. We want that man caught in the very act, but there may be a hitch."

"I hope not. I should like to see this thing go through."

"It must go through. Where is this Mr. Savage?"

"Seated in the room behind the office."

"Ha! The man the clerk consulted about taking me in."

"The same."

"The sly rascal! I suppose he has helped many a lot of opium over the line."

"It may be so. I never suspected him. I don't think anybody else ever did."

"His day is over. But he must be caught in the act."

"What am I to do, Mr. Brady?"

"Where are your men?"

"In the different rooms."

"You can get them together at a moment's notice?"

"Yes."

"You ought to have a boat of your own to cross the river in."

"You think so?"

"I do."

"Why not go over in the ferryboat?"

"It would excite suspicion."

"It can be so arranged."

"How?"

"I know a man here who has a steam launch."

"See him. Get the use of the launch. Follow the ferryboat. Be on hand subject to my orders the moment we reach the American side."

"Evidently you do not intend to cross with us."

"Perhaps."

"Why not let us go over in the boat ahead?"

"Because I might want you here."

"I see. Well, it shall all be done as you say."

"Good! Report to me just before midnight. You had better leave me now."

Detective Maxwell had no sooner left the room than Old King Brady slipped out into the hall.

The coast seemed to be clear.

The detective listened for a moment to make sure.

Then he moved toward the door of the second room.

Here he listened at the keyhole.

Out came the bunch of skeleton keys.

The door was softly opened a minute later.

Old King Brady glided into the room, closing the door behind him.

The gas was turned down low, but there was light enough for the detective to see everything plainly.

Stretched upon the bed was a young man in a deep sleep.

An opium layout was upon a low stool beside the bed. There could be no doubt that the man was under the influence of the drug.

"And this is Henry Trask!" murmured Old King Brady. "Ah, Miss Oliver, how you have been deceived!"

The detective returned to his own room a minute later.

Here he remained for some little time, pacing the floor in deep thought.

"There is no other way," he said at length. "I must take my chances. It is hit or miss. All depends upon this one chance."

He opened the window and looked out.

It was about twenty feet down to the ground in the rear of the hotel.

For Old King Brady this was nothing.

Bolting the door he climbed out of the window, and, holding on by his hands, dropped.

No one saw him.

The coast was clear.

Old King Brady now made his way to the ferry, keeping as much in the shadow as he could.

As he drew near he saw a policeman armed with a big cane, after the Canadian style.

The detective walked boldly up to him and they talked earnestly for some moments.

During the conversation Old King Brady showed his shield and the papers he held.

"It is all right," said the officer, "I will arrest him, sir."

"Not unless I give the word—understand?"

"I understand."

"I am authorized to pay well for all help I get in this case. Here are twenty-five dollars."

"I dare not take it."

"You may take it freely. This is strictly between ourselves."

The cash changed hands.

It was now eleven o'clock.

Old King Brady entered the ferryhouse and waited half an hour.

Then a boat came in from the American side.

An undertaker's wagon, driven by a tall man, was the only vehicle on the boat.

In the back of the wagon was an object like a coffin, covered with a rubber cloth.

Old King Brady suddenly emerged from the ferryhouse as the wagon came off the boat.

He had made one of his lightning changes.

He was a different-looking man.

Raising his hand he signalled the policeman.

All the passengers were off now.

There was no Chinaman among them, nor was Young King Brady there.

"You will have to stop!" said the policeman to the driver. "You are under arrest!"

"Under arrest!" gasped the undertaker. "What for?"

"Attempting to smuggle opium into the States."

"But that is nonsense. I was sent over here for a body at Moestein's Hotel."

"Can't help that. You go with me. To-morrow you can explain all, no doubt."

"But this is an outrage! What's to become of my team?"

"That will be looked out for," said the policeman.

"Come along quietly, now, and no fun!"

So much Old King Brady heard, but no more.

He sprang upon the wagon and drove to Moestein's Hotel.

Two men, hostlers apparently, came out to meet him.

"You are from Mr. Barker?" whispered one.

"Yes."

"We will take the box right in. Mr. Savage wants to see you in the office. The team can remain here."

Old King Brady walked into the office, perfectly confident of his disguise.

And he had reason to be.

The clerk showed him into the back room, never dreaming who he was.

"Well, what's this?" demanded a sour-faced man, confronting him there.

"I'm from Mr. Barker," said the detective.

He was chuckling inwardly at the success of his scheme.

"Why in thunder didn't Barker come himself, instead of sending a stranger?"

"He was sick. It's all right, Mr. Savage. I understand about the hop."

The crooked inspector stormed around for a good ten minutes.

Old King Brady took it very coolly.

"It's none of my affair," he said. "I can go back again if you say the word."

But the savage Mr. Savage did not say the word.

He was altogether too anxious to get the business off his hands for that.

Quieting down after a while he led the way upstairs into the room where Henry Trask still lay, deep in the opium sleep.

Here they found the box standing on two undertaker's horses.

"There's your man," said the inspector; "we will put him in!"

"Yes."

"You understand that he is not dead?"

"Why, of course."

"It is understood that no harm is to come to him?"

"Certainly. Barker explained all."

"There's too many in this job. I shall call Barker to account for this."

"As I said before, that is nothing to me. You will have to settle with Barker and Ong Sing."

"Here, lend me a hand," snarled the inspector; "enough of this talk!"

Together they lifted Henry Trask and placed him in the box.

He stirred feebly, but did not awaken.

"I don't like this," growled the inspector; "I don't go into another job done this way."

"Do we carry him out now?" demanded Old King Brady.

"We wait for Ong Sing, of course."

"Oh, certainly."

"What did you expect?"

"Nothing, nothing."

"Get downstairs and wait until you are called."

"Just as you say."

Old King Brady left the room and started along the hall.

He had not taken three steps before he saw a man come off the stairs.

It was a Chinaman in American clothes.

It the dim light it looked like Ong Sing!

CHAPTER XII.

CONCLUSION.

"There, Dick! There's your pipe," said Ong Sing returning to the room where Young King Brady sat waiting. "Now we talk business—see?"

"I'm all ready."

"Is the cash ready?"

"Sure!"

"I'd like to see it."

"Here's part of it."

Young King Brady flashed his fake roll.

It was a sizable pile.

On the outside was a genuine hundred dollar bill.

There were a few other genuine bills in the roll.

These, however, were only ones.

As for the rest, the roll was made up of old bills of broken banks.

Ong Sing's eyes glistened.

"Be honest now, Dick, and tell me how much you got away with from the bank?" he said.

"You know."

"No, I don't."

"Thirty thousand."

"So much?"

"Yes."

"And you have it all about you?"

"Sure!"

There was a wicked look in Ong Sing's eyes.

Young King Brady saw it plainly.

"We need five thousand to pay the inspector," remarked Ong Sing.

"All right."

"You are ready to advance it?"

"Wasn't that the bargain?"

"Yes."

"Well, I'm ready."

"Will you lend me ten thousand more?"

"What for?"

"I have to meet a friend of mine at Fort Erie. I can buy a lot of hop cheap."

"When will you pay me?"

"As soon as I can turn it over."

"But I shall stop in Canada."

"I will send you a draft in Toronto in any name you wish."

"All right; you can have it."

"Good, Dick! Better give me the other five thousand, too!"

"Now?"

"Yes. Why not?"

Young King Brady was up against the danger line.

At no time during the interview had he felt as nervous as he did now.

"I'll give up the money when we get to Fort Erie," he said, "that will be time enough."

"All right," laughed the Chinaman. "Hold on to the cash, Dick."

Had the danger passed?

Young King Brady did not believe it.

He felt even more anxious than he had done before.

It was now eleven o'clock.

He knew that they must be on the move soon.

Ong Sing talked for a few minutes on various matters.

Then he rose and left the room without saying a word.

"If I could only slope," thought Harry. "That rascal means to do me up."

"There was no time, however:

In a moment Ong Sing was back again.

He entered hurriedly.

There was an expression of fear on his face.

"Quick, Dick! Quick!" he whispered. "The police are upon us! The joint is going to be pulled!"

Loud voices and the shuffling of feet were heard outside.

"We go this way!" breathed Ong Sing, catching Harry's arm.

He threw open a door, behind which was a stairway leading up into the deserted rooms of the old house.

There was nothing for it but to follow him or bring matters to an issue at once.

Ong Sing closed the door and produced a dark-lantern.

"Up! Up!" he said.

"But will they not follow us?"

"We go down another way. We escape by the other street."

"I see. Lucky you got on to it."

"I thought I heard something, and I went out to see."

They entered a small, unfurnished room.

Ong Sing closed and locked the door behind him.

Before doing this he set the lantern on the floor.

Then suddenly, with a cat-like spring, he wheeled around and jumped at Young King Brady with a long, glittering knife.

"You're a fake! You're a fraud! You're a detective!" he hissed. "And now I'm going to kill you! Ha! you die right here, and nobody knows!"

But Young King Brady was not dying just then—not to please Ong Sing or any one else.

He had been fully prepared.

"Only thing was, he thought the Chinaman meant to rob him.

Quick as lightning Harry darted to one side just as Ong Sing rushed upon him to strike the fatal blow.

At the same instant he thrust out his foot.

This was one of Young King Brady's strong cards.

No one more skillful than he in tripping a man up.

He fixed Ong Sing.

Down went the Highbinder flat on his face.

He struck his forehead with terrible force and lay unconscious.

The knife buried itself, half an inch of the length of the blade, in the floor.

"Heavens! I have killed him!" muttered Harry.

He thought so, for the Chinaman never moved.

What was to be done now?

Harry's thoughts ran fast.

"By Jove! I believe I can do it!" he muttered.

"May as well connect with the governor that way as any other. I'll try."

No detectives on earth are more expert in disguising than the Bradys.

Their face paints are always with them, and in their mysterious pockets are many other handy things of which the outsider would never dream.

To strip off Ong Sing's clothes and pull them on over his own was but the work of a few moments.

Fortunately the Chinaman wore no pigtail. A black wig with straight hair fixed Harry's head.

Out came a pocket-mirror and the paint box.

Crouching before the lantern Young King Brady fixed hi face.

"That will do," he muttered at last. "I'll pass muster with every one but Ah Gow, and I must take my chances on him."

He snapped a pair of handcuffs upon the Chinaman and tied his feet.

Ong Sing revived as he finished the job.

"Kill me!" he groaned. "Don't arrest me! Kill me now!"

"Stay where you are till I come back," said Harry, cramming a handkerchief into his mouth for a gag.

He opened the door softly and looked it on the other side.

Stealing downstairs and out into the joint he passed among the smokers unnoticed.

Then it was down the ladder and through the secret passage.

The old Chinaman on guard at the door of the joint never even looked at him as he went by.

"I knew his talk of a raid was all a fake," thought Harry, "but what am I to do if I meet Ah Gow?"

And meet Ah Gow he did, but it was on the sidewalk, just as he was moving away from the laundry door.

The Chinaman was coming in with a basket.

Darkness favored Young King Brady.

Ah Gow did not seem to suspect.

He rattled off something in Chinese.

"He's locked in the room. Leave him there till I come back," Harry said, and hurried away.

"Ho! you talkee so muchee 'Melican you forget Chinese!" Ah Gow called after him.

Harry never heeded.

He made his way as quickly as possible to the Fort Erie ferry and was just in time for the half-past eleven boat.

Thus it will be seen that the person whom Old King Brady met on the stairs was not Ong Sing.

The old detective knew Young King Brady at a glance.

"Harry!" he breathed.

"All right, governor. How goes the battle?"

"We are right up against it. How is this?"

"How's what?"

"You here in this disguise."

"Anything the matter with my disguise?"

"It wasn't the arrangement."

"It was that or nothing."

"So?"

"That or get a knife in my heart."

"We must come to an immediate understanding."

"I'm agreeable. Where's the hop?"

"Haven't seen it yet. The inspector is in that room waiting for you. I'm due downstairs."

"Go on, then. Trust me."

There was nothing else for it.

Old King Brady went out and stood by the undertaker's wagon.

Young King Brady went into the room.

"Well, you are here at last!" growled Savage, who admitted him.

"You see me, boss."

"Why didn't you come over with the wagon?"

"Couldn't."

"Barker has sent a strange man."

"I know. It is all right."

"Where's your banker? Got the money?"

"My banker is at Ah Gow's. He has the money, all right."

"But why the blazes didn't he come over here and pay up according to agreement?"

"Because he hit the pipe too hard. He'll pay up, there."

"It's all right, then?"

"Yes, boss. Believe me, all right."

"I suppose I shall have to go over to Gow's. I didn't want to."

"There is no other way."

Mr. Septimus Savage, crooked Canadian customs inspector, did not seem to have the slightest suspicion.

"We must move right ahead," he said. "I'll put the hop in."

He knelt down and raised the carpet in one corner of the room.

After that he raised a piece of one of the floor boards which had been sawed out.

From the space thus revealed many small bundles of

opium were taken out, each done up in canvas coverings in the usual style.

These were ranged along in the box beside the drugged man.

All being complete, the lid was laid on and the inspector touched the bell.

The two hostlers appeared, and, with the help of the inspector, the box was carried downstairs and put on the undertaker's wagon.

Old King Brady got upon the seat, and, with Harry beside him, they drove to the ferry.

The permit for the removal of the "corpse" was given to the ferry master by the inspector.

In a few minutes the boat started across the Niagara River.

At the same moment a little steam launch, containing several men, shot out from a nearby lumber yard and passed ahead of the boat.

The inspector went into the cabin, the detectives remained with the team.

"I shall drive rather slowly," said Old King Brady to the inspector when they went off the boat. "You had better go ahead."

This was done, and when the wagon reached Ah Gow's the inspector was waiting at the door.

The supposed Ong Sing, however, had disappeared.

"Where's the Chink?" demanded the inspector suspiciously.

"He got off. Said he would be along in a few minutes," replied Old King Brady. "You are to wait."

The inspector swore.

It was no time to stand talking in the street, however.

Ah Gow came out and also the shirt ironer.

The block was deserted.

Some one was liable to come along at any moment, however.

So they hustled the box in.

Old King Brady retreated immediately.

Mounting the wagon he drove around the corner.

Here he stopped and whistled twice.

The spot was a lonely one.

It was a region of factories and lumber yards.

Suddenly six men slid out from behind a fence.

Then the supposed Ong Sing appeared.

At the same moment, crossing the street, Dr. Ranlett was seen with a young lady leaning on his arm.

"Good, good! We are all here!" exclaimed Old King Brady. "Mr. Maxwell, let one of your men take charge of this wagon."

"It shall be done, Mr. Brady," the Buffalo detective replied.

"Excuse us a minute," said the old detective.

With Young King Brady he stepped behind the fence.

When they appeared a minute later they were in their usual dress.

"May I go now, Brady?" asked Dr. Ranlett.

"You may; and many thanks!" was the reply.

The doctor jumped on the wagon and drove off.

"You know your cue, Maxwell," said the detective; "two in front."

"All right," said the Buffalo detective.

With two of his men he went on down the street.

The other two followed the detectives and Miss Oliver.

"Oh, I am so frightened!" murmured the Boston girl.

"Take my arm, my dear young lady," the detective replied.

"Have you seen Henry?" asked Miss Oliver as they walked along.

"Oh, yes; and you will see him in a minute. Have courage. It will soon be over now."

When they reached Ah Gow's the place was dark.

"Ready!" breathed Old King Brady, putting his shoulder to the door.

It went in with a crash.

In three seconds the back room behind the red curtain was full of men.

The Canadian inspector was in the act of piling the opium on a table when Old King Brady pounced upon him.

"Pinched! Pinched at last!" gasped the crook. "Ha! I know you! I suspected you from the first!"

He reached for a revolver, but the detectives caught him and Old King Brady snapped the handcuffs on his wrists.

"No go! The game is up! We have you dead to rights, my friend!" said the old detective sternly.

"Where's Ah Gow?" he asked then.

"In the joint," growled the inspector, pointing to the open trap-door.

"Come, Miss Oliver," said Old King Brady, "now is our time."

Passing by the secret way, capturing the guard and hursting in among the frightened dope fiends in the main joint, the Bradys and the Boston girl penetrated to the private room.

Ah Gow was in the act of drawing the curtain before the alcove, beside which, on a Turkish stool, was an opium layout ready for Henry Trask when he should awake.

"There he lies, you see, Miss Oliver!" said Old King Brady, throwing back the curtain. "Will you believe me now?"

At the same instant Ah Gow pressed the electric bell.

Miss Oliver screamed and drew back.

"It is enough!" she cried. "Henry is an opium fiend! I have done with him forever!"

Old King Brady collared Ah Gow.

At the same instant the window flew up and Detective Maxwell and his two companions sprang in.

"Take charge of this Chink and everybody in this place!" cried Old King Brady. "Now, Harry, for Ong Sing!"

They flew into the other room and up the stairs.

Ong Sing lay as Young King Brady had left him.

"There is the King of the Opium Ring!" cried Young King Brady. "And, by his own confession, the man who cut off Dr. Patmore's head!"

A little later Ah Gow, Ong Sing and every one else in the opium joint was rounded up in the police station.

Henry Trask had to be taken in a carriage, of course.

Next day was a busy one for the Bradys.

The inspector, Barker, the undertaker, Ah Gow, Ong Sing and the opium were turned over to the Secret Service men.

Among Ong Sing's papers found in his big pockets was a list of the opium ring.

Immediately the telephone was set to work, and before night every one was in custody—some twenty altogether.

It was Dr. Ranlett who translated the paper for the police.

Richard Ronalds made a confession in jail.

It was he who killed Dr. Patmore. Ong Sing removed the head.

The doctor followed him on from Boston, and, coming to his stateroom, demanded a share of the stolen cash.

Henry Trask was completely exonerated of all part in the crime.

His only failing was opium smoking.

Once under the influence of the drug Ronalds could handle him as he pleased.

That night Richard Ronalds cut his throat in his cell with a knife he had in some way managed to conceal.

Miss Oliver and Henry Trask disappeared next day.

Later the Bradys heard that they had been married and went away together.

What finally became of them they never knew.

Dr. Ranlett completely reformed.

With Old King Brady's assistance he published his great work on the use of opium which became a text book in medical colleges.

For their work for the Government the Bradys were well rewarded.

The Metacomet Bank of Boston treated them very liberally, too.

Ong Sing and his confederates all went to prison, as did the undertaker and the crooked inspector.

And thus ended the great case of THE BRADYS AND THE OPIUM RING.

THE END.

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