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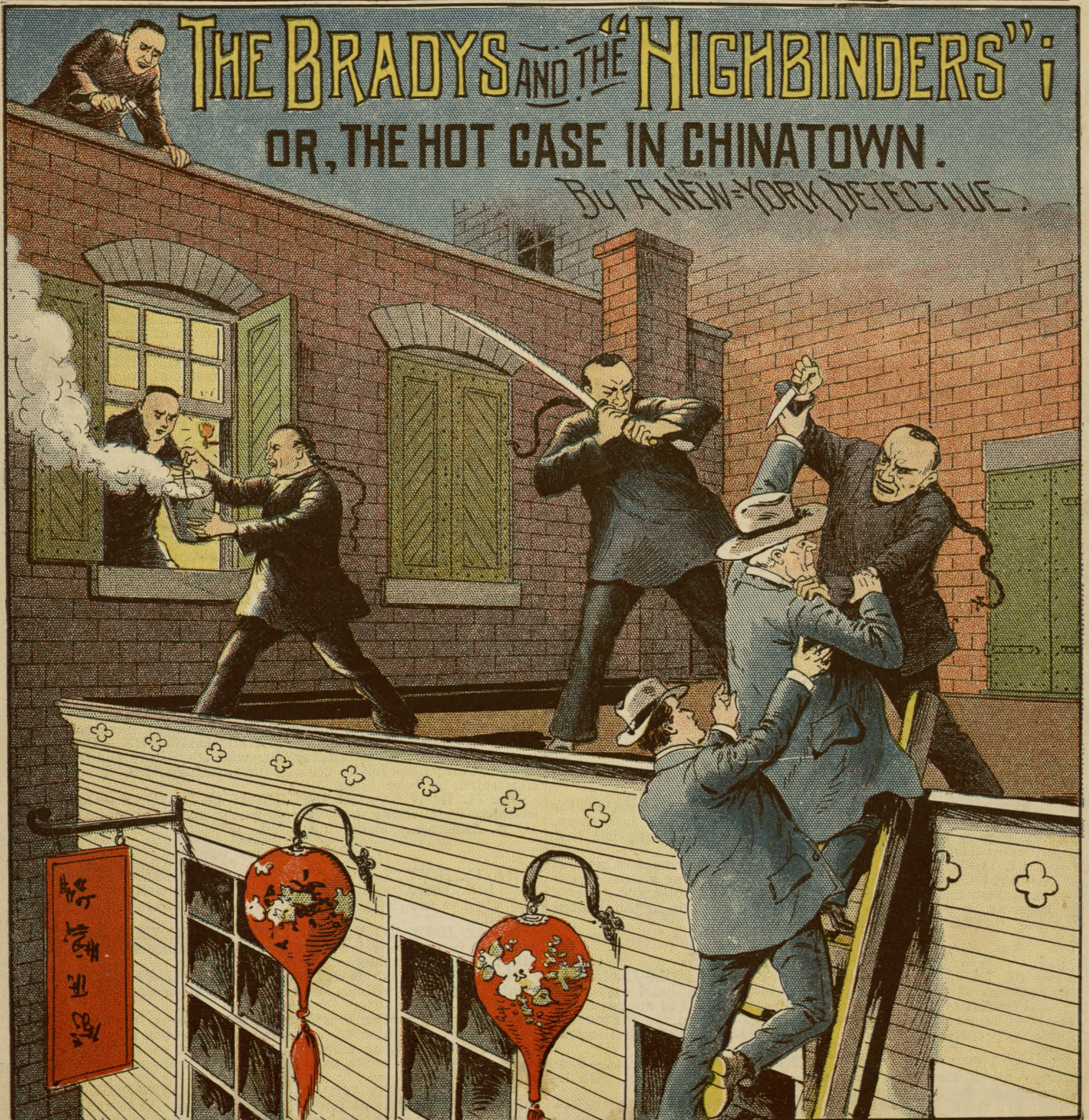
OLD AND YOUNG KING BRADY, DETECTIVES.

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

No. 179.

NEW YORK, JUNE 27, 1902.

Price 5 Cents.



Old King Brady caught Ah Ling's wrist. The Highbinders swarmed on the roof. It seemed as if the detectives were doomed.

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NEW YORK, JUNE 27, 1902.

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The Bradys and the Highbinders

OR,

The Hot Case in Chinatown.

BY A NEW YORK DETECTIVE.

CHAPTER I.

THE CASE OPENS.

"Me heap 'flaid! No go on stleet for Highbinder killee quick. Chin Ling honest man, makee monee, payee bills allee samee Melican man. Wantee police."

"Well, Chin Ling," said the Chief of the Secret Service, earnestly, "you certainly are entitled to protection. We know that you are a law-abiding citizen. Since when have you known that you were under the ban of the Highbinders?"

The Chinese merchant wiped the perspiration from his agitated visage and his almond eyes shone with a new light of terror as he said:

"Me gettee notice postee on door. No sellee tea, no keepee store. Chin Ling pay big monee. Killee quick."

"Ah, then they tried to make you pay money, eh?"

"Yes; tellee Chin Ling killee quick! Highbinder killee him. No tell when safe. Go 'long stleet, bad Chinese jumpee out, stop, killee quick. Highbinder!"

"All right, Chin Ling," said the chief. "Now, can't the chief of police promise you protection?"

The Celestial shook his head.

"Police no do anyfing," he declared. "Highbinder hide, they no findee. Me wantee detective."

"All right. I'll send the Bradys up to see you. Is this your card?"

"Yeppee."

"Chin Ling, tea merchant, Mott Street. All right, Mr. Ling, I will send them over to-day."

"Allee light."

The door closed behind Chin Ling. The chief's face wore a puzzled look.

Just then the door opened. Two men walked in.

One was a man past the middle age by ten years. He was of strong frame, hardy physique and his face was rugged and betokened strong character.

James Brady, or Old King Brady, the detective, was the most famous man of his profession in the country.

For many years he had been the terror of the evildoer in the criminal circles of New York.

His companion and partner was a younger man named Harry Brady, who was hardly less famous as a sleuth.

The two Bradys were noted the world over. Success had rewarded their every effort. They had never lost a case.

The chief looked up.

"Hello, Brady!" he cried. "You have come just in the nick of time."

"Ah!" said the old detective, in his cool manner. "What is up now?"

"A case in Chinatown."

"In Chinatown?"

"Yes."

"That is queer!" said the old detective. "What do you think of that, Harry?"

Young King Brady looked surprised.

"It is certainly very odd," he said. "We have just come from Chinatown."

"You have?" exclaimed the chief, in surprise. "What does that mean?"

"Well, they say that an edict has been sent over here from China, to the local Highbinders, providing for the murder of several prominent Chinamen."

"The deuce! That is just it. A Chinese tea merchant, Chin Ling, was just in here to secure your services."

The Bradys were astonished.

"Chin Ling!"

"Yes."

"Why, we are told that he is the chief potentate of the Highbinder society."

"That must be a mistake. See, here is his card. He is very much wrought up and wants protection."

The detectives looked at each other.

For a time there was silence.

Finally Old King Brady spoke:

"So Mr. Ling was just here, eh?"

"Yes."

"Well, we will go over and see him. But it is very odd."

"I am inclined to believe it is a bluff," said Harry. "That is my real opinion. Our information of the Highbinder case comes from a very high quarter."

"Indeed!" said the chief. "Will you tell me all about it?"

"Yes," said Old King Brady, "though there is not much to tell. We received a letter from the Chinese minister at Washington, Mr. Wu Ting Fang.

"In this letter he mentioned the fact that news had been received from his own country that an edict had been issued by the Highbinder society to remove certain Chinamen in San Francisco and New York.

"The methods of the Highbinders are strange and inscrutable. No Chinaman not a member of the order is safe. At any moment, for some real or fancied grievance, he is apt to be condemned and sentenced to death.

"Then, without warning, an assassin strikes him down. It is the most cowardly of games. But it exists and is the great curse upon the Chinese.

"Now, the Honorable Chinese Minister intimated that his representative, Mr. Chang Wu, would come to New York to meet us.

"It is the desire of the minister to get the names of the heads of the order. Then it will be an easy matter to arrest and hold them, or at least keep them under surveillance.

"Several dark murders have been committed of late in San Francisco. It is believed that New York will be the next place struck.

"So Mr. Chang Wu called upon us at our lodgings and we had a long conference with him. The result is that we are now at work trying to ferret out the murder conspiracy and bring the guilty parties to justice."

The chief was deeply interested.

"Good!" he cried. "I am glad to hear that you are working on the case."

"Oh, yes, we have several clews already."

"I am pleased. But one statement you have made surprises me."

"What?"

"You say that Chin Ling is reputed to be the head officer of the society?"

"Let me see his card."

"Here it is."

"Yes, Chin Ling, tea merchant, Mott Street. He is the very man."

"I can hardly believe it. On whose authority do you have this?"

"The emissary, Chang Wu."

"Well, I am greatly deceived, then. I assumed that Chin Ling is a law-abiding and innocent man."

"There may be some error, but his name is on Chang Wu's black list."

"You don't think that it is a game on the part of Chang Wu?"

"Oh, no; he is the representative of the Chinese minister. That could not be."

"No, I presume not. Well, what motive could Chin Ling have in coming to me?"

"We may assume a number of motives. Chinamen are cunning fellows, I tell you. He may have desired to learn if we were really on the case. See?"

"Exactly. Well, what will you do?"

"Why, we will go over and see him. It will be our best plan to throw him off the track. We will take his case and then keep an eye on him."

"Capital!" cried the chief. "You will fool these heathens."

"I am not sure. They are very shrewd and clever rascals."

"At any rate something must be done with these Chinamen. The police can do nothing whatever with these Highbinder societies. They must be broken up."

"That is true. It is known that they have even marked Americans for death."

"Yes, I know. I hope you will do your best."

"You may be sure of that. How long since Mr. Ling was here?"

"He has just gone."

"It will be of little use to call on him just yet, then. We will get around there in an hour or so."

"Very well."

The Bradys arose to take their leave, but just then there came a rap on the door. The chief called out:

"Come in!"

It opened, and the chief and the detectives were given a start of surprise. On the threshold stood a much belacquered Celestial.

He wore rich, silken dress and a turban in which were valuables gems. His whole appearance was that of the Chinese dignitary.

"Why," exclaimed Old King Brady, "it is Mr. Chang Wu!"

The visitor bowed low. He was a man of education, and did not speak pigeon English but used excellent language.

"Ah, gentlemen," he said, politely, "you are no doubt surprised to see me again so soon. I followed you here, for I learned at your lodgings that this was your destination. I have distressing news."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Old King Brady. "What may it be?"

"I have to inform you that my honorable fellow-countryman, Tong Fee, of Mott Street, has disappeared."

"Disappeared?"

"Yes. No clew to his whereabouts can be found. We know what is his fate, though we cannot prove it."

"The Highbinders have disposed of him?"

"Yes."

There was a period of silence. Mr. Chang Wu sat down leisurely. His almond eyes roved about the room. He stroked his silky mustache.

"Well," said Old King Brady, finally, "I have to tell you that Mr. Chin Ling called here a few moments ago."

Chang Wu gave a violent start and his eyes glittered.

His hand fell upon the jeweled dagger under his tunic, and he looked about him in an uneasy way.

"Is it true?" he exclaimed. "Did Chin Ling come here?"

"Yes."

"What did he want?"

"He wanted us to give him protection against the Highbinders. He was in a very terrified state," said the chief. "He certainly did not have the bearing of a Highbinder himself."

Chang Wu's lips parted, showing his yellow teeth stained with opium.

"Devil!" he gritted. "Chin Ling is a devil. He lies! He is the chief of the society in New York."

"He has come here to fool you. Do not believe him. Do not trust Chin Ling. He is a bad Chinaman."

Chang Wu hissed the last words. Then he smiled in a strange way and waited for an answer.

"Well," said Old King Brady, "we shall pay him a visit. If he is that sort of a chap we shall try and catch him in his own trap."

"Don't let him fool you," said Chang Wu. "He is a devil!"

"We will take our chances. Well, Mr. Wu, we will report to you later. You are at the Waldorf Hotel?"

"That is my stopping place," said the Chinese dignitary, with a low bow.

CHAPTER II.

A PROBLEM AND A WARNING.

When the Bradys made their way into Mott Street it was easy to see that something exciting was on the tapis in Chinatown.

At every street corner were knots of the almond-eyed Celestials.

They were jabbering and gesticulating in the most excited manner. The Bradys guessed the reason for this.

The disappearance of Tong Fee had created a tremendous stir.

Tong had been a favorite with all classes. He had scores of friends. His loss was deeply mourned.

The sentiment against the Highbinders was of the bitterest sort.

It was hard to tell who were members of the mystic society. Such is the hypocrisy of the Chinese that the very murderer of the man might be one of those so loudly bewailing his loss.

"Well, there is trouble enough here, partner," said Old King Brady.

"You are right."

"I'll wager we have got a big job on our hands, my boy."

"Well, I think we have; but we are usually good for it."

"Indeed we are. At least we will die in the ring. Hello! here is Chin Ling's store."

The store of Chin Ling was one of the largest in Chinatown.

He was a merchant of great business ability and wealth. In fact, he might be called the ablest Chinaman in the town.

The Bradys opened the door and entered.

There was a long line of customers at the counter. Chin Ling himself was dealing out packages of tea as well as his clerks.

He looked up as the detectives entered.

In an instant he came out to meet them. With a low bow he said:

"Heap glad to see Melican detectives. Comee dis way to Chin Ling's private office."

The Bradys followed him through a door at the end of the store.

They were in a small, square room, furnished with the most costly of Chinese stuffs and bric-a-brac.

They sat down and Chin Ling faced them.

There was no longer any evidence of fear in his manner. Gone was the trepidation and nervousness which he had betrayed to the chief a short while before.

Chin Ling was the affable merchant, the polished diplomatic host. His manner was easy and gracious and his face smiling.

"Mr. Ling," said Old King Brady, "our chief tells us that you desire to see us."

"Yeppee, that true," agreed the merchant. "Me sendee for you. Heap Highbinder in Chinatown. Mebbe killee Chin Ling."

"Do you apprehend an immediate attack upon you?"

"Me no tellee. No go out on stleet. Mebbe gettee killed."

"I see that you are more cheerful than when in the office. The chief said you were very much distressed."

Chin Ling rubbed his yellow hands in a deprecatory way.

"Yeppe, all right," he replied. "Chin Ling feel safe here. He no 'flaid. Highbinder no dare come here."

"I see. One of your friends they tell me has disappeared."

The Chinaman showed his craft.

"Ah!" he said. "Who tellee dat?"

"Mr. Chang Wu tells us that Tong Fee has mysteriously disappeared."

Chin Ling's face was inscrutable.

"Muchee good thing," he said.

The detectives were astounded.

"Eh?" they exclaimed. "How is that? Did not the Highbinders do away with Tong Fee?"

Chin Ling grinned in a sickly way.

"Chang Wu tellee you dat?"

"Yes."

The Chinaman shrugged his shoulders.

"Chang Wu know better," he said. "Tong Fee Highbinder himself."

"What!" exclaimed Old King Brady. "Tong Fee a Highbinder?"

"Yeppee. Dat true."

The Bradys exchanged glances.

"I say," said the old detective, bluntly, "who of you yellow rascals can we believe? You say Tong Fee was a Highbinder. A certain person tells us that you are the ringleader of the Highbinders."

This was a telling shot. Chin Ling gave a convulsive start.

His curious, almond eyes blazed.

"Hi!" he exclaimed. "Chang Wu tellee you dat?"

"No matter who told us."

"I know, allee light. You findee out Ching Ling true man. Chang Wu big liar. Tellee heap storee. He Highbinder hissself. Me know. Tong Fee Highbinder. He no dead. He hide and foolee detectives. Highbinder allee round. Soon killee me and allee rest. Me heap 'flaid now."

It was true that the Celestial's confident air had vanished. He was trembling and much agitated.

The Bradys were puzzled.

In all their lives they had never hit upon a case like this. It was certainly a great problem.

All of these Chinamen looked alike, acted alike and lied alike.

Old King Brady was inclined to believe that they were all Highbinders. That, in fact, they were putting up a hard bluff game.

At any event, who was to be trusted?

One accused the other. Which was the truthful one?

The detectives were at this stage inclined to abandon the game. It looked a game not worth the candle.

If this parcel of lying Chinamen were inclined to play the game of secret assassination, let them go it.

The Bradys could see no reason why they should sacrifice time and risk life to delve in such a field.

This impulse was upon them. Old King Brady now said:

"Well, Mr. Ling, I don't know what to do or say. Everybody else says Tong Fee is a man of good character. You say that he is a Highbinder.

"You are in turn accused of being one of that society. Now, who are we to believe? Who is the innocent man and who the guilty? I own I don't know which of you to believe."

Chin Ling showed his teeth in another sickly grin.

"Believe Chin Ling," he said, in a soft voice. "He tellee truth. He straight man."

"Well, we shall see. Really we ought not to take hold of this case. It is out of our province. We will communicate with you later."

Chin Ling arose and took a paper from the mantel.

It was of native rice manufacture and was scrawled all over with Chinese hieroglyphics.

"Chin Ling gettee this to-day," he said. "Melican man readee. See it."

"Easy, Ling," said Old King Brady. "You don't expect us to read that trash; we are not linguists."

The Chinaman laughed.

"Oh, yeppee!" he said, "I slee. Well, I readee same to you. Hear dis: 'Chin Ling is warned of death. The Highbinders will killee allee samee before long. Takee warning.' There," concluded Chin Ling, "you slee! Now mebbe you believe me."

"All right, Chin," said Old King Brady. "That reads good, but you will pardon us if we are skeptical. Keep close and be good. I don't believe you need fear the Highbinders. That is all. Good day."

The Bradys took their leave. When they went away from Chin Ling's store they believed the case ended.

"What's the use," cried the old detective, "we are just making fools of ourselves. We would risk life for a parcel of Chinamen. If they want to kill each other let them go it."

"That looks like a proper sentiment," said Harry, "but we mustn't forget one thing."

"What?"

"Fair play. If Chin Ling is a fraud and an impostor there are doubtless plenty of Chinamen who are not. We must give them justice. The innocent must not suffer, even among Chinamen."

"I agree with you," declared Old King Brady. "So far it is well, but I can't undertake to right the wrongs of every Chinaman."

"No, by no means."

"Very well. The best we can do is not to mix up in their affairs. I know other things that should claim our attention."

"Then we will drop the case?"

"I see no better plan."

So the Bradys returned to the chief's office. He was astonished to see them so soon.

"What's the matter?" he asked.

"Well, very little," replied Old King Brady. "But I think we will throw up the Chinatown case."

"Throw it up?"

"Yes."

"Mercy!" gasped the chief. "What is wrong now, Brady? Why do you drop this case?"

"Well," said Old King Brady, "it is not on the level. See?"

"What do you expect?"

"I expect level treatment. I accept no sort of a bunco game. See?"

The old detective looked hard at the chief.

The latter nodded his head.

"I will never criticise your judgment," he said. "You know how much they would stand."

"I do. If any of these Chinamen should kill or maltreat an American I would go after them; but I cannot mix up in their politics. Why, it is impossible to tell who is who.

"We might arrest and punish the innocent man. Chin Ling accuses Chang Wu, and then says that Tong Fee is a Highbinder, and that he is in hiding for effect. It would turn one's brain to try to puzzle the thing out. Let them go it."

The chief's face grew serious.

"Brady, you are wrong," he said.

"Am I?"

"Yes."

"Will you show me where?"

"Yes, I will. Now don't you think that a law-abiding, honest Chinaman is entitled to justice?"

"One moment. Which Chinaman is that? If you can tell you can do better than I can."

In spite of himself the chief laughed.

"I can see your point," he said, "and I don't wonder that you are puzzled; but I need only to say to you that there is a dangerous band of Highbinders in Chinatown. They menace the lives of all the people in the city.

"Now, I don't want you to try to right the wrongs of Chin Ling or any other Chinaman, but just get evidence and arrest these members of the Highbinder Society. Don't let one of them escape.

"I can tell you that their fiendish work is not confined to Chinatown. They are aiming even at the mayor of the city. See this."

The chief drew from his desk a bit of rice paper.

It was covered with Chinese characters. Old King Brady held up his hands.

"I am out of it," he said. "I could read Choctaw easier."

"Well," said the chief, slowly, "this was sent to the mayor. Translated it reads thus:

"To the Mayor—The mark of the Highbinder is on you. Unless you release Wun Lo from the Tombs we shall strike! Look out. The Highbinders never fail!"

The old detective and the young detective were deeply impressed.

CHAPTER III.

THE HIGHBINDERS' DEN.

"Is that the translation?" asked Harry.

"It is."

"Well, that is cool. I suppose they think that will frighten the mayor of the city into releasing that Chinese highwayman."

"Wun Lo was the greatest Chinese crook ever known in this country. He is waiting for a trial. I don't believe the mayor will intercede for him."

"Of course he won't."

"It is the coolest proposition that I ever saw. Humph! why didn't the mayor send down a posse to raid the Chinese quarter?"

"He had ought to. You see, the Highbinder is becoming a power."

"And one of the most evil forces we could have to work against. These people with their opium dens and their secret societies are a blot upon the fair name of New York."

"That is true enough. Now you can see the necessity of getting after them. All we want is to get the names of some of the ringleaders of the Highbinders. Then we can manage to find a way to deal with them."

"Well," said Old King Brady, "we might undertake to do that much."

"When you have done that I think the rest will be easy," declared the chief.

"All right; we will keep on."

"That will please me much. Now, I know there are good, law-abiding Chinamen. Chin Ling may be a traitor. You can soon find out. If he is, don't spare him."

The Bradys shortly took their leave. They went to their lodgings to talk the case over and make deductions.

They had barely seated themselves when there came a rap on the door.

Harry arose and opened it.

On the threshold stood a personage whom both recognized.

It was Mr. Chang Wu.

The representative of the Chinese minister bowed in his oiliest way. The detectives were not over pleased.

"I know you will pardon me, gentlemen," he said, suavely, "but I felt it necessary to call upon you at this time. I have some important facts for you."

"Will you come in?" said Harry.

"I am honored."

The Chinese emissary entered and took a seat. The detectives regarded him keenly.

"I understand that you made a call upon my countryman, Chin Ling?" he asked.

"Yes," replied Old King Brady, "we did."

"May I ask the result?"

"Yes. We had decided to throw up the case. We were disgusted."

Chang Wu held up his hands.

"What is that?" he exclaimed. "I do not understand."

"Well, it is easy enough. Chin Ling accuses you. You accuse him. You assert that Tong Fee is an honest man and has been done away with by Highbinders. Chin Ling swears he is a Highbinder and is hiding for effect. Now, who are we to believe?"

Chang Wu drew himself up with dignity.

"I am the representative of my Emperor, through Wu Ting Fang," he declared. "My honor and my word is good."

"On the other hand Chin Ling is a merchant of wealth and character. Would he be apt to lie?"

Chang Wu grew angry.

"Chin Ling is a scoundrel," he declared. "He is trying to ruin me."

"We don't know anything about that. We have come to the conclusion that we will trust none of you. We will work alone."

"But Chang Wu has important facts," said the Celestial, earnestly. "He has learned where the Highbinders have their headquarters. He can find a way to get into their secret meeting. It is well to listen."

The Bradys became suddenly impressed. They had not yet made up their minds to trust Chang Wu.

But this declaration had its effect upon them.

It aroused their interest.

"Do you mean that?" asked Harry.

"Yes, on my honor!"

"Well, if you can do that we are ready to co-operate with you."

Chang Wu rubbed his hands.

"Ah, you shall see!" he cried. "Now you will trust Chang Wu?"

"Well, we'll try you."

"Have no fear," said the Chinaman, confidently, "I will prove to you that your opinion of me is wrong. If you will trust Chang Wu we will have the leaders of the Highbinder Society before a week."

"All right," agreed Old King Brady, "we are with you."

"What is your plan?" asked Harry.

"It will soon be evening," said Chang Wu. "We will then proceed to Mott Street. I have a trusted friend, Lee Foo, the laundryman. We will hide in his place. Then Chang Wu show you what to do."

The detectives were impressed.

Certainly this looked logical. It seemed as if Chang Wu was in earnest and there was a prospect of something.

This was all the detectives wanted.

So Old King Brady said:

"Very good, Mr. Wu. We are at your disposal. You think it is better to wait until evening?"

"Oh, yes," agreed Wu; "but I have a better plan."

"What is it?"

"It will not be wise for us all to go to Lee Foo's at once. We may be seen and there will be suspicion."

"That is true."

"Now, it might be well to go one at a time. You will

go now. Lee Foo will find you a comfortable chair in his private room. Then your partner may go an hour later. I will visit Lee Foo after dark."

"Capital!" cried Old King Brady. "You would make a good detective, Mr. Wu."

"I am a poor Chinaman," said the emissary, with a bow, "but I must serve my emperor. It is by his order. Chin Ling must die. The Highbinders must go!"

"Well," said Old King Brady, "we will follow out your plan. I will turn up at Lee Foo's place very soon. We will wait there for you."

"Here," said Chang Wu, giving them a card with Chinese characters upon it, "give this to Lee Foo."

Then Mr. Wu took his leave. The detectives were reflective.

"It looks as if we were in for it, Harry," said Old King Brady.

"Yes, that is so."

"But just the same we will keep our eyes open. This may be a trap."

"You are right."

"I don't trust any of these slippery yellow-skinned devils. However, we are in for it. Let me see, it is getting dusk now. I think I will go over to Lee Foo's."

"All right."

"Come along in an hour."

"I will."

Old King Brady sauntered forth. He made his way into the slums.

He turned into Mott Street, finally. Then he saw Lee Foo's sign swinging over the street.

The laundryman was a prominent factor in the politics of Chinatown. He was a smooth, plausible fellow with a glib tongue.

Old King Brady pushed open the door of the laundry. A bell tinkled in the back room.

Lee Foo appeared on the instant. He came up behind the counter.

"Gettee shirtee?" he asked. "Allee washee."

"No," said Old King Brady. "It's a different errand this time, Lee. Read this."

He gave him the card which Chang Wu had given him. A great change came over Lee Foo.

He looked about him in a half fearful way. His face showed fear.

"Melican detective?" he asked, in a whisper. "Tly find Highbinder?"

"Yes," replied Old King Brady. "You understand?"

"Me know," said Lee Foo, in a whisper. "Come dis way. Waitee."

He opened a door to an inner room. It was furnished in the Chinese way, with mattings and silken cloth.

Old King Brady sat down upon a divan and Lee Foo placed cigars and matches on the table, with true Celestial hospitality.

"Melican detective smooke?" he asked. "No hittee pipe?"

"No; tobacco is good enough for me," said Old King Brady as he lit a cigar. "You're all right, Lee Foo."

"Spec findee Highbinder?" asked the laundryman. "Hangee him?"

"Yes, we'll hang them if we find them. Have they threatened you yet?"

Lee Foo shivered. He produced a bit of rice paper, covered with hieroglyphics similar to that which Chin Ling had shown.

"Ah, that is their death decree?" asked the old detective.

The Chinaman made a peculiar sign.

"Killee me!" he said. "Me no safe. No go out on stleet. Killee sure!"

"Ah, do you know Chin Ling?"

Lee Foo gave a start.

"Chin Ling?" he exclaimed. "Hi! he heap Highbinder."

"You don't say! How do you know he is a Highbinder?"

"Me know. Have fliends tellee me. Chin Ling go to Highbinder meeting; me know."

Lee Foo spoke positively. Old King Brady was much impressed. He began to believe that Chang Wu might be on the right side, after all.

Thus he conversed with Lee Foo until Harry appeared.

The laundryman seemed to be an inoffensive, harmless sort of a heathen. There seemed nothing of the criminal about him.

It was nine o'clock before Chang Wu appeared. The Chinese emissary came in quietly and joined the detectives in the back room.

He was cool and confident.

"The Highbinders meet to-night," he said. "We have learned that."

"How did you get the information?" asked Old King Brady.

"Lee Foo got it for me. Lee has a way of getting on the inside."

"That is fortunate. Yes, indeed! Now, gentlemen, if you will come with me I will show you something."

The Bradys followed Chang Wu.

He led them to a window in the rear of Lee Foo's place.

It looked out into a square courtyard. On the further side was a building which was wedged in against two higher buildings.

Above this first roof, which was flat, there were rows of iron-shuttered windows.

Chang Wu pointed to these.

"You see?" he said.

"Yes."

"Well, back of those windows is the den of the yellow devils. That is the secret council room of the Highbinders."

The detectives were thrilled.

This looked promising.

"It is easy to see, then, what we can do," said Old King Brady.

"Yes," agreed Chang Wu, "if we are strategic."

"Indeed! Why not boldly raid the place?" asked the old detective.

"For the reason that it would be of no use," Chang Wu. "You would find nothing there of an incriminating nature. The Highbinders would swear that they were not Highbinders and you could prove nothing."

"I see," said Old King Brady. "Yet in that place plots of murder are hatched."

"Yes."

"Then we must plan to in some way overhear these plots and get the names of the plotters."

"There you are!" agreed Chang Wu.

CHAPTER IV.

A THRILLING ORDEAL.

The detectives could see that this was the only logical method to use.

But how should they employ it? This was the question.

How get behind those steel window-blinds? How gain a safe entrance and at least overhear the doings of the conclave?

This was the problem.

In the gloom it was difficult for the detectives to study out accurately the lay of the territory.

They examined the roof and the windows as well as they could with their eyes.

Chang Wu smiled as he noted this.

"No use," he said; "nothing can be gained that way."

"Well, what is the best plan?"

"Lee Foo will assist us."

The laundryman, who was trembling with fear, now said:

"Lee Foo know way. Melican detectives wear Chinese dress. Hidee face. Walkee in with dis. Muchee safe pass."

Lee Foo held up a quaint idol of carved ivory. It was blood red in hue and had crystal eyes.

There was a Chinese inscription on its base. It was wholly unlike any idol the detectives had ever seen.

"That is a pass to the secret rooms of the Highbinders," said Chang Wu. "Now the question is, have you got the nerve to try this desperate game?"

The Bradys were staggered.

"You mean that we are to don a disguise?" they asked.

"Yes. Lee Foo will furnish you with one. You can cover your faces—mask them if you wish. Most of the Highbinders do this, for some of them do not wish even some fellow-member to know them. This idol will pass you. But do not give it up."

"It is a go!" cried Old King Brady. "But I have a suggestion."

"What?"

"There is no use of risking three lives. Let two remain here. I will go alone."

"You!" cried Harry. "I would like to go, partner."

"You see my point," said Old King Brady; "one can accomplish as much as three. If this one spy is caught why the others will be alive to avenge if not rescue him."

"Your plan is a wise one," said Chang Wu. "We will wait here."

Harry could demur no further. The plan was quickly made.

A more daring scheme could hardly be conceived. If executed safely much of value would be gained.

But if there was the least blunder or misstep, certain death would be the result.

But Old King Brady did not fear to risk his life. In this case the enormity of the end to be gained overbalanced all other considerations.

Lee Foo quickly produced a Chinese costume. It was of a character akin to that worn by Chin Ling and men of his rank.

Old King Brady was quickly dressed in it. A pigtail was fastened under his hat. Then a heavy veil was draped over his face.

He wore Chinese sandals and in every respect looked, outwardly, to be one of the Celestials.

Lee Foo cautioned him.

"Walkee light in," he said. "No waitee, no speakee. Show idol to doorman. Inside keepee quiet. Listen, but no talkee."

"All right," agreed Old King Brady. "Now tell me the door."

"Black door, white panel," said Chang Wu. "It's the sixth from the corner. You must go around into the other street."

"All right."

"We will walk behind you as far as the corner and see you go in."

"Very well."

The old detective now sallied forth from Lee Foo's place. He had not gone far when two other figures came out. In the gloom they attracted little attention.

Many Americans walked these streets at night.

The opium dens furnished the attraction. The old detective kept on boldly.

He passed many Chinamen. None of them gave him more than a passing glance.

Then he turned the corner into the other street. The sixth door, black, with a white panel—he had found it.

Two Chinamen opened it and went in as he came along. It was the crucial moment, but Old King Brady did not falter.

Straight up to the door he walked.

Without a moment's hesitation he raised the knob and entered. The black door closed behind him.

He was in the den of the Highbinders. He was in the shadow of death.

Chang Wu drew a deep breath and turned to Harry.

"May the American's God be with him!" he said. "He is in great peril, but if he comes out safely we will win."

Harry, for a moment, felt a suffocating sensation. He had much disliked to see Old King Brady take the risk.

But the young detective knew that much was to be gained. There was a good chance for success.

For some while they stood on the corner and watched and waited.

Many Chinamen came along and entered the place.

All was quiet. There was no sign of an uproar or any indication that Old King Brady had been betrayed.

It was certain that in case of betrayal the old detective would make a fight for his life and a desperate one, too.

Time passed. A half hour slipped by.

Harry and Chang Wu went back to Lee Foo's place. Meanwhile Old King Brady had walked into a literal trap of death.

When the black door closed upon him the old detective saw a dimly lit passage in front of him.

Along it several Chinamen were making their way. The old detective did the same.

The passage was decorated with colored paper and lanterns. At the far end were stairs leading upward.

Up these the old detective went.

Thus far he had met with no hindrance. No one had spoken to him, no one had taken notice of him.

But now he reached the landing above. On either side stood two half naked heathens. In the hands of each was a monstrous, keen-bladed, two-handed sword.

They were powerful brutes, their coppery skin glistening in the dim light.

Just beyond them stood a tall, richly dressed Chinaman. His keen, searching gaze looked into every face.

As each Celestial filed in not a word was spoken, but they showed the sign of the blood-red idol.

Old King Brady for one instant felt a misgiving. He saw the utter defencelessness of his position.

The two janissaries would hew him down in a flash if he failed to pass the doorkeeper.

But the old detective remembered Lee Foo's admonition. His nerve came back to him.

He walked boldly past the human butchers with their glistening blades. He did not offer to raise his veil.

But he held forth the idol.

The doorkeeper glanced at it and then hesitated as he saw the veil, but the old detective walked on.

It was a rule that a member need not show his face at a secret meeting. This saved Old King Brady.

The next moment he was in the council room.

It was a large, square room, with wide doors opening into rooms beyond. It was furnished in the Chinese fashion.

At the far end was a dais. On this sat three masked Chinamen.

Each held a keen-edged sword. On a pedestal before them was a huge, glittering crystal.

A dragon was on either side of the dais. Red curtains hung over it.

One of the potentates was making a speech. To the old detective's dismay it was all in the Chinese tongue.

He could not understand a word.

This was certainly too bad.

But as the old detective stood a little in the shadows a Chinaman passed by him. His face was plainly visible in the dim light.

It was Chin Ling.

Then the detective knew the truth. He knew that the visit of Ling to the chief was all a bluff.

Chin Ling was a Highbinder. Chang Wu had been right.

The detective regretted much that he could not understand the words of the Chinese potentate. It was unintelligible.

He was sure it referred to plans for the death of certain allotted parties, but he was to gain one important fact.

Suddenly a name was spoken:

"Chin Ling!"

It was the Chinaman on the dais who had spoken.

The tea merchant walked forward before all in the party. Every eye was upon him.

Something in Chinese was said to him. Then one of the three Chinamen on the dais descended and advanced toward him.

In his hand he held a silver salver. On it was a small object.

Chin Ling took it from the salver. The detective could only see that it looked like a slug or billet of solid metal, possibly silver, with a silken cord attached to it.

On it were Chinese characters.

The tea merchant held it up.

Then he said:

"Chang Wu!"

At once all over the room the name was spoken in chorus:

"Chang Wu!"

Old King Brady was thrilled. It was the name of the distinguished representative of Wu Ting Fang.

What could it mean?

An idea occurred to Old King Brady. The assassins were drawn by lot and Chin Ling had been selected to murder Chang Wu.

This was the sagacious conclusion of the old detective.

Now the Chinamen began a peculiar chant. Then all formed in a line and marched past the dais, speaking some word as they passed.

The old detective shrank back in the shadows.

It was not his desire to get into this deal, for he knew that he could not pass the ordeal.

So he shrank back into the shadows. As it happened, this proved most unfortunate.

His move was observed by a Celestial near him, who seemed to be a guard. At once he took a step forward.

He addressed the old detective in the Chinese tongue.

Of course, Old King Brady could make no answer. He

simply remained silent, but he saw the beginning of the end.

For a moment the Celestial looked at him intently. Then he whistled shrilly.

Instantly there was a rush of feet and cries of alarm.

The janissaries with the gleaming swords came up the corridor. Old King Brady knew that the crisis had come.

He knew what it would mean to remain where he was and submit to interrogation. He must not allow the foe to close in about him.

So he acted with the rapidity of thought.

CHAPTER V.

THE BLOW IS STRUCK.

Swift as lightning the old detective let out with his right. It struck the Chinaman in the neck.

He went down like a log.

Old King Brady did not try to make a wild break for escape. He simply slipped back into the shadows and waited.

In an instant Chinamen were all about him.

He pushed among them, feigning as great alarm as the others. The fellow he had struck lay senseless on the floor.

Only the coolest of nerve and skill could have carried out the game which Old King Brady had played.

The Highbinders did not know what had happened.

The warning cry had been sent up, but they knew no more. Old King Brady was not to be distinguished from any of the others.

It was a close call for the old detective.

He knew, however, that he was not yet, by any means, out of the woods. His life depended upon quick action.

So he skilfully disentangled himself from the crowd and made his way toward the exit.

The guard still stood at the door. It happened that two Chinamen were passing out at the moment.

Old King Brady fell in behind them. The gatekeeper spoke to the first of these and was answered. He ignored the detective.

And so it happened that Old King Brady, by the greatest of good fortune, came out of the death trap safely.

He drew a great breath of relief when he struck the sidewalk.

He was very willing to admit that it was as close a call as he had ever had.

With the cool air of the street fanning his face he dispelled the nausea which the fetid atmosphere of the place had given him.

The old detective now glanced at his watch.

He was astonished.

It was the hour of four.

He had been fully three hours in the Highbinders' den. He wondered if his friends would yet be waiting for him at Lee Foo's.

Another step brought him to the corner. Then, instantly, two dark figures stepped in front of him.

For one moment the old detective drew back, apprehending danger.

But this was dispelled the next moment.

"Thank heaven! It is you, partner!" cried Harry Brady. "You came out safe."

"Harry!" exclaimed the old detective, "I am glad to see you. Yes, I have never been nearer death in my life."

"We feared the worst," said Chang Wu. "Let us go back to Lee Foo's."

And this they did.

The laundryman was still astir. His lights were out and he was crouching in the rear of his shop.

Tremblingly he admitted them.

"Heap glad!" he whispered. "Lee Foo muchee 'flaid. Hear great noise in Highbinder house."

"It's all right, Lee," said Old King Brady. "They are looking for me, but you need have no further alarm."

Into the little back room the party went.

Old King Brady exchanged his disguise for his own clothes. Then he told the story of his adventures.

Harry and Chang Wu listened with great intensity.

Then the old detective told of the proposing of Chang Wu's name. As he described Chin Ling's action, Chang Wu listened with much excitement.

"Yes," he cried, "they mean me. It was a drawing and Chin Ling was the one selected to kill me."

"To kill you?"

"Yes. Now you will believe me when I tell you that Chin Ling is one of the leaders of the Highbinders."

"I believe you," said Old King Brady. "I have no longer any doubt, but you must be on your guard."

"What more can I do?"

"I don't know, but keep on your guard. As for Chin Ling, we will shadow him."

"There is not sufficient ground for arresting him?"

"No."

"Very good. Now, I think we had better leave this place as soon as possible. I will return to my hotel."

"Very good," agreed Old King Brady. "We will return to our lodgings. Nothing more can be done to-night."

So this was done. One by one they sallied forth from Lee Foo's place.

The Bradys went back to their lodgings. It was within an hour of dawn.

They were much exhausted, so retired at once to rest. They slept until a late hour the next morning.

Then they arose and went to breakfast. Over the meal they discussed plans for the future.

"Chin Ling is the man we must keep our eyes on," said Old King Brady.

"Yes."

"We will devote all our time to him. If we can catch him in his evil attempt we will make an example of him."

"That we will."

The Bradys donned a clever disguise and went back to Mott Street.

There are many restaurants in Chinatown. In some of them the cooking is par excellence. In others it is vile.

The Bradys found a restaurant directly opposite Chin Ling's place. They secured a seat at the window.

The restaurant was in the second story. From the window they could see Chin Ling's place and note all who went in or out.

They sat there for some while and kept watch of the place.

Many people went in and out, but nothing was seen of the merchant himself.

But one of the clerks came across the street and entered the restaurant.

Somewhat singularly he sat down at the same table with the Bradys. The detectives studied him.

They saw that he was a sly-visaged, shrewd fellow. It did not take Old King Brady long to engage him in conversation.

"Yeppee, me muchee eatee here," said Wun Loo, which was his name. "Me likee suey. Muchee good."

"I suppose you carry a good stock of tea?" asked Old King Brady.

The Celestial opened his eyes.

"Chin Ling hab bestee store," he declared. "Hab bestee tea."

"I see," said the old detective. "I suppose he is a rich man."

"Heap richee."

"Is Chin Ling always in the store?"

Wun Loo looked up quickly, but the Bradys were unconcerned.

"Chin Ling gone away," said the clerk. "No comee back for week."

"Oh, is that so? I suppose you look after the store while he is gone?"

"Yeppee, me keepee store."

"Where has Chin gone?"

The clerk gave a start. He shook his head.

"Me don'tee know!" he said.

After this the Bradys could get no more out of him. He was strictly non-committal and closed up like a clam.

But the Bradys had gained all they desired.

They were not bound to linger in the vicinity any longer. They knew that Chin Ling was on the trail of his man.

"Our game is to shadow Chang Wu," said Old King Brady. "In that way we shall find Chin Ling."

"I believe you."

So the Bradys went to the Waldorf. Chang Wu was not there. The detectives hung about the great hotel until a late hour that night.

Chang Wu did not return. The Bradys now were seized with alarm.

"What do you make of it?" asked Harry. "Can he have been decoyed?"

"He is too wily."

"Where is he?"

"That is the question."

The Bradys waited until midnight. Chang Wu did not return.

Nor did he appear the next morning, nor the next day, nor the next. Then the detectives, after a long search of the city, went to the hotel and were admitted to Chang Wu's room.

His effects were there and his valet still kept them in readiness.

"Me not know," he declared. "Chang Wu tellee me he come back. Get message an' go out. Neber comee back."

The Bradys looked at each other aghast.

"Decoy!" whispered Harry.

"The Highbinders!"

In that moment the detectives knew the blow had fallen. One more victim the deadly Highbinder crew had claimed.

"Where is the message that Mr. Wu received?" asked Old King Brady.

The valet went to the dressing-table and took up an envelope. The Bradys read the message enclosed, which was on a telegraph blank.

Thus it read:

"HON. CHANG WU, Waldorf-Astoria Hotel:

"I am in New York in disguise. Am on track of Highbinders. Come to me as soon as you get this, and no fail. My cab is at the door. Get in and come with the bearer.

"In the name of the emperor, WU TING FANG."

"Message he dared not disregard," declared Harry. "It was a trap. He went to his death."

Further inquiry seemed to bear this out. The bell-boys recalled seeing Chang Wu enter the cab with another Chinaman.

They had driven away. That was all.

Another Highbinder mystery was in the hands of the detectives. Once more the dread secret society of mystery and crime had shown its power.

The detectives were aghast.

But they lost no time.

Everything possible was done. They tried in vain to find the cab and its driver.

It was their theory that Chang Wu had been murdered in the cab.

The Highbinders had fulfilled their threat in terrible earnest.

The Bradys, after a futile search, wired Wu Ting Fang the dread particulars. For a week they had followed every clew in vain.

Ching Ling had not returned.

Thus matters were when it occurred to them to correspond with the Chinese minister and apprise him of the fate of his envoy.

While waiting for an answer the Bradys went down to the chief's office.

"I told you that you would have a case," declared the chief. "They are the slickest gang of rascals on earth. You can get no evidence against them."

"Well," said Old King Brady, resolutely, "I will not agree to break up the society of Highbinders, but I will swear to bring to justice the murderer of Chang Wu."

"We will!" cried Harry. "He was a good Chinaman."

Just then there came a rap on the door. The chief arose and opened it. Nobody was in sight.

But on the threshold was a square box of deal. It was nicely lacquered and had a hinged cover.

"What is this?" cried the chief, in amazement. "What have we here?"

CHAPTER VI.

THE NEW ENVOY.

Astonished, Old King Brady picked up the box.

Harry went out into the corridor, but whoever left it had vanished.

It was a box of finely lacquered wood. The cover was hinged with brass. As he put it on the table Old King Brady instinctively lifted it.

And as he did so all gave a great start and a cry of horror. A grewsome spectacle was revealed.

A grinning, polished skull rested in a velvet bed. It had been skilfully prepared and upon its crown was the gilt and purple skull cap of Chang Wu.

Appalled and chilled to the marrow by this grim hint, which had, no doubt, come from the Highbinders, the detectives could not for some moments speak.

They had as yet received no more plain evidence of the power and cunning of this terrible secret organization.

It meant that Chang Wu was dead. That he had been killed by the Highbinders, who, in this manner, hurled defiance at the law and its minions.

"Chang Wu is no more," said Old King Brady, finally. "This is his skull."

"It is the work of the Highbinders."

"Yes."

"They got him, didn't they? What will Wu Ting Fang say? How can the murderers be got at? How can evidence be secured to convict them?"

This was the problem.

And it remained such for many days. The mysterious fate of Chang Wu, and the attendant incidents made a subject for a thrilling newspaper story which stirred New York to its foundations.

In San Francisco, where the power of the Highbinder is acknowledged, this would have excited only passing comment.

But in New York, with its superior police force, its complex detective system, it was a veritable shock.

The Bradys did their utmost to get at the bottom of the mystery.

They went down to Chinatown and called on Chin Ling. The merchant had returned, after a long absence.

He greeted the detectives in a most affable manner.

"Mr. Ling," said Old King Brady, "are you not surprised at the mysterious fate of Chang Wu?"

Chin Ling's face was beatific as he replied:

"Chang Wu belly great man. Too bad he gettee killed. Mebbe hab some enemy."

Old King Brady looked hard at the old merchant.

"Do you think the Highbinders killed him?" he asked.

Chin Ling, with an utterly blank face, replied:

"Me no tallee. Mebbe so. Chin Ling be 'flaid allee time. Dat why I go way. Stay here, mebbe gettee killed, too."

"There is logic in that," said Harry, "but I hardly think there was much danger of your getting killed, Mr. Ling. I don't believe you are on the black list."

Chin Ling's eyes dilated.

"Oh, heap danger," he declared. "I gettee warning. Mebbe have to go away again."

This was all the satisfaction the Bradys could get out of Mr. Ling.

Meanwhile the Chief of the Secret Service had received a message from Wu Ting Fang.

The Chinese minister was thoroughly stirred up over the murder of Chang Wu. For that the skull in the box was that of the envoy he felt sure.

This was verified later when the headless trunk of Chang Wu was found in a dump in the outskirts of the city.

Murder most foul had been done. The Chinese government, in the person of Wu Ting Fang was bound to avenge the crime.

A heavy reward was posted on all the boards of Chinatown.

There was much excitement in the Mongolian colony. All classes were deeply stirred.

But the Highbinders were not disturbed. They could lie low and still bid defiance to the law.

But the Bradys were now deep in the case.

They were bound to see it through. The murder of Chang Wu must be avenged.

At this stage of the game a new representative came up from Washington.

He bore letters from Wu Ting Fang and called on the chief at his office. At once the Bradys were summoned.

The new man was a tall, crafty-looking Celestial, by the name of Loo Chin.

He was dressed richly, as were all the members of Wu Ting Fang's suite. It did not take the detectives long to discover that he was a polished and able man.

His English was perfect as had been that of Chang Wu, for like Wu he was a graduate of an American school.

"I shall employ different methods from my predecessor," he declared. "I do not intend to expose myself as he did.

"I shall wear various kinds of disguise. I intend to work secretly and in co-operation with you."

"I think that a good plan," declared Old King Brady, warmly. "I am sure it will win success."

"I am confident that we can soon learn the names of the Highbinder leaders," declared Loo Chin. "Once that is done the rest will be simple."

The Bradys were much impressed with Loo Chin.

They had regarded Chang Wu as an able man, but it was easy to see that he was in nowise the equal in shrewdness and strategy of Loo Chin.

The Chinese envoy's eyes snapped as he said:

"I know this Chin Ling well. He is a clever rascal. That he is the murderer of Chang Wu there is no doubt."

"I was present and saw him drawn as the assassin," said Old King Brady.

"That was certainly a clever piece of work on your part," declared Loo Chin. "You can be sure that you are the only American who ever attended a Highbinder meeting."

"And lived to get out."

"Just so."

"Now," said Old King Brady, "we are ready for work. what plan of action would you suggest?"

Loo Chin was silent for some moments. Then he said: "Do you wish me to propose a plan?"

"Yes."

"You say that Chang Wu placed much faith in Lee Foo?"

"He did, and I believe Lee Foo is an honest Chinaman."

"Let us go down and see him. Perhaps he can give us a tip."

"Very good. But I would like to make a suggestion."

"Well?"

"It will be a bit risky for you to go down there with us in your present garb. That is to say, they will know you and it might compromise Lee Foo."

"You are right," cried Loo Chin. "I will wear a disguise. You intend to do the same?"

"We do. We shall make up as Dagos."

"Good! I will put on the dress of an American, and a hat to match. That, I think, will disguise me."

"Yes."

"Now," said Loo Chin, "I will go to my hotel, which is the Fifth Avenue, and make this change. Then I will return and join you wherever you wish."

"Let it be at the corner of Park Row and Broadway, at seven o'clock."

"Very well."

This question settled, the Bradys went back to their lodgings.

They effected their disguise and at a little before seven made their way to the appointed meeting place.

It was not long before a tall Mongolian, in American dress, dropped off a car and came up to them.

Save for his features the Bradys would never have recognized Loo Chin. The change of guise had metamorphosed him.

"Ah, gentlemen!" he cried; "you are ahead of me. I am glad to see you. Now we shall get to work."

"With good fortune, I hope."

"So do I. Let me see, we can cut through the park to go to Lee Foo's place."

"Yes."

They proceeded across City Hall Park and finally turned

into Chatham Street. They had soon reached the Chinese quarter.

In their disguise it seemed as if they must be safe from detection by the Highbinders' spies.

They loitered along, carelessly, looking into the shop windows. Thus they drew near Lee Foo's laundry.

Suddenly Harry drew the attention of his companions to a shop window. This was a pretext, for he said, in an undertone:

"We are spotted!"

"What!" exclaimed Old King Brady, in dismay. "Is that so?"

"Are you sure?" asked Loo Chin.

"Look for yourself," said the young detective. "Behind us at the corner of the street is a yellow devil who has kept behind us ever since we came into this district."

Old King Brady, in a careless manner, looked back.

There stood the object of Harry's remark, at the street corner. His hands were in his pockets and he pretended to be looking across the street. But the young detective was not deceived.

"He is a spy!" he said.

"Wait; we will make sure of that," said Old King Brady.

They suddenly separated by mutual arrangement. Harry stepped into a doorway near at hand.

Old King Brady went up the street and Loo Chin crossed to the other side. It was seen then that the spy on the corner was much excited.

He turned and made a quick signal with his hands.

Then from doorways down the street two other Highbinders appeared. One crossed the street after Loo Chin.

The other followed Old King Brady. The original spy stayed where he was, but watched the doorway where Harry was.

Old King Brady saw all this in a mirror which he carried in his hand. He was much interested.

"By the horn spoon!" he muttered. "This is the best spy system that could be devised. They are certainly on the alert. They do not mean to be taken by surprise."

So it seemed. No stranger could enter Chinatown in the daytime at least without being at once under surveillance.

The old detective walked on up the street a ways.

Then he suddenly turned and retraced his steps.

The spy was thus met face to face. He halted and stood on the curb. His face was averted as Old King Brady passed.

The old detective now halted in front of the doorway and Harry rejoined him. They saw that Loo Chin had gone on and entered Lee Foo's laundry.

It was a risky thing to do, as the detectives at once saw.

They would have restrained the envoy had there been an opportunity for them to do so.

But there was not.

"Whew! I am afraid he has put his foot in it!" said Harry, dubiously.

"That is so," agreed Old King Brady. "I gave him

credit for being a shrewd fellow, but I fear he has made a mistake this time."

CHAPTER VII.

A CLEVER BLUFF.

Certainly it seemed an unwise thing in Loo Chin to enter Lee Foo's laundry with the hounds of the Highbinders at his heels.

It certainly seemed sure that Lee Foo would be compromised and become an object of suspicion to the Highbinders.

But the Bradys could do nothing now to change the situation.

All they could do was to wait and watch for the results. They saw that the three spys had crossed the street and were drawing near Lee Foo's place.

It was plain that they were disposed to mark the laundryman. But just at that moment an unexpected thing occurred.

There was a tremendous uproar in the laundry. Loud shouts and the trampling of feet could be heard.

Then through the door shot Loo Chin, with wrath-inflamed face. He landed, with a cat-like spring, in the middle of the street.

There he halted and began to hurl Chinese maledictions at Lee Foo, who stood in his laundry door.

Lee Foo held a cudgel, which he shook threateningly at Loo Chin.

It was to the Bradys a most astounding development.

This manifestation on the part of the meek and gentle Lee Foo was certainly unexpected and most astonishing.

"What do you think of that?" muttered Harry, in amazement. "I can't believe my eyes. Certainly Lee Foo is out of his mind."

"I can't imagine why he should have received Loo Chin in such a way. He was excellent friends with Chang Wu."

"He certainly is not a Highbinder."

"Oh, no!"

The Bradys were never more deeply puzzled in their lives.

But a crowd was being attracted by the scene. Lee Foo now retired into his laundry.

Loo Chin turned and made his way toward the Bradys. As he came up he said, in an undertone:

"Every Highbinder in the town is on our track. We can do nothing here to-day."

"That is true," agreed Old King Brady. "But what was the trouble with you and Lee Foo?"

"Let us get out of here and to some safe place and I will explain all to you," whispered the envoy.

They sauntered out of Mott Street and turned into the Bowery. They were followed several blocks by the Highbinder spies.

Then they became assured that the hounds had left their track.

"They will not follow us beyond their own precinct," said Loo Chin. "We are safe now. But it is plain that not one of us can go into Chinatown in any disguise in the daytime without arousing suspicion. Every stranger is under surveillance."

"That is right," agreed the detectives.

"Now," pursued Loo Chin, "this will not discourage us. We will go back there as soon as darkness comes, but it will be in some other guise."

"Do you think it safe?"

"We will make it so."

"But—we have antagonized Lee Foo now."

At this Loo Chin laughed.

"Well, I am flattered," he cried, "if that deceived you!"

"Deceived us?"

"Yes. It was only a big bluff. Lee Foo is all right now. It was necessary for me to see him. I learned some very important facts. At the same time, by the clever little stratagem, I removed all suspicion from Lee Foo. In the eyes of the Highbinders he is free from suspicion."

"Then his anger was assumed?"

"Certainly."

The Bradys were certainly taken aback. Their respect for Loo Chin from that moment was unbounded.

"My friend, you are all right!" declared Old King Brady. "That was well played, you deserve credit for it."

"Thank you! Now, let us once more try the game. We will start over again and this time with new methods."

"Good!"

"I would suggest that we all meet at Lee Foo's laundry at eleven o'clock to-night."

"At eleven?"

"Yes. Lee has given me some valuable information. The Highbinders meet to-night. You know where their meeting place is."

"Yes."

"Well, we must try and find out in some way what their game is."

"I think I can guess."

"What?"

"It concerns you."

Loo Chin shrugged his shoulders.

"I think you are right," he said. "So you can see that I ought to be interested."

"Yes. We are with you, heart and soul. Your idea is a good one. We will drop in on Lee Foo this evening."

"I think it the best plan. The hall in which the Highbinders meet, if you remember, is right back of Lee Foo's shop."

"Yes."

"Now, I learned from Lee that there is only a thin partition between the cellar of his shop and that of the next building. We might in some way get through there. If we can, I think we can manage to get upstairs and perhaps play eavesdropper."

"That is grand!" cried Harry.

"It is absolutely necessary that we learn what the next move of the society is," said Loo Chin.

"Correct!" cried Old King Brady. "You may count on us for anything you wish."

"All right. Now, it will not be advisable to go to Lee Foo's place together."

"Certainly not."

"Our best plan will be to drop in singly at different times. Of course, we will all wear close disguise."

"Yes."

"Then it is understood. We will part now, to meet later."

"That is the plan."

Loo Chin smiled in his most affable way and walked away. The Bradys did the same.

The detectives went down to police headquarters. As they entered, the sergeant at the door said:

"Mr. Brady, I'm glad you have come in. The inspector has been wanting to see you all day."

"Very good," agreed Old King Brady. "We will go in and see him."

"Do so."

So they found their way into the office of the inspector of detectives.

"Hello, Brady!" he cried, heartily. "Both of you here, eh? Well, I am glad of that. We have a very puzzling case."

"Indeed!" said Old King Brady. "I am afraid we can't help you for we are very busy just at present."

"Well, you are working in Chinatown, aren't you?"

"Yes."

"That's it. Then it will be right in your way."

"A case in Chinatown?"

"Yes."

"Is it murder? Highbinders?"

"Oh, no. We hope not so serious as that. Still it may turn out to be such. It is a case of abduction, we believe."

"Abduction?"

"Yes; the daughter of a millionaire, Roger Dean. Miss Emily Dean her name is. She has vanished in the purlieu of Chinatown. The very worst things are feared."

"My soul!" exclaimed Old King Brady. "That is horrible! What took her into such a quarter? Was she a charity worker?"

"No; she, like many other foolish fashionable people, was slumming. There was a party of young people under the charge of Jack Smith, a private detective.

"They had visited various joss houses and restaurants and were endeavoring to locate an opium den.

"In some way, it is not known how, Miss Dean became separated from the rest. Her absence was first noted as the party was about to leave Chinatown.

"Not the slightest clew could be found. She had simply dropped from sight. This was all that could be said about it. Everything possible was done, but she is missing and her fate is unknown."

The Bradys were appalled.

They listened to this awful recital with tingling veins. It was certainly a dreadful affair.

That a beautiful, refined young girl should drop from

sight in the dark purlieus of Chinatown, even as a pearl thrown into the mire of a sty, was a most fearful thing to contemplate.

Yet such had happened.

Of course, the theory of foul play was the only tenable one.

In some way she had become momentarily separated from her friends. Then a drug and a dark side passage into some den of the yellow scoundrels was the result.

What their purpose was had not as yet been made plain.

Perhaps some Mongolian had been attracted by her personal charms and wished to make her his wife.

Perhaps she would be held for a ransom. If the latter, then some word would reach her friends before long.

The inspector of detectives put all these facts before the Bradys.

"I hope you'll not refuse to do all you can," he said. "It is conceded that if anybody can save the young woman it is the Bradys."

"We certainly will not refuse," declared Old King Brady. "We will do all in our power. I cannot hold out false hopes of success, though. It is my private opinion that the young lady will never be seen again."

"Then you think——"

"She has been murdered—yes."

"Get evidence, then, and we'll electrocute the devils who have done this thing. It makes my blood boil!"

The detective sprang up.

"We are going into Chinatown to-night," they declared. "We will do our best. Certainly, something must be done. When the Highbinders dare threaten the life of the mayor of the city it is certainly time to act."

"Even if we have to wipe out the whole heathen colony."

"Yes."

"Good for you, gentlemen! I hope you will have luck."

"Thank you."

"I shall await with interest word from you," he concluded.

The Bradys now left headquarters and went to their lodgings. Here they spent the time until half-past ten in making deductions as to the logical solution of the case.

The mysterious abduction of Emily Dean had added a new element of more than thrilling sort.

When they left a little later they were in close disguise.

They separated a few moments later and Harry went on ahead. The young detective soon found his way into Mott Street.

He walked along carelessly until just opposite the door of Lee Foo's place.

Then he looked up and down the street. No person was in sight.

Harry slipped into the place like a silent shadow.

A dim light burned at the lower end of the shop. Lee Foo was there, hard at work, doing up some shirts.

He grinned at Harry, in his cheerful way, and said:

"Loo Chin waitee inside. Go 'long in an' slee him. He belly glad slee you."

Harry passed into the rear room.

CHAPTER VIII.

AT LEE FOO'S PLACE.

Loo Chin had reached the laundry a quarter of an hour earlier. He had waited with much anxiety for the Bradys.

As Harry entered he grasped his hand eagerly.

"Ah, I am glad to see you. I feared that something would detain you and spoil the whole game. I believe there is lively work ahead for us to-night."

"Good!" cried Harry. "I am more than glad to hear that. I certainly hope we will hit something."

"Will your partner arrive soon?"

"Yes."

"I must tell you that I am already on dangerous ground. Since leaving you an attempt was made on my life."

Harry gave a gasp of astonishment.

"On your life?" he exclaimed.

"Yes."

"Who could have done that?"

"Oh, the Highbinders. They mean to send me over the same road as Chang Wu. But they'll never do it."

He spoke with determination. Harry was deeply thrilled.

"Tell me about it," he said.

"I will do so. I returned to my apartments at the Fifth Avenue Hotel after leaving you."

"Yes."

"When I reached the hotel I found there a package awaiting me. The package contained this."

Loo Chin took from his pocket an object and laid it on the table before Harry. It was a beautifully embroidered belt.

The material was a very soft leather, and it was lined with costly satin.

"Ah!" said Harry. "A gift from a friend, I take it."

"Presumably," said Loo Chin. "Now, read this note."

A perfumed note was placed in Harry's hand. It was written in a perfect female hand:

"To the Honorable Loo Chin:—I have heard of your dangerous mission in New York. I am much alarmed for fear harm may come to you. Doubtless you wonder who I am. Do you remember the American girl with dark eyes who danced with you at the Embassy Ball? So anxious am I that no harm shall come to you, I send you this talisman belt. It ensures long life to the wearer and immunity from the attack of a foe. Wear it next to the flesh, for it contains strength and life. From

"A Washington Admirer."

Harry was astonished. It read exactly as an epistle should be written by a matinee girl to her idol of the stage.

"This certainly is surprising," he said. "Can you recall the writer?"

"Recall the writer?" exclaimed Loo Chin. "I wish I could. I wish that some pretty American girl with dark eyes could think enough of me to write me such a note."

"Who else could have written it?"

"Certainly no dark-eyed girl. I danced with many such at the Embassy Ball. No; this message came near proving my end."

Harry was astounded.

"How was that?" he asked.

"Well, in the first place, of course no young lady sent me the belt. Very fortunately I was wise enough to suspect a trick of an enemy.

"So I examined the belt and made a startling discovery. If I had put on the belt and buckled it about me two keen needles of hollow steel would have lanced me to the depth of an inch.

"The pressure would have caused these needles to fly from a hidden socket. The needles contained enough of a deadly poison, which, injected into my veins would have made a dead man of me in less than five minutes."

Harry was horrified.

This most astounding narrative was one more bit of evidence that the Highbinders were deadly in their methods.

It was a most astonishingly cunning game. Why it had not worked with full success was certainly marvelous.

But how had these crafty Chinese secured such a bit of workmanship?

Who had written the perfumed note?

It was not to be assumed that a Chinaman had written it. The writer was a person of education and refinement, and certainly a woman.

At this moment Old King Brady came in.

The story was told him, and he listened with even greater amazement than Harry had.

"Certainly that is remarkable," he declared. "It shows the resources of the Highbinders."

"Does it prove that their society includes women of American birth and refinement?" asked Harry.

"Oh, no," replied the old detective. "I think I can explain that note. It was written by some opium devotee. There are plenty of refined women who have become victims of this awful drug. In a certain state of mind, induced by the opium, the rascals could have got the woman to write the note."

"I can see the logic of that," said Loo Chin.

"You certainly had a narrow escape."

"It puts me wholly on my guard."

"It should do so."

"Now," said Loo Chin, turning to Lee Foo, "we are ready for work. If you show us a way to get hold of the Highbinders you will win the great reward."

"Me showee how," cried Lee Foo eagerly. "Mebbe get-tee into Highbinders' room."

"That is what we want," said Old King Brady. "Just show us the way."

The laundry keeper sprang up and turned down the light. Then he placed his ear to the wall and listened.

Next he went to the rear window and peered out into the court. Then he held up his hands.

"Hi, hi!" he exclaimed in low tones. "Highbinders all in room. Now come with me."

"Lead on!" said Old King Brady; "but, remember, treachery means death."

"I don't believe Foo is a traitor," said Loo Chin. "I am willing to trust him."

The laundry keeper bent down and began to feel about the floor. Presently his hand encountered a ring.

He pulled up on it, and raised a trap door.

A huge aperture in the floor was thus revealed.

"Detective gottle lantern?" asked Lee Foo.

"Yes," replied Old King Brady. He produced his dark lantern and lit it. Then he flashed the rays into the cellar below.

A rickety ladder led down to slimy stones below.

Lee Foo slid down quickly. Old King Brady followed next.

Harry and Loo Chin then descended. Lee Foo led the way through a sort of narrow, stone-walled passage.

Silently they made their way through this, which Lee Foo explained led under the courtyard.

Once the building opposite had been owned by the same person, and this passage had been built to connect the two cellars. But when the property was divided it had been closed up.

In a few moments they had reached this wall.

In a whisper Lee Foo explained that this was but a crumbling, frail barrier, and could be easily cut through.

"All right," said Old King Brady. "Let us go through it. But when we get through are we in the cellar underneath the Highbinders' house?"

"Yeppee," replied Lee Foo.

"That settles it," exclaimed Harry, as he began to pry into the loose mortar. "We are going to go through."

Lee Foo now went back and got an iron bar.

This enabled them to easily pry the stones out of their bed of mortar, and in a remarkably brief space quite an aperture had been made.

Through this they now clambered.

They were now in another cellar, which seemed to extend for some distance. They made their way through it.

Lee Foo led the way to the disused shaft of a dumb waiter. Standing in the well they could look up and see the stars through the skylight above.

A shaft of light fell athwart the shaft some distance above. Lee Foo pointed to it and said:

"That Highbinders' room. Allee there. Climb up and see."

"Climb up," said Loo Chin. "That is easier said than done."

"But one man can go up there at a time," said Old King Brady. "One of us might climb up and take a peep through that crack."

"I will," said Harry, with alacrity.

"All right," agreed Old King Brady. "You are lighter than I am, and I am willing that you should."

Up the shaft Harry went nimbly, by placing his hands and feet in the niches on either side.

Soon his head was on a level with the crack through which came the glimmer of light.

The young detective applied his eye to the crack. He beheld what was to him an interesting sight.

Seated in a circle about a small table were a dozen Mongolians.

The foremost man of the circle was Chin Ling. Beside him sat a man who was his counterpart.

Harry learned afterward that this was his brother, Ah Ling, and the smoothest rascal in Chinatown.

They were holding a council, the subject of which was most interesting to the young detective. He listened intently.

Fortunately they talked in pigeon English, so Harry understood them.

Chin Ling was having a wordy argument with Ah Ling, his brother.

"No foolee with 'Melican girl," said Chin Ling angrily. "No have luckee! Ah Ling let women alone."

The young detective's ears began to prick up. Here was something of value.

Ah Ling's cunning face took on a sneering expression. There was a baleful light in his almond eyes.

"Me hear much, say little," said Ah Ling contemptuously. "Me have just as much luckee as other people. Berry muchee talk; no common sense. Chin Ling sluttee up!"

Chin Ling's hand stole beneath his tunic, and the gleam of a dagger was seen.

"Looke out!" he gritted. "Me Highbinder chief. Mebbe brother be sorry if he cross Chin Ling."

"What you care?" asked Ah Ling. "Me wantee white girl. Makee her love me. Chinaman want wife."

"Where 'Melican girl be now?" asked Chin Ling sharply.

There was a moment of silence. Harry listened intently.

Much depended on that answer. It came finally. Ah Ling, however, was guarded in his reply.

"Melican girl safe," he declared. "Me takee care. Ah Ling no fool."

"Well," growled Chin Ling. "You be named to killee Loo Chin. You draw lot."

"Allee right!" agreed Ah Ling. "Me do my part. I sent poison belt to Loo Chin. He puttee on kill quick."

This seemed to please the other members of the council. They spoke words of enthusiastic approval.

But just then a startling thing happened.

CHAPTER IX.

IN PERIL.

Harry had been leaning heavily against the side of the dumb waiter shaft.

As it happened, it was the small door against which his

weight rested. It was secured with nails, which doubtless had rusted, and therefore were the cause of what followed.

For suddenly and without warning the door burst in. Losing his balance Harry would have fallen to the bottom of the shaft, but his presence of mind taught him to cling to the verge, and he did so. But again losing his balance he pitched forward into the room.

Astounded, the Chinese plotters had bounded to their feet.

There was the young detective sprawling on the floor.

"Hi, hi!" yelled Chin Ling. "Treachery! Killee quick! Callee help!"

He drew his dagger and rushed at the young detective.

Harry was on his back. He knew he would not have time to get upon his feet and defend himself.

So just as Chin Ling was about to drop on him the young detective raised both feet.

They were planted full in the pit of Chin Ling's stomach. The tea merchant was hurled across the room.

Ah Ling and the others had made no move. They seemed petrified.

Chin Ling bounded to his feet again; but the young detective was now upon his feet as well.

And he stood there facing his foes. His position he knew to be one of awful peril.

He was in the Highbinders' den. He did not know that he would go forth alive.

But he felt no fear.

He pulled out a revolver, and stood ready to sell his life dearly.

Chin Ling now gained his feet.

His fury was something past description. His face was contorted with devilish hatred and fear.

"Chinamen fools!" he screeched. "Why standee there? No see Melican detective? Catchee, catchee, killee quick! No letter escape. No gettee way from Highbinders!"

"Allee light!" cried Ah Ling, suddenly recovering. "Gettee sword! Keepee dagger! Killee quick!"

"Back, you yellow devils!" gritted Harry. "I'll kill the first one of you who advances."

The Highbinders paused.

They looked into the muzzle of the weapon. It was plain that they feared death.

Harry's quick brain was busily working. He knew that he was in a desperate position and must make some sort of a shift at once or his life would pay the forfeit.

But just at that moment he heard a sound behind him.

Up through the shaft came Old King Brady.

The old detective's keen eye took in the situation at a glance. He saw that strategy alone would save the day.

"Hold 'em steady, Harry," he cried. "There's fifty policemen at the front door. We have the heathens caged."

These words fell upon the dismayed hearing of the Chinese Highbinders, and had just the effect the old detective had intended it should.

With a yell of alarm they turned and darted away

through a draped doorway. Only Chin Ling and Ah Ling were left.

Behind Old King Brady was Loo Chin.

As he leaped lightly down into the room he fixed a terrible gaze upon the two Highbinders.

"Dogs!" he hissed in the Chinese tongue. "Know you your fate? Your heads will pay for the murder of Chang Wu, and your souls are cursed forever, for you will be buried in dishonor."

No more terrifying threat could be hurled at the Lings.

If there is one thing the Chinaman fears it is any perversion of those rites and ceremonies which they believe necessary to usher them into Celestial Paradise.

With ashen faces and trembling limbs they stood staring at Loo Chin.

"Yes," said Old King Brady scathingly. "Your only hope is to give up the white girl whom you hold a prisoner. Where is she? Speak, or you die!"

The old detective pointed his revolver at Ah Ling.

"Yeppee!" whined the terrified scoundrel. "Me give up Melican girl. Killee Ah Ling, but lette his soul go."

He addressed his words to Old King Brady, but his eyes were fixed beseechingly upon Loo Chin.

In spite of the seriousness of their position, the Bradys came near laughing outright. The situation had its comical side.

But Loo Chin knew as well as they that something must be done and at once for their personal safety.

The fleeing Highbinders would soon discover their ruse and return to wreak vengeance upon them.

They would be three against hundreds, and a battle within these walls would only result in their extinction.

It would have been the height of folly to try to raid the Highbinders' den without the aid of the police.

Their fate would never be known.

So Old King Brady hit upon the only feasible plan, which was a daring one enough.

"Handcuff them, Harry," he whispered. "We have got to make a break quickly."

Even as he spoke both detectives caught a distant roar of voices and trampling feet.

There was no time to lose.

Harry sprang quickly forward. Old King Brady held them under his pistol as the young detective handcuffed them.

Harry put on the handcuffs in such a way that they could make little movement, and were helpless.

Then Loo Chin exclaimed:

"Quick, friends! We haven't time to lose! They are coming!"

The detectives sprang into the shaft and descended into the cellar. Loo Chin quickly followed.

Above were heard howls and yells of rage. Yellow faces peered down the shaft.

Back through the cellar they ran, and up through the trap door in Lee Foo's laundry.

Lee Foo, trembling with awful fear, was picking up his effects.

He knew that he was betrayed, and his only hope was to get out before the Highbinders could reach him.

It was a serious matter for him. His home was broken up, his business destroyed, and he was an outcast and a refugee.

Wherever he went henceforth he must live in fear of death.

He could never again trust one of his own countrymen, for that one might be a Highbinder and under oath to kill him.

"It's all right, Lee," said Loo Chin. "You go with me, and I will take care of you. I will send you to Washington, and you will be under the protection of the Embassy."

Lee Foo's teeth chattered, and he shivered in awful terror. But he obeyed the mandate of Loo Chin.

Already the Highbinders could be heard in the cellar.

Lee Foo pulled a heavy table over the trap. All then left the laundry.

"It's all up for to-night," said Loo Chin. "Lee Foo and I will go back to the hotel. I shall see you again soon, gentlemen."

"All right," agreed the Bradys.

The Chinese envoy, with Lee Foo in his charge, ran out onto the Bowery. He hailed a cab, and they entered it.

But the Bradys had no idea of leaving Chinatown.

"Harry," said Old King Brady, "I believe we can gain something by making a sharp blow now."

"What do you mean?"

If Emily Dean is in Ah Ling's power, I believe she is hidden somewhere in that den of the Highbinders."

"Well?"

"Now, we know that the hornet's nest is all stirred up. Why not destroy it? Let us send to the nearest police station and call out the reserves and raid the place?"

Harry caught the inspiration.

"Good!" he cried. "I am with you. I believe it is a capital idea."

"All right. Will you go to the nearest telephone and send the message? I will remain here?"

"Yes."

Harry darted away. Old King Brady buried himself in the shadows. Just then out of Lee Foo's place came a troop of maddened Highbinders.

They swarmed out upon the sidewalk and into the different streets. In a few moments, however, they vanished.

Either they had given up the quest, or else they had extended it. The old detective kept in hiding.

Half an hour passed.

Then into the street galloped the patrol wagon. A score of bluecoats leaped out.

Harry Brady was at their head.

Old King Brady joined them.

Around into the other street went the most of the police, the detectives with them.

The arrival had created a panic and a sensation in Chinatown, even at that hour. Doors opened and yellow faces appeared at windows.

The Bradys knew that the quickest work was necessary.

The police proceeded to break in the front door of the Highbinders' den. Suddenly Old King Brady looked up and beheld a surprising spectacle.

Up the front of the building was a fire-escape ladder.

From the second story a Chinaman had appeared and was climbing up the ladder to the roof.

The Bradys recognized Chin Ling.

"He will get away!" exclaimed Harry. "Once on the roof he will give us the shake."

"You are right."

"I have an idea."

"What?"

"Come with me."

The young detective darted down the street. Old King Brady followed him.

Suddenly Harry turned into a narrow and dirty alley.

This, he knew, led into the courtyard in the rear of Lee Foo's place.

The next moment they were in the courtyard. Above them was the low roof, the extension or ell of the building.

Chin Ling must pass over the upper roof in his attempt to escape. Harry's idea was to reach this roof in time to head him off.

But the difficulty which now presented itself was how to get up there. Just beyond their reach swung a sign, also some Chinese lanterns.

But as the detectives' eyes roamed about the courtyard the problem was solved.

Alongside a building lay a ladder, which had been used by a painter. In an instant Harry sprang forward.

"Come on, partner," he cried. "We will catch him."

The two detectives raised the ladder to the coping of the first roof.

Old King Brady started up the ladder. He had reached the edge of the roof, with Harry close behind him, when a startling thing happened.

A dark figure was lying face downward on the flat roof.

It sprang up and rushed forward, with a sibilant screech. A dagger gleamed above Old King Brady's head. Just in time he grasped the wrist of his would-be assassin and looked up into the face of Ah Ling.

CHAPTER X.

AN IMPORTANT CAPTURE.

In that same moment Chin Ling was seen looking over the edge of the upper roof.

All sorts of queer cat-calls and signals filled the air.

A shuttered window flew open and out leaped a China-

man with a huge, two-handed sword. Behind him came another who was handed a pail of scalding lye by a third.

Old King Brady caught Ah Ling's wrist. The Highbinders swarmed on the roof. It seemed as if the detectives were doomed.

Old King Brady saw that their lives depended upon the most prompt of action. He did all in his power.

He saw the terrible sword uplifted to behead him.

He knew that if the pail of lye was thrown upon them the flesh would shrivel on their bodies.

It was as thrilling a position as the detectives had ever been called upon to meet.

But they met it.

Old King Brady's powerful grip was fastened upon Ah Ling's wrist. He gave it such a wrench that with a howl of agony the Chinaman dropped the dagger.

Then, with the strength of a Hercules, Old King Brady pulled Ah Ling over the edge of the roof.

At the same moment he swung back and the ladder tilted over toward the opposite wall of the court.

The result was that when the ladder struck the opposite wall it parted with a crash and Ah Ling and the detectives went down to the flagstones below.

It was a terrible fall, but the only method of salvation.

Ah Ling's head struck the flagging and he was rendered unconscious. Harry was momentarily stunned by getting tangled up in the ladder.

But Old King Brady was unharmed. He regained his feet and drew his revolver.

The Highbinders above were scattering. Some dove back through the open window, others vanished through a scuttle in the roof.

Chin Ling was seen to run along the edge of the upper roof and vanish.

Harry now recovered himself.

He sat up somewhat dazed and uncertain. His head rang like a bell.

Old King Brady put a flask of whisky to his lips and asked:

"All right now, my boy?"

"Ye-es," said the young detective. "What happened? Oh, I remember. We were on the roof."

"Yes, and it was a tight pinch. If they had ever poured that lye onto us it would have been up with us."

"Did the ladder break?"

"Yes."

"Where are they now?"

"Scattered. But we have one of them here, and he is just the fellow we want."

Harry stared at the senseless Chinaman. Then he gasped:

"On my word, it is Ah Ling!"

"Yes."

"That is luck."

"Yes. We wanted him badly, and we have got him."

Harry scrambled to his feet.

"We had better handcuff him," he said.

"That is right."

"Is he badly hurt?"

"Oh, I think not."

This was done. Then the detectives went out of the alley to the street. The police had captured a dozen of the Highbinders.

The place was effectually raided. The Bradys carried their quest into every corner.

Many of the effects of the murderous society were seized. But not a trace of the missing girl was found.

"That is all right," said Old King Brady. "Before we get through with Ah Ling he may be glad to tell where she is."

"We will give him the second degree," declared the young detective.

"Indeed we will."

Ah Ling came out of his stupor when restoratives were applied. He was placed in the patrol wagon and sent to the Tombs with the others.

This was all that could be done for the present.

The raiding of the den of the Highbinders, as the Bradys knew, had not resulted in any important benefit.

They were disappointed in the result. They had hoped that the hiding place of the captive girl would be found.

Instead, her whereabouts was even a greater mystery than ever. But they had Ah Ling in the toils.

It was not likely that Chin Ling or any of his ilk would make an appearance in public again right away. The risk would be too great.

The night's work was over. It was near morning, and satisfied that they could accomplish no more the Bradys went back to their lodgings.

They were much exhausted and slept until a late hour in the forenoon.

Then their first move after their morning meal was to go down to the Tombs.

Ah Ling was in his cell, moody and sullen.

He looked up as the Bradys entered, and there was a murderous light in his almond eyes.

"Well, Ling," said Old King Brady, "you can see that rascality is bound to get a man into trouble, sooner or later. We shall soon have the rest of you Highbinders in prison."

Ah Ling scowled.

"Whatee do wif Ah Ling?" he asked.

"What will we do with you? I'll tell you, you yellow scoundrel! We will send you to the electric chair if you don't produce that girl, safe and well."

Ah Ling's shifty gaze was fixed upon the detectives.

"Telle where Melican girl is, gettee free?" he asked.

"Yes, provided you agree to lead a better life and quit the Highbinders."

"Me no can do it."

"Why not?"

"Highbinder heap killee. No Chinee man leave Highbinder. Slee?"

"Yes, I see," said Old King Brady. "It seems to be

only a choice of death with you. Now, which way had you rather die?"

"Me no do wrong. Melican man no can hangee Ah Ling."

"Don't you believe it. We know that you and your brother, Chin Ling, killed Tong Fee. We also know that you were concerned in the murder of Chang Wu."

"No provee dat."

"Can't we? Well you wait and see. At any rate, after you are dead we shall see that the dogs get your body."

Terror now shone in the Chinaman's face. This was the one way to work upon his fears. He gasped and choked.

"No, no!" he cried. "Don't lettee Ah Ling go to dogs. Givee body to fliends. Bury in Chinee way."

"That will depend on you. Produce the white girl, safe and well."

Ah Ling writhed in agony of spirit. His stubborn will was defying the detectives.

But his superstitious fears were breaking that will.

Already he was near acquiescence. The Bradys started to leave.

Then he broke down completely.

He threw himself at Old King Brady's feet.

"No, no!" he whined. "Savee Ah Ling! Givee chance! I tellee where Melican gal is. Givee up Melican gal."

"That is enough," cried Old King Brady. "It saves your heathen soul. Now where is she?"

"Ah Ling keepee her in opium house. He knowee where. Nobody else know. Go with Ah Ling. He findee gal."

The detectives looked hard at the wretch.

Then Harry said:

"How do we know that is not a trap, you yellow scoundrel? How do we know that you tell the truth?"

"Oh, yeppee," assented the wretch. "Me tellee truth. Allee true! Me findee gal. Ah Ling telle tluth."

The detectives looked at each other. The Chinaman was abject now. It was plain that life was dear to him.

"Well," said Old King Brady, "we will give you a trial, Ah Ling. But at the least sign of treachery you will be brought back. There will be no hope for you."

"Ah Ling findee gal."

"Remember that it is useless for you to try to escape. There is no place in this country where you could hide. You are a Chinaman, and you are marked."

"Me slee. Me allee right."

"Very good. We will go now to get your release and return later."

The Bradys hurried away.

They had no trouble in obtaining the necessary writ, and Ah Ling was given into their custody.

They started for Chinatown.

Since the raid of the Highbinders' den the Chinese colony had been in a fearfully excited state.

The raiding of opium dens was frequent, and resulted in little more than a breeze of interest.

Then all lapsed again into quiet.

But the descent upon the Highbinders shook Chinatown to its foundation. The Mongolians were much stirred up.

So when Ah Ling and the Bradys appeared in the streets of the Chinese quarter there was a sensation.

From every quarter flocked the Celestials to view the three. No effort, however, was made to free Ah Ling.

"I say, partner," said Harry, with some little apprehension, "I don't know that I feel altogether safe. Had we not better have a police escort?"

"I think we can stand them off," said the old detective. "We are all right if we don't get into any dark den."

Ah Ling was the picture of penitence. He walked quietly along with the Bradys.

Finally he paused before a wretched house of brick. He said in a low tone:

"Ah Ling keepee gal in cellar. Opium den once. Now keepee white gal there."

"Is she locked up in there?" asked Old King Brady.

"Yeppee!"

"What?" exclaimed the detectives in horror. "All alone?"

The Mongolian nodded.

The detectives were aghast.

"It is time she was released, then," cried Harry. "That is dreadful! It is a wonder if she is not dead from terror."

Ah Ling stepped up and opened the door of the brick house.

He passed through the hallway into a rear room. Here he found a key hidden in a crevice and unlocked a door.

A flight of steps led down into the darkness below.

"Melican man hab lantern?" asked the yellow villain.

CHAPTER XI.

A TERRIBLE FATE.

Old King Brady produced his dark lantern.

"Yes," he said, as he lit it. "Go ahead, you yellow rascal!"

As the light of the bull's-eye was flashed down into the place a door painted a bright vermilion was seen below.

There was a wicket in the door, but no yellow face appeared at it. Ah Ling produced another key from some hiding place and unlocked this door.

"Melican men go in," he said, stepping aside; but the Bradys did not.

"Go ahead, Ah Ling," said Old King Brady. "We will follow."

The Mongolian stepped into the place. The Bradys now followed.

Along a gaudily decorated passage they went.

It was the typical entrance to an opium den. There were Chinese pictures and paper lanterns.

It had been kept by Ah Ling, and was the retreat to which he had taken the kidnapped girl.

Into a room at the further end of the passage they went.

It was large and square and windowless, being under-

ground. There were bunks with silken curtains, divans, and all the appurtenances of the regular opium joint.

Ah Ling looked about the place.

He went from one bunk to another, and pulled the silken curtains.

Then he turned with blank face to the Bradys.

"Hi, hi!" he gasped. "Melican girl gettee way. No be here."

The Bradys stood still and looked at Ah Ling. The fellow's face showed honest surprise and dismay.

The detectives on first impulse, of course, suspected a trap.

They reckoned that this was a game of Ah Ling's to deceive them. The girl was hidden somewhere else.

The ways of the heathen were well known to the Bradys.

So it was not strange that they should hold Ah Ling strictly under suspicion.

"No lies, you devil!" hissed Old King Brady. "That game won't work. Put the handcuffs on him, Harry."

The young detective pulled out his handcuffs and advanced.

Ah Ling dropped to the floor and began to writhe and beg and protest. He was in terrible agony of spirit.

"No, no!" he wailed. "Ah Ling no lie. Tellee tluth. Melican gal was here. She now gone. Ah Ling not know how."

Harry stood a moment in doubt. Then his eye fell upon a hat which was lying on one of the divans.

It was a woman's hat, such as is worn by the American woman of fashion. The young detective picked it up.

"Hello!" he exclaimed. "This shows that she was here."

Old King Brady gave a start.

"How is this?" he cried. "Do you know this hat, Ah Ling?"

"Oh, yeppee!" cried the Mongolian. "Allee same Melican gal's hat."

"Well, that proves that you have partly told the truth. But where is she now?"

"Ah Ling not know."

"Is that straight?"

"Yeppee! Me swear! Ah Ling speakee straight. He right."

"What do you think has become of her?"

"Me not know."

"But you have an idea?"

"No tellee what. Mebbe gettee out an' go home."

"No, that is not so."

"Well, mebbe other Chineeman gettee her. Lockee her up. Keepee her."

The horror of this occurred to the detectives. Then another thought came to Old King Brady.

He sprang forward and seized Ah Ling by the throat.

He bent him back and pressed on his windpipe until he gasped and whined in very terror.

"You fiend!" hissed the old detective, "you have killed her!"

"No, no!" gurgled the Celestial. "Savee—no killee—no, no! Me not hurtee Melican gal!"

"It is up to you to find her for us," said Old King Brady, flinging him away. "If you don't, you know what will happen to you."

"Ah Ling swear he findee gal! He kill other Chineeman. He swear!"

"All right," declared the old detective. "Now lead us out of here."

But just at that moment Harry, who had been searching the place, found a bit of rice paper on one of the divans.

On it was written the following:

"Heaven help me! I am a prisoner in this awful place. Will rescue never come? God will not see me consigned to so awful a fate. Oh, for some plan of escape! I fear the worst. Held in this place by the villainous Chinaman, I fear I will never again see the light of day.

"I shall try to escape, but how? There is no window, and but one door, and that is securely barred. Hark! I hear footsteps now. I fear the worst. If any friend should find this, for the love of heaven rescue me! I am Emily Dean, and my father is wealthy and will pay a large reward for my rescue."

The detectives read this thrilling memorandum with interest.

It proved to them that in many things Ah Ling had told the truth.

They were determined to scour Chinatown in quest of the young girl.

It was certainly most unfortunate that she had not remained in Ah Ling's den.

Rescue would have been certain.

But if she had escaped, by what means had she done so?

Again, if she had been stolen away from the hiding place by another Chinaman, who was he, and how had he known of her presence there?"

As this occurred to Old King Brady he turned to Ah Ling.

"Look here, my man," he said sternly. "Is this place known to any other person but you? That is, did any other person know you had the girl confined here?"

Ah Ling's eyes opened.

"Nope," he replied. "Nobody know I havee Melican girl here; but my brother, Chin Ling, he know I hab dis place."

The detectives sprang up.

In an instant all flashed upon them. They looked at each other.

"Ah Ling," asked Old King Brady, "your brother was not in favor of your keeping the girl prisoner, was he?"

"Nope," he replied. "My brother. I know him. He wantee gal himself."

"Well, he's got her."

The same idea came like a flash to Ah Ling. His yellow face swelled and contorted with fury.

He worked his bony fingers in a convulsive manner.

"Chin Ling takee gal!" he hissed. "He gettee plitty

gal away from me. Heap cussee! I killee Chin Ling! He my brudder, but I killee allee same."

The Bradys knew that they had the best of the situation now.

Ah Ling had only deadly hatred for his brother. Jealousy begot hatred, and there could be no more friendship.

"Yes, Chin Ling has the girl," said Old King Brady. "Now, tell us, Ah Ling. Where would he take her?"

The Chinaman's eyes glittered.

He started toward the door.

"Me findee gal," he said. "Me settle wid my brudder. Melican detectives trust me. Ah Ling be blue. He swear it."

"We will go along with you."

But Ah Ling put up his hand.

"No can do dat," he said. "Ah Ling must go alone. Melican detective no fear. Findee Ah Ling easy enough. Ah Ling tellee dem when he findee out."

The Bradys hesitated. They saw the logic of Ah Ling's argument.

He certainly could work to greater advantage alone among his people. The presence of the Bradys with him would make of him an object of suspicion.

So Old King Brady made up his mind.

"Look here, Ah Ling," he said. "We are going to take chances on you, and trust you. Of course it is risky. You could play us false."

"No, no! Me no do dat," pleaded the Chinaman. "Me swear by Great Joss! Me findee gal; bringee back. Killee Ling."

"No; we don't want you to kill Chin Ling. We want you to turn him over to us. He is a murderer, and must die in the electric chair."

At this Ah Ling's face lit up.

"Allee light!" he cried, with alacrity. "You hangee Chin Ling. I catchee for you."

"Yes."

"Allee light. Me do so. Me swear by Great Joss! Me do so."

They now left the den.

Once in the street Ah Ling separated from the Bradys.

The Bradys were taking a chance. But they knew that Ah Ling now had the necessary motive to carry out his plan.

So they felt sure that he would do so. At least, they deemed it worth while to take the chances on him.

The Bradys now went uptown to see Loo Chin at the Fifth Avenue Hotel.

It was near the hour of noon, and as they entered the lobby they saw Lee Foo in American dress walking up and down.

In no other way could Lee Foo have found accommodations at a first-class hotel. But in American dress and under the wing of Loo Chin he was all right.

When Loo Chin came to New York, unlike Chang Wu, he left his valet in Washington, so it devolved now upon Lee Foo to fill that office.

And the laundry keeper felt the dignity of his new rise in the world.

As the detectives appeared he went up to them quickly. "Yeppee," he said, in answer to their questions. "Loo Chin waitee for you. He in room. I callee him."

"Do so. We want to see him."

Loo Chin promptly appeared on the scene. He was delighted to see the Bradys.

Then they told him what they had done with Ah Ling.

Loo Chin looked sober.

"Maybe it is all right," he said; "but a Chinaman is the worst of liars. Perhaps he is fooling you."

"I don't think so," said Old King Brady. "He is thoroughly frightened, and he is very angry at his brother."

"That is favorable. At any rate, we will hope so."

"Have you learned anything new?"

"Yes. Some high leaders of the San Francisco Headquarters of the Highbinders have arrived in Washington."

"Indeed."

"They intend to come to New York. My dispatches say that they are traveling in pairs and on different trains, and with great secrecy."

"That is important."

"Yes."

"It means that there is some dark purpose back of it all."

"There is. You remember that Wun Lo is held at the Tombs for trial on the charge of murder?"

"Yes."

"You also recall that the mayor received a threatening letter from the Highbinders, demanding the release of Wun Lo?"

"We do."

CHAPTER XII.

LOO CHIN'S PLAN.

"Well," said the envoy impressively, "I fear serious things. You cannot imagine what dark and deadly methods these scoundrels have."

"What? Do you think they have such fearful designs as that?"

"I do."

"Then it is time to act."

"So I say. The whole sect should be swept from the earth; but how to do it is the question."

"Then you really think the mayor of New York is in danger?"

"Yes; and perhaps other men high in office. There is intense feeling over the fate of Wun Lo."

"That is awful."

"Indeed, it is. Why, our minister and his suite are surrounded by detectives. They keep their lives only by eternal vigilance."

The Bradys were much impressed. They had learned enough about the Highbinders to fear the worst.

So Old King Brady set his lips tightly.

"We will be ready for them," he said. "Every China-

man who crosses the North River must give an account of himself."

"Oh, they will not come into New York by such a public route. You may be sure of that," declared Loo Chin.

"Well, then, we will watch all avenues into the city."

"Very good! Now, I fear that when Chinatown hears of their coming Chin Ling and his gang will get new confidence, and we shall hear of more crimes."

"Let us get a grip on Chin Ling," said Old King Brady grimly. "I believe he is the nucleus of the whole thing."

"Yes, he is, in this city; but he is only a small factor in the whole problem."

"Very likely."

"Now, if Ah Ling is really in earnest and keeps his word, our salvation may lie through him."

"I believe he is just vengeful enough to carry out his purpose."

"Good! Then we have a chance."

The Bradys discussed matters for a long time with Loo Chin. Finally Old King Brady said:

"I have a plan to suggest. I don't know that it will work successfully, but we can at least try it."

Loo Chin was interested.

"What is it?" he asked.

"I suggest that my partner and I make up as Chinamen. You can disguise yourself, and we will haunt the slums to-night. Are you agreeable?"

"Wholly," agreed Loo Chin. "I think it is a good scheme, too."

"We can at least try it."

"Yes."

"It is my opinion that Chin Ling is somewhere in hiding there."

"There is no doubt of it."

"Well, we may run across a clew. At any rate, Miss Dean is somewhere a prisoner in that wretched district, and we must find her."

"We will do our best."

So the plan was laid. The Bradys were to meet Loo Chin that evening at the corner of the Bowery and Pell Street.

Then the Bradys took their leave.

They had the afternoon before them, but could think of no plan. It would be folly to venture into Chinatown in the daytime.

All of the Highbinders would be out of sight and nothing could be gained. In fact, it was likely that damage would result from it, for the Bradys would surely be spotted.

Neither was it of any use to take the police reserves and raid the different dens of the district.

This had already proved a failure.

Old King Brady's theory was the only one. This was to work after dark and to follow up the ringleaders.

Meanwhile, the Bradys reported at Police Headquarters and gave in the information regarding the San Francisco Highbinders that they had received from Loo Chin.

Action was at once taken.

Telegrams were sent to Washington for the capital police to be on the lookout.

Then plain-clothes men were stationed at all the railway depots and public places.

If the Highbinders should get into New York now it would only be by the very shrewdest of work.

The likelihood of their being held up was very great.

All this done, the Bradys returned to their lodgings for much-needed rest.

But when they arrived there they met with a surprising revelation.

It was a message from Loo Chin. Thus it read:

"To the Bradys:—I have some information for you. I have just had a visit from Ah Ling. He has sworn revenge upon his brother, and I think his promise to you is on the square.

"He says that he has located the hiding place of the captive girl, and is on Chin Ling's track. I suggested at once taking a posse of police and raiding the place.

"But he said this would be impossible, for the moment the police appeared the girl would be murdered, and Chin Ling would only slip into some new hole in the wall.

"So it stands. Ah Ling's plan is the most feasible. He thinks that if we all make up as you proposed and go down into Chinatown to-night he can win the game for us.

"We will work for it, anyway. So be on hand at the corner of Pell Street and Ah Ling will be there with me. Then we will try the game of strategy. I believe we will win. Yours faithfully,
Loo Chin."

The Bradys were deeply impressed with this new plan.

"That is all right," declared Harry. "I feel very sanguine now."

"So do I."

"We have the wires laid well. The old saying is, 'Set a thief to catch a thief.' We certainly have a murderer on a murderer's track, and also for the purpose of revenge. I don't believe he will go back on us."

"Nor I. I tell you, Harry, we will get the girl all safe."

"I think so."

"When we got Ah Ling we got the key to the whole case."

"That is my belief."

"I shall cling to it."

"So shall I."

The Bradys occupied the rest of the day in making notes and a record of the case.

This they did most minutely with all their cases. It was of immense value to them.

As a matter of reference even its worth could hardly be estimated. It is the business of the detective to become familiar with all criminals.

To such an extent had the Bradys carried this principle that they not only knew nearly all the criminals and their various eccentricities and relations with each other in the City of New York, but they could instinctively place a crook even in a crowded thoroughfare.

They possessed to a high degree what can be called by no better name than "detective instinct."

Nobody possessed a greater store of this peculiar intuition than either of the Bradys. It was of great value to them.

For instance, at the mention of a crook's name, even if he was a simple petty thief, it was more than likely that Old King Brady could turn to his ledger and point out his name.

And under his name would be chronicled every detail known regarding him, his career, his record and his antecedents.

These sort of archives are faithfully kept by the Parisian police, who are extremely thorough.

To some extent the American police keep such a record, in the shape of the rogues gallery.

But thousands of dangerous crooks are arrested in New York, and beyond a slight entry on the sergeant's blotter in the police station they are fined or imprisoned, and nothing more is known of them.

This very practice of the Bradys had done more to build up their reputation than anything else.

Scarcely a crook in the United States could be called by name that Old King Brady did not know him and all about him.

This saved the trouble of much tedious investigation, and enabled the detectives to get right down to work.

This very same economy of time had been the means of enabling them to at once capture many a desperate character.

For some hours the Bradys spent their time thus.

Then it came dinner time, and they went out. After a hearty repast they were ready for the night's work.

"We shall know to-night," said Old King Brady, "whether Ah Ling is true to us or is a traitor."

"I can hardly believe that he is a traitor," declared Harry.

"Well, we shall see."

At the hour appointed the Bradys proceeded to the corner of Pell Street.

Loo Chin was already there.

The Bradys in their Chinese disguise came along cautiously. They simulated the gait of the Mongolian to perfection.

Loo Chin laughed in an amused way. He had doffed his fine tunic and donned the simple garb of the low-class Chinese.

"You are a great success," he declared. "I should think you were Highbinders if I did not know differently."

The detectives laughed.

"We are much gratified," said Old King Brady. "Your criticism is valuable."

"Well, we are ready for work."

"Yes."

"Ah Ling is to meet us at the Pekin restaurant in Mot Street. Shall we not go there at once?"

"By all means."

The detectives, accompanied by Loo Chin, now made their way around into Mott Street.

They were soon before the entrance to the restaurant. But they did not enter.

There was a possibility that in the keen light they might have failed to pass inspection. The Highbinders' spies were everywhere.

So they stood in the shadows outside. Two tall Mongolians came down the street. One of them stopped, turned and spoke to Harry in the Chinese tongue.

Like a flash Loo Chin came to the rescue.

"My friend no talkee," he said quickly. "He lose voice. Allee same likee deaf and dumb man."

This explanation seemed satisfactory. He conversed a moment with Loo Chin. Then he passed on.

The envoy, with a grimace, whispered:

"That was a close call."

"Who was he?"

"One of the Highbinder spies."

This was to the Bradys a good hint of the danger they were incurring.

In American garb they would have attracted no comment whatever.

But any moment some Chinaman might address them, and they would be expected to answer.

Failure to do so would be sure to result in discovery, and this would be most disastrous.

But at this moment Ah Ling appeared.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE FATE OF AH LING.

Ah Ling came out of the restaurant and carelessly joined Loo Chin on the sidewalk.

He at once said, in a low tone:

"Melican detectives here?"

"Yes, they are," replied Loo Chin.

"Allee light. Me finde out where Melican gal is. She in house with four armed Chineemen at door. Police come, they killee her quick an' run away."

"Ah, where is the house?"

"Come, me showee you."

They followed Ah Ling down the street and turned into a little court. He pointed to a shabby old three-story house.

The lower story was occupied by a Chinese butcher. The windows of the upper stories were blinded.

Ah Ling looked away as he said:

"Dat house! Dat de place where Melican gal is. She allee safe. See men at door? They no fail to kill Melican gal if police come."

"Hang the police!" cried Old King Brady. "I don't care for them. But I'd like to know just what room she is in?"

"Dunno, but I t'ink it am dat room over de front door. Alle day curtains pulled down."

The Bradys looked keenly at the curtained window. The impulse was upon them to again surround the house with police and make an effort to rescue the girl prisoner in the raid.

But they could see that this would be fatal to her.

There was no doubt but that Chin Ling had ordered her killed in the event of police attack.

The detectives were stumped. Here was the captive girl almost within their reach, yet they could not help her.

It was a maddening reflection. Many a man would have recklessly thrown away his best chances, ruled by impulse.

But the Bradys wisely did not.

Loo Chin was pacing up and down in a restless way.

Suddenly he turned to Ah Ling and said:

"Every Chinaman in this place knows you are Chin Ling's brother?"

"Yeppee," replied Ah Ling.

"Even these guards at the door knows this. Now why can't you get a pen and a piece of paper and write a note in Chinese to the doorkeepers. It may purport to come from Chin Ling.

"Write it this way: 'Let my brother, Ah Ling, enter and see white girl. If he thinks best to take her elsewhere, obey his orders.'

"Do you see? It will be all the easier if you chance to know the name of the doorkeeper. I believe they will let you pass. It is probable that they know nothing of the trouble between you and your brother."

The detectives signified their approval.

"That is a brilliant plan," said Old King Brady. "You may be able to easily smuggle her out. In any event, if you get into trouble whistle and we will all rush in and help you out."

"Here is a pistol," said Loo Chin. "Get between the girl and her hired assassin. Shoot them down if they attempt to do her harm."

Ah Ling hesitated.

"My brother may have told them not to lettee me in," he said.

"Well, they will then refuse to admit you. That is all the harm that can be done."

Ah Ling's face lit up.

"Me slee!" he cried. "Givee me pistol!"

Old King Brady gave him the weapon.

Ah Ling now paused again. It was plain something embarrassed him.

"Me not know how writtee," he said, finally.

"Oh, I see!" exclaimed Loo Chin. "Well, we'll fix that. I'll do it myself. Where is there a scrivener's?"

"Me show," said Ah Ling. "Comee with me."

"All right," agreed Loo Chin. Then to the Bradys:

"Wait here in the shadows. This fellow does not know how to write. I must go with him to a Chinese scrivener where we can get ink, pen and paper. I will write the message."

"All right," said Old King Brady. "We will wait here."

The detectives drew back in the shadows and waited. It seemed an eternity.

Tall, shadowy figures glided past them at intervals. But if they were seen by the passing Mongolians they were not spoken to. They were all safe.

Finally Loo Chin and Ah Ling returned.

Ah Ling had the letter purporting to come from Chin Ling.

"Have you seen any one enter the house?" asked Loo Chin.

"No," replied Harry.

"Then doubtless the coast is clear. Now all is ready, Ah Ling. Show your diplomacy."

"Allee light," said Ah Ling, with a confident grin. "You sleep!"

The Chinaman glided across the street. He tapped lightly at the door.

The watchers saw it open slightly. Then Ah Ling disappeared inside.

The game was on.

Breathlessly they waited and watched.

The dim light in the room over the door seemed to grow brighter.

"It is a success!" gasped Loo Chin. "He got in, all right!"

Intensely excited they waited. Their ears were strained for any signal of distress.

But the light burned the same in the room above. Still no sound or sign came forth.

What did it mean?

"He is biding his time," said Loo Chin. "You can be sure he is on the right track. He will rescue her."

Suddenly the light went out.

The house was all in darkness. In doubt and perplexity the detectives knew not what to do.

Just then the house door opened.

A single dark figure emerged and glided away down the street.

"It is all right," said Loo Chin, with a deep breath. "Ah Ling has sent one of them off on an errand. He will appear with the girl very soon."

"Do you believe that?" asked Old King Brady dubiously. "I don't wish to appear skeptical, but I fear there is something wrong."

"What can we do?" asked Harry.

"Wait," said Loo Chin. "I am sure Ah Ling is all right."

The minutes drifted into an hour. All was silent in the dark house opposite.

There was no longer any doubt. Something was wrong.

Ah Ling would have appeared or sent word long ere this. Cautiously they crossed the street.

Then they were given a surprise. The door of the house was wide open.

Old King Brady drew his dark lantern and flashed its rays into the squalid and unfurnished hall.

Stairs were seen leading upward. No sign of the guards was visible.

"They are gone," whispered Harry. "Now we know something is wrong. Either Ah Ling has got the girl and escaped by a back way or he has met with trouble."

"Let us see."

Up the stairs they went with revolvers in hand.

At the landing they saw the open door of the front chamber. It was furnished in the Chinese fashion.

But no sound of life came from it. Old King Brady flashed his lantern light into the place.

Then all gave a start of horror.

An inanimate figure lay on the floor. Beneath it was a pool of blood. Old King Brady flashed the lantern light upon it.

It was Ah Ling.

The Chinaman's head was half severed from the trunk. He was slashed and cut in horrible fashion.

The Highbinders had won again.

Aghast, the detectives and Loo Chin stood gazing upon the awful spectacle. The latter bent down and examined the dead man.

As he did so he uttered an exclamation.

Pinned to the dead Chinaman's heart with a dagger was the message which Loo Chin had written and which Ah Ling had relied upon to carry out his plans.

It was easy now to understand how he had failed.

What was to be done?

Pursuit was out of the question. The police arrived and took charge of the place. The body was taken to the Morgue.

And that was all.

Not a Chinaman could be found who could give a clew. None had seen anything or found anything.

And there the matter rested.

Only the Bradys and Loo Chin knew the real murderers of it, and they kept it to themselves.

But they were determined upon one thing. The first view of Chin Ling would result in his arrest.

But the question was, how were they to get on his track?

He was as elusive as a will-o'-the-wisp. There was no more cunning fiend in the whole of Chinatown.

Ah Ling's murder was taken very phlegmatically by the residents of Chinatown. They evinced little interest.

He had not been especially popular. Moreover, it was not deemed especially safe to speak one's mind in public.

The power of the Highbinders was potent. It was a thrall upon Chinatown.

The Bradys could see this.

The detectives were now in the worst position yet. They were defeated absolutely.

The death of Ah Ling had cut off the last hope of an immediate rescue of the imprisoned girl.

"What's the use?" said Harry desperately. "The girl is somewhere hidden in Chinatown. The region is limited. There is no reason why we should not find her."

"No one would be better pleased to know a method than I said Old King Brady.

"We will keep plugging away."

"Certainly."

But now there came a new turn in affairs.

Word from Washington recalled Loo Chin. The Chinese minister, for some reason or other, demanded his presence.

He left for Washington, taking Lee Foo with him.

"I don't understand what it means," he said. "Perhaps the minister is displeased with my efforts. Or there may be a new plan on hand."

"However it may be," declared Old King Brady, "I am sorry, and I hope we may meet again."

"Thank you. I think it possible."

After the departure of Loo Chin the Bradys decided to apply a new method to their work.

They discarded all manner of disguise, and went boldly down into Chinatown and openly avowed their purpose.

They went from one shop to another, and made open inquiries about the Highbinders. They played the bluff, loud and high.

The Mongolians were plainly surprised. Some of the better class would have been glad to have given information.

But this they dared not do.

It would have cost them their lives, as they well knew; and thus matters were when one day the Bradys hit upon a new plan.

It had been well known that certain Highbinders from San Francisco were on their way to New York.

The detectives had been on the lookout for them. But thus far they had seen nothing of them.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE HOUSE IN GRAND STREET.

Plain-clothes men had been stationed at the Jersey City ferries to watch for the coming of these emissaries.

So it happened that a Mongolian of somewhat prosperous appearance was arrested just as he left the Pennsylvania Railroad train.

He was taken to the New York Headquarters and put under examination.

He was a Chinaman of the higher class, and had plenty of money on his person. Moreover, the remnant of a California railroad ticket was found upon him.

That he was one of the Highbinder envoys from San Francisco, there was no doubt.

But this could not be proved.

He was slick and plausible in giving an account of himself, as all Chinamen are.

"Me honest Chinese," he said. "Me Foh Lung, from San Francisco. Me no Highbinder."

Word was sent to the Bradys, and they at once went down headquarters.

Foh Lung was in his cell when they called.

The detectives interviewed him at great length. The Mongolian protested most solemnly that he was an innocent man.

"Me no Highbinder," he declared. "Foh Lung innocent man."

In vain the detectives tried to break his story. They were unable to do so.

The result of this was that Foh Lung secured the services of a lawyer, who demanded his release.

He had been arrested simply on suspicion, and his time had now expired. He could not legally be detained longer.

There was no evidence of absolute sort against him.

So he was discharge.

But the moment he left the prison the Bradys took his trail.

Like sleuthhounds they hung to the Chinaman. They were, of course, in close disguise.

They followed him from the Tombs into Chinatown.

Here he proceeded to a Chinese hotel, kept by one Wang Foo.

Now, Wang Foo, as the Bradys had good reason to suspect, was a Highbinder.

He was an object of suspicion, and this only confirmed their belief that Foh Lung was one of the California delegation.

"He is our man," said Old King Brady; "and he has come here to confer with the Highbinders of New York."

"That means Chin Ling."

"Yes."

"If we hang to him there is no reason why we should not get Ling."

"I believe so."

Therefore the Bradys were determined not to lose sight of their man. Foh Lung kept close in the hotel for the whole of that day.

And the Bradys, relieving each other in the watch, kept a close guard over the place. Nothing of note transpired until evening came.

Then about eight o'clock Foh Lung emerged from the place. He was dressed in the plainest of clothes.

He looked up and down the street cautiously. Then he made his way out of Mott Street into the Bowery.

The detectives followed him.

Foh Lung went eastward along Grand Street. Near the ferry was a ramshackle old building.

The lower story was occupied by Fun Lee, a Chinese laundryman. The upper stories were squalid tenements.

Foh Lung paused before the door of the laundry.

He looked searchingly up and down the street.

Then he entered the place.

"At last!" cried Old King Brady. "We have the lead now, Harry."

"I believe you."

"This is the Highbinders' den."

"I hope so."

"I think we can be sure of it. Foh Lung has not come here for nothing."

This seemed plausible.

The Bradys now watched the place for some little while. They noted some peculiar facts.

Over the door of the place hung the sign of Fun Lee, laundryman, but the curtains at the door and windows were closely pulled down.

No view of the interior could be had. If it was a laundry certainly the door should be open.

"That is a fake," said Old King Brady. "Let us make sure of it."

The two detectives crossed the street.

On the opposite side was a cobbler's shop. From the window an easy view of the laundry could be had.

Over the cobbler's was the sign:

JOHN SPEED, Boots and Shoes.

The detectives opened the door and went in. The cobbler sat in the window working at his last.

He would have risen, but the old detective said:

"Keep your seat, sir. We are not customers. We have come for information."

"Indeed, sir! Well, I am at your disposal," said the shoemaker.

"We want to ask you if you know Fun Lee, who has a laundry across the street?"

"The laundry?" exclaimed Speed. "Humph! It's not much of a laundry. All the washing that is done there could not be seen under a microscope."

"Ah, how is that?"

"I don't know. Fun Lee must be a Chinese millionaire. He certainly makes no effort to get trade."

"Is not that strange?"

"Well, yes, I suppose so; but these Chinese are queer chaps, you know."

"You are right, there."

"I make an honest living, but I have to work for it."

"From which we are to infer that Fun Lee does not work?"

"Hardly. People sometimes go there to get a washing done, but the door is always locked."

"Indeed! Do any other Chinamen call there?"

"That is all I see going in or out. I just saw one go in a few moments ago."

"Do you know Fun Lee personally?"

"No; but I have seen him."

"Ah! What does he look like?"

"I can't say. He is a Chinaman; they all look alike to me."

"Thank you."

The detectives went out.

They were now sure that the place was a Highbinders' den. Old King Brady would have staked his life on it.

"It's all right, Harry," he said. "We are once more in the game. Perhaps we shall find that Miss Dean is really confined here."

"I hope so, and that we may effect her rescue. Ought we not to take chances and surround the place?"

"There is the old objection to that which Ah Ling gave us."

"What?"

"They might take it into their heads to murder her. It is certain they would not give her up alive."

"Well, that is so. We have, then, to use strategy, have we not?"

"It is our only chance."

"Now how can we manage to find out what is going on in that place?"

"Let us take a look about it."

The Bradys crept down in the shadows near the laundry. They entered the dingy hallway leading to the tenements.

Here they placed their ears to the floor. They could hear faintly the murmur of voices in the basement below.

The first tenement of the house was unoccupied. The upper floor no doubt held poor families.

It was dark in the hallway. The Bradys were not afraid of being seen.

The rickety door of the tenement was held only by a frail lock.

Old King Brady placed his shoulder to it and pushed it in.

Silently the detectives crept into the tenement. They got down on their hands and knees.

From one room to another they crept, at times placing their ears to the floor. They listened intently.

They heard plainly the murmur of voices in the Chinese tongue.

But they could not tell what was said. This was baffling.

Finally Old King Brady's ingenuity suggested a plan. The floor was loose, and many of the boards were so far gone that they had become separated long since from the nails.

The old detective inserted his fingers in a crack and pulled gently upward. There was a faint creak as the timber gave way.

But the voices below did not cease. This was evidence that the sound had not been heard.

"It's all right," whispered Harry. "Let's get up the next one."

This was done.

The Bradys soon had lifted enough of the floor to make quite a large aperture. Only the rotten lathes and a crumbling ceiling now intervened.

Old King Brady drew his knife, and with the blade gently scraped away the plaster alongside one of the lathes. In a few moments he had actually made a crack wide enough to gaze through.

Then the old detective leaned over the edge of the flooring and applied his eye to the crack.

What he saw gave him a thrill.

The room below was dark.

It was hard to guess what it contained; but in the next room was a light, and the door was ajar.

By squinting sidewise the old detective could see into that room.

He saw the pigtail and yellow face of a Chinaman.

Opposite him sat another.

The first was Foh Lung. He could not see the face of the other. They were conversing in excited fashion.

But unfortunately it was in the Chinese tongue, and the detectives could gather nothing from it.

"Too bad," whispered Harry.

"Yes."

"Who do you fancy the other is?"

"I don't know. As far as I can see, it might be Chin Ling."

"Whew! If that was only true."

"If I knew it I believe I'd drop down onto him."

"Hello! What's that?"

It was a long, deep-drawn sigh. It came plainly to the detectives' hearing. It seemed to be in the very room they were in.

But they knew better.

It came from the room below. There was no doubt of this. There was somebody in that room.

But it was too dark to see who it was.

However, the Bradys were not to remain long in doubt. Suddenly the two Chinamen at the table arose.

Then both detectives were thrilled. One of them was seen plainly to be Chin Ling.

For a moment the Bradys with difficulty restrained themselves. The impulse was strong to leap down through the ceiling.

But they waited.

Chin Ling spoke in English:

"Belly plitty Melican gal; Chin Ling makee her his wife. You see?"

The Chinaman flashed the light into the dark room.

CHAPTER XV.

WHICH IS THE END.

As he did so the Bradys gave a gasp. Awful horror came over them.

The sight they beheld stirred them to the bottom of their souls. They saw a miserable couch and on the edge of it sat a young girl.

It was Emily Dean.

But the millionaire's daughter would hardly have been known by her friends.

She was a wreck of a woman. Her face was drawn and ghastly.

She shivered and clutched the edge of the cot, weakly, and cast a half insane gaze at her captor.

The two yellow fiends stood in the doorway and grinned at her.

The detectives felt their blood crawl. The captive girl arose.

And as she did so something clanked. The Bradys saw

a manacle on her wrist. A small, steel chain connected it with a staple in the floor.

Escape was impossible for Emily Dean.

Indeed, it was doubtful if she would have had the ambition to attempt it, for she was constantly stupefied with the drug given her.

It was a horrible thing to gaze upon the physical wreck of the woman below and recall that she had a few weeks since been a most beautiful society belle.

The detectives clenched their hands.

But they waited.

"Slee!" cried Chin Ling. "Belly fine Melican gal. Standee up. Chin Ling muchee kiss."

The hideous yellow fiend advanced toward the young girl.

She shrank from him, her eyes wild with terror.

"Oh, God!" she gasped. "Will you see me cursed in this awful way? Save me, I pray Thee! Don't put your treacherous hands on me!"

Chin Ling came, grinning, nearer.

"Plitty Melican gal!" he said, in a cooing way. "No flaid Chineeman. Givee lillie kiss, allee same."

Then he darted forward and clutched her shoulders with his talon-like finers.

This was more than the Bradys could stand.

Even as her dull shriek went up Old King Brady put his weight on the plastering and down with a crash he went. A great aperture was left in the ceiling.

When the old detective went through thus to the floor of the room below, he lit full and fair on the shoulders of Foh Lung.

The Chinese Highbinder was crushed to the floor, senseless.

But unfortunately the old detective's head struck the jamb of the door and he was momentarily stunned.

Harry leaped down after him, but when he struck the floor Chin Ling, who had been for an instant stupefied, yelled wildly in the Chinese tongue.

Instantly from the back room there came skurrying a half dozen yellow demons. The young detective saw that they were in a hornets' nest.

He had intended to leap upon Chin Ling, but that elusive rascal had sprang through the door.

Harry had just time to get into position to defend himself when the demons were upon him.

With lightning agility the young detective grasped one of the chairs and whirled it over his head.

The Chinese minions of Chin Ling were armed with daggers. It was their purpose to murder the interlopers.

But Harry felled the first of them with the chair.

He hurled it at the next and then Old King Brady leaped up, somewhat dazed, but ready to fight for his life.

"Give it to 'em, boy!" he yelled. "Give it to 'em! Knock out every one you can. Dip into 'em!"

The old detective evaded the knife thrust of one Mongolian and planted such a terrible blow in his face with his right fist that the fellow went down, senseless.

The next he caught by the wrist and giving it a wrench brought the wretch to his knees with agony.

Then he kicked him over into insensibility just as the next miscreant came to him.

In all their lives the Bradys never forgot that fight in the Highbinders' den.

Right and left they rushed the yellow fiends. Four of them were rendered hors de combat in quick time.

Still they seemed to be coming in a whirlwind and greater numbers. Up to this moment neither detective had thought of fighting to kill.

But now they saw that it was already a question of life or death.

They were tiring and the numbers were overwhelming. They would be overcome and murdered.

"I am almost out, partner!" breathed Harry, desperately.

"So am I."

"We can't die this way."

"No."

"Shall we use guns?"

"Yes."

Instantly Old King Brady pulled out his revolver, but he had no intention of making a slaughter.

He wanted only to stop the horde of yellow devils.

So he acted accordingly.

He was a dead shot. In all his travels he had never found his match with the revolver at any range.

So he raised the pistol and fired with deadly accuracy.

Crack! one Celestial sank down with a bullet in the calf of his leg.

Crack! crack!

Two more went down. One with a bullet in his shoulder, another with his wrist shattered.

Thus the old detective rained the shots at the foe. In no case did he make a fatal shot.

But every shot crippled. One after another the Celestials went down. There were already six on the floor, besides the four others knocked out in other ways.

This was more than even Highbinder courage could stand.

The line of Chinamen wavered and then followed a precipitate retreat. It was Old King Brady's desire to capture as many of them as he could.

So he fired at their legs.

Two more were dropped before they succeeded in reaching a court in the rear of the tenement.

Then they scattered like sheep. The old detective pursued them.

He was chagrined to realize that Chin Ling was not among them. The wily Chinaman had sought safety in early flight.

In the court the Bradys halted. It was necessary to decide instantly upon a plan of action.

It was their impulse to pursue the fleeing ones; but this could not very well be done.

A dozen crippled Highbinders were in their power now.

It would be a comparatively easy matter to make prisoners of them. Then there was the captive girl.

She had fallen upon the bed in a swoon.

"No use, Harry!" said Old King Brady. "We'll have to run Chin Ling down later."

"All right," agreed the young detective. "Just as you say."

"We have won a great victory."

"Yes."

"This is a blow the Highbinders will feel. I believe we have them going."

"So do I."

So back into the tenement went the detectives. Old King Brady kept surveillance while Harry went to get help.

The police reserves came in a hurry. Harry also brought an ambulance.

Several doctors were quickly on hand. The wounded Chinese had their injuries dressed and were driven away to the Tombs.

But the captive girl was gently placed in an ambulance and taken to a hospital.

It was many weeks before she was herself again. She hung between life and death for a long time.

Her friends overwhelmed the Bradys with praise and gratitude. The newspapers dwelt upon the wonderful work of the detectives.

The Highbinders had been dealt a blow from which they would not soon recover.

Indeed, many of their prominent leaders were in the lot captured by the Bradys.

They were at once incarcerated in the Tombs, to be held for trial. The charges against them could only result in a visit to the electric chair.

For every one of them had been implicated in the terrible Highbinder murders. Foh Lung begged hard for his liberty.

"Me no Highbinder," he declared; "me no know Highbinders in Fun Lee's place. Me honest Chinaman."

But the Bradys laughed.

"He is the worst devil of them all!" they declared.

The detectives now received a particularly pleasing message from Washington. Thus it read:

"To the Bradys—I send you my congratulations. You have done honest Chinamen and the world at large a mighty service.

"Our Embassy extend their gratitude and appreciation, and acknowledge that you are the peer of all American detectives. Yours faithfully, Loo Chin."

This was most gratifying to the Bradys, but there was one thing yet undone.

Chin Ling, the arch-conspirator of all, was still at large.

But his liberty was at present worth little to him.

The condition of affairs in Chinatown had greatly changed now that the spell of the Highbinders was for the time broken.

The oppressed people recovered from the reign of terror and it became an unsafe place for Highbinders in Mott Street.

So it happened that Chin Ling became a fugitive in his own stronghold. He was unable to show his head safely in Chinatown.

There was only one recourse left, and this was to flee to San Francisco.

But a Chinaman is a marked individual. Escape is not easy for him.

The Bradys received a despatch one day from Buffalo.

"Come on at once. I believe we have your Highbinder, Chin Ling. Yours, Chief of Police."

Before another day the Bradys had returned from Buffalo with Chin Ling. He was a spectacle of abject misery.

But for all that he expiated his crimes in the Tombs prison. He cheated the electric chair in suicide.

¶This last coup wound up the Bradys' great Highbinder case. It was a memorable one indeed.

But they were soon busy on another, of which we hope to tell later.

THE END.

Read "THE BRADYS AND THE SERPENT RING; OR, THE STRANGE CASE OF THE FORTUNE TELLER," which will be the next number (180) of "Secret Service."

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