

SECRET SERVICE

OLD AND YOUNG KING BRADY, DETECTIVES.

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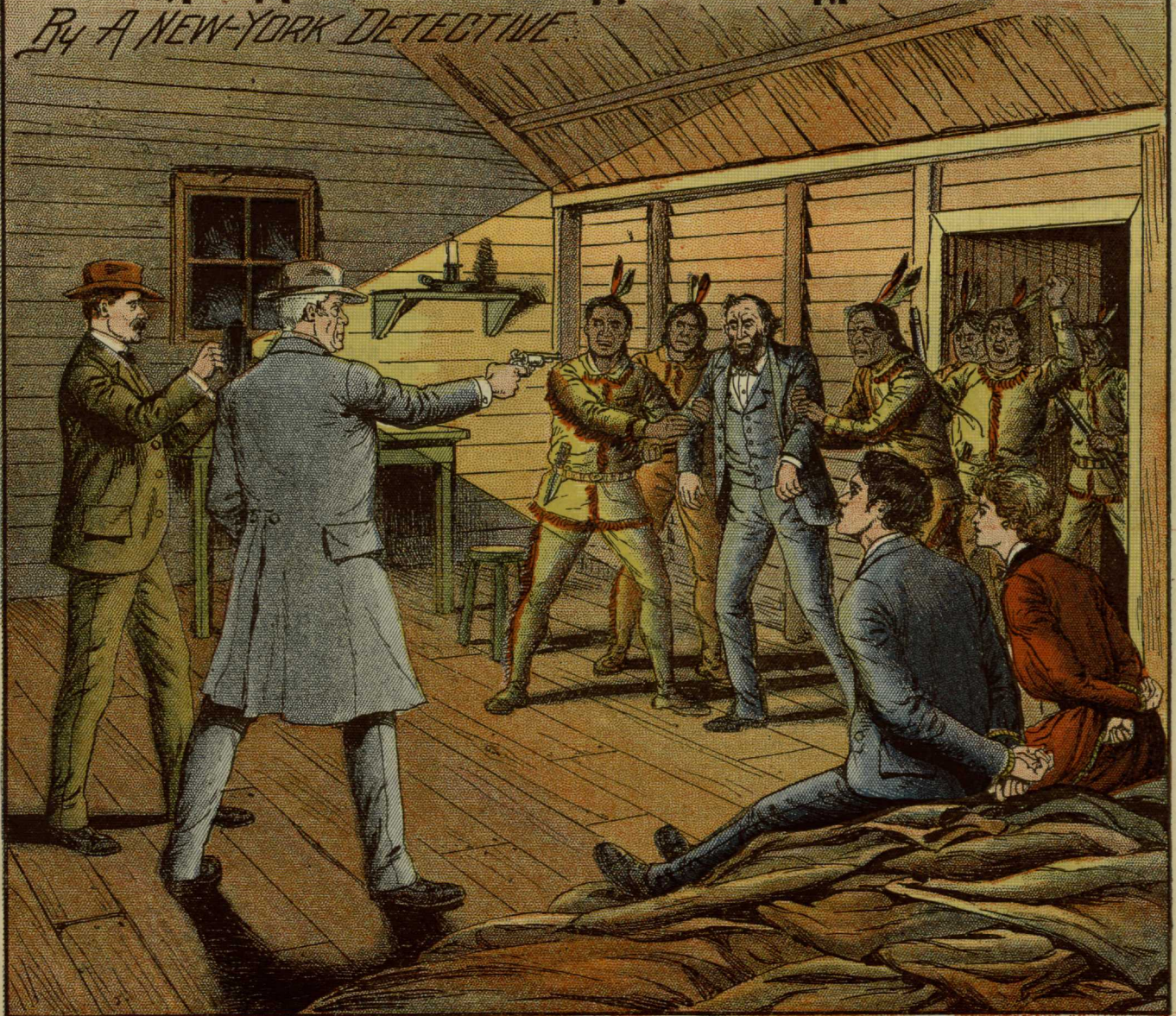
NEW YORK, SEPTEMBER 18, 1903.

Price 5 Cents.

THE BRADYS AT GOLD HILL

OR, THE MYSTERY OF THE MAN FROM MONTANA.

By A NEW-YORK DETECTIVE



Into the hut came two Indians dragging Dr. Rhymer between them. Running Deer was not one of them. "Come on!" shouted Old King Brady, dashing in through the door, followed by Banta, who flashed the light ahead.

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(Continued on page 3 of cover.)

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NEW YORK, SEPTEMBER 18, 1903.

Price 5 Cents.

The Bradys at Gold Hill;

OR,

The Mystery of the Man from Montana.

BY A NEW YORK DETECTIVE.

CHAPTER I.

A MURDER IN THE MURRAY HILL HOTEL.

Young King Brady, the pupil and partner of the world-famed New York detective, Old King Brady, having retired late one evening, was awakened about eight o'clock next morning by the ringing of the telephone bell.

At this time the Bradys were keeping bachelors' hall in an old mansion on Washington square, in the city of New York.

Old King Brady had grown tired of lodging, and although but seldom in the city, unless he happened to have a case there, he desired to be comfortable while at home.

Harry, as Young King Brady is usually called, jumped out of bed and hurried to the telephone, which was in one corner of the room.

The call proved to be from Jack Wells, the widely-known night clerk of the Murray Hill Hotel.

The following conversation took place over the 'phone:

"No; this is not Old King Brady. It is Harry."

"Oh, how are you? Is Old King Brady in town?"

"Don't know. He was to come back from Washington last night. I got in late, and don't know whether he returned or not. I can find out in a minute. What's wanted?"

"It's a case of a man being found dead in one of our rooms."

"Murdered?"

"Murder or suicide—we don't know which."

"Who is the man?"

"He registered as Carrol Calef, Gold Hill, Montana."

"Do you want us to come up and investigate?"

"Yes; the proprietor wishes you to look into the matter before he notifies the police. He wants to keep it out of the papers, if he can."

"All right. I'll be up, and bring Old King Brady with me, in case he has returned."

Harry hung up the receiver, and pulling on his trousers, hurried along the hall, knocking at the door of the front room.

"Hello!" came the answer in the old detective's familiar voice.

"Oh, you are there, are you, governor?" replied Harry. "I didn't feel sure you had got home."

"Yes; come right in," was the reply.

Old King Brady was sitting up in bed when Harry entered.

"Well, what's up now?" he demanded. "I intended to stay in bed until about noon, but it seems impossible to get any rest."

"I'm sorry to disturb you, but we have just had a call over the 'phone from the Murray Hill Hotel."

"What's the matter there?"

"Case of murder or suicide. Man found dead in a room. They want us to come right up."

"Well, we can't refuse. I have had several good cases from the Murray Hill. I will dress, and we will go right along up."

"Without breakfast?"

"No; see the cook, and tell her to put breakfast right on the table. I'll be down in five minutes."

Harry returned to his room, dressed, ordered breakfast, and in less than an hour the detectives reported at the hotel.

They interviewed the night clerk, who had remained up to meet them, the proprietor being away.

"What is it now, Jack?" asked Old King Brady, who knew the man well.

"A mysterious piece of business. I don't know what you will be able to make out of it," was the reply.

"Just state the particulars of the case, please."

"Come into the private office," said the clerk. "Or, better still, we will go directly to the room; where we are sure not to be disturbed."

Ascending by the elevator, Jack Wells and the Bradys entered room 962, on the ninth floor of the hotel.

The shade had been pulled down, but Jack Wells, slightly raising it, turned to face the ghastly object which the two detectives were already contemplating.

A dead man in a chair!

An ordinary sight enough, to be sure, but here were surrounding circumstances which necessarily put the case among the mysteries.

Jack Wells bolted the door, and for a moment no one spoke.

The man was perhaps sixty years of age, a large, powerfully built person, with iron-gray hair and heavy mustache.

He was but partially dressed, having removed his coat, vest, shoes and stockings.

His head had dropped forward on his breast, and but for the arm of the chair he would very likely have fallen on the floor.

Death had evidently come suddenly.

In one hand he held an open letter, upon the floor in a line with the fingers of the other lay a tiny metal cylinder about as large as one of those little boxes which stationers sell filled with leads for lead pencils.

The bed covers were turned down, and a dress suit case containing clothing lay open upon a table, while a suit of pajamas, evidently taken from it, had been carelessly thrown on the bed.

This was about all the detectives saw at the first casual glance.

"There you are," said Jack Wells. "I know no more about this man than you do. Did he kill himself? Is it a case of heart disease, or a case of murder? That's what I want you to decide. You may, if you will, find out all about the man, notify his people and send the bill to the house. As you know, in cases like this we always want to do the right thing."

"Just so," replied Old King Brady. "Let me have a clear look. Have you read that letter?"

"No; I have done nothing. The man left word at the office to be called at half-past seven. As the bellboy could not make him hear, we looked over the transom, and, finding how the case stood, telephoned for you. That is all I know."

"Yes, yes," replied Old King Brady. "Well, we will see what we can learn."

He raised the head and laid his hand upon the man's forehead.

"He died last night, all right," he remarked.

"The bed shows that."

"Yes; and it proves positively that it is not a case of suicide."

"I don't know about that," said Jack Wells. "If this man had wanted to make it appear that he died of heart disease, he might have made these preparations for the express purpose of deceiving us."

"No."

"But why?"

"Because there are not preparations enough. If such had been his intention, he would have gone more into detail. I am positive of this."

"I bow to the superior judgment of Old King Brady. It is then either murder or heart disease."

"That is certain. The door was locked on the inside?"

"Yes."

"No way of getting in by the window?"

"Impossible, as you can see at a glance."

"I assumed that it was so, and the room is not connected with the others on each side of it. We shall have to cut out the murder theory, as far as the ordinary acceptance of the word goes."

"So I say, and yet the man was the picture of health when he signed my register last night."

"That counts for nothing. Now for the letter; I see the envelope which lies in his lap here is addressed to the hotel."

"Yes; the letter came a few days ago, and is postmarked Gold Hill, Mont., the place from which he registered."

"Yes."

"It was mailed a week ago," remarked Young King Brady, taking up the envelope and examining it more closely.

"And was waiting for him at least a couple of days," replied Jack Wells.

Old King Brady, without attempting to move the letter, raised the hands, and, putting on his glasses, read the letter which ran as follows:

"Gold Hills, ——

"DEAR CAP: All ready. Let her go. Shall look for him this day week. Will meet him at the Buffalo Gate.

"ULEX."

"Tells nothing," said Old King Brady, who, having read the letter aloud, let the hand which clutched it drop.

"That's right," said Jack Wells.

"Now, the only thing is this little pencil lead case," continued the detective, stooping down and picking up the metal cylinder.

"I was waiting for you to come to that," said Jack Wells.

"You have not touched it?"

"No; it is just as I saw it when I first entered the room. Evidently it dropped out of his hand."

"And must be the last thing which happened before he died," said Old King Brady.

"Yes; it is a pencil lead case, all right, but it is empty, and I see no leads scattered about."

The detective examined the tiny cylinder with great care. Then getting down on his hands and knees, he looked about and picked up a little metal cover on the floor.

"Well, what now?" asked Harry. "Made a discovery?"

"I think so. I shall now decide it."

Old King Brady put the little cylinder under his nose.

"Well?" demanded Harry, eagerly.

"Don't know yet."

"But you suspect prussic acid poisoning?"

"I do."

"What?" cried Jack Wells.

"I cannot detect the odor of prussic acid in this little box," said Old King Brady, "but we once had a case where prussic acid was sent to a man by mail, and he died merely by smelling of it. My partner scents a case of the same sort here."

"Is it possible for a man to die merely from smelling prussic acid?" demanded Jack Wells.

"Most certainly, if the acid is concentrated, and his heart is any way weak," replied Old King Brady.

"But if you think there had been prussic acid in that little box I should think you would be afraid to smell of it yourself."

"Not at all. The danger only exists when it is first uncorked. Prussic acid is most volatile. If this box contained it, and it was spilled on the floor, not a trace would remain after all these hours."

"Your theory leaves us quite in the dark, Mr. Brady, unless—by jove, there is something in what you say!"

"Hello, what have you thought of now?"

"That little box was in the letter, all right. I remember distinctly feeling a bunch in the envelope. It has just come back to me now."

"You are positive?"

"I am."

"Then that settles the case. It is one of murder, providing we can prove there was prussic acid in the box."

"How can that be proved?"

"By any chemist. We will let that stand for the present, and proceed to examine this man's clothes."

A careful search was made.

It is not necessary to detail all the belongings of the dead man.

The things found which most interested the Bradys were a roll of bills amounting to something over a hundred dollars, and a letter, which read as follows:

NEW YORK ———

Capt. C. Calef, Gold Hill, Mont.

Dear Sir: Replying to yours of the 9th, would say that the property in question belongs to me, as you surmise.

If a rich gold strike has been made in the valley, as you say, I certainly do not care to sell the land until I know more about the discovery, and perhaps not then. It belonged to my father, and as I am in a position to raise all necessary capital to work a gold mine worth working, I shall probably decide to develop it. I want to know more about the matter, in any case, before I commit myself. I know of no reason why I should not go to Montana shortly, but first I think you had better come to New York and see me. Assuming that you are not a millionaire, I enclose a postoffice order for \$200, which you will please accept to cover expense of trip. Wire me if you decide to come. If not, you can return the money. Very truly yours,

J. BILLINGS BANTA,

40 Wall St., New York.

"Here's our standing clew," said Old King Brady. "Mr. Wells, you will have to notify the police, and send for a doctor. There is no help for it."

"Then you consider it a case of murder?"

"I cannot say. I consider it a case which should be fully investigated."

"And this man Banta?"

"I do not know him."

"Well," said the clerk, "what must be, has to be, I suppose. I will leave the case in your hands."

CHAPTER II.

THE MYSTERY OF BASIL BARRYMORE.

Leaving the Murray Hill Hotel, the Bradys went by the elevated to the corner of Canal street and the Bowery, and entered a certain building, where several of the most expert chemists in New York make their headquarters.

Dr. P. H. Brown is one of these. He is a man whose reputation is well known.

Dr. Brown received the Bradys cordially, having been often associated with them in their work.

Briefly detailing what had happened, Old King Brady presented the little box.

"It is impossible to tell by the odor," said Dr. Brown. "There is nothing more volatile than prussic acid. It seems to me that I can detect traces of the smell, but there is one sure test."

The doctor arose, and taking down a bottle from a shelf which held a great number of other bottles, pulled out the glass stopper and poured a few drops of a colorless liquid into the top of the little cylinder.

Covering the top with his thumb, he shook it about for a moment and then turned the liquid into a glass test tube.

It was now no longer colorless, but instead had assumed a pale blue shade.

"Prussic acid," said Dr. Brown, handing back the little box.

"Absolutely certain?" queried Old King Brady.

"Absolutely certain."

"Thank you. How much do I owe you, doctor?"

"Nothing at all," was the reply. "I am only too glad to be able to oblige you, Mr. Brady. Of course, you know how difficult prussic acid is to obtain?"

"Certainly. It can only be procured by a chemist, or on a doctor's prescription."

"That's it. You say that the box is supposed to have come from Gold Hill, Mont.?"

"Yes."

"I consider it very doubtful if the acid could have been obtained there."

"I'm inclined to agree with you," replied Old King Brady, and then with his partner he left the doctor's office and hurried on downtown.

No. 40 Wall street was the detective's next call.

He found Mr. J. Billings Banta's office on the tenth floor.

The business given on the door was that of a lawyer.

Upon entering the office they found it was but a single room, where a stylish-looking young fellow of some twenty-three years sat at a desk writing a letter.

"Yes, I am Mr. Banta," he replied in response to Old King Brady's question. "What do you wish?"

Old King Brady presented his card.

"We have been called upon a case in which your name is involved, Mr. Banta," he said. "We want a little information."

"My name!" exclaimed the lawyer. "Well, well! I am glad to know that my name has become known to some one at last. To be frank with you, I wasn't aware that I had any case. I'm only a year out of the law school, Mr. Brady. I've just started in here."

"It is in connection with Captain Carrol Calef, of Gold Hill, Mont.," replied the detective.

"Never heard the name," said Mr. Banta. "Don't know the man at all."

"Is that so?"

"It certainly is so. I never even heard of the place."

"Be good enough to tell me who wrote this letter," said Old King Brady, taking the letter taken from the dead man's pocket.

Mr. Banta read it through carefully.

"Why, it is in my paper, and in one of my envelopes!" he exclaimed. "But I never wrote it."

"I see you have a typewriting machine here. The letter is typewritten, even to the signature."

"I always sign my letters with a pen."

"Which is usual. You employ a stenographer?"

"I had a young man here for a short time. He took French leave the other day, and I haven't seen him since."

"Indeed! What was his name?"

"Basil Barrymore."

"How old a person was he?"

"Twenty, perhaps. He was very efficient—knew his business. I was sorry to see him go."

"He simply disappeared, you say?"

"Yes; went out to lunch and didn't come back again. I was called up to New Haven on business that afternoon. Didn't get back till this morning, when I found the mail on the floor and everything just as I left it. Basil evidently has not been here since I left."

"And he is the only person who had access to your paper besides yourself?"

"The only one, Mr. Brady. Really, this is a very singular affair. Give me information on it, will you? I am entirely in the dark."

"Mr. Banta," said the detective, seating himself without invitation, "this affair is much more singular than you are at present aware. It is a case of murder."

"Murder! Great heavens, man, am I accused of murdering any one? Is Basil——"

"Wait. No one is accused. Let me explain."

And Old King Brady told all that had occurred.

The interest of Mr. J. Billings Banta increased as he continued to talk.

"This just suits me!" he exclaimed. "Look here, gentlemen, I have been just wild to know how I should get next to the public. I see my chance in all this."

"Slowly, Mr. Banta. Your name hasn't been used without your consent for nothing. I think I can see daylight in all this. Did your father ever own any wild land in Montana?"

"By jove! You're right he did! He owned a thousand acres near Flathead Lake. He always claimed that it was worthless, though."

"There you are! Got the deeds, maps, and all the rest?"

"Why, yes; they are in the safe there."

"Did Basil Barrymore know the combination of the safe?" asked Harry, with a smile.

"Why, yes! You don't mean to say"——

"It's as plain as the nose on your face that Basil Barrymore has been doing business in your name, Mr. Banta," said Old King Brady. "That is what my partner means."

Mr. Banta sprang to his feet, opened the safe and pulled open a drawer.

"Gone!" he exclaimed. "By gracious, you are right! The villain! And after all I did for him!"

"Yes, yes," said Old King Brady. "You have been making a fool of yourself, I see."

"I have! I treated that fellow more like a brother than an employe. Why, I took him off the street; I clothed him, I——"

"That's enough," interrupted Old King Brady. "I see how the eat jumps. Another case of the folly of picking up tramps."

"But let me explain. That fellow saved me from being slugged by a lot of toughs one night, when I was doing the town. I found him handsome, well educated and agreeable. I wanted an assistant here who was a stenographer; he knew the business, and so——"

"And so you engaged him, and made a pet of him, and now he has turned on you in the usual way. My dear

friend, rely upon it, this is all a put-up job to rob you of land which has a prospect of becoming immensely valuable."

"I declare, it looks so."

"Of course it is so. Instead of an innocent stenographer, you have been harboring the representative of a desperate gang of crooks, who is probably a crook himself. Where did this Basil Barrymore claim to have come from, may I ask?"

"Why, from the West. Now you speak of it, he claimed to have been employed on the Northern Pacific Railroad."

"Which probably runs right through the region in which your land is situated. We are getting at it. Look through your safe and see if there is anything else missing."

Mr Banta hastened to obey.

"The only thing is a copy of my father's will," he finally announced.

"There you are," said Old King Brady. "Somebody means to personate you out in Montana, surest thing, Mr. Banta. Why this man Calef was made away with, as I firmly believe to have been the case, is a mystery which remains to be solved; but the rest of it is all as plain as day."

Mr. Banta sat down and lighted a cigarette, first passing his paper to the detectives.

Old King Brady preferred one of his own cigars. Harry accepted the cigarette.

"Instruct me, Mr. Brady," said the young lawyer. "I don't know what to do."

"Have you got any money?" asked the old detective, bluntly.

"Not much. My father left me about \$50,000 in real estate, and the Western lands. I've got away with \$10,000, and now I am trying to be good and make a little. I am no millionaire."

"What business was your father in?"

"He was a railroad contractor."

"And took the land in pay for work done on the Northern Pacific?"

"Yes."

"You are his only heir?"

"Yes; my mother and two sisters shared in the estate, but they are dead."

"Have you a 'Modern Atlas' among your books, Mr. Banta?"

"I have; it is there on the top of that rack."

"Look up Gold Hill, Mont., please."

Mr. Banta did so.

"You are right!" he exclaimed. "Here it is; town on Flathead Lake; no doubt close to my land. Population, eight hundred."

"Exactly. Now one question more and I have done. Where did Basil Barrymore live?"

"Why, he moved recently, but I have his address here in my address book."

"A good thing to keep. Look it up, please."

Mr. Banta did so, and announced the address as a certain number on West Fifteenth street.

"That's a tough block, now," said Old King Brady, "although it used to be respectable enough. There remains only one thing for us to do, and that is to get into that house and see what record Barrymore has left behind him. You need not expect much, though. He has had too good a start."

"But what shall I do? I don't want to be robbed!" declared Mr. Banta. "I have no means of employing detectives of your reputation. I——"

"Hold on a minute, Mr. Banta," broke in Old King Brady. "I am not at all busy just at present, and would not mind a run out West. Could you leave your business for a while?"

"To be frank, Mr. Brady, I have none to leave."

"You have the means to take this journey with us?"

"I have not. Of course I could raise money, but——"

"Never mind. I have money enough. Sometimes I take up a case on my own account. I have a mind to take up this one and see where it will land us. If you will join with me, I'll advance the needed money. If anything comes of it, and you find yourself a millionaire, you can pay all expenses and give me a fee of ten per cent. on the value of the recovered property. How will that suit?"

"Suit! Why, I'm ready to jump at the chance. But in case of failure?"

"In case of failure you will owe me nothing."

"Mr. Brady, you are more than kind."

"Not at all. It is simply that I have begun this case, and don't feel like dropping it until it is finished. When can you start with us?"

"Right now, if you wish."

"Then right now it is. We will take a cab, drive to the Fifteenth street house, and then go to the Murray Hill Hotel. Very likely we shall be on the move for Montana by night, so if you have anything to settle——"

"Oh, but I haven't. I'll just put a card on the door, 'Out of town,' and then I am at your service."

And it is by such rush methods that the Bradys have earned their well-deserved reputation for success.

Ten minutes later the detectives, in company with Mr. J. Billings Banta, were rattling uptown in a cab.

The block in Fifteenth street, just off Sixth avenue, was soon reached, and the cab drew up at the corner, the detectives walking to the house.

It was an old brick dwelling, which had been altered over for lodgers.

A dirty-looking man answered their ring.

"Barrymore," he said. "He's out of town. Won't be back till next week."

"We want to see his room," said Old King Brady, showing his shield.

"Hello! A detective!" exclaimed the lodging house keeper. "I thought it would come to this. What has he been about?"

"No matter. Was he crooked?"

"Not that I know of," replied the man. He kept late hours, though, and there were other things. We have to read people now. Still, I can't kick. He always paid."

"How is it that you came to hold the room for him?"

"Because he paid a week in advance. Time's up to-morrow."

"What did you mean by saying that you thought it would come to be a case of a detective? I insist on knowing."

"Why, he told me before he left that if any one came here insisting upon seeing his room to let them go right up. I thought then it was suspicious, and I think so now, especially as he told me not to go into his room on any account."

"It is more than suspicious," said Old King Brady. "And you have not been in the room?"

"No; so long as people pay, I never interfere, no matter what they do."

"Take us to the room," said Old King Brady.

The lodging house keeper led the way upstairs to a front room on the top floor.

Producing a key, he opened the door.

"Why, what is this?" he exclaimed. "He has moved the bed across the doorway. I can't see what for."

He reached out to push the bed away, but Old King Brady pulled him back.

"Don't touch it!" he exclaimed.

"What the deuce—why not?" retorted the man. "It's my bed. Why shouldn't I do as I please?"

He gave it a push back into the room.

Instantly there was a tremendous explosion, and from the room burst a sheet of flame.

CHAPTER III.

OLD KING BRADY SCENTS TROUBLE IN THE WIND.

If Old King Brady had not pulled the lodging house keeper back at the precise moment when he pushed the bed the man would have been terribly burned.

He did not appear to realize this, however, and struck at the detective.

"Fire! Fire!" he shouted, starting for the stairs.

"Stop, you fool!" cried Old King Brady, seizing the lodging house keeper by the shoulders and throwing him into a corner.

There was a fire extinguisher hanging against the wall in the passage.

It was one of the kind which you pull from its nail to open, and contains a chemically prepared powder.

Harry had it open before the older detective could reach it, and instantly dashed great handfuls of the powder at the base of the fire, which was in a pile of clothing and papers behind the bed.

The flames were extinguished in short order, and the re-

mains of an infernal machine were discovered which had been attached to the bed by means of a wire.

Seizing the smoldering garments, Old King Brady threw them aside, revealing a little pile of torn letters upon the floor.

"This is the work of a fiendish mind, Mr. Banta," he said. "This trap was prepared for any detective who might come here in search of evidence. Such is the fellow you have harbored. It is a wonder that he left you alive."

"I begin to think so," replied the lawyer, "and yet I never did him any thing but kindness. I can't believe now that he would try to kill me."

"This was intended for detectives, as I said before. Previous to his flight, the fellow destroyed his correspondence, and corked up this job. He was perfectly willing to burn this good man's house down to suit his own purposes. Well, there are a few such people in the world, but, thank heaven, they are scarce."

Meanwhile, Harry was pulling over the scraps of letters.

"Looking for a clew?" asked Old King Brady.

"Yes."

"Then you will be disappointed. So shrewd a person would never leave one behind him."

"Don't be so sure of that; I have found one already."

"Hello! Then that is one on me. What is it?"

"These letters are all from the same person—at least they are all in the same handwriting."

"And the name?"

"Simply 'Jack.'"

"Then your clew is no clew. What do they seem to be about?"

"They are all in Spanish, governor."

"Let them rest, then. We have no time to muss with them. Have you come across any scrap which tells the place where they were written?"

"Yes; Gold Hill, Mont."

"Well, that seems to settle it," said Mr. Banta. "We ought to gather these papers up, paste them together, and have them translated."

"And give that young scoundrel another week's start," replied Old King Brady. "No; that won't do. We are off right now."

Leaving the lodging house keeper to bemoan the loss of a ragged old carpet, the Bradys hastily left the house, and drove to the Murray Hill Hotel.

The police had been there, and a doctor had examined the body.

The man of medicine scouted the murder theory, and affirmed that the death had been caused by heart disease.

"Let it rest so," the old detective said to Jack Wells.

"You don't believe it?" asked the clerk.

"I am so positive that it is not so that I am heading for Gold Hill to trace the case back by this evening's train."

"Hello!" exclaimed Jack Wells. "You must consider it serious, then. I don't know that the house will stand for that."

"The house don't have to," replied Old King Brady. "This case has taken a new turn."

"The deuce! Put me wise on it, Brady."

"Yes—when I return," replied Old King Brady.

And with this remark ended the work of the Bradys in the mysterious case of the man from Montana, so far as New York was concerned.

That afternoon at three o'clock the Bradys and Mr. J. Billings Banta left for the West by the "Chicago Flyer," over the Erie Railroad.

Next day it was Chicago, and on the next they entered Northern Dakota.

Just at night on the day following the Bradys left the Northern Pacific express at Arlee station, from whence runs the trail up into the Flathead Indian Reservation, and from which one turns aside to get to the Upper Flathead Lake country, where is located the new mining town of Gold Hill.

The first thing Old King Brady did was to inquire for the Gold Hill stage, but it had left an hour before.

The inquiry was made at the station, and the agent, a dark, swarthy-looking fellow, who might have been a Mexican, seemed to take a great interest in the detective's party.

"Are you from the East?" he asked.

"Yes," replied Old King Brady.

"New York, it might be?"

"It might be, certainly; but it happens we came from Chicago."

"Oh," said the man, eyeing them still more closely.

"Chicago, eh? Going to Gold Hill?"

"Such is our intention, friend. Are you acquainted there?"

"Well, some. I lived there awhile."

"Do you know a man named Captain Carrol Calef?" Banta blurted out.

Old King Brady was in despair.

This was the very thing he had charged Banta not to do, but the young lawyer had proved himself irrepresible from the start.

There was no such thing as making him keep a still tongue.

"Why, yes," replied the agent. "I knew Captain Calef, but he is not at Gold Hill now."

The mischief was done, and Old King Brady thought it best to continue the conversation rather than give Banta a chance to blunder again.

"Where is he?" the detective asked.

"He went to New York a couple of weeks ago. I understand he means to go to Europe," was the reply.

"Dear me, that's too bad. I'm afraid we have taken our journey for nothing," said the detective.

"What did you want to see Captain Calef for?" asked the agent.

"We were recommended to him as a man who would be likely to put us next to a good thing in mining property. We are looking up investments for Chicago parties."

"There isn't much mining being done up Gold Hill way just now."

"No? That is Captain Calef's business; however?"

"He is in the real estate business; he has done some mining prospecting work."

"In connection with a man named Jack—Jack—Pshaw, I forget the name."

"You refer to Jack Jernegan, I presume. Yes, they have done some work together, I believe."

"This man can be seen at Gold Hill?"

"Yes; if he isn't in the mountains."

"Come to think of it, that wasn't the name. It was a shorter name; began with U."

"Can't think who you mean."

"Let's see—Uley, Ulig; no, Ulex! Have I got it right now?"

"Bill Ulex keeps the hotel at Gold Hill," replied the agent. "Calef generally lives there when he is in town."

"That's the man," said Old King Brady, carelessly.

"Well, he will do as well. We were told that he was Calef's partner."

"He's nothing of the sort," replied the agent, showing an interest in the conversation which was attracting Old King Brady's attention more and more. "But say, if you want to make a quick run to Gold Hill, I think I can help you out."

"Indeed," said Old King Brady, "then you are just the man we want. How so?"

"There is a party here in town who starts over there to-night in an empty wagon. He came down here with a lot of ore, and is going back. It wouldn't take much to rig up an extra seat. You might ride with him."

"How far is it?"

"About fifty miles."

"That would exactly suit. Where can we find this man?"

"I'll find him for you," said the agent. "You go over to the Dickinson House, and after supper I'll send him around. I have to wait till the eastbound freight goes through."

"That will be all right. What time does this man intend to start?"

"About nine o'clock, I suppose."

"He knows the road thoroughly?"

"Oh, yes; he's driving back and forth all the time. He knows the road, and he has a fine team, too."

The Bradys pulled away then and started for the hotel.

"Just the thing, isn't it? What luck!" exclaimed Banta, as they walked across the street.

Young King Brady gave a short laugh.

"Say, Mr. Banta, the governor has got a knife up his sleeve for you!" he exclaimed.

"Hello!" cried Banta. "What on earth have I done?"

"Put your foot in it the first start," said Old King Brady. "However, I won't be too hard on you, but I warned you more than once."

"But how?"

"By mentioning the name of Captain Calef."

"Thunder! I forgot."

"Evidently."

"But say, you went right on and gave away the name signed to that letter!"

"What harm thus? Who can tell what the agent knows? He may have been warned to be on the lookout for us. I am strongly inclined to believe that such is the case."

"I am sure that he was," said Harry. "He took altogether too much interest in our affairs, don't you think so, governor?"

"I am sure of it," replied Old King Brady, quietly.

"Then, good heavens, man, we don't want to ride off into the night with a man of his choosing!" exclaimed Mr. Banta, looking alarmed.

"Brother," said Old King Brady, "that is exactly what we are going to do."

"But why?"

"We have got to get next to these people somehow. We might as well begin by allowing them to try to trap us as in any other way. The detective business isn't all plain sailing, by any means, Mr. Banta. It is my opinion that we are up against a bad gang, and that we are bound to get some tough knocks before we are through."

"Well, I am ready to take my share of them, that's one thing sure," replied Banta, as they entered the hotel.

Much to Old King Brady's surprise, they sat down to an excellent supper at the Dickinson Hotel.

They had scarcely finished, when the girl who was waiting on the table came and informed Old King Brady that there was a man outside who wanted to see him.

The detective went out and found the wagon driver.

He also was a dark, swarthy fellow, and giving the name Tony Panetti in course of the conversation which followed, Old King Brady took him to be an Italian.

Panetti stated that he had been sent by the station agent, and was ready to take the party to Gold Hill if they wished.

"That wagon of yours don't look as though it would give us any too easy riding, friend," said the detective, doubtfully regarding the ramshackle old affair at the door.

"It is hard riding, but it is the best I have got," replied Panetti, who spoke perfect English.

"Perhaps we can make it do. What will be the charge?"

"A dollar a head won't be too much?"

"For a fifty mile ride—that is very reasonable. What does the stage charge?"

"Two and a half, sir."

"Your price is right, then. Can you put in another seat?"

"Certainly. It won't take but a minute. I can get one down at the stable."

"You live here?"

"I live in Gold Hill, sir."

"What time shall we reach Gold Hill?"

"Well, it will take pretty much all night. It is a hard road."

"We will go," said Old King Brady. "Here is your money. I might as well pay you now."

"All right. I'll see about putting the seat in and come right back," replied the man, and climbing upon the wagon, which was drawn by two horses, he drove away.

Harry was behind Old King Brady when he turned.

"Well, governor, do we go in that trap?" he asked.

"In that trap, to be driven into the trap set for us, boy."

"Surest thing you know. I can prove it, too."

"Hello! You have been at work?"

"Yes; I merely asked the hotel clerk where that fellow lived. I told him we were going over to Gold Hill with him, you know."

"Well?"

"Well, then I came out here just in time to hear him say that he lived in Gold Hill."

"And the clerk said?"

"That he lived right here, and that we had better look out for him, for he was a shady customer."

"Ah!" said Old King Brady. As I thought. Well, forewarned is forearmed. I must think up some scheme to block Mr. Tony Panetti's little game."

CHAPTER IV.

THE ACCIDENT ON THE MOUNTAIN TRAIL.

Tony Panetti, with the Bradys and Mr. J. Billings Banta on board, pulled out of Arlee at a quarter past nine o'clock.

Before starting, Old King Brady went across to the station and thanked the agent for his "kindness."

"Oh, that's nothing," replied the man, with a grin. "Always glad to help a stranger along. Hope you have a pleasant ride. Give my regards to Bill Ulex; you can tell him I am still alive."

"I certainly shall," replied Old King Brady, and a few minutes later they were on their way.

Banta sat on the front seat with Tony Panetti, the Bradys taking the seat behind.

"You feel sure that it is a plot, governor?" asked Harry, his low whisper being drowned by the rattle of the wagon.

"It is nothing else, if I'm still fit to keep my mind on the detective business," replied Old King Brady. "My idea is that this gang who have deliberately started in to rob Banta of his property learned of the secret of the gold mine from Captain Calef, who intended to do the fair thing. For this reason he was disposed of, and, having murdered him, they naturally look for some one to come to Gold Hill and look up the case. I believe, also, that they have kept the station agent on the watch, and that this man Panetti and his wagon was arranged for as soon as the murder was committed. You can look for a hold-up on the road to-night, Harry, for that is what is coming our way."

"We are running a big risk, if you are right in your conclusions, governor."

"No more in this way than in stopping right there at the Dickinson House, where we were."

"How can you say that?"

"Why, stop for a moment and think. Do you suppose that a gang so shrewd as these men unquestionably are would not provide for every emergency. If we had refused the wagon, then mark my words, we surely would have fallen into the next trap on the programme, which might have been a worse one."

"And it all came of Banta giving us away."

"On the whole, I am glad he did. It brought matters directly to a head. More than likely that fellow in the station, if he is the spy of the gang, would have got onto us some other way."

"But it is impossible that they could have known we were coming, unless Jack Wells gave us away, which is not likely."

"Which is not to be thought of. Still, we may have been watched from the start, for all we can tell. But there is one thing certain—our coming has been telegraphed to Gold Hill, and there are those ready to do us up now on their way to meet us."

"I never saw you so certain about anything, governor."

"Well, it may turn out that I am mistaken, but if it does, I miss my guess, and will never prophesy again."

And as the night wore away it did, indeed, begin to look as if Old King Brady had missed his guess.

Nothing occurred worthy of note.

Tony, the driver, was respectfully silent, and gave his whole attention to urging his horses along the road.

It was all up hill and down dale for the first twenty miles, and then they struck the foothills of the Rockies, and the scenery grew grand beyond all expression, and the road rough to correspond.

At about one o'clock they met a band of eight Flathead Indians, who gave them a fine scare, coming suddenly into view around a bend in the towering cliff on their left.

The Bradys had their hands on their revolvers as Tony reined in and addressed them.

The Indians proved to be entirely peaceable, however.

They were on their way to Arlee to purchase supplies for the Flathead reservation, and after exchanging a few words with Tony, who seemed to know them, went on their way.

It was hard keeping awake in the chill of the early morning.

Banta gave it up, and lying down in the bottom of the wagon, went sound asleep.

Three times Harry came near losing consciousness for the moment, and almost fell out of the wagon, but Old King Brady sat broad awake and bolt upright, chewing away upon the everlasting cigar.

"Lean your head on my shoulder, Harry," he said.

"Take forty winks, and you will feel better."

"But you, governor?"

"Pshaw! I've learned to keep awake, as you well know.

I only wish I was your age, and could sleep as you do—that's all."

So Harry gave up, and was slumbering on his partner's shoulder, when all at once came a grand crash, and down they all went in the road.

The forward wheel of the wagon had struck against a mass of rock which had fallen from the cliff above.

Tony had done his best to avoid it, but on the other side was a precipice several hundred feet high along the bed of the stream below, and he did not dare to turn out any further.

The only wonder was that all hands had not gone over the edge of the precipice, carrying all to their death. But as it was they stopped short, leaving the passengers to crawl out from the wreck as best they could.

"Here's a bad job," growled Banta. "By thunder, I thought the end of the world had come."

"It has for one of us, I'm thinking," replied Old King Brady. "Look!"

He pointed to Tony Panetti.

The man lay motionless upon the ledge, with blood flowing from a severe wound in the head.

"He struck that stone fair and square," declared Harry.

"It seemed to me I could hear his skull crack."

Old King Brady produced his little electric dark lantern and carefully examined the driver.

"This man was instantly killed!" he announced. "Well, this ends his plots and plans, whatever they may have been."

"Are you sure he is dead?" demanded Banta, considerably disturbed.

"Of course he is, if the governor says so," remarked Harry, who was holding the horses. "He never makes a mistake."

"That's putting it rather strong," said Old King Brady. "Still, the man is surely dead, Harry. This gives us our chance, I guess."

"Surest thing," replied Young King Brady, ever quick to grasp his partner's meaning. "It is up to me, I suppose?"

"It is up to you, decidedly."

"What do you mean to do?" demanded Banta.

"What you will consider rather ghoulish work, I suppose," said Old King Brady. "But still, in our business these things have to be done. Hold the horses, please; we are liable to be interrupted at any moment, and there is no time to lose."

What the Bradys did was to strip the clothes off of the unfortunate young man, who, although we have not mentioned it, was about Harry's own age.

These Harry put on, clothing the corpse in an old suit taken from his dress suit case.

Old King Brady then produced a small box, took from it a bottle containing a wash which, being applied to Harry's hands and face, made the skin as dark as the Italian's had been.

A few lines about the eyes and mouth completed the transformation.

"By jove, it is wonderful!" exclaimed Banta, in amazement. "The resemblance is perfect. He looks like the same man."

"We know our business," said Old King Brady. "Now, you shed your coat and put on the boy's clothes."

"What's that for?"

"Because I wish it, Mr. Banta. You will now become my partner, while Harry, for the present, is Tony Panetti. He'll be able to play the part well enough."

"Unless I have to talk Italian," said Harry. "In that case I shall be in the soup."

Banta obediently yielded, and made the change.

Old King Brady, who wore his usual peculiar costume, a big white hat, a long-tailed blue coat with brass buttons, an old-fashioned stock, etc., stood by and watched it all.

By the time the transformation was effected the body of the unfortunate driver was quite cold. There could be no doubt that his death had been instantaneous.

Leaving the remains where they were, the Bradys removed most of the harness from the horses, and, the two detectives mounting one, and Banta the other, they rode on.

They soon came to the end of the pass, and the trail here descended into a deep valley, with another trail leading off to the right.

Which was the Gold Hill trail? was the question, and the Bradys stopped.

"Which is our road?" asked Banta.

The old detective consulted his watch.

"It is now nearly four o'clock," he remarked. "We can't be a great way from Gold Hill. Harry, I guess you had better do as I said."

"I'm ready, governor," was the prompt reply.

"You have no fear? If so, you don't have to go."

"When you come to put it that way, I'll go anyhow."

"For heaven's sake, take care of yourself. If it was anybody else but you I wouldn't permit it."

"Yes, but it is me, and I have as many lives as a cat. I'm not one bit afraid."

Thus saying, Young King Brady rode off on the left hand trail.

"By gracious, Mr. Brady, it is running a big risk," exclaimed Banta. "Do you think he can personate that man?"

"Surest thing," replied Old King Brady, quietly. "If the fellow had not spoken good English, of course, the risk would have been greatly increased, but as it is, I have no fears."

"And what do we do?"

"Get to Gold Hill by this road, the best way we can."

"It may not go there."

"True; but there may be a cross road cutting over to the other. At all events, that is the course which lies before us."

"If Harry does succeed in getting in with those fellows, he ought to be able to learn something of the plot."

"That's what we are here for, Mr. Banta. We have to take our chances as we find them, and do business the best way we can."

"Hark!" cried Banta, as a shot suddenly rang out.

"There you are!" cried Old King Brady, listening breathlessly for the answering shot.

None came.

"We had best be on the move," said the detective, after a little.

Digging their heels into the horse's flanks, Old King Brady urged him on along the right hand trail.

Their way led them along the side of the mountain, while the left hand trail descended into the valley.

It grew more and more rugged, until at last they came to a point where the trail suddenly turned to the left and followed a steep incline down into a deep valley between towering, treeless cliffs.

The gray of dawn was now just beginning to appear in the east, and they could see a few huts in the valley standing beside a stream.

"We shall know our road soon now," said the detective, holding the horse with a tight rein as the sure-footed beast picked his way down the steep incline.

They had just reached the bottom of the slope when two Indians armed with rifles suddenly sprang into the trail and confronted them.

"Stop there, boss!" said one, sternly, as both rifles went up. "How! How! What want here?"

CHAPTER V.

HARRY HAS A HOT TIME AT THE HUT.

Young King Brady had undertaken a dangerous contract, as he knew perfectly well.

He was prepared for trouble later on, but he was not prepared for what actually happened within ten minutes from the time he parted from his chief.

Descending into the valley, Harry struck a stream, and immediately beyond it a thick clump of cottonwood trees, between which the trail ran.

He had not gone far before the horse suddenly stopped short, and Harry peering forward, saw a rope stretched across the road between two great trees.

"This was for us!" he muttered, and before he had time to give the matter another thought a shot rang out in the darkness, and a voice called:

"Halt, there! Hands up, or you are a dead man!"

Now Young King Brady, without being anything of a ventriloquist, had made a careful study of voice changing, and was well able to imitate almost any one's voice to a greater or less degree.

"Hold on! Don't shoot!" he cried. "It's only me!"

A man wearing a black mask immediately stepped out from among the cottonwood trees.

He carried a rifle, with which he held Young King Brady covered, and there was a small lantern suspended from his wrist.

"Thunder! Is it you, Tony, and alone?" he exclaimed.

"Yes," said Harry. "We had a smashup. Wagon broke down, and—oh, say, my poor brother was killed!"

"Your brother!" exclaimed the man. "You blamed Ginny! What do you mean? I never knew you had a brother. Where are our men?"

"Oh, yes; my brother came in from St. Paul on the express. I started to bring him over with me. I couldn't hold them two fellers. They was mad because I broke down. They thought it was all a put up job. They took one of the horses away from me and went off the other trail when we came to the divide. I couldn't help it. Oh, my brother is dead! My brother is dead!"

"Shut up, you idiot! What's all this cock and bull story you are giving me? There were to be three of 'em. Where's the other?"

"I only seen two."

"We were telegraphed three."

"Can't help it. I only seen two. Oh, my poor brother, my poor brother! I must get back and fetch his body in here. We must bury him. Oh, oh!"

Two other masked men who had evidently been listening among the trees now stepped into view.

"Tony, have you been drinking again?" one asked.

"No, boss; no, no!"

"I believe you have; but come on to the hut, and tell us all about it. This isn't the way we planned the thing for a cent. We got the wire at Gold Hill that there were three of them, and now you say two. How could Hen Perez make such a mistake?"

"Don't know," replied Harry, who had already informed himself of the station agent's name, and knew to whom they referred.

The three men led the way to a small hut which stood hidden among the cottonwoods, close to the stream.

Harry dismounted, made his horse fast to a tree, and followed them inside.

Here the men unmasked.

Two of them were rough-looking customers, and appeared enough like mining prospectors to satisfy Young King Brady that such was probably their business.

One of them looked very much like a Mexican greaser, but the other was evidently an American.

The third man was of a different build, and before he had said a dozen words Young King Brady put him down as a person of education.

For several minutes they talked among themselves, little dreaming that they were supplying a detective with important information in the matter of names.

Jack Jernegan was the way one of them was addressed.

"Gus" appeared to be the name of the greaser. The educated man was addressed as "Doctor."

Harry stood meekly in a corner and listened to their talk.

They seemed to be intensely disappointed at the turn affairs had taken, but the satisfactory part of it was that no one seemed to doubt Young King Brady's identity.

Young Panetti was evidently a nobody, as far as the operations of these men were concerned, and had merely been hired to help out in this crooked work.

"There must have been three of 'em," said the Doctor, "or Hen would never have telegraphed to Bill Ulex to that effect."

"Probably one of them concluded to stop behind," replied Jernegan. "You know how the despatch read."

"Well, I ought to; it said that two of the men were evidently the Bradys, and the third was Banta, surest thing."

"Dey saya de Bradys vas de best detectives in de world," put in Gus, with a strong Spanish accent.

"They are a great team," replied the Doctor. "I wish Basil was up. We might ride over to Arlee and see if we could locate Banta, in that case."

"I think you had better do so as it is," said Jernegan, "but alone. Confound the luck! They must have come down on the reservation. I wonder what it means?"

"Perhaps they suspected something," suggested Gus. "Tony, you didn't give us away?"

"No, no, no!" cried Harry. "I talk all the time Italiano with my brother. Oh, he's dead, he's dead!"

Some questioning now followed, and Harry was called upon to describe the accident more particularly.

He did so, and glibly added a story about his brother, which seemed to pass muster well enough.

He also described Old King Brady, and the Doctor declared that a man of such appearance could be none other than the celebrated detective.

The three then went outside the hut and talked a long time among themselves.

Young King Brady would have given much to have been able to get near enough to hear what they were saying, but as they stood near the open door, he did not dare move, and so remained seated by a table smoking cigarettes.

That their eyes were upon him Harry well knew.

Suddenly the hut door was slammed shut.

"What does that mean?" thought Young King Brady, springing to his feet.

A deathly chill had come over him.

The strange sensation seemed to shoot down his spine, and for a moment he hardly knew how to act.

"What's this? Am I afraid, or is it a warning?" thought Young King Brady.

He could no longer hear the voices outside.

There was a buzzing in Young King Brady's brain.

Something seemed to tell him to lose no time, but to get out of that hut just as quick as ever he could.

There was a window just back of the table, and Harry softly raised it.

Beyond lay the creek, running through a bed some twenty feet below the level.

The hut had been built on the very edge of the bluff. There was not space enough to stand if he climbed out.

He looked at the creek. The water seemed to be high, and was rushing down between those two rocky walls with considerable force.

"If I dive, I may break my neck," thought Harry, "but here goes for a drop."

He stuck his legs out of the window, held on by his hands and then hesitated.

If the creek was shallow, that drop might mean broken limbs, or even death.

He who hesitates is lost, they say, but Young King Brady's hesitation was short, for in the same instant a fearful explosion broke upon the stillness of that desolate spot, and the next Harry knew he was in the creek, battling with the rushing waters.

He had seen the hut fly into the air, a shattered wreck, but the force of the explosion had caused him to let go his hold, and here he was in the water unharmed.

Had the explosion been a matter of accident or design?

This was more than Young King Brady could tell, and while he was thinking about it, letting himself float along with the water, he suddenly heard a sharp cry.

Directly in front of him a head rose above the water, and two arms went up.

"Save me! Save me! I can't swim!" a voice called out piteously.

Then the head disappeared again.

But for an accident Young King Brady could have done nothing, for the rush of water had already swept him past the place where the head had appeared.

The accident brought him against the drowning person under the water.

Suddenly two arms were thrown about his legs, and hands clutched him desperately, pulling him down.

"This won't do," thought Harry, and fortunately he knew how to act.

A splendid swimmer, and thoroughly acquainted with all phases of the art, Young King Brady threw himself on his back with all the force he could command.

This action brought the drowning person up out of the water.

It was a young man of his own age, apparently.

He wore only an undershirt, and his face showed the awful fear he felt.

"Let go of my legs," said Harry, with all the calmness he could summon. "You will drown us both. Pull yourself up! Put your arms around my waist and hold on, so!"

"I—I can't! I am terribly wounded about the legs!" was the stammering reply.

"Catch my coat, then! Hold on to that!" cried the detective. "I'm going to turn over now! Get your arm around my waist. You can—you must! Do as I say!"

"The cave! The cave!" was the reply. "We shall be knocked to pieces on the rocks!"

At that moment Harry did not understand the full meaning of these words.

With a tremendous effort he kicked himself free from the death clutch of his companion and got his arm around his waist, while the young fellow clung desperately to his coat.

Then he saw and understood.

Right before them a mighty cliff towered, beneath which was an arched opening, and into it the river ran.

Here was one of those "lost rivers" of the Far West.

To attempt a landing was impossible, owing to the high banks on either side.

"We are lost!" panted the young man. "We shall be dashed to pieces on the rocks!"

Then all in an instant they were swept in under the rocks, and in total darkness were carried on down the rushing stream.

CHAPTER VI.

UP AGAINST THE LION IN HIS DEN.

"Hold on, Buck! Hold on! Don't kill us!" cried Old King Brady. "We are good friends to the Indians. We mean you no harm."

"Good friend, nothing!" growled the second Indian, whose English was nearly as good as that of the average Western miner. "What white man is ever the Indian's friend? This is the gate of the Flathead Reservation. We don't allow no prospectors in here."

"That's all right, too," said Old King Brady, his fears departing as he saw how the case stood. "We are no prospectors, Buck. We have lost our way, that's all. Tell us how to get to Gold Hill, and we will pay you well."

Indians differ from white men in many respects, of course, but in one particular most men are alike.

We refer to the question of cash.

Money talks.

The big buck lowered his rifle.

"You sure no prospector?" he demanded.

"Sure," said Old King Brady. "We are strangers here. We are just from the East."

"Den all right. Only one prospector allowed in here—only one."

"Who is he?" inquired Old King Brady, little guessing what the answer would be.

"Captain Calef," replied the Indian. "Him heap good man."

Here was a person who knew the mysterious man from Montana who could surely be questioned with safety.

It was not to be supposed that this Indian could be in the plot.

Old King Brady immediately produced a small roll of bills, which he always carried handy. The bulk of his money it would have puzzled any one to find.

Handing each of the Indians a ten-dollar bill, he asked that the one who had mentioned Captain Calef's name become his guide to Gold Hill.

There was not much difficulty in striking a bargain.

The Indians seemed to consider the dollars as a fee for allowing Old King Brady and young Banta to live.

Running Deer, as the buck announced his name, agreed to act as guide for ten dollars more.

The detective and Mr. Banta were not allowed to enter the reservation, however.

The other Indian remained on guard while Running Deer went for his horse.

He soon came riding up on a fine black mustang, and announced himself ready to depart.

Not a word did Old King Brady say of Captain Calef until they were well under way.

"I saw that man you spoke of in New York, Running Deer," he then said.

"Yes," replied the Indian. "How?"

"Running Deer, I'll tell you how—he is dead!"

"Dead! Dead! The good captain dead!" cried the Indian, reining in. "Bad! Very bad! He get in fight? How?"

"No," said Old King Brady. "Somebody sent him poison in a letter from Gold Hill."

"How?" said the Indian, eyeing the detective keenly.

It was evident that he was much disturbed.

Now Old King Brady has had much to do with Indians, and knows their character well.

He saw that Running Deer was deeply moved.

That he had struck a valuable ally there could be but little doubt, but the question was to get at the situation and make him tell what he knew.

Very quietly, and in the most simple language, Old King Brady went on to describe the affair at the Murray Hill Hotel.

"Letter! Poison!" said Running Deer. "Bad! Bad! Very bad! Captain Calef my good friend. Who you?"

"I am a sheriff," said Old King Brady. "The man who sent that poison in the letter is to be arrested."

"You arrest him?" demanded Running Deer.

"Yes."

"You take him to New York?"

"Yes."

"You hang him?"

"Yes. Who do you think it could have been, Running Deer?"

"Me don't know who," said the Indian, "but me know why."

"Yes, yes! Tell me."

"Captain Calef hunt gold much. Many time me go with him. Him find heap rich mine many moons ago. Me with him then, and he say, 'Who own land, Running Deer?' Me no tell him; me say, 'Go, captain, and ask Bill Ulex, he make books that tell who own land. Dat land once b'long my people,' I say. 'White men steal all. Captain, take him,' I say; 'you take land. I give it to you. Dig

gold and give me some, give Bill Ulex some, and he write paper and say you own land.'"

"And did he do it?" asked the detective.

"Me no know. Me never see captain no more."

"Where is this land?" asked the detective.

Running Deer waved his hand vaguely to the West.

"Me no tell," he replied. "Me no bribe you. Captain Calef save my life one time. Me get drunk, raise heap big row. Bill Ulex hang me, but captain say no. See, I find out all. I tell you. I come Gold Hill few days. You see Bill Ulex, you tell him not captain dead. You say you buy mine, den he try sell you captain's land, perhaps. So? Den you find out all."

"Running Deer, you have a long head on your shoulders," said the detective. "Listen to me. You find out all you can, and I pay you money. Understand?"

The Indian grunted.

"Not for money, but because Captain Calef my brudder," he replied. "Me come Gold Hill one, two days."

Running Deer left them at the dividing of the roads.

It was now broad daylight, and the detective scarcely feared trouble.

"That was a lucky hit," said Banta. "Do you suppose the Indian will really do anything about the business, though?"

"I'm sure he will," replied Old King Brady. "But what have we here?"

They had come to the ruins of the hut.

There was no one near it. The rope had been removed from the cottonwood trees, and but for the shattered timber of the hut Old King Brady might have ridden on.

"There has been an explosion here," he exclaimed. "What can it mean?"

Investigation showed them nothing, however, and after a careful examination they rode on to Gold Hill, which was not over three miles away.

It was a typical Western town, of the sort found in the North.

No open gambling saloons are allowed up here, but there were liquor saloons galore, and the town, which clustered around one big quartz crushing mill, was a rough looking place enough.

Old King Brady rode up to the Harrison House, the only brick structure in town.

The hotel proper was on the second story, the ground floor being occupied by stores.

One was a real estate office, and the sign bore the name William Ulex.

On the other side of the main entrance to the hotel was a drug store. H. Rhymer was on the sign over the door.

A boy came hurrying up to take the horse, and, turning it over to him, the detective and his companion went upstairs to the hotel.

Here he registered as J. Brady and son.

"Aren't you afraid they will get onto the name?" asked Banta, anxiously, when they found themselves alone together in the room to which they were assigned.

"They will get onto me in any case," said Old King Brady. "You see, my personal appearance is well known, and then there is the horse."

"You think it will be recognized as Panetti's?"

"It's bound to be. Some one will come over the road and find the wagon and the body. I look for trouble from that, but it can't be helped."

"What do you prefer shall be your first move?"

"To find out about your property."

"Is this the county seat?"

"Yes; and the records are here. We will strike Mr. Ulex first of all. The Indian's suggestion is as good as any other. I am Old King Brady. For the present you are Young King Brady. We don't know Captain Calef. We want to buy a mine; that is our sole business in Gold Hill."

"Right. It is all just as you say. Ulex is the landlord of this hotel, I believe."

"That's what I was told at Arlee. He is also county clerk, and of course has charge of the records. Now come, Mr. Banta; we may as well start in now, as any time. But first let me see that photograph again."

The photograph in question was one of Basil Barrymore, which Mr. Banta had brought along with him from New York.

The detective studied it attentively for a little while, and then handed it back.

"Expecting to meet him in Ulex's office?" asked Banta.

"It is possible."

"Then he will know me, surest thing."

"Mr. Banta, when a man goes into the detective business and drops his identity, he drops it. You are now Harry Brady, and no one else."

"That's all right, too," replied Banta, "but the trouble is I don't know how well I can keep up with my part."

"Make up your mind you have got to, that's all," the detective replied, and leaving the room together, they went downstairs.

"Shall I be likely to find Mr. Ulex in his office?" Old King Brady asked of the clerk.

The clerk pointed to the barroom, which opened off from the office.

"That's Mr. Ulex—that big man standing at the bar," he said.

The detective's mind was made up.

Here was a plot which had been carefully concocted by some person or persons in Gold Hill.

Unless Harry had met with more success—and Old King Brady was not counting on that—he knew that he might spend weeks working on the mystery if he remained in disguise, and then be none the wiser.

If, on the contrary, he declared himself openly, the enemy from very fear would be almost certain to make some move against him.

Thus reasoning, Old King Brady walked boldly into the barroom and called Mr. Ulex by name.

The detective thought he had never seen a meaner face than the one which was turned toward him.

He was able to read it, however, and he saw at a glance that he was recognized.

"Yes, I'm Mr. Ulex," said the landlord. "Just come to town?"

"Just come over from Arlee," replied Old King Brady. "We had a breakdown, and lost our way. A couple of fellows who claimed to be brothers started to drive us. They managed to break the wagon between them, and one of them had his brains knocked out. The brother jumped on a horse and rode away and left us. We have had a hard time getting here, and that's a fact."

"Why, yes," said Mr. Ulex, "we heard about that up here. But it seems to me you have been a long time getting into town. Did you miss your way?"

"That's what we did. We got on the wrong road, and went down by the Flathead Reservation. Had to give a buck ten dollars to set us right."

The landlord glanced meaningfully at the man he had been drinking with, who looked like a Mexican.

"What brings you to Gold Hill?" he asked.

"Why, we are thinking of investing in a mine," replied the detective. "My name is Brady. I'm from New York."

"Just so. I have heard of you. A detective, I believe?"

"Yes, yes. So my fame has reached Montana, has it?"

"Your fame has reached most everywhere in the United States, I fancy," was the reply. "It is known that you are financially able to buy a dozen mines, if you wanted to. May I ask if you were recommended to me?"

"Why, yes; I had some business with a man named Captain Calef a few years ago. He wrote me from this place that there had been a big strike made on the Banta property, and asked me if I would not like to go in with him on it, so I thought I would take a run out here and see him, and bring my son along, for he has never seen this part of the country. You see, we don't happen to be busy just now."

The faces of the two men were a study.

It was evident that Old King Brady's frankness had taken them entirely by surprise.

"Say, Bill," remarked the man on the other side of Ulex, "if you are going to talk business, I reckon I'll light out. See you later, old man."

"Well, s'long, Gus," was the reply, and the man hurriedly left the barroom.

"Come down to my office, gentlemen," said Ulex. "We can talk business better there. But hold on; let's liquor first. What will you have?"

Cocktails were called for by Old King Brady and Mr. Banta, while Bill Ulex poured down a huge tumbler of his own whiskey straight.

The landlord then led the way downstairs to his office, where an old man was found writing at a desk.

"Now for it," thought Old King Brady. "This is the first move. I am up against the lion in his den."

CHAPTER VII.

YOUNG KING BRADY FINDS BASIL BARRYMORE.

Young King Brady, supporting the fainting boy, was whirled on through the darkness.

A less expert swimmer than the young detective would have lost heart and sank with his heavy burden.

But Harry was cool and nervy.

He knew just how to hold up the wounded, drowning boy, and he did it.

As the moments passed he gained courage.

The river must find an end somewhere, he told himself. It was only a case of holding out long enough.

But thoughts of what he had read and what Old King Brady had told him would intrude themselves.

He knew that many of these "lost rivers," as they are called in the West, emptied into underground lakes, or at least were supposed to, and were never seen again on the surface, while others sank into the ground, to reappear many miles away.

Neither prospect was pleasant, but Harry had prepared himself for both, when suddenly the boy spoke.

"Brace up! Don't let go of me," he said faintly. "We are almost through."

"Hello! You are alive, are you?" exclaimed Harry.

"Yes; haven't croaked yet, thanks to you! Oh, if I can only live to have revenge on Doc Rhymer! Oh, if I only can!"

Young King Brady listened eagerly.

He was not blind to the fact that this very accident, trying as it now seemed, was probably a piece of luck.

It is true that he had not been able to get a good look at the boy, but the thought at once occurred to him that he might be Basil Barrymore.

"Of course, those fellows blew up the hut," Harry reasoned.

Equally, of course, the plot was formed before he came on the scene. Perhaps it was intended to blow up the Bradys, but was it not more likely that they meant to blow up this boy?

"Somebody is in this deal who understands explosives and chemicals, all right," thought Harry, "and who should it be but the Doctor? I think——"

But he stopped thinking then, for at that moment they suddenly emerged from darkness to light.

"We are safe!" gasped the boy. Get ashore as quick as you can. I am suffering terribly. I don't see how we ever escaped the rocks."

The rush was all over now.

The creek was flowing through a narrow valley, walled in by towering cliffs.

It was easy to swim ashore, and in a moment Young King Brady had drawn the boy out of the water and laid him down upon the grass, where he again fainted.

For the moment Young King Brady thought he was dead.

And he did not wonder, when he came to look.

The poor fellow was terribly wounded about the left hip. Something driven against him by the force of the explosion appeared to have torn the flesh away.

The night was bright moonlight, and getting decidedly warm.

Seeing no sign of habitation, the first thing Young King Brady did was to strip off his clothes and spread them out upon the grass to dry.

Feeling more comfortable now, he was able to work, and he turned his attention to the boy.

Pulling off the saturated undershirt over his head, he turned him over upon the grass and proceeded to examine the wound.

Now in all cases of this sort Old King Brady is most expert, and from him Harry had learned much.

Taking a pair of scissors from his pocket, he cut away the ragged flesh and carefully bathed the wound.

The boy revived during this work.

He groaned some, but on the whole bore the pain like a hero. Not until Harry had completed his work did he speak.

"You are very kind to take so much trouble," he said at last, looking at Young King Brady curiously. "I am not worth it. I ought to die."

"Don't say that. You have had a narrow escape, but you are going to come out of this all right."

"Do you think so?"

"I'm sure of it. Do you know where we are?"

"Oh, yes."

"There is a way out of this place?"

"Oh, yes; there is a way. Am I much hurt?"

"Your hip is badly lacerated, but there are no bones broken that I can find."

"Then my chance is good. This serves me right. I might have known."

"Might have known what?"

"That as soon as they got through using me they would try to kill me. The house blew up, didn't it?"

"That is what happened."

"Perhaps you think it was intended to kill you, but it was me they were after. I was asleep upstairs."

"I guess it was intended for us both, as far as that goes."

"Perhaps. May I ask you a question?"

"Surely."

"You were there in disguise?"

"What do you mean?"

"Your hands and face are as dark as an Italian's, but your body is white enough."

"Thunder! Here's a give away," thought Harry. "I may as well come out flatfooted now. If this boy is out for revenge, I can use him. To be frank is my best hold."

"You are Basil Barrymore?" he quietly said.

"That's my name. Who are you?"

"Who do you think?"

"We were at the hut waiting for detectives from New York. Are you one?"

"Well, what if I am?"

"You are my friend, just the same."

"I am glad to hear you say so. Is Mr. Banta also your friend?"

"He ought to be," said the boy, bitterly. "Never did one man show more kindness to another than he showed to me, but——"

"Well?"

"Are you one of the Bradys?"

"I am going to be just as frank as you have been. I am."

"I thought so. Did your partner escape?"

"My partner never came to the hut. He and Banta went another way."

"I am glad. This business has taught me a lesson. If I had been unheard of when you came, according to agreement, you would have found me your enemy, but now I am your friend. What brought you out here?"

Harry hesitated. It was hard to know how much to tell and how much to keep back.

"I'll tell him all," Young King Brady determined after a moment. "I might as well."

In a few brief words he stated the case as he knew it.

When he mentioned Captain Calef's death the boy started to sit up, but sank back with a groan.

"They didn't kill him! Say they didn't kill him!" he cried after Harry ceased speaking.

"He is dead, at all events," said Young King Brady. "Do you think he was murdered?"

"I don't know. They would stand for anything; but they didn't tell me. How did he die?"

"He was found sitting in a chair in his room in the Murray Hill Hotel, with an open letter signed Ulex in his hand."

"Was there any trace of poison found?"

"There was."

"What?"

"Harry told."

"And that was why you came out here?"

"Not altogether. We came here in the interest of J. Billings Banta. Those papers——"

"Which I stole?"

"You admit it, then?"

"It would be quite useless to deny it after what you have discovered. I was hired to get those papers, and I did my work."

"You meant to blow up any detectives who might attempt to follow you? That was why you arranged that man-trap in your room?"

"I did as I was told. Say, Brady, I'm no good—never was. I've been in with a tough gang. It was a shame, though, to rob Banta. Such a good fellow!"

"You wrote to Calef on his paper. It was you who inveigled him to New York. What did you expect?"

Barrymore did not answer for a little.

"Well, I own up," he then said. "It was intended to

kill him, but I didn't know how it was to be done. It was all a plot to rob Banta of this land and get the title to it without paying a cent."

"As we supposed. The mine discovered by Captain Calef lies in this valley?"

"Yes."

"Is it very rich?"

"Very. Beats anything you ever saw."

"Who was in this plot?"

Again Barrymore hesitated.

"It's no use, Brady," he said, as Harry pressed him for an answer. "I thought first I'd let the whole thing out and tell you all, but I dare not talk until I am safely out of this. Get me out. Take me to Banta. Put me safe, and I'll tell you all."

"But why not tell me now?"

"No, I won't. I'm afraid for you as much as myself. Listen! We have got to get out of this valley, and before we do it is likely enough we may run into these fellows again. In that case it would be lots better for you not to know much, and better for me not to tell you. A fellow must look out for himself, you know."

That he had gone as far as he could at this particular session Young King Brady plainly saw.

"All right," he said. "I will not press you, but just tell me what became of the papers you stole from Banta's safe!"

"They are here."

"What do you mean? You can't possibly have them. You had nothing on but your undershirt, you know."

"I mean they are at Gold Hill."

"Then this place is part of the town of Gold Hill?"

"Yes; I don't mean that the papers are in this valley, of course. The gang have them. Now, look here! What we want to do is to block their game, and in order to do that we must have help. Perhaps your partner can manage it, but you and I certainly can't do it alone. Get me out of this, and we will see what can be done."

"That's easy said, but I don't see how it is to be managed. You can't walk."

"I must; and when I make up my mind to do a thing I generally get there. What we ought to do is to go on to the mine, but what to do about clothes I don't know."

"Perhaps I can help you out in that, but who is at the mine?"

"Oh, it is being worked. There are four or five men there. Brady, I want time to think. I am disposed to do the right thing, but I want to see my way clear first. If I can get back those papers and return them to Banta, I will, but in the meantime you must continue to play the part of Tony Panetti. Your face is splendidly made up. You certainly look like him. You can easy fool the fellows at the mine."

"All right; you shall have your way," replied Harry. "Now listen. I had on two pairs of trousers; I put Tony's over mine. You shall have mine, and when your undershirt is dry we will be on the move."

And here the discussion ended. Harry had determined to let Basil Barrymore have his own way.

By this time the sun had risen and had dried their clothes considerably.

Harry wrung them out before spreading them on the grass, and, examining them now, he found that they were in shape to be put on.

It was with considerable difficulty that he got Basil Barrymore upon his feet, but the boy was able to stand once he was up, and could walk slowly, although every step he took gave him great pain.

He bore it like a hero, however, and after they had dressed they started slowly on down the stream. Barrymore announced that it was about a mile to the mine.

They soon came in sight of the rough frame buildings standing on the bank of the creek.

"I must rest," declared Barrymore. "Let me sit down on this rock. You go ahead, Brady, and tell big Jim Gordon about the explosion, and that I am here. Put it all down as an accident, of course. Don't let him suspect that you think differently."

Harry left him and walked on.

"That fellow means mischief," he said to himself. "For the moment, out of gratitude to me for saving his life, he thought he was going to be good, but he soon changed his mind. I must be on my guard."

He could see no one moving about the mine buildings.

Having advanced a little further, he paused and looked back.

To his surprise he saw a girl holding a rifle in her hand, standing by the rock, talking to Basil Barrymore.

She appeared to be young, and, as nearly as Harry could make out in the distance, rather good looking.

Barrymore, catching sight of him as he stood there, waved his hand for him to go on.

Young King Brady began to grow decidedly nervous.

He walked on a little further and then looked back again.

Barrymore and the girl had vanished. There was no one near the rock.

CHAPTER VIII.

MR. J. BILLINGS BANTA MAKES A BAD BREAK.

"Well, Mr. Brady," said Landlord Ulex, "what sort of a mine do you want to buy?"

"A good gold property is what I have in mind," replied the detective.

"I have a few fine prospects for sale," said Ulex, "but when you come to talk of a developed mine, that means a million."

"I am not prepared to go a million, but I have friends who are willing to join in anything I may recommend."

"You think you could raise that much, then, if I offered something to suit?"

"Yes, and more. But is it necessary to buy a mine outright? A controlling interest in some developed property would be about the thing I have in mind."

"I understand you, and I think I can fix you up. Will you smoke?"

"Thank you."

Bill Ulex had produced a box of fine cigars.

Having lit his own, he opened a drawer in the desk and took out a number of samples of gold quartz.

"There! What do you think of those?" he exclaimed. "Aren't they birds?"

Old King Brady examined the ore samples in silence.

"They certainly are very rich," he declared. "Where did they come from, may I ask?"

"They came from a strike on the old Banta property," replied Ulex, eyeing the detective closely.

"This man meets bluff with bluff," thought Old King Brady. "Well, I must keep my eyes open, though."

"Near here?" he carelessly asked.

"Within the limits of Gold Hill, sir," was the reply.

"Who owns the property now?"

"It belongs to me and my associates."

"Who are?"

"Is that necessary, Mr. Brady? We haven't come to a trade yet."

"No, it is not necessary; but it happens I knew old man Banta, if it is the same person I have in mind. He was a contractor on the Northern Pacific, took land in part pay for his work."

"It's the same man."

"He left his estate to his son, J. Billings Banta, as I happen to know. Did you and your associates acquire title from him?"

"We did. Within a week. Do you want proof? I am county clerk; I've got the records right here."

"It might be as well to have a look at them before we go any further," said Old King Brady, more on Banta's account than his own.

"You shall see them," replied Bill Ulex. "Mr. Gray, be good enough to hand me liber five of the county records. I believe I am right about the number; I mean the book containing the Banta transfer."

The old man at the desk in the outer office went to the safe, took out a big book and brought it in.

Bill Ulex opened it and pointed to certain freshly entered records.

Mr. Banta, looking over the detective's shoulder, saw that a full description of his property had been entered in the book. There was also an extract from his father's will, and in addition the stolen map of the property had been pasted in the book.

"That is all right," said Old King Brady. "Quite satisfactory, Mr. Ulex. Now, sir, not to take up your time further, I will merely say that I am prepared to invest heavily for myself and friends, and would like to see this property at any time it is convenient."

"Certainly," replied Ulex. "I'll harness up and take

you out there some time to-day, if you wish—that is, providing my friend, Dr. Rhymer, can go along with us. He is equally interested with myself, and I should not like to go without him."

"His store is next door, I believe?"

"Yes."

"Then you can see him at once, and make an appointment?"

"I can. You have heard of Dr. Rhymer, I presume, Mr. Brady?"

"I have not had that pleasure."

"He is one of the most expert mining chemists in the country. He does all the assaying for the Gold Hill Smelting Works here, and also for the different miners in this neighborhood. He invented that wonderful new high explosive Rhymite. I presume you have heard of that?"

But Old King Brady had never heard of Rhymite, either.

"Excuse me a minute," said Ulex. "I'll go and see if the Doctor is in, and can receive you. I'd like to have you meet him."

Thus saying, Bill Ulex hurriedly left the office.

"Did you ever hear of such brazen work?" breathed Banta. "They have actually recorded a deed from me of *this property!* You can arrest them for forgery, at all events."

"We have seen no forged deed," replied Old King Brady, quietly. "This man knows his business. I—hush! Look!"

The window near which they sat overlooked the yard behind the hotel.

A tall man was just passing.

He glanced casually in through the window and went on out of sight.

"One of the gang, perhaps," whispered Banta.

"Dr. Rhymer, for two cents," breathed Old King Brady. "But hush! Here is Ulex back again."

"The Doctor is very busy, and can't do anything about the matter to-day," Ulex announced. "To-morrow afternoon we will be at your service, Mr. Brady."

"All right, sir. We will be on hand," said the detective, and they then withdrew.

An hour was spent in walking about town and paying a visit to the smelting works.

As they were leaving the works they met the tall man heading for the office.

He looked casually at Old King Brady and Banta, and passed on, entering the office.

They now returned to the hotel, where Old King Brady retired to his room to write a few letters, leaving Banta to amuse himself the best he could.

Thus far the conduct of Mr. Banta had been most exemplary, although he had not proved himself as bright a person as Old King Brady had expected.

When the detective went down to dinner he observed to his disgust that Banta had been drinking considerably, and was very talkative.

It appeared that he had been playing billiards all the morning in a saloon down the street.

"You want to cut that out," said Old King Brady. "You will get us into trouble, sure, if you don't."

Banta's reply showed his weakness. He utterly denied that he had been drinking, which was absurd.

"I'm going to ride over to the reservation and see if I can find Running Deer, and you had better go with me," said the detective.

"No, I'm going to lie down and take a sleep," replied Banta. "I won't leave the room until you return."

Old King Brady, hiring a better horse than Tony Panetti's, rode off shortly after two o'clock, leaving Banta sound asleep. It was after nine when he returned.

The afternoon had been wasted. He missed his way among the hills, and it had taken him hours to find it again.

He now returned to Gold Hill without having been near the reservation, nor learning anything of Harry, which had been the real reason for the trip.

The day had been a disappointment all around.

Banta was not in the hotel office, nor in the barroom, nor was he in the room upstairs.

Greatly troubled, the detective was just starting out to look for him, when he ran into Landlord Ulex, in company with the tall man.

"Ah, Mr. Brady, let me introduce you to Dr. Rhymer!" Ulex exclaimed. "Now we can talk mine."

"You must really excuse me, gentlemen; I am worried about my partner," said the detective, after shaking hands with the Doctor. "I've been out for a ride, and now on my return I can't find him."

Ulex laughed.

"Why, I guess I can put you wise on that matter," he said. "Last I saw of him, he was down at Jack Jernegan's, hitting up the chips for all he was worth."

"Gambling!" cried Old King Brady. "That will never do. Where is this Jernegan's place?"

"We will all go down there," said Bill Ulex. "We can talk as we walk along."

The talking was all done by Ulex himself, however. Dr. Rhymer and Old King Brady were both silent.

Just before they reached the smelting works they came to a brilliantly lighted saloon.

Rough looking miners were passing in and out, and the music of a harp and violin could be heard behind the swinging door.

"If you will excuse me, gentlemen, I won't go in," said Dr. Rhymer, "for I have business to attend to. Mr. Brady, you will pardon me, I know, but I have a word to say to Mr. Ulex in private."

"Certainly, Doctor," replied the detective. "I will go right along in."

"No, wait for me!" cried Ulex, but Old King Brady, pretending not to hear, pushed through the swinging doors.

"I am up against three of them," he said to himself, "and there is going to be trouble right now to-night. I never should have left Banta alone in the condition he

was in. Ever since we left Arlee things seem to have gone wrong."

He had to wait for Ulex, however.

Behind the swinging doors he found nothing but a large saloon fitted up in expensive style.

Two Italians, with harp and violin, were furnishing really good music in a corner.

A stout man dressed like a miner, but wearing no hat, was walking up and down, and Old King Brady took him to be Jack Jernegan. Harry, had he been there, could have told him that he was right.

Ulex followed him right in.

"You are impatient," he said. "You can't get into the faro room. Oh, Jack! This is my friend, Mr. Brady, of New York—Mr. Jernegan, Mr. Brady. Jack, we want to see that young fellow who was hitting it up so heavy. This gentleman's partner. Can we go in?"

"Sure," said Jernegan. He led the way through a dark hall and knocked on a door in the rear three times.

It was immediately opened, and Old King Brady and Bill Ulex passed into the biggest gambling room in Gold Hill.

A faro bank was in full blast in one corner, a wheel of fortune in another, and a roulette wheel in a third.

Banta was at the faro table.

He had quite a little pile of chips beside him.

His face was fiery red, and his clothing disordered.

The card turned up in the box as the detective stepped behind him was in his favor, and he raked in more chips.

Old King Brady touched him on the shoulder.

"Come," he whispered, "we must get out of here."

Banta turned on him like a tiger.

"Don't touch me—you'll queer my luck!" he shouted.

"What do you come here mussing around me for? Get out, you old fraud!"

Some laughed. Others glared at the detective. Banta put a stack of chips on the nine of spades and coppered the ace of hearts.

"Come, come, Mr. Brady; this won't do," said Ulex, taking him by the shoulder. "You want to quit here."

That was the time Old King Brady found out how little he knew Banta.

The lawyer sprang to his feet and dealt Bill Ulex a blow between the eyes which sent him reeling.

"You!" he cried. "You thief! You villain! You have robbed me of my property! How dare you interfere with my luck? How dare you call me Brady, when my name is Banta? J. Billings Banta, of New York! Give me back my gold mine, or I'll wipe the floor with you right now!"

CHAPTER IX.

YOUNG KING BRADY'S AFFAIRS TAKE A STARTLING TURN.

Young King Brady stood looking back, deeply perplexed.

Should he return and see what the disappearance of Basil Barrymore meant, or should he push on to the mine?

He was both disappointed and vexed.

He had taken a great fancy to young Barrymore all of a sudden.

"But then that's the sort of a fellow he is," he said to himself. "Banta did the same thing, and how did he fare? All the same, the girl could not have dragged him away. He must have gone of his own account."

Still puzzled, Harry pushed on toward the buildings, which in a few minutes he reached.

The place appeared to be deserted.

There were two of the buildings, both rudely constructed of boards.

One was evidently intended for a miners' boarding house. The other covered a shaft sunk to a considerable depth on the bank of the creek, and under its roof was also included an office, a blacksmith shop and a room where considerable rich gold quartz which had been broken up into small pieces with hammers was stored.

Harry went all over the premises, but could not discover a soul.

Once more he looked back toward the rock, but nothing could be seen of either Barrymore or the girl.

"I've got the premises to myself, at all events," thought Young King Brady, "and I may as well make the most of it while the chance lasts."

He listened at the mouth of the shaft, but all was still.

Turning aside into the office, the detective started in to work.

The handsome oak desk was the first thing which drew his attention.

"That desk cost money," he said to himself. "It must belong to the boss of this institution, whoever he may be."

The roll top was fastened down, but Harry had a skeleton key which easily opened it.

Books and papers lay scattered about in great disorder. Some one had evidently overhauled the desk before.

The first book which Harry picked up was a diary.

On the flyleaf was written:

"C. Calef, Gold Hill."

"Captain Calef's diary, by all that's great!" thought Young King Brady. "I want to freeze onto that."

He hastily turned over the leaves.

The diary had been written in Spanish, but Young King Brady was able to read it.

The daily entries were all about the mine.

They told of rich strikes, of the quantity of ore taken out, and other things.

Suddenly Harry struck an entry which commanded his full attention. Its date was about three weeks back.

Translated, it read as follows:

"This thing has gone far enough. I've got a conscience, even if Dr. Rhymer and Bill Ulex have none. I will not rob this man Banta any longer. He must and shall be told of the strike made on his land."

Then followed another interesting entry, thus:

"I have just learned that Barrymore has been working

as a clerk in Banta's office for a month. This is black treachery. I am going to New York. After all, I made the strike, these men merely furnished the money, which has been repaid ten times over. Banta can hardly prosecute us. I am determined to make a clean breast of it to him and come to such arrangements as I best can. I have led the Doctor to believe that the object of my journey is to inveigle the young man out here. Heaven help him if he were to get into their clutches! I firmly believe that Doc is wicked enough to give him a dose which would put him out of business forever. I may get my dose before I get through. My life is surely in danger. I feel that I can't get away too soon."

This was the last entry.

"Unfortunate man!" thought Harry. "The mystery is explained now. When he found the pencil lead box in his letter he at once suspected poison, and naturally opened the box and smelled of its contents. Probably he knew nothing of the properties of highly concentrated prussic acid, and little dreamed that he was falling into the very trap which had been laid for him.

"But how came this diary here?" he added, half aloud. "Captain Calef never could have gone away and left it loose in the desk like this. Ah, I see!"

Secret drawers, hidden panels and springs are the things in which the Bradys particularly excel.

Harry scented a secret drawer here.

Pulling at the centre drawers and pigeon holes of the desk, the whole section came forward.

Young King Brady took it out altogether, and there behind it, just as he had expected to find, was a secret compartment.

"That's where these books and papers came from," he thought. "Hello! There are papers in it now."

He drew them out, and knew instantly that he had made a most important discovery.

"Banta's stolen deeds!" he muttered.

"The map is missing, but here is the copy of his father's will."

Footsteps outside prevented Harry from examining the papers.

He had just time to thrust them into his pocket, along with the diary, restore the drawers and close the desk, when he heard some one enter the shaft house.

Harry backed away and stood facing the girl who had been with Basil Barrymore at the rock, as she came bounding into the room.

"It's you!" she gasped. "Oh, I am glad!"

Certainly she was a marvellously pretty girl, and just as certain was it that she was all out of breath now.

"I've been running!" she gasped. "I—I can't speak for a moment; give me time!"

"Take your time, miss. Take your time," said Harry, soothingly.

"I—I know you!"

"Yes? I am Tony Panetti."

"No, no! You are a detective! Your name is Brady. Save him! Oh, save him! He is all the world to me!"

"Barrymore?" cried Harry.

"Yes, yes!"

"He has been taken worse? He——"

"No, no! Not that. My father—he has caught him. He has orders to kill him! He will do it, too. He is a bad man!"

"By gracious, and this is a bad job, too!" cried Young King Brady. "You took him away when I would have looked out for him. Where is he now?"

"Will you come? Will you help?"

"Surely."

"You are armed?"

"Yes; and so were you a few minutes ago. Where is your rifle now?"

"It was taken from me, sir. Oh, if I only felt sure that I can safely trust you!"

"Don't have any doubts about that."

"Then we must act at once. It is almost time for some of the men to come up from the lower mine, and if they find us here, nothing can be done to save him. Follow me."

For a moment Young King Brady hesitated. Was this a trap?"

How could he tell that Barrymore was actually in danger, and had sent the girl to him? It was a difficult question to decide.

"How do we go?" he asked, to gain time for further thought.

"You are afraid," said the girl. "You believe that I mean to lead you into trouble."

"Well, I——"

"You do not know me, but you do know that you are up against a bad gang, who have tried once to kill you, and may try again. Is it not so?"

"It is. I own up."

"Let me make you sure that I am sincere, then. As I hope to meet my dead mother in heaven, I swear that I do not mean to betray you—that I am telling the truth."

"That's enough," said Harry. "I am ready to help you. How many are there to deal with?"

"Only my father now, but there will be six, if he calls upon the men who are working for him in these mines to help."

"Come," said Harry. "I'm all ready. We need not delay any longer. You are the daughter of the superintendent, Big Jim Gordon, I suppose?"

"Yes; Minnie Gordon is my name."

The girl passed out into the shaft house then.

There was a peculiar hoisting arrangement here, an automatic affair used in some mining shafts of moderate depth when steam or other power is not available.

Hanging over the shaft was a heavy iron weight suspended from a ring.

Minnie seized the fall, which ran through a block above, and, lowering the weight, a big tub soon made its appearance.

She climbed into the tub, calling upon Harry to follow.

Their own weight carried them slowly down into the shaft.

They had descended about thirty feet into the hole when Minnie suddenly produced a miner's lamp, struck a match, lighted it and flashed it against the wall.

A few feet further they came upon a wooden arm projecting slightly from the side of the shaft.

With a dexterous twist the girl threw the rope over it, and the tub stopped.

Directly in front of them was an open drift about three feet wide and four feet high.

"Our way lies through there," said Minnie. "Work the tub in, please."

This was no easy matter, but Harry managed it, and stepped out into the drift, assisting Minnie to follow him.

"Lead on," said Harry, letting go of the tub. "There don't seem to be much nonsense about you, that's one sure thing. I will follow you wherever you go."

They walked on through the drift for about thirty feet, passing then through a narrow opening into one of those large caves so common in Montana.

"This ended the work here when we struck this cave," explained Minnie. "We will soon be at the scene of action. Now listen to me."

"Yes, miss," said Harry. "Well, what am I to do?"

"You are to capture my father, make him a prisoner, and then help Basil and me to escape from this valley by way of the Buffalo Gate."

"The gate mentioned in the Ulex letter," thought Harry. "If I live to see the end of all this, the last shred of the mystery of the man from Montana should be solved."

"You think your father will show fight?" he asked, aloud.

"I will not deceive you, Mr. Brady," said the girl. "My father is a big, powerful man. He is also a man without a conscience. He would just as soon kill you as eat his breakfast."

"And——"

"Don't be shocked at what I am going to say. With me it is a case of the life of one I love against the life of one I hate. If worse comes to worse, and you have to kill him to save Basil's life or your own life, or even mine, you will never hear from me."

"I understand," replied Harry, quietly. "Are we most there?"

"Close upon the ladder now," replied Minnie, hurrying on.

They soon reached a corner of the cave where there was a ladder leading up into the darkness above.

"That ladder leads up to a shaft my father works," explained Minnie. "When he had gone down about twenty feet the bottom fell out of it, and this cave was discovered. As the vein disappeared the work was of course abandoned and the mouth of the shaft covered up. A hut was built above it, in which we have lived ever since, and that is where we are going now."

"There is a trap-door in the floor, I take it?" said Harry.

"Yes; it opens directly into the kitchen."

"And your father may be there?"

"You think out everything I am about to tell you. That's the danger. I'll go first up the ladder. The trap-door is not fastened, and——"

"Excuse me, I'll go first up the ladder. Are you armed?"

"No; my father took my rifle away."

"Then take this revolver and defend yourself, if you have to."

"You have another?"

"Yes."

"I am willing to go first, Mr. Brady. It is not likely father would shoot me off-hand, although I believe he would not hesitate if he thought I meant to block his evil schemes. It will give you a better chance."

"No; I will not allow you to go first. Say no more about it. I am ready to go now, but first I want to be fully posted. Is Basil Barrymore in that hut?"

"He was fastened up in the loft when I left. Don't ask me any more, Mr. Brady. He may be dead now."

"Ready for business," said Harry, and with his revolver thrust loose in the side pocket of his coat, he grasped the rounds of the ladder and started to ascend.

CHAPTER X.

OLD KING BRADY STRIKES HARD LUCK.

In spite of the exciting climax in Jack Jernegan's gambling room, brought about by Mr. J. Billings Banta's drunken ravings, Old King Brady kept his head.

His eyes were everywhere. He was taking it all in, and he knew by the expression which came over Bill Ulex's face how much mischief the crazy lawyer had done.

But before he could make a move Jack Jernegan changed the whole situation.

There was a small gas plant at Gold Hill.

Of course Jernegan had gas in his gambling room, and as he now stood by the open door, he reached his hand up to a shelf against the wall where the meter stood, and quick as a flash turned the key.

Instantly all was darkness, and pandemonium reigned.

Somebody fired a revolver—perhaps it was Banta.

Then came a grand rush for the door.

Men yelled and swore.

The dealers grabbed their money and beat a retreat by a secret way.

The instant the darkness fell upon the room Old King Brady whipped out his revolver, prepared to fight his way to the door.

He never got the chance.

Quick as lightning somebody caught his wrist and wrenched the revolver away from him.

Old King Brady struck out right and left, hit or miss.

So did every one else, seemingly.

Three times the old detective's fists did telling work.

He knew that he had knocked at least one man down, and he thought that the man must be Bill Ulex.

Then all in an instant came a crushing blow between the eyes which caused the detective to reel.

He fell heavily against some one behind him.

Then a stunning blow on the back of the head sent him flying forward.

"Rough house! Rough house!" some one was yelling.

On his hands and knees upon the floor the detective tried to crawl to the door, when some one jumped on him in the darkness, bore him down, and seizing his head, beat it against the oilcloth.

"This is my finish," thought Old King Brady, struggling for all he was worth.

He actually succeeded in tearing himself loose, too, and got upon his feet again, when some one grappled with him, and another fearful blow on the head followed.

That settled the brave old detective.

He fell unconscious to the floor, and it was well that it happened so, or he would surely have been killed.

"Clear the room! Clear the room! Get out, every mother's son of you!" Jack Jernegan's hoarse voice could be heard yelling through it all.

And the room was cleared, so far as the gamblers were concerned, before Old King Brady came back to consciousness, to find himself lying with his hands securely tied behind him upon a handsome leather-covered lounge.

A solitary burner gave light to the place now, and Bill Ulex and Jack Jernegan, with the Spanish-looking man whom Old King Brady had seen drinking with the landlord at the bar, sat by the faro table smoking, with their backs turned.

Over in one corner, with his clothes torn half off his back, lay the cause of all the mischief.

The wretched lawyer was apparently deep in a drunken sleep.

Old King Brady, however, knew his business.

The instant he opened his eyes he closed them again.

There was no work for them to do, but his ears could do much.

There was a strange taste in the detective's mouth. He felt rather sick at his stomach. He felt sure that he had been drugged.

"Not satisfied with knocking me out with their fists, these wretches have given me a dose of knock-out drops," he said to himself. "I wonder how long I have been unconscious? It may be hours, I should not be at all surprised."

They were talking about him now.

Ulex seemed to have the floor.

"It would be a big mistake to kill him off-hand," he was saying. "I tell you, gentlemen, there are few men

in these United States what have the pull that old guy has got. Kill him, and there'll be trouble. Besides, his partner is loose about these diggings somewhere."

"Don't believe it," said the man called Gus; he of the Spanish appearance. "That fellow who pretended to be Tony Panetti was Young King Brady; dat am sure ting."

"It looks so," added Jernegan. "The body picked up by the wagon on the Arlee trail is certainly Tony's. Then we have Hen Perez's testimony. His despatch, as I told you, positively states that Tony had no brother suddenly turn up last night. The little plot of these fellows is plain enough. Young King Brady went into the creek along with Basil Barrymore. They are both dead, and pushing clouds in some other sphere by this time."

"It's always your way to be certain of what you don't positively know about!" continued Bill Ulex, who appeared to be the brains of the gang, as constituted in the gambling room. "None of us have had time to go down to the mine. The boys may have escaped. I say it was barbarous business, blowing up that hut. Basil was true to us. Why should he have been killed. If I had been consulted he would not have been."

"It was Doc's work," said Jernegan. "He would have it so. He said the boy knew too much."

Ulex grunted.

"Another murder," he said. "Doc forged my name on that letter which put poor Calef out of business. I don't like such high-handed work. I tell you, none of us are safe against that man of many poisons. The first thing we know he will put us all out of business and grab the mine himself."

"He's a bad one, I own," said Jernegan. "I'm as much afraid as you are. You ought to have seen the fiendish smile on his face when that hut went skyward last night. 'Two out, Jack,' he says; 'one less to divide with,' he says. Then he whispers in my ear: 'Say, old man, I wish they were all out but you and me.' Gee, it made my blood run cold!"

Silence followed.

"Well, I think so, too," Ulex broke out at last.

"What do you mean?" demanded Jernegan, hoarsely.

"I mean what you are thinking about."

"You hain't no mind reader, Bill. You don't know what was running in my head."

"Don't, hey?" retorted the landlord. "Johnny, a child could read your thoughts just now."

"Hush," said Jernegan, looking around at the detective. "That dose of knock-out drops may have lost its force by this time."

"He's still asleep, all right," said Ulex. "If you don't believe it, go over and maks sure."

Old King Brady was breathing regularly. His eyes were tightly closed.

"Guess you're right," said Jernegan, contenting himself with looking. "Well, I don't know what to say."

"Let Gus say it," laughed Ulex. "He's a greaser, and don't care."

"It's easy done, senors," said Gus. "What the deuce! A glass of whiskey! Ha! De stomach aches. Vat's de matter, doctor? We do everything. He don't get well. What de deuce? Even doctors have to die."

"We'll talk of this later," said Jernegan, hurriedly. "I don't care much about giving him time to think about it. If we could only get hold of some of that blamed stuff what he sent to Cap Calef in the letter! Well, that would be something like!"

"I'd like to see you get hold of it," replied Ulex, contemptuously. "Doc told me that there are not ten men in the United States who know how to make it, and that while it's being made one has to wear a glass mask to protect his own life. I wouldn't touch the blame stuff with tongs. No, we shall have to think of some other way."

"Ah, forget it," growled Jernegan. "The time for that hasn't come yet. Question is about this blamed detective. Is he to live or die?"

"Give him a dose of Rough on Rats—don't die in the house," chuckled Ulex. "Do you want a dead man to be found in your joint, Jack?"

"You know blamed well I don't."

"Then it brings it back to where we started out. After all this chin music, perhaps you are ready to listen to my plan?"

"I've been ready ever since we began to talk," growled Gus.

"Go on, Bill; say your say," added Jernegan. "It is getting late, and if anything is to be done to-night we must be at it at once."

"Well, it's this way," began Ulex. "I know all about Old King Brady; heard of him many a time when I lived East. The man's worth a million, and over. He can command all the money he wants. I say, take him down to the mine, tie him up in the cave, and make him shell out a good fat sum to be set free. After this is done he can be let get as far as Arlee, or some other place where he can publicly show himself, and then we must see to it that he comes up against one of Doc's little doses. That will shut his mouth forever, and will prove profitable to us into the bargain. It's the prettiest way of handling the case by long odds, according to my mind."

"I agree to the first part of it," said Jernegan, after a few minutes' reflection. "As for the rest, we will think about it. We don't have to decide that now."

"Very well," said Ulex. "We had better start right now, as quick as ever we can."

"Do you go?"

"Yes; I'll see you through, boys."

"And Doc? Is he to be let into it? Remember, he knows nothing of what has happened here to-night."

"Unless he has heard it in the street."

"Which he hasn't, or he would have been around, sure."

"Well, he will have to be let into it. He'll be poisoning some of us if you don't."

"And the other fellow?"

"Oh, Banta has got to die—that goes without saying.

But we may as well take him along and finish him up at the mine."

"Settled! We'll talk no more. Gus, go and hitch up. Bring the wagon around to the entrance of the alley. Put a lot of them old bags in to cover them up. We'll join you by the bridge."

The programme was all arranged at last, and the men rose from the faro table.

"I'll go and tell Doc," said Bill Ulex. "Now, Jack, I'll leave matters here in your hands."

"They'll be attended to, and don't you forget it," said Jernegan.

Ulex and Gus then left the gambling room.

Jernegan walked over to Old King Brady and tumbled him about a bit.

"Still sound asleep," he muttered. "Well, he's good for another hour, and when he comes to his senses again he is pretty certain to find himself somewhere else."

He then left the room, and Old King Brady started in to struggle with his bonds.

It was a hopeless case.

Loosen the cords he could not.

And when Jernegan and Gus came to carry the detective to the wagon they found him, to all appearances, in the same deep sleep.

There was just one thing that Old King Brady could do to help his case along, and that was to play possum, and he did it to the queen's taste.

And in the end, with the wretched Banta lying beside him under a pile of old bags in the bottom of a wagon, Old King Brady went rattling out of town, down the hill toward the gulch.

To be at the mercy of a bad gang was no novelty for him, but this gang, to put it mildly, was the worst he had ever tackled.

Black prospects loomed up ahead of him.

Old King Brady felt that it was altogether likely he was going to his death.

CHAPTER XI.

THE INDIANS AT THE BUFFALO GATE.

Ascending to the top of the ladder, Harry found himself up against the trap-door.

Here he paused and listened intently.

"Do you hear anything?" asked Minnie, who had come up close behind him.

"Nothing," breathed Young King Brady. "There is not a sound. Can it be possible that he has gone out?"

"Quite possible. I shouldn't be at all surprised."

"I think there is nothing to be gained by waiting. Is the trap-door fastened?"

"It was not when I left. He may have fastened it since."

"Did he know what you were going for?"

"He hadn't the slightest idea. He thinks he has me completely under 'his thumb."

Harry softly pushed up the trap-door.

Thrusting his head through the opening, he found himself looking about in a plainly furnished kitchen.

There was no one to be seen. The door stood wide open.

He listened, and could hear no one.

"Come on!" he called softly. "The coast is clear. We have got everything all our own way, I guess."

Minnie followed him up into the room.

She was terribly frightened. He could see that.

Her face was as white as chalk, and she was trembling all over as she shut down the trap-door.

"We are in luck," she breathed. "He has probably stepped out to see the man who stands guard at the Buffalo Gate. We don't have to kill him, now that we came here by way of the cave."

"Will it be best so?"

"Yes; leave it to me to concoct some story."

"Suppose he don't come?"

"Then you must tackle the man at the gate and put him out of business, for the time being, anyhow."

"I can tackle that job all right, and I'll make a go of it, too, if I have any sort of show. But what about Barrymore?"

"Stand where you are. Let me act first."

She ran to the door.

"Father! Father!" she called.

There was no answer, and then she screamed it out again. Still no answer came.

Minnie returned to the kitchen looking immensely relieved.

"Brady, we have got time to act, thank heaven!" she said, familiarly. "Basil is in the room overhead. The door is locked. You detectives are usually slick at such business. Have you got such a thing as a false key?"

"I have a dozen."

"Then get to work."

Harry stole up the stairs, which went right up out of the kitchen, there being no hall.

The door at the top was secured by just an ordinary lock, and he had not the least difficulty in opening it.

Upon a dirty bed Basil Barrymore lay tossing and turning, his face terribly flushed.

His hands were tied behind him, and his ankles were also secured.

As Harry entered the room he gave a wild cry and tried to rise.

Failing in this, he sank back upon the bed and groaned out:

"Don't kill me, Jim! Don't kill me, old man! It's all a blamed lie. I never went back on the gang."

"Barrymore, don't you know me?" asked Young King Brady. "I'm not your enemy, Big Jim Gordon. Look at me and see!"

He was in a raging fever, and delirious. Harry could see that plainly enough.

Barrymore broke out in a wild laugh.

"Minnie!" he called. "Minnie! I want Minnie! Where is she? Why don't she come?"

"She is downstairs. Shall I bring her up?" Harry asked.

"No; I'm crazy, I guess. I don't know what's the matter with everybody. Who tied me up so?"

Harry was going to cut his hands loose, but as the case stood he determined that it would not be safe.

"Best thing I can do is to leave him alone for the moment," he thought, and he retreated toward the door.

Before he had reached it, Basil Barrymore, still mistaking him for Big Jim Gordon, broke out into a torrent of abuse:

"Oh, you snoozer! You poisoned that whiskey!" he started. "That's what made me daffy all of a sudden! You are Doc Rhymer's dog, all right! You do all his dirty work! I know you! Let me out of this! Let me loose! I'll dig a knife between your ribs! I'll——"

But there is no use giving it all.

His wild talk was mingled with profanity. It was dreadful to listen to him.

Young King Brady retreated down the stairs in a hurry, to find Minnie standing at the foot with blazing eyes.

"My father has poisoned him!" she hissed. "Now show him no mercy. Now let him die!"

"Hadn't you better go up and see him?" asked Harry.

Minnie shook her head.

"No; if I did I should set him free, and if I did that, like as not he might kill us. I've seen fellows fighting with Doc Rhymer's whiskey before."

"Will it kill him?"

"I can't tell. It depends upon how much of the dreadful stuff my father gave him. Never mind, Brady; I die when he does. I am living now for revenge."

"Don't be foolish and talk about suicide. You will live to forget him, even if he does die. I could tell you things about him which would show you that you would be a fool to kill yourself for his sake."

"Don't tell me. I don't want to hear. I know he is as bad as the rest of them. You saved his life once—help me to save it again."

"I will if I can, surely. Did he betray me to your father? Did he arrange to have me put out of the way, as I suspect? Ah, I see by your face that he did. Never mind; I'll do my best, just the same, but don't you talk of killing yourself for such a man."

Harry's speech was emphatic, but given in a kindly tone.

"Say no more. We will go to the gate," said Minnie. "Perhaps, after all, my father followed me down to the mine."

"To attend to my case? I am inclined to think so. Now we go; I will do just as you say."

"Then kill him!" cried Minnie, fiercely. "Kill him if we meet him at the gate."

"She was sent down to the mine by her father to entice me up here," thought Harry. "Oh, they are a sweet gang."

I never ran up against such a bunch, but all the same, I can't help believing that this girl is sincere."

The mountain was right in front of them when they stepped out of the hut, and there was a well-worn trail leading toward it.

Harry looked narrowly on all sides, but could see no one.

In a moment they had reached the foot of the towering cliffs.

Here it looked as though they could go no further, but the trail turned abruptly to the left.

Minnie, who had not spoken since they left the hut, laid her hand on Harry's arm.

"You see these cliffs, and no doubt you think there is no way of getting through them," she said; "but you are wrong there. This whole stretch is a mass of little *caves*. Washed out in the limestone rock, they run in every direction, and it would puzzle you to find your way about among them. But there is just one which opens on the Gold Hill road; that's the Buffalo Gate."

"That's more to the point. Lead on; I'm at your back all the time. I'm going to see you through with this."

Minnie passed on and came in a moment to a place where the trail turned under the cliffs, passing an arched opening which had evidently been blasted away above to make it high enough to allow a team to pass through.

They now entered a narrow cave, but the top was lost in the darkness. Opening off from it were others.

Fantastically shaped pillars of stone rose on all sides, and almost everywhere Harry looked there were breaks and passages leading off under the mountain.

"Who can ever find their way through this labyrinth?" Young King Brady explained.

"I can, and don't you speak a loud word," answered Minnie. "Take hold of my dress. It will be dark in a minute."

They pushed on rapidly, winding in and out among the passages, covering as much as a quarter of a mile, Harry thought.

And it was then that he took the opportunity to conceal the papers taken from the secret drawer in the desk in a pocket which he deemed secure.

He had but just finished doing so when Minnie paused.

"We are now close to the Buffalo Gate," she breathed. "Listen! See if we can hear voices."

Harry listened attentively.

"I can hear footsteps," he whispered at length. "Some one seems to be walking up and down."

"It is the guard. I hardly think my father is there."

"And in that case?"

"We must capture the guard and tie him up."

"What about rope? I have none."

"I have. I brought it with me. Follow on till you see the light. That's the gate. The guard is in a little cave right alongside."

Again they crept on.

Suddenly daylight appeared ahead of them.

Minnie caught Harry by the arm and pointed to a narrow passage between the two pillars of rock.

"There!" she breathed. "We rush in on him. He's as bad as all the rest. Don't be afraid to shoot."

The words had scarcely escaped her when a shot was heard.

"Back there! Back!" a stern voice cried.

Instantly a frightful yell rang out through the cave.

Looking at the light, Harry saw six Indians rushing toward them.

There was a sharp cry as the foremost raised his rifle and fired.

A man came staggering out into the light.

He held a smoking rifle in his hands, and turning toward the Indians, he tried to raise it.

"My father!" gasped Minnie.

The rifle went ringing upon the rocky floor, and the man dropped face downward, dead, as the Indians came rushing on.

CHAPTER XII.

CONCLUSION.

The wagon containing Old King Brady and Mr. Banta went rattling down the hill, and halted at the bridge which spanned the creek.

"Hold on, Gus!" Old King Brady heard Bill Ulex's voice call. "Doc's here."

Gus reined in.

"Get aboard, quick!" said Jack Jernegan, who was on the wagon. "It won't do for us to be seen."

The detective then heard them climb upon the rear seat of the wagon, and the journey was resumed.

They had scarcely started when Dr. Rhymer began to talk.

"I see no use in taking these fellows into the mine," he said in a discontented way. "I can put them out of business in a moment when we get down where the old hut used to be. What's the sense in putting it through to the mine?"

"It's about time some of us showed up there, I should say," remarked Jernegan. "How do we know whatever became of Barrymore and the other detective? They may have passed safely through the tunnel and be on Big Jim Gordon's hands by now."

"May, of course, but is it likely? I think not. And if such was the case, would not Jim have surely sent some one up to tell us? I think yes."

"Didn't Bill tell you his scheme, Doc?" Jernegan inquired, evidently somewhat surprised at this sort of talk.

"No; I haven't had a chance," replied Ulex. "I'm going to do it now."

A good deal of talk followed.

Dr. Rhymer did not at all approve of Ulex's plan.

While they were in the midst of it Old King Brady felt a hand pass over his face.

It was Banta, of course. The man was so completely intoxicated that Jernegan had not thought it necessary to tie him up.

"You are awake at last," breathed Old King Brady, the rattle of the wagon preventing his voice from being heard.

"Yes, at last," whispered Banta, with his mouth close to the old detective's ear. "Oh, Mr. Brady, I have been listening to their talk. I have spoiled the whole business. You don't know how terribly I feel."

"Humph!" grunted the old detective. "I doubt if you realize what a bad mess you actually have made of it, all through your folly. Repentance comes too late now."

"Where are they taking us?"

"To our death, unless something can be done."

Banta groaned.

Old King Brady now gave himself up to close listening to the talk of the schemers.

Twice Dr. Rhymer alluded to having poisoned Captain Calef by highly concentrated prussic acid sent in the pencil lead case.

It appeared also that Captain Calef, having found the mine, applied to Landlord Ulex for financial help to develop it, and that a secret company was formed and much gold taken out.

All went smoothly with the conspirators until Captain Calef began to grow conscience-stricken and make trouble.

Barrymore, who acted as clerk at the mine, was then sent to New York to get next to Banta and steal his deeds of the property, if possible.

How well he succeeded in his mission the reader alone knows.

At last, it seemed, Captain Calef broke away from the gang altogether and went to New York to see Banta, having first written him a guarded letter, which Barrymore promptly answered, as has also been shown.

He never got beyond the Murray Hill Hotel, for there Dr. Rhymer's death-trap awaited him.

It seemed strange that the Doctor should care to rehearse all this as they rode along that night with their prisoners, but he did it.

And as the wagon rattled on, the case seemed more hopeless than ever.

"Brady, we are done for," breathed Banta, who, of course, had also been listening for all he was worth. "Those fellows are the most awful scoundrels I ever heard of. They will put us out of business, surest thing."

"There is still hope," replied Old King Brady, quietly.

He would not admit that it was otherwise, and yet he felt but little hope himself.

At last they fell to discussing Old King Brady himself.

Ulex urged his blackmailing scheme for all it was worth, and dwelt upon Old King Brady's wealth.

Dr. Rhymer seemed to take little stock in the plan, however.

"We want to give him a dose, that's the best way to fix him," he declared, and if he said it once he said it twenty times.

As for Banta, there really seemed to be no hope, for from the talk of the evil man it appeared that they had fully determined to put him out of the way.

And so matters stood until the wagon suddenly stopped.

"Who is that, do you suppose?" Dr. Rhymer exclaimed.

"They are there among the trees," Ulex's voice replied.

"They are laying for us, surest thing," added Jernegan. "There's a big bunch of them, too."

There was an ominous silence.

"Vell," said Gus, "me gotta go on. Me eanta go back. Dey shoot us, den me!"

"Who are you? What do you want?" Ulex shouted.

The answer was an awful yell, and the clatter of horses' hoofs was heard.

"Injuns!" bawled Jernegan. "Let 'em have it, boys!"

"Crack! crack! crack!"

Then the shots rang out, and others answered.

"I'm a goner!" yelled Ulex, and he tumbled back on top of Old King Brady.

"Hold, you bad mans who kill my friend Calef!" a hoarse voice shouted. "Hold, or I kill you!"

"Running Deer and his friends, by all that's good!" thought Old King Brady, as other shots rang out upon the silence of the night.

* * * * *

Young King Brady and Minnie Gordon were as good as captured then, if they had only known it, which they did not.

"It's Indians!" gasped Minnie. "They have killed my father, and I am glad of it, but I don't want them to kill you and me."

"Hush," said Harry. "We might retreat while there is time. Our only chance is to get back to the hut."

There was no chance.

Harry knew it before they had gone a dozen yards.

Suddenly the light of a blazing torch was flashed upon them, and three Indians stepped out into view from behind the pillars.

"How, boy! How, girl! You stay so, or we kill you, too!" a big buck cried, as rifles were leveled at the pair.

Of course Harry knew nothing of Old King Brady's interview with the Indians on the Flathead Reservation.

He had no reason for believing that these red men instead of being enemies, might be transformed into friends by a single word.

"Don't shoot!" he cried. "See, you would not kill the young squaw! Tell us what you want, and we will do what you say."

"White man make heap much talk," replied the Indian. "Talk to Running Deer."

Two other Indians came forward from the gate with smoking rifles in their hands.

"So!" exclaimed Running Deer, who was one of them.

"Two more. You live here?"

"No," replied Harry, "we don't live here. Let us go out through the gate. We do not want to do you harm; you must not do us harm—see?"

"You no live here, then why you be here?" replied Running Deer. "We come here to find out who kill my friend, Captain Calef. White men fire at us. Well, we fire back. We kill. What you do—ugh?"

"We do nothing," replied Harry. "See, I came here also to find out who killed Captain Calef, and this girl is my friend. Let us go."

"No," replied Running Deer, shaking his head. "No; you say that, but it is not so. You tell heap big lie, white boy. Me know detective what come from New York to find out who kill Captain Calef. He old man—he not you."

"He is my partner!" cried Harry. "Have you got him? Take me to him; he will tell you that I don't lie. He will make you know that I am Indian's friend."

Running Deer grunted.

He then began to talk in his own language with his companions.

Of course, Harry had no means of knowing what they were saying, nor did they explain.

After a brief conversation two of the Indians sprang upon Young King Brady and hurriedly searched and disarmed him, others serving Minnie the same way.

Then tying their hands behind them, they were led off, while Running Deer and two others continued on through the cave.

Past the dead body of Big Jim Gordon they were hurried, and past the body of another man whom Harry rightly assumed was the guard.

Then passing through an arched opening, they came out from under the mountain into the canyon, through which ran the Gold Hill road.

Taking the direction of Gold Hill, they were led on for about a quarter of a mile, when suddenly turning aside into the woods, they came to a small hut.

This was destined to be Young King Brady's prison for hours to come.

Harry's legs were tied together now, and he was tumbled upon a heap of dirty ore bags in one corner, Minnie being served the same way.

And when the night was far advanced there they still lay, with a solitary Indian standing guard outside.

To Harry, who had hoped to do so much, the situation was particularly galling. The only thing he had to congratulate himself on was the fact that he still had Captain Calef's diary and Mr. Banta's deeds safe.

But how was it all to end?

It seemed as if the end would never come.

* * * * *

A yell from the man Gus, followed by the sound of some one falling off the wagon to the ground, was the next thing Old King Brady heard.

"Gus is a goner, too," gasped Jernegan. "Doc, the vengeance of heaven is falling upon us. It's every man for himself now!"

Old King Brady heard them jump from the wagon and

plunge into the woods, and he could hear the Indians following, shouting to the fugitives to stop as they went.

Through it all the horses stood still, for a wonder.

Old King Brady would have shouted to Running Deer and tried to make his presence in the wagon known, but with Bill Ulex lying heavily upon him, he realized that it would be of no use.

They were all gone now, and once more silence reigned.

"Good heavens!" gasped Banta. "This is a great turn of affairs."

"Have you got a knife?" asked Old King Brady.

"Yes, yes!"

"Then up with you! Lift this dead man off of me! Let us do something! Quick, man! I must overtake those Indians. I want to have a hand in this business, and not let them do it all!"

Banta scrambled up and pulled the body of Bill Ulex off of the detective.

The landlord never even groaned.

"He is dead," said Old King Brady, after Banta had set him free, and he was able to flash his little electric dark lantern upon the corpse.

"He has been shot through the head. Mr. Banta, it begins to look as though things were coming around your way, after all. Here is Gus on the ground, dead, too. Your enemies are being cut off fast."

"It's more than I deserve," replied Banta. "But what are we to do?"

"Those Indians were led by Running Deer. Not waiting for me to avenge the death of his friend, Captain Calef, he has taken matters into his own hands. We must reconnoiter a bit and see what we can find."

Old King Brady had seen a light flashing among the trees, and it was this which caused the remark.

They moved forward along the road, leaving the team where it was.

The light was flashing in the woods on their left, and seemed to be moving in a direction parallel to the way they were going.

They could hear men crashing about among the bushes, and then all at once came a yell and the sound of a struggle.

No shot was fired, however.

Old King Brady and Banta paused and listened breathlessly.

For a few minutes all was still.

"I expect they have got one of them," said Banta.

"It would seem so," replied the detective.

"I hope it is that fiend of a doctor."

"Well, I don't, then."

"You don't? Why, he is the leader of the bunch. I guess your ears are not as sharp as mine. If you had heard all that he was saying there in the wagon, you would soon change your tune."

"My ears are all right, my friend, and I did hear probably as much as you heard. You forget that I am out here to capture the murderer of Captain Calef, as much as any-

thing else. I don't care to have my game bagged by another."

"Oh, if you look at it that way——"

"I do. They are dragging somebody through the woods. We must be on the move."

They hurried on, following along with the light, which was flashing among the trees.

Again it stopped, and Old King Brady could hear them talking.

"Let's get a little ahead of them," he said. "There may be a path here somewhere by which they will come out upon the road."

They soon came to one, but now they could hear no sound, and even the light was lost to view.

"We'll push in upon them, Banta," said Old King Brady, but the lawyer hesitated.

"I don't know about that, Mr. Brady," he said. "I don't feel like trusting these Indians. They might be seized with the notion to do us up, too. Oh, I'm too nervous and shaky. If I only had a drink! Give me one, and I'll not take another as long as I live."

Old King Brady had a flask, and he silently handed it to Banta, who tipped it up eagerly, draining it to the last drop.

"Ah, that makes a man of one again!" he muttered, as he handed it back. "I am ready to do business now."

"Then come on," said Old King Brady. "We will go down this path and see where it leads."

It led to a solitary hut standing in the midst of a little clearing.

Producing his dark lantern, Old King Brady pulled aside the half open door.

A cry of joy escaped him as he glanced inside.

"Harry, at last!" he exclaimed. "And who have we here?"

It was Young King Brady and Minnie Gordon lying bound in opposite corners of the little room.

"Look out for yourself, governor!" he cried. "Indians! They were here a few minutes ago. Hark! Don't you hear them coming again?"

Feeling that he could not trust Running Deer, Old King Brady instantly shut off his lantern, and pulling Banta after him, stepped out through the back door.

"Take the lantern," he whispered. "Pull the slide open the instant they show themselves, and—ho! They are here now!"

A torch was flashing outside. Into the hut came two Indians, dragging Dr. Rhymer between them.

"Come on!" shouted Old King Brady, dashing in through the door, followed by Banta, who flashed the light ahead.

A revolver he took from Ulex was out and ready, and he fired over the heads of the Indians.

No doubt the Indians mistook the detectives for the sheriff and a large force.

At all events, they fled, and Dr. Rhymer staggered to his feet, with the blood running down his face.

"Old King Brady!" he gasped, falling back.

"Exactly," said the detective. "Dr. Rhymer, I arrest you for the murder of Captain Calef. Once more the Bradys win out!"

* * * * *

The Bradys had won again.

Harry and Minnie were quickly freed, and the young detective's story was told, while Dr. Rhymer, with his hands tied behind him, stood and glared.

"Here are your deeds, Mr. Banta," said Harry, handing the papers over.

"I'll turn State's evidence," whined the Doctor. "The transfer of the mine property was forged by the county clerk, Bill Ulex. I'll tell all."

But Old King Brady had no notion of letting him.

The Indians did not return, and soon the party were in the wagon, on their way to Gold Hill, leaving the bodies of Bill Ulex and the man Gus behind them.

Jernegan, Dr. Rhymer declared, had made his escape, and was being pursued by Running Deer.

Great was the excitement at the hotel in Gold Hill when the Bradys came in with their prisoner and informed the night clerk that the landlord was dead.

Old King Brady looked up the sheriff, and entering a charge of murder against the Doctor, he was landed in jail.

Next day, with the sheriff and his posse, they all went down to the mine, but found it deserted.

Basil Barrymore had gone with the rest.

Doubtless the miners had got wind of what had happened, and had freed the boy, and he had fled with them.

There was no opposition made to Mr. Banta's claim.

Dr. Rhymer, badly wounded, died the next night, and before his death confessed all.

Jernegan was never heard of again. Running Deer also disappeared from the reservation.

Perhaps each killed the other among the mountains, but this was never known.

Old King Brady saw the body of Big Jim Gordon decently buried for Minnie's sake. The others were left to be disposed of by the authorities.

And so the case ended.

The detectives were rewarded, according to their agreement, by Mr. Banta, who is to-day a millionaire, and still working his mine.

He has kept his promise, and has not tasted liquor since that last night of his adventure with "The Bradys at Gold Hill."

THE END.

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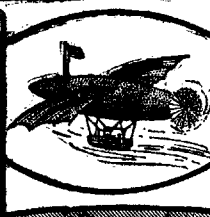
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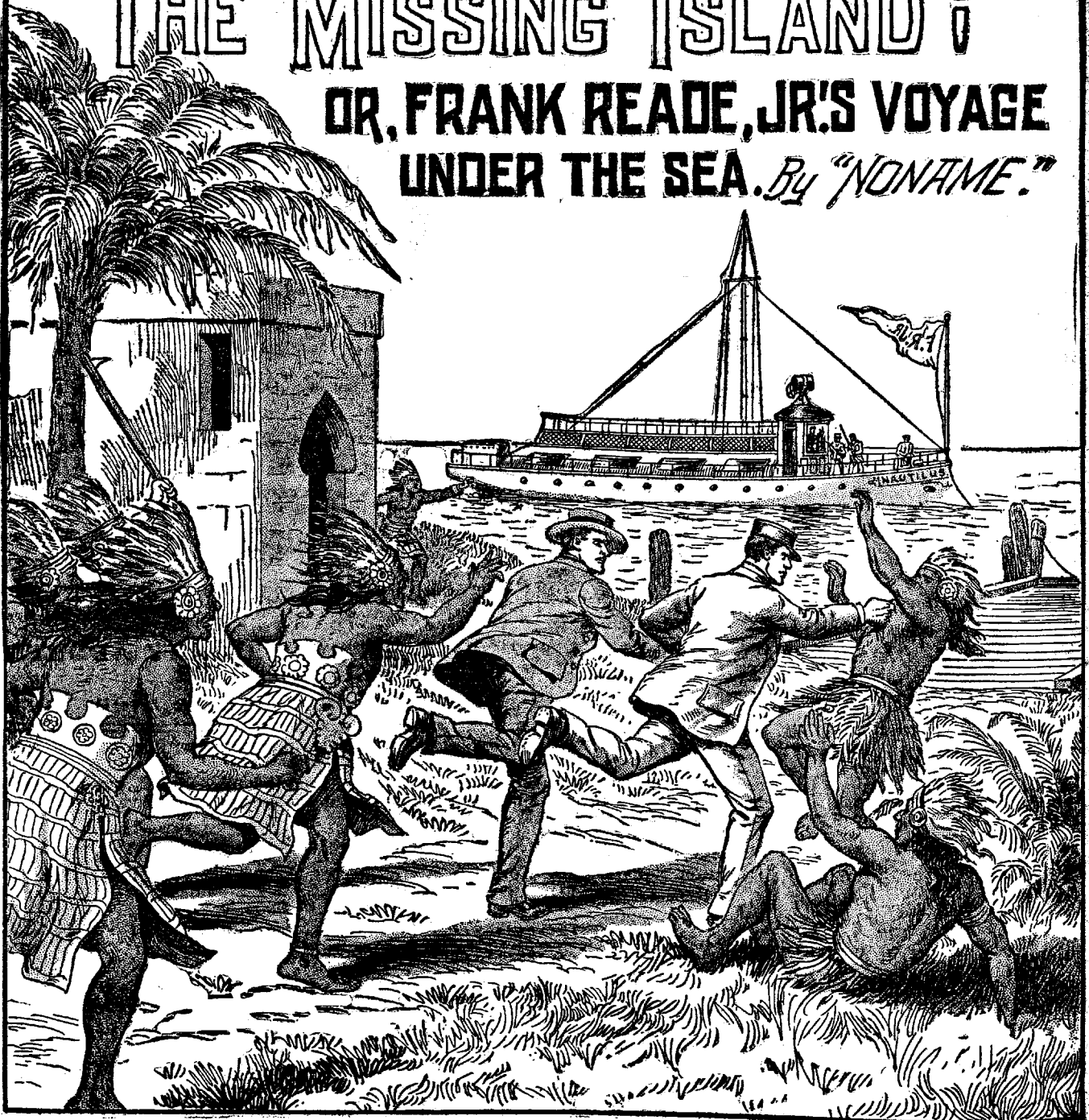
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