

SECRET SERVICE

OLD AND YOUNG KING BRADY, DETECTIVES.

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

No. 253.

NEW YORK, NOVEMBER 27, 1903.

Price 5 Cents.

THE BRADYS AND BRADY. THE BANKER; OR, THE SECRET OF THE OLD SANTA FE' TRAIL.

By A NEW-YORK DETECTIVE.



Old King Brady's wrists were tied together so he could just manage to grasp the reins. He gave them a tug and stopped the horse, while the two Indians dismounted. One of them, seizing Al Buckner, lifted him to the ground.

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(Continued on page 3 of cover.)

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The Bradys and Brady the Banker;

OR,

The Secret of the Old Santa Fe Trail.

BY A NEW YORK DETECTIVE.

CHAPTER I.

THE BRADYS AND MR. BRADY.

Take it all in all, the Bradys are the most successful detectives of the age, and as this fact is generally recognized, their business takes them all over the country.

Originally Old King Brady confined his operations to New York and vicinity, but nowadays one is just as liable to hear of him in Chicago, San Francisco or New Orleans.

One evening in the month of December a year or two ago, the Bradys came down from a big cattle range in New Mexico on horseback, and struck the town of Tipton, on the line of the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe railroad at about ten o'clock in the evening.

Their intention was to take a train east, which left Tipton at midnight.

The great detectives had been looking into the case of a mining superintendent who was working a rich gold mine for his own benefit, instead of that of the stockholders.

They had successfully trapped the man and turned him over to the authorities, and now they were going home. Sometimes the Bradys strike a case by accident.

This has happened in numerous instances.

They caught one on the fly at Tipton, as we are about to relate.

It was snowing a little, and the air was cold and raw, when the detectives turned their horses over to the stable-keeper to whom they belonged.

They at once proceeded to the hotel and ordered supper, and, having eaten it, Harry, as Young King Brady is called, proposed that they go out and see the town.

Old King Brady rather objected.

"I don't care about changing my clothes," he said, "and it is just as well that everybody does not know that we are in town."

Of course Old King Brady cuts rather a striking appearance on account of the peculiar dress he persists in wearing.

Unless in disguise, the old detective always wears a long blue coat, of peculiar cut, a big white felt hat and an old fashioned stand-up collar with a black "stock," instead of a tie or scarf.

These stocks went out of fashion somewhere about 1850. Old King Brady has them made to order now.

"Oh, that can't make any difference, seeing that we are through with our work," replied Young King Brady. "I'm not ready for bed, and I don't care to sit around the hotel. Go just as you are. What does it matter if you are recognized, now that our work is done?"

Willing to oblige, Old King Brady yielded, and, lighting their cigars, the detectives sauntered out upon the street.

There is only one business street in Tipton.

It is like many another one in New Mexico.

A brick hotel, a brick bank and numerous little one-story brick stores, all very square and very red, having signs on top almost as high as the buildings themselves.

Some people in the East fancy that because the towns in Colorado, New Mexico and parts of Arizona are in the far West, the houses must necessarily be built of logs, not being aware that logs are about the most expensive things going in that treeless region.

It is not necessarily so.

Some are quite the reverse.

Take the city of Denver, for instance. There is scarcely a frame building in it. Everything is brick and stone.

The Bradys walked the full length of Tipton's main street without discovering anything that particularly interested them, except one sign.

This was over the bank.

Instead of being the "First National Bank of Tipton," it carried an individual name.

This is not unusual in the far West.

Out there private bankers are very much in evidence.

It is usual, however, to give the full name on the sign.

In this case the sign, which was painted in particularly large letters, read:

BRADY, THE BANKER.

Harry laughed as they passed it.

"So you seem to have gone into a new business, Governor!" he exclaimed.

"That man has private banks in a dozen small towns in this part of New Mexico," replied Old King Brady. "He is a well known character."

"No relation of yours, I suppose?"

"None that I know of."

"Did you ever meet him?"

"No."

"Does he live here?"

"Oh, I hardly think so. But I don't know anything about it. I had an idea that he lived at Santa Fe."

Next to the bank was a big saloon, of the sort found in many far Western towns.

Over this building was a big sign reading:

LARRY LIMPER'S.

The sound of a cornet and a violin could be heard outside, and through the uncurtained windows men could be seen sitting at tables, drinking, smoking and playing cards.

There was also a long bar, in front of which a number of cowboys and rough looking fellows of the Western pattern were lined up.

The Bradys did not enter Larry Limper's.

In course of their business they have to take in many such places.

The idea of entering one for pleasure never comes into their heads.

"That looks like a tough joint," remarked Harry, as they passed it.

"Yes, and I have no doubt that it is so," replied Old King Brady, "but I don't suppose that it is any worse than a hundred others of its kind."

These remarks were made as the detectives passed up the street.

On their way down again, for they turned when they reached the end, they were given a chance to find out what sort of a place Larry Limper's was.

They had not yet reached Brady the Banker's little

brick building when the sharp report of firearms was heard, and several rough looking men rushed out into the middle of the street and began firing at each other. This was all to be seen plainly under the electric light which hung over the street.

Two fell, and then three ran back into Larry Limper's.

The others rushed after them, firing in through the open door as they went.

There were quite a number of people on the street at the time.

These acted precisely as people in far Western towns always do during these shooting scrapes.

They were not in it, and they did not want to be in it.

In New York a crowd would have gathered around the door in an instant, but here everybody promptly made for cover.

In less time than it takes to tell it the Bradys had the street to themselves.

"A row!" cried Harry.

"Look out for yourself!" said Old King Brady, dodging into the banker's doorway. "They will be out again in a minute, and we may pick up a ball before we know it!"

The sharp report of revolvers, loud shouts, and the crash of glass showed that things were getting decidedly lively in Larry's.

To pass would have been risky, and Old King Brady preferred to remain where he was.

He was 'right about the danger, too.

In a moment a little man without a hat shot out through the door of the saloon and ran toward them.

He was instantly followed by about six others, who repeated the operation of a moment before.

They began firing at each other in the middle of the street, and two more were shot.

In the meantime the little man had run to the doorway of the bank and almost fell into Old King Brady's arms.

"For the love of heaven, protect me!" he gasped. "They will be after me in a moment! I shall be murdered, sure! Bad luck to it! Where's the key?"

He was fumbling in his pocket, and as Old King Brady whipped out his revolver and sprang in front of him he produced a key and opened the bank.

"In wid yez!" he panted, speaking with rather a marked Irish accent. "So much for mussing with bad men! Sure, I might have known!"

Willing to lend his assistance, Old King Brady slipped inside the bank, followed by Harry.

Without losing a moment, the little man slammed the door shut, locked it, shot two bolts and put up a heavy iron bar.

"Sure, we are safe for the time being!" he exclaimed.

"I'd strike a light, but I don't dare. It's at the hotel they'll be after looking for me. If we keep dark they'll never guess I am hiding in the bank."

"Is it a gang?" inquired Old King Brady.

"That's what it is!" was the reply. "It's long Ike Rawley's gang scrapping with the Blind Coyotes."

"Another gang?"

"Yes. They have a hangout in the Taos range. I might have guessed when I saw the crowd coming into Larry's; but I was that busy talking with Ike Rawley that I never give it a thought, nor did he, till they jumped on us, and now he's dead."

"He was one of the men shot in the road?" inquired Old King Brady.

"Yes. It's good riddance to bad rubbish, but it's likely to make trouble for me yet."

"How so?"

"Oh, niver mind. What I want to do is to get out of this town as quick as I can."

"Won't they attack the bank?"

"I don't think it. If they were to try that everybody would rise up in arms against them. There's not so much money here. What there is belongs to the tradesmen on the street, and I only receive it on their own risk in case of a raid, for I won't stand responsible for the doings of these gangs where there are no police in town. That's the rule I always make."

"Indeed," said the detective; "then I take it that you must be Brady the Banker."

"Well, I'm no one else. But I only do a small business. Sure, I'm no millionaire!"

"You are beginning to feel rather afraid of me, my friend."

"No, no! Not at all; but you are a stranger in town."

"You were thinking that perhaps you were foolish to trust us and bring us in here in the dark."

"Well, man, I own it! So I was thinking; but thoughts don't make facts. All the same, I hope you are square men. Listen to the howling of them! That's the way they go on all the time. What have I to do with their quarrels? And yet I would like to bet that they would have killed me had I stopped there another minute."

"You will find us all right, Mr. Brady," replied the old detective. "By the way, my name is the same as your own."

"Look at that now!" cried the banker. "Sure, I knew I'd seen you somewhere. Now I know who you are!"

"Well, who?"

"Old King Brady, the detective. I seen your picture in a Chicago paper only the other day."

"It was there. I am the man. My friend here is Young King Brady."

"Yes! Yes!"

"He is my partner and pupil."

"Look at that now!" cried the banker. "This is luck, the luckiest kind of luck. Of all the men in America whom I wanted to meet you are the ones!"

"Yes? And why?"

"I've got a case for you."

"A case?"

"Yes."

"I hardly think that we can undertake it. We are on our way to New York just now."

"You must undertake it. I'll not take no for an answer. Wait until you hear what it is. Sure, and it's the biggest kind of a proposition."

"Hark! They are coming down the street! They are coming this way!" whispered Harry.

He stole to the window and pulled aside the curtain a little.

"This band is mounted! There are as many as twenty of them," he whispered. "They are making straight for the bank."

"Holy Saints! They are right after me!" gasped the banker. "What a fool I was to trust that man with even a whisper of the secret of the old Santa Fe trail!"

CHAPTER II.

THE SECRET OF THE OLD SANTA FE TRAIL.

"Brace up, Mr. Brady!" cried Old King Brady. "We appear to have just about one minute in which to decide what to do, and we want to decide right now."

"Right you are, man!" replied the banker. "But I've already decided. Let 'em clean the place out if they want to. Sure, the loss don't fall on me, except that they break the safe, and that's insured."

"Suppose they break into our heads with a bullet? That won't be so very pleasant, either," suggested Harry.

"They'll not do it, for we'll not stop here to let them," the banker replied. "Gentlemen, please follow me! Bad luck to it! I'll have to grope my way in the dark, and mebbe I'll make a miss of it. If I only dared to strike a light now!"

"I have my dark lantern," said Old King Brady. "It is just the thing for a case like this."

Thus saying, the old detective produced the little electric dark lantern, which was the most complete thing of its kind ever invented.

It threw all the light they needed in front of them, and left not a glimmer behind.

"The very article!" breathed the banker. "Young man, would you be after moving your boot until I pull up the trap door? Thank you. That's it. Down wid yez now. Bad luck to them, but they are going to attack the bank."

A vigorous pounding on the door was heard.

"Brady! Brady! If you are inside there, open up, or we will beat the door in!" a voice called out.

There was a ladder underneath the trap door which the banker had raised, and he ordered the Bradys to descend.

Following them, he lowered the trap door and proceeded to bolt it on the under side.

"Have you anything at the hotel you will be after wanting, gentlemen?" he asked.

"Nothing of any consequence," replied Old King Brady. "There is only a dress suit case which, with its whole contents, is not worth a thought."

"So much the better for us, then. We can give the town the cold shake entirely. Just follow me."

The bank's foundation was built of stone, and Brady the Banker, advancing to one corner, seized an iron bar and pried one out of place.

Instead of being large and square, as it seemed to be, it was broad and flat, and came out very readily.

"Sure, I make these holes in all me banks," he explained, "so, in a case like this, there's always a way out. This is a rough country, Mr. Brady, and a man in the banking business is liable to have a rough house made of his place any moment. Bad luck to ther fellers! They are always making trouble, so they are! May I take the lantern now, and lead the way?"

"I'll lead the way," replied Old King Brady, quietly; and he pushed on through a narrow passage which had been boarded up on the sides and overhead.

The fact was, Old King Brady did not altogether trust his namesake.

He rather blamed himself for getting mixed up in this disagreeable business which in no way concerned him.

How can we tell but what this may just be a scheme of Joe Tyler's friends to revenge themselves on me, the detective thought.

Joe Tyler was the crooked mining superintendent whom the detectives had just turned over to the authorities.

He did not actually believe this, but still there was a chance of it, and Old King Brady felt that it behooved him to be on the safe side.

So he pushed on through the secret passage for a hundred feet or so, when he came to a wooden door built directly across their path.

"Here we are!" said the banker. "Since you are in front there, if you will be good enough to open that door, Mr. Brady—it is just on the latch."

"Where does it lead to?" asked the old detective.

"There's an old stone house above," replied the banker. "It's a bit of property I own. I had this way out fixed up on the quiet. Once before I had to use it. That was two years ago, when the Blind Coyotes cleaned out the town."

Old King Brady opened the door and found another ladder.

"There's a secret spring at the trap above," said the banker. "Sure, you can do as you like, but it would be better if you let me work it, for it's myself that knows how."

The detective stood aside and flashed the light up the ladder.

Brady ascended, and in a moment had thrown up the trapdoor, and the detectives followed him up into a large room where old boxes, barrels and similar rubbish was stored.

The room faced a back street which ran down to the station.

The door was gone, and the windows were broken out. The detectives could see the station lights on ahead.

"There you are!" said the banker, closing the trap. "I bought this piece of property when I built the bank, for the very reason I told you. Now, what we want to do is to stop quiet here and wait for the train. Bad luck to them fellers! Hear them how! I don't believe they are going to break in the bank, though. It's back to Larry's they have gone."

"Governor, I'll sneak down there and see what's going on, if you say the word," remarked Harry.

"Perhaps you might as well," replied Old King Brady. "Be very careful, though."

Harry passed out, and he had no sooner departed than Brady the banker began to talk.

He told Old King Brady how often he had heard of him, and how much confidence he felt in him.

He showed a perfect knowledge of the affair at the mine, which the old detective had just completed.

He hinted again at some mysterious secret which he held, and declared that Old King Brady was just the man he wanted to handle the business.

From the way he went on it looked as though he might talk indefinitely, unless he was cut short.

"Come, Mr. Brady," said the old detective, "tell me what it is you want to have us do?"

When he made the remark he did not believe that anything would come of it, for it seemed to him then that Brady the Banker was merely "blowing out hot air."

But the banker's next move altered the aspect of affairs.

He put his hand into his pocket and, counting out a thousand dollars, handed it to the detective.

"Will you be after accepting that for a retaining fee, Mr. Brady?" he asked.

"Certainly not until I know more about the business," replied the detective.

"But I must have your service, man!" was the reply. "You do work of this kind for others, why not for me?"

"As I told you, we are on our way to New York."

"Sure, you will stop out here if I can make it pay you?"

"Perhaps we would. I must know definitely what you are driving at first."

"That's reasonable, but tell me, would you do this job for me if I offered you enough?"

"It is not so much what you might offer as it is if we care to undertake the case."

"Well, it's no case that requires so much of your detective skill, as it is that I need somebody that I can rely on to go up into a country which is altogether unsafe for me to go alone, being so well known as I am out here."

"How long would it probably take?"

"It might be a week, and it might be two. I can't tell."

"Well, it is up to you to explain if you want our help, Mr. Brady."

"I will do it. Listen now, and we will decide this business before the young fellow comes back."

"Go on!" said Old King Brady. "I am waiting to hear what you have to say."

"Sure, it can be told in a few words," replied the banker, and he told the story as follows:

We propose to dispense with the accent.

Enough to say that it was marked, and ran through it all.

"It is more than ten years now, Mr. Brady, since I first opened my bank at Santa Fe," began the banker.

"I went there from New York, where I had kept a small money broker's office on the Bowery. Did I deal in policy tickets, do you ask? Well, maybe I did, but that's neither here nor there. Out here in New Mexico I've done a straight business; it has been mostly loaning money; making advances to railroad men and cowboys and miners, and all that sort of people. Did I get high interest? Well, of course I did. I was not in the business for my health. I started up in several of the smaller railroad towns and, well—I made some money, but, as I told you before, I am no millionaire.

"About a month ago I had to foreclose a mortgage on a piece of property near Alberquerque. The owner was a widow woman named Moragas. Her husband was employed on the railroad, and I advanced him a bit of money before he was killed by getting between two freight cars. Well, as I was saying, I foreclosed and took the property, which lay just outside of Alberquerque; and, as the town was growing that way, I pulled down the house, which was an old Spanish affair, and put the lots on the market for sale. While the house was being pulled down, under the floor I found a little box which held a bit of money and a few diamonds. And along with them was a paper which carried a secret. I have it with me, Mr. Brady, and I will give it to you to read."

Brady the Banker produced an old pocketbook tied up with a string.

Having opened it, he produced a yellow, time-worn paper written all over in a cramped hand, and in Spanish.

Attached to this paper was another, which was in English, and purported to be a translation of the older document.

Holding it up to the lantern, Old King Brady read as follows:

"My name is Pedro Moragas. I was guide and driver for the Pony Express. It was my business before I lost my feet in the big snowstorm of December 10, 11 and 12, 1850, to guide the express agents through the Taos pass.

"On the occasion of which I am about to speak we started from Santa Fe on the night of the 8th, twenty strong, under the leadership of Captain Winslow. He had in his charge five iron boxes in which was packed much gold dust.

"This gold dust had been shipped from San Francisco

to the United States mint in Philadelphia. I understood that the amount was not far from a quarter of a million. I know that the boxes were immensely heavy, and it was all that the mules could do to carry them.

"I am not much of a hand to write, so I cannot tell of our troubles in all their details. It is enough to say that we were overtaken by that awful storm just as we reached the Taos pass.

"We were snowed in, and for two weeks we lay there with little food and with but little shelter. We had lost our way, too, which made matters worse.

"Every man perished but Captain Winslow and myself by the fourth night. We two managed to survive. We ate a mule and——"

Here there was a break, and whoever had done the translating inserted a note, saying that several lines of the original were obliterated.

The translation began again abruptly, as follows:

"—— I buried the gold in the cave and threw Captain Winslow's body down the ravine. I then, with great difficulty, managed to drag myself back to Alberquerque, where both my feet were amputated, and I have been a helpless cripple ever since. I could not get back to recover the gold, but as I always hoped to do so, I never revealed the secret to any one. My statement made to the express company was that the boxes went down in the snow, and that I was not able to tell the exact place. This was my story, but it was false. I killed Captain Winslow, and I buried the gold in the cave, and now that I am dying, let me describe the locality as well as I can, so that long after I am dead whoever finds this paper may have a chance to get it. I don't care who it is. My crime brought its punishment, and the gold is accursed. Let it bring its curse to some one else, that he may suffer as I have suffered. That is my revenge.

"Starting from Santa Fe, you follow the old trail to the Taos pass. There, if a sharp lookout is kept, will be seen on the left a huge rock, which looks like a camel lying down. I never saw a camel, but that is what others have told me it looks like. Anyhow, it resembles an animal with a small head and long neck.

"Let whoever would seek the gold climb to this rock, where right underneath it will be found two pinon trees growing close together. They have a white stone between them. This stone marks the entrance to the cave. I placed it in its present position, thus closing the cave.

"I packed the gold up there, little by little, and it was in that way that I froze my feet. The iron boxes I left in a hole at the foot of the rock. I tumbled them in on top of the snow. I don't know that they were ever found. I never heard of it if they were, although I know the express company made several efforts to recover the treasure. Twice they carried me up to the pass and tried to make me locate the spot where the boxes were abandoned, as I had told them. Of course I did not tell them the truth, for I still hoped to recover the gold. This was before I

became paralyzed and lost the use of my limbs entirely. Unless some one has come across it by accident, which I very much doubt, the treasure is still in the cave.

"And this is the secret of the old Santa Fe trail which I have preserved through all these years. People call me a madman, and perhaps I am; but, at all events, I would not tell. Now that I am dying I write this. The treasure has proved a curse to me, and let it curse somebody else.

"As I said before, this would be my revenge.

PEDRO MORAGAS."

"Written on the 6th day of April, 18—"

"There!" exclaimed Brady, the banker, as the old detective handed the paper back. "What do you think of that, now? Here's a chance for somebody to get rich, and that somebody must be me. Help me to get this gold, Mr. Brady, and—oh, here they come! They'll kill me! Stand by me, Brady! See me through this business, and you shall have your share."

Quick footsteps were heard approaching the old stone house.

Brady the Banker drew a revolver as he spoke, and sprang toward the door.

CHAPTER III.

A HOLD-UP ON THE ATCHISON

"Put up your revolver, man!" said Old King Brady. "It is only my partner returning."

"You can't be sure!" replied the banker, nervously. "I was fool enough to tell this business. That's why they want to kill me and get the papers. I am not altogether a popular man in these parts, Mr. Brady, and that's the truth."

"It is only Harry, I tell you," said the old detective. "Stand away!"

Old King Brady, pushing the banker aside, stepped through the door and looked out.

As he had supposed, it was Harry returning.

"Well," said Old King Brady, "so you are back again!"

"Yes," said Harry, following him into the room. "The danger is all over now."

"Did they break into the bank?" demanded Brady.

"Yes. They broke the door in. They did not disturb the safe, however."

"I knew they wouldn't. Sure, how could they open it? Where are they now?"

"They rode out of town. A crowd came against them as soon as they broke into the bank, and they beat a retreat."

"Just as I said. I hold the strings on half these people here in Tipton. Some of them would like to see me done up, all right; but at the same time they don't dare, for fear they might have a worse one to deal with after I am dead."

"Is this your hat?" asked Harry. "I was in the bank and I picked it up there. I thought it might belong to you."

"It's an old one," said the banker, clapping it on his head. "The other I lost in Larry's. How did you get in? Was there no one on guard there?"

"Yes, there were two men on guard. Others had been there, but they had gone away to get timber to bar up the door."

"And what do they think became of me?"

"I heard them say that you had probably been carried off by the outlaws."

"Look at that, now! It just serves my turn, Mr. Brady. I tell you what it is; the best thing I can do is, having disappeared, to stay disappeared till we have had the chance to attend to this business of ours. Don't you think so, man?"

"You are the best judge," said Old King Brady, "but I haven't decided to undertake your case as yet."

"But you will, man! You will?"

"I don't know whether I will or not. I shall want to talk it over with my partner first. Where do we make the start for this Taos pass?"

"The best point to strike the old trail is out from Las Vegas."

"Very well. Then, what I propose, if you want to slip out of town on the quiet, as I suppose you do—"

"I do, that. I don't want any one to know how I got away."

"Then let us all three run down to Las Vegas, and we will decide the matter to-morrow."

"But you were going East?"

"We will cut that out, or, at least, postpone it for a day or so and go to Las Vegas with you."

"Good enough!" cried Brady. "That is as much as to say you will take up with my case."

"Wait and let me talk it over with my partner. Give me that paper again."

The east and west trains both passed Tipton shortly after midnight, and as there was still plenty of time, Old King Brady took Harry aside after he had read the paper, and had a talk about the affair.

"And do you really think of meddling with this business, Governor?" the latter asked, in some surprise.

"Strange as it may seem to you, I do," replied Old King Brady, "for it happens that I was consulted on this matter by one of our very best customers shortly before we left New York."

"Hello! Who was that?"

"The Wells Fargo express people."

"Oh! We have done a lot of work for them."

"Exactly! And I hope to do more. The Wells Fargo succeeded to the business of the old Pony Express, which in the days of '49 followed the Santa Fe trail. The story this man has told is true, and, according to the manager of the express company the gold was never recovered, so far as they could learn. There it still lies—over a quarter

of a million. As far as this man Brady is concerned, he has not the slightest claim to it, and I size him up as a miserly money-lending shark; but, while pretending to work for him, we can actually do a service to the Wells Fargo Express company, so that is the reason why I propose to take up with the case."

This settled it.

Old King Brady is strictly the boss of the business. Nor did Harry desire to raise any objection.

He rather enjoyed the prospect of a treasure hunt in the Taos range.

Their conversation took place aside, and was carried on in tones too low for Brady the Banker to hear.

The little man nervously paced the floor, pending the detective's decision.

"Well, well, and what's the word, gentlemen?" he demanded, when the Bradys returned to where he stood.

"The word is 'yes,'" replied Old King Brady. "Mr. Brady, we have decided to undertake your case."

"Good! Good!" cried the banker. "It is as good as won, then, so it is, for I have heard tell many a time that the Bradys never fail."

"We have certainly been very successful, but it by no means follows that we shall be in this case."

"I think you will, man. Indeed, I know you will. Was there ever such luck as for me to run into you like I did?"

"If we are to undertake that business you must consent to put yourself entirely in our hands," said Old King Brady.

"I'll do it. I'll do whatever you say. We are sure of success. Let me give you the retaining fee."

"Put up your money, Mr. Brady," was the reply. "You can pay us what you consider the job worth after it is done."

The banker looked relieved, and Old King Brady now proceeded to question him further.

"Who have you told about this business?" he asked.

"Sure, I couldn't go there alone, for the Blind Coyotes gang has a holdout somewhere up in the Taos mountains near the pass, and they have sworn death to me. I will tell you why."

"Cut it out," interrupted the old detective. "We care nothing for the reason. The fact is enough. So you told this man Rawley? Who is he?"

"He leads another gang of cattle thieves and hold-up men. I knew him and I sent for him at Santa Fe and told him part. I wouldn't tell him all, of course, but I promised him that if he would go with me and protect me from the Coyotes he should have his share. It was arranged that we were to meet here to-night, and he was to be alone in Larry's, but when I got in here I saw a lot of his gang hanging about, and I accused him of betraying me. We were having it out at a table, when all at once Joaquin the Greaser came up to us and called him a name in Spanish. 'Is this the man who has the treasure paper?' he asks, and then up jumps Ike and shoots at him and misses his aim. I run out at once, gentlemen, for

Ike's men gathered around him, and so did the Greaser's gang."

"This Joaquin is leader of the Coyotes?" asked Harry.

"He is," replied Brady; "and it's a blamed bad man he is, too. When they began to shoot I hid under the table. They all ran into the street, and Ike was shot dead there. Larry ordered me out, and as I was going, in they came again, but I dodged them, and you know the rest."

"How do you suppose this Joaquin learned this secret?" demanded Old King Brady.

"I can only think that Ike told every one he met, until it came to Joaquin's ears."

"Was that his style?"

"When he was on the booze he would talk."

"You gave him money?"

"Yes, a hundred dollars."

"Perhaps that accounts for it. Now, Mr. Brady, I am going to fix up a little disguise for you," said the detective. "We will then go to the hotel and wait till train time in my room."

Old King Brady produced a wig, a false beard, and a small box containing paints and brushes.

When he had finished with Brady the Banker the man's best friends would not have recognized him.

They walked boldly to the main street, which was quiet enough now, and kept on until they came to the bank.

The door was all boarded up, and two men armed with rifles stood on guard.

"What's the matter here, gentlemen?" inquired Old King Brady.

"Oh, there was a fight," replied one of the men. "Joaquin the Greaser and his gang attacked the bank."

"Indeed. Did they rob the safe?"

"No," was the reply. "We didn't give them time. They carried off old Mike Brady, though, and it's good enough for him."

"Ah! You refer to the banker?"

"Yes."

"This Mr. Brady does not appear to be very popular. We are strangers in town. I ask from curiosity, that's all."

"He's the meanest old stiff in New Mexico," replied the man. "It isn't on his account that we are guarding the bank. We all have an interest in it in a certain way."

Old King Brady did not stop to inquire what that certain way was, for he saw that the banker was getting restive, and he was afraid that he would blurt out some ill-timed remark.

"Bad luck to him!" he cried, when they had passed beyond hearing. "That's the way he talks about me, eh! It's myself that's got a mortgage on his store, and I'll make him sweat as soon as I get through with this job."

"This money lending is liable to make you enemies," replied Old King Brady, quietly; "but here we are at the hotel."

The Bradys got the banker up to their room without anybody recognizing him.

Here they remained in seclusion until midnight.

As they sat talking Old King Brady drew his name-sake out, and got him talking freely about his affairs.

It was easy to see that the man was a perfect Shylock, and a conceited one at that.

Boarding the train, the Bradys took seats in the smoking car, leaving the banker, who did not care to smoke, to go into the day coach, for the short run to Las Vegas made it unnecessary for them to take sleeping berths.

"I shouldn't wonder if this would prove a lively case, Harry," remarked the old detective. "There can't be the least doubt that this Long Ike Rawley intended to betray Mike Brady. There are wheels within wheels somewhere here, surest thing."

"What about Joaquin the Greaser?" asked Harry. "Is he an outlaw of much note?"

"Indeed he is. He has terrorized this part of the country for the past three years. Surely you must have heard of the man."

"It seems to me I have. Didn't he hold up the Santa Fe express about a year ago?"

"Yes, and defied the detectives, who chased him into Mexico. There was a reward of \$5,000 set on his head at the time. I can't understand how he has dared to venture back to his old haunts."

"He must have some political pull, I suppose."

"No doubt that is it. Most of the outlaw leaders have, and that is what makes them so bold. Hello, what's the matter now?"

Sharp whistles sounded, and the train began slowing down.

"The signal is against us, I guess," said Harry.

"I don't know; I don't think this can be the end of the block," replied Old King Brady, rubbing the moisture from the window and attempting to look out.

The train had now come to a standstill.

Lights were flashing, and loud voices could be heard.

All at once the sharp report of a revolver rang out upon the night.

"Heavens! It's a hold-up!" gasped Harry.

"Quick!" breathed Old King Brady. "We must get into the other car. It wouldn't surprise me a bit if they were after Brady the Banker. If they get him and carry him off to the mountains that will spoil our pie."

As they sprang up two shots were fired.

Before they could reach the door it was thrown open by the brakeman, who shouted:

"Better look to your valuables, gentlemen! Joaquin the Greaser has got the train!"

CHAPTER IV.

THE BRADYS KNOCKED OUT.

Of course all the passengers in the smoker were thrown into a panic by the announcement.

Even the Bradys shared in the excitement, although there is little doubt that they were the coolest headed persons in the car.

As they passed out of the door they saw that the brakeman had vanished.

No doubt the man had been in a hold-up before, and did not care to face another.

Opening the door of the next car, the detectives found themselves too late.

For some reason, the hold-up men had not yet come upon the platform of the smoker, but they had already entered the next car.

Three masked men armed with revolvers were coming down the aisle as the Bradys entered. They were just in time to hear the order: "Up hands!"

"Hold on! This won't do!" whispered Old King Brady. "I am scarcely prepared to risk my life for that man."

"We had better get back to the smoker!" said Harry.

"That's what we had! Be quick!"

Again they were too late, for they turned only to face two more masked men, and to find two cocked revolvers under their noses.

"Stand where you are, and throw up your hands!" ordered one of the outlaws, in a hoarse voice.

"My friend, we belong in the smoker. We were merely going in there," replied Old King Brady, obeying the order. "You had better let us pass."

"Do as you are told," was the surly reply.

"But our things are there. You want our valuables, I suppose?"

"Give me any more of your guff, you old geezer, and I'll bore a hole through you!" retorted the masked man.

It was a good time to stop talking, and Old King Brady stopped.

He did not even consider it safe to turn and see what was happening to the banker, whom he had observed seated about midway in the car.

Just then a voice rang out:

"Ladies and gentlemen, you will prepare to deliver up your valuables. Be as quick as you can about it. The collector will now pass down the aisle."

"Heavens! A woman's voice!" thought Old King Brady. "What can this mean?"

He would have liked to have turned and had a look, but he did not dare, for the revolver was still at his head.

Just then the woman's voice called out again:

"I want Mike Brady, the banker! Let him step this way, and his life will be spared. If he don't get a move on at once, he will be shot dead!"

It was a hard situation for Old King Brady.

He had agreed to protect this man, and as far as keeping him from personal injury was concerned, he had intended to do so.

To move now was impossible, however, if he desired to save his own life and Harry's.

There was some little confusion behind them.

He concluded that Brady the Banker had answered the call.

In a moment a masked man carrying a hat as big as the one the old detective wore came elbowing his way past them.

The hold-up man was using the hat as a contribution box.

The Bradys each have a good watch, but they never carry them at the end of their brass chains.

Old King Brady dropped a dollar watch and a two dollar chain in the hat.

"Here, you blamed old geezer, you take this out again," growled the hold-up man. "We don't want to be bothered with such truck."

"Very sorry my turnip don't suit you, boss," replied Old King Brady, meekly. "It's the best I can do."

"Trot out your dough and let it go at that," said the hold-up man.

"Yes, sir. Right away, sir. Do you want my son's watch? It's the same kind as mine. We are too poor to carry gold hunting case double back action levers."

"Cut it out and give up the dough," was the retort.

Old King Brady then produced his fake roll.

During his risky journeys, and he had considered this one of them, the old detective always carries a roll of bills prepared for this very purpose, and he proceeded to produce it.

On the outside were two fives, and following them three ones. The rest was made up of Confederate money, and all were secured with an elastic band.

This roll Old King Brady dropped into the hat.

It passed muster all right.

Even hold-up men are a bit nervous at times, and this man was not stopping to pull the roll to pieces.

Harry tossed in a similar roll, and the hold-up men passed out of the car and into the smoker.

Looking through the door as it opened, Old King Brady saw that there were now two other masked men on the platform of the smoker.

"They have got us on all sides, Harry," he whispered; "but I guess we may venture to turn around and see what has become of our namesake."

They did so, and saw Brady the Banker still in his place.

A masked man stood at the other end of the car with a raised rifle.

The Bradys saw no woman. Who it was that had spoken still remained a mystery, but it was soon to be solved.

"Brady has had brains enough to keep still and trust to his disguise," whispered Harry.

"Yes," replied the old detective. "But the danger is hardly over yet. I can't see how they knew he was on the train."

"Perhaps they only guessed at it," suggested Harry; and this was the natural conclusion, but it was wrong.

If the Bradys had been outside they would have understood better.

Later on they learned from an eyewitness something of what occurred there.

The hold-up had taken place at a point where the railroad crossed the creek, which here runs through a narrow gorge.

At this moment, while three of the masked men held the engineer and conductor covered, three others were engaged in robbing the express car.

The messenger had promptly surrendered and opened his safe, and its contents were even then being taken out and put into a bag.

The leader of this band was a tall, slender fellow who, like his companions, wore high boots and a big cowboy hat.

He had climbed a telegraph pole, cut the wire, and attached it to a little battery which rested on the ground.

Evidently this man understood telegraphy.

He was working the wire now.

Beside him stood a young woman dressed in a sort of bicycle costume.

She held a rifle, and had a rude knapsack made of antelope skin slung over her shoulders.

She was watching the man with close attention as he worked the key.

Suddenly he looked up and said something to her, and the woman immediately started for the train and entered the car near to which the Bradys stood.

Had this precious pair received a tip from Tipton?"

Later on the Bradys learned that this was so.

The girl pushed by them and walked along the aisle.

Old King Brady observed that she scanned their faces closely as she passed, and he felt that trouble was coming.

The girl stopped alongside of Brady the Banker, who began making horrible faces, and talking to himself.

"You're the man I want! Get out of that, and follow me!" exclaimed the girl, raising the rifle and covering Mike Brady. "A friend of yours saw you being disguised in town, and telegraphed us how you looked."

The banker burst out laughing.

"Yes, yes, yes!" he cried. "I've given up all I've got. You can't get any more out of me. Go away and leave me alone."

"Don't interfere with that old man. He is crazy," said Old King Brady, getting on to the banker's dodge.

He started along the aisle, but at the same instant three masked men burst in the door behind him.

One was the man who had worked the wire.

"Out of the way!" he cried, giving Harry a shove.

"That's the man with the big hat!" he shouted.

Quick as lightning, he raised his rifle and fired.

Old King Brady threw up his hands and dropped to the floor of the car.

At the same instant four other masks rushed in through

the door and pounced upon Harry, who rushed to the aid of his chief.

"Take that young fellow! Hold him!" shouted the tall man. "He's one of them detectives what downed Joe Tyler. I want to have a talk with him. Carry him out!"
Bang!

A man sprang up from a distant seat and sent a bullet whizzing past the speaker's head.

"Get up and defend yourselves, men, if you are men!" he shouted.

It was his last shout.

Up went the rifles of the outlaws, but not a passenger came to the assistance of the man who had dared to show so bold a front.

Horrible confusion followed.

The crack of many rifles and wild shouts filled the air.

Harry saw the venturesome passenger shot, as he himself was dragged from the car and thrown upon the ground.

Before he could rise the outlaws were upon him, and his hands were tied.

There he lay utterly helpless while the wild work went on.

A moment later Brady the Banker stripped off his disguise and was dragged out.

The man was howling for mercy.

"Don't kill me, Joaquin! Don't kill me! I'll tell all I know!" he yelled again and again.

No attention was paid to his pleadings. He was thrown upon a horse and tied there flat on his back, his head being tied to the horse's neck.

Young King Brady's arms had been tied behind him, but his feet had not been secured.

He could move a little, and he made the most of it.

Over and over he rolled, every roll bringing him nearer to a clump of bushes which skirted the edge of the ravine.

Here Harry hoped to hide, but it was not to be.

Suddenly Joaquin caught sight of him.

"Look to Young Brady!" he shouted. "I want that fellow. The old man is dead, but this one I want alive!"

And this settled Young King Brady's fate.

He was pounced upon, seized and tied to a horse in the same way Brady the Banker had been.

"Mount, all!" cried the young woman. "We are off now!"

It seemed as though she was the boss, for her orders were obeyed.

Harry, as he lay against the horse, looked in vain for his great chief, hoping that he would suddenly put in an appearance and give affairs a new turn, as he had done so many times before.

But this was one of the times when Old King Brady did not appear.

A few moments later, all being ready, the outlaws were dashing over the bridge down the gorge.

At the distance of half a mile they turned abruptly

to the right, entered a deep canyon and struck off toward the Taos range, whose peaks tower above the lower hills.

It was a complete knockout for the Bradys; as bad a blow as they had ever received.

CHAPTER V.

OLD KING BRADY GETS A GANG.

It is not often that the Bradys are knocked out thus. The hold-up was something entirely unexpected, and the detectives were not at all prepared for it; but, even so, Old King Brady had formed plans which might have succeeded if he had been given the chance to carry them out.

He got no such chance.

Seeing that he would surely be shot if he stood his ground, Old King Brady resorted to his usual plan of playing possum.

No man can drop before a rifle or a revolver quicker than the old detective.

Even now he dropped, but not quick enough to dodge the bullet. It grazed his skull, but in falling he unfortunately struck the back of his head against the ironwork of the seat.

The blow was a most unfortunate one for the old detective. He was senseless, and at the same time every plan he had formed had been knocked out.

Yet, most fortunately, he was not seriously injured.

The next Old King Brady knew the train was on the move, and he was lying back in a seat with several men around him.

One was the conductor, who asked him how he felt.

"Why, I don't know as there is anything the matter with me!" gasped the detective. "My head aches—that is about all."

"You cut your head against the seat as you fell," said the conductor. "We thought at first that you were shot, but we can't find any wound."

"I'm all right," said Old King Brady. "Thank you for your attention, but I am sure that there is nothing serious the matter with me. Where is my son?"

"You mean the young man who was with you in the smoking car?" the conductor asked.

"Yes."

"I am sorry to tell you, sir, that he was carried off by the outlaws."

"Ah!"

"This is a bad affair. I should like your statement of what occurred."

"Yes, yes! Any one killed?"

"There was a man shot in this car. You had a narrow escape. I am told that he fired at you."

"Yes, yes! Leave me awhile. I'll pull myself together. Stay! There was an old man sitting in this seat. What became of him?"

"Why," said the conductor, "he was carried off, too. It was old Mike Brady the Banker in disguise, it seems. They tell me that some fellows tried to do him up at Larry Limper's at Tipton to-night. We think this hold-up must have been on his account. They tapped the telegraph wires. Somebody at Tipton must have given them the tip that Brady was on this train."

"Ah!" said Old King Brady, closing his eyes and leaning his head against the window. "It's too bad. Leave me awhile. I'll be all right in a few minutes. I'll talk to you further later on."

But Old King Brady did no further talking on the train.

Before the conductor put in an appearance again it pulled into Las Vegas, and here the detective left it.

He was deeply chagrined at the turn affairs had taken, and glad to get away.

"Now there is no question about undertaking this case," he said to himself. "Harry must be rescued. It's a shame that I allowed myself to be knocked out so. Probably they were watching out for us on account of the Joe Tyler affair. And yet that can't be it, either, for if they knew our plans they would have been after us on the eastbound train. No; it must be this business of Brady the Banker which is at the bottom of it all."

Old King Brady is well acquainted at Las Vegas.

As nothing could be done that night, the old detective proceeded to the hotel, dressed his wound himself, and went to bed.

Where another would have remained awake all night, the detective abandoned himself to needed sleep.

His anxiety on Young King Brady's account was not nearly as great as might have been supposed, for he had profound confidence in Harry's ability to take care of himself, even under the trying circumstances into which he had been thrown.

Beyond a few strips of plaster on the back of his head, which he had put on himself, there was nothing to show that he had passed through unusual experiences on the previous night.

Old King Brady quietly ate his breakfast, and then started in to do business.

And right here his great acquaintance came into play.

From one end of the country to the other Old King Brady is known.

Besides this, his kindly nature and desire to help those in trouble has ever been of the greatest assistance to himself.

We shall see in a few minutes how well it worked in this case.

The first thing the detective did was to buy a broncho, for which he paid \$15, and a Mexican saddle, with the accompanying trappings, for which he paid \$25.

It is scarcely necessary to mention that he put the saddle on the broncho and, having done this, he put himself upon the saddle and then rode out of town.

Old King Brady is an excellent rider, and he had soon covered a distance of twenty-five miles or more.

His way was through a rolling, treeless country, up one brown hill and down another, and so on and on until it seemed as though he never would draw rein.

During the first few miles he met a few people heading for Las Vegas, but he soon entered into a region that seemed to be utterly deserted.

At last, turning aside a little to the eastward he came upon a level plain, which extended for a great distance to the foothills of the Taos range.

Far away a vast herd of cattle were grazing.

At last Old King Brady drew rein and, fixing his field glass to his eyes, surveyed the herd.

"It can't be that those are his," he said to himself.

He put away his glass and rode on.

He had not gone far before he saw a break in the herd.

About a hundred head, led by a big white bull, came charging down upon him.

In a moment four cowboys came dashing after them.

They separated, swerving to the right and left to head off the herd.

Again the old detective halted, for he could not tell in which direction the cattle would strike.

They passed him a few hundred yards to the left before the cowboys had overtaken them.

As they went rushing by, making the earth tremble, the broncho jumped about a bit, but Old King Brady easily quieted the animal and waited until the cowboys went flying past.

"I want Al Buckner's ranch!" he shouted. "Am I going the right way?"

"This is Al Buckner's!" bawled one of the cowboys. "The house is five miles straight ahead."

"Well, well! The boy seems to be doing well in the country," muttered the detective as he rode on.

At last he saw the smoke of the ranch, and finally reined in before a long, low adobe structure, with a big corral and large barns near by.

An old Mexican greaser was digging in the garden patch near the house.

"Buenos dios, Senor!" he called out, leaning on his spade.

"I want Mr. Buckner! Is he at the house?" called the detective.

The greaser nodded and gave a shrill whistle.

In a moment a tall, athletic fellow of about twenty-five appeared at the barn door.

He shot one look of astonishment toward the detective, and then came hurrying toward him.

"Old King Brady, it can't be!" he exclaimed.

"It's no one else, Al!" replied the detective, dismounting.

Never in his life had he received a heartier handshake. The greaser was called to take his horse, and he walked with Buckner toward the house.

"And is this all yours, Al?" the old detective asked.

"Everything as far as you can see," was the proud reply. "Oh, I am living on Easy Street now, Mr. Brady, and don't suppose that I forget that I have you to thank for it all."

"Yourself and your own energy, too, Al. I ought to have been prompter in answering your letter, my boy; then I would have known more about you than I do. Rather better than what might have been, eh?"

And while Old King Brady is being entertained by the young rancher in true New Mexican style a word of explanation is necessary.

Here was another of Old King Brady's proteges.

Not so many years before Al Buckner was a young New York burglar whom fate threw into Old King Brady's hands.

With a word the old detective could have given the boy ten years in Sing Sing; but, being satisfied that there was something in him, and that all he needed was a helping hand, Old King Brady gave him that instead.

A little advice, a little money loaned, a quashed indictment through the old detective's great political influence, and a few letters written to friends in New Mexico were sufficient to place the young man on a ranch.

At parting Old King Brady put it up to the boy to do his best.

How well it was done was shown by what the detective had seen that day.

And this was only one instance.

It is no wonder that Old King Brady finds friends everywhere.

It is his rule to give the unfortunate a push up hill, never a shove down.

Sitting on a bench in front of the ranch, Old King Brady told Al Buckner something of his story.

He did not mention the amount of the supposed buried treasure, but led him to believe that it was considerable. He dwelt upon his anxiety to rescue Harry, and asked the young rancher's help.

Al was one of the silent kind.

He listened to the detective until he had entirely finished speaking before he said a word.

"Mr. Brady I would do anything to serve you," he said. "What made you think of me? Tell me just what you want."

"Men enough to carry this affair through successfully, and you to lead them, if it can be arranged, Al."

"Well, it can, and you shall have my help. Let me tell you right now, you could not have come to a better man, but it will be only on your account that I do it. I would not raise my hand to help Mike Brady out of his scrape, nor would a man in my employ."

"The banker seems to be rather unpopular."

"Unpopular is hardly the name for it. He's an old skin, a perfect miser, and a man hated by every one. It's the greatest wonder in the world that some one hasn't done him up long ago."

"Is he a crook?"

"Keeps just within the limit of the law."

"About this gang led by Joaquin the Greaser—what do you know of them?"

"As much as any one. They have raided me once, but that was several years ago. The gang goes by the name of the Blind Coyotes, just why I never could learn. I supposed that they were broken up long ago. I am surprised to hear that they are on the warpath again."

"Do you know the old Santa Fe trail?"

"As well as any one. Of course, I could hardly pretend to follow it, but I know where it goes through the Taos pass."

"And this camel rock?"

"Never heard of it; but I'll tell you something which chimes in with your story about the buried money, and makes it look plausible."

"What is that?"

"Joaquin's right name is Moragas, and he once lived at Santa Fe. I'd like to bet that the woman you saw was his sister, Pepita, who used to live in a little adobe on San Mateo street above Santa Cruz. Brady the Banker foreclosed on that property not long ago, and I happen to know that he pulled the house down."

"It sounds plausible. It also gives a reason for the attack on Brady the Banker. Do you know anything about the holdout of this Blind Coyote gang?"

"I do not; but it is more than likely that some of my men do. I'm ready to start to work right now to help you out."

"Then consider it settled, Al," said the old detective, "and for whatever you do you shall be well paid, and should the treasure be recovered, you and your men will come in for a share of the reward."

"The last part is all right," replied Al Buckner, rising, "but if it is only a matter of helping you to rescue your partner you can't pay me a cent. Stay where you are. I'll be back soon."

"It's good to see the boy prospering," said Old King Brady, as Buckner hurried away. "I fancy I have come to the right spot for help against such a gang as these Blind Coyotes. I could not hope to do a thing alone. The worst feature of it is the loss of time."

But so little time was lost after Al Buckner left him that within an hour Old King Brady, accompanied by a band of fifteen cowboys, rode off over the plains.

CHAPTER VI.

YOUNG KING BRADY'S FORTUNES TAKE A STRANGE CHANGE.

It may appear that Old King Brady was taking matters rather easy to go thirty miles out of his way to get help to proceed against the Blind Coyotes.

If the detective had possessed positive knowledge of

the holdout of the gang it is probable that he would have decided to start in the business alone; but, having no such knowledge he could hardly have acted other than he did.

In the meantime, while Old King Brady was sleeping and riding his broncho, Harry was having troubles of his own.

They began with the start away from the train that had been held up.

To be tied lengthwise on the back of a horse was a new experience for Young King Brady, and a mighty disagreeable one.

No one paid the slightest attention to him for two hours or more, during which time the ride through the canyon continued with little change.

Unknown to himself, Young King Brady was even now following the once famous Santa Fe trail which, if steadily followed, would lead him to the Taos pass.

But at the foot of the mountains the gang turned aside and, following the bed of the creek for a considerable distance, came at last to a deep gorge which extended back into the cut of the Taos range at an abrupt angle.

An ascent of half an hour followed, and when at last a halt was made far up in the mountains, Harry was cut free from the horse and allowed to sit on the saddle.

He was then blindfolded, and the march was renewed.

He saw nothing of Brady the Banker at this time, and when he addressed the men he received no answer beyond being simply told to "hold his jaw."

Others he could see at a considerable distance ahead of him, but the three men who did the untying and blindfolding were the only ones that were near.

Young King Brady was not tied up now, but, as he was blindfolded, he was told that at the slightest move to take away the bandage from his eyes he would be instantly shot by the man behind him.

This caution, however, was hardly necessary.

Harry had been in a similar position too often to feel like taking any such risk.

He was now unarmed, for he had been thoroughly searched when he was first captured, and even the spare revolver which he always carried in one of his secret pockets had been found and taken away.

There was, therefore, nothing to do but to submit.

The ride continued in silence for fully half an hour longer, when suddenly the call came to halt.

Harry drew rein and waited for the next order.

"There's something wrong with it!" a voice rang out.

"That's what there is," replied another. "I never seen it tipped like that before."

"Hadn't we better go back?" called out the first one who had spoken.

"If we hurry on it will be all right," was the reply.

"But Pepita is behind us—she and old Mike the Miser. Don't we want to warn them?"

"Gee! There's no time to stop and talk about it! We either go on or we go back. Which shall it be?"

Harry, wondering what all this meant, remained motionless in his seat.

Suddenly a startling sound broke upon his ears.

It was like ice cracking.

"Get ahead!" yelled the first voice. "There's no time to lose!"

"Forward, prisoner! Kick the broncho into a gallop!" came the cry.

What the matter was Young King Brady could not imagine.

It was startling enough.

He felt as though some dreadful calamity was impending as he drove his heels into his horse's flanks.

The animal seemed to have caught a share of his terror, and suddenly bucked.

If Harry had had the use of his eyes or been prepared for it, he might have held his own, for this was not the first time that he had ridden a bucking broncho by any means.

But he was wholly unprepared, and the next he knew he went flying over the horse's head.

"Blast that bucking brute, he has thrown the boy!" he heard one of his captors shout ahead of him.

"Can't stop! She's a-coming!" was the answer.

Harry was trying to scramble up when a thunderous roar broke upon his ears, and the ground shook as if hit by an earthquake.

The crash which followed was appalling.

Something struck the detective on the head, and for the moment knocked him senseless.

When he recovered himself all was as still as death.

What had happened?

For the moment Harry lay motionless.

Then, springing to his feet, he tore the bandage from his eyes, half expecting to get a shot as he did it.

None came.

He was quite alone, standing in the narrowest canyon he had ever seen.

Ahead the way was blocked by a great pile of broken stone which rose to the height of fully a hundred feet, while high above in the wall on the left was a break of equal size.

It was a landslide—a fall of rock which often occurs in the far West, where many of the mountains are masses of loose, disintegrated sandstone which, properly speaking, cannot be called rock.

"Heavens, what an escape! If the broncho had not bucked I should be under that pile now!" gasped Young King Brady.

The thought had scarcely crossed his mind when there came another resounding crack from above his head.

Harry jumped for his life.

He was just in time.

Had he been the merest shade nearer he would have met his death, for at least two tons of the broken rock came crashing down.

"This is no place to stay!" thought Young King Brady.

"Heavens! It is terrific! I wonder if those men are under that pile?"

He looked around for the broncho, but could neither see anything of him nor hear the footfalls of the beast behind him.

"He must have been off like a shot!" he thought, "and I had better get into the same business. Hold on! There is that girl!"

He remembered what he had heard the men say when they had discovered the danger.

The girl whom they had called Pepita was behind him, acting as an escort to Brady the Banker, according to their talk, and that was the meaning of the sounds he could hear now.

Harry hesitated and stopped.

"I'll have to lay for her, or she'll shoot me, like enough," he thought. "No doubt she is armed to the teeth, while I haven't got a thing about me. Well, I'll take the risk. If I had been going to die this trip probably I would be under that pile now."

There was a big mass of rock close to where he stood, and he crouched behind it, waiting.

The hoofbeats grew louder.

Whoever was coming was not making very rapid time.

"I can't imagine what it was," he heard the girl's voice say, at last. "I reckon it means trouble for us, anyhow, old man."

A mumbling answer was heard.

"You needn't think you are going to escape, Brady, on account of this," the girl's voice called out, shrilly. "I'm good for an old bag of bones like you any day in the week. If my brother and all hands are dead so much the better. I'll make you tell me your secret and show me where the money is hid. Then I'll have it all for myself."

"After you have killed me?" demanded a voice which was unmistakably that of the banker.

The girl gave a harsh laugh.

"Well, perhaps I may conclude to let you live, providing you do the right thing," she said. "We will see about that later. First, we must find out how the case stands."

"I must be boss here," thought Harry. "There is only one way, and that is to take her by surprise."

He crouched down behind the big mass of rock and waited.

Morning had already begun to dawn, and it was light enough even there at the bottom of the canyon to distinguish the horses as they came up.

On the foremost rode Brady the Banker, blindfolded and sitting upright, as Harry had been placed when the last halt was made.

Behind him rode the girl Pepita, leading Young King Brady's broncho, which had evidently been caught as it went flying down the canyon.

Harry held his breath and waited.

"I want that rifle, and I mean to get it, too," he thought.

"It's the steeple rock! It has tumbled into the canyon just as my brother said it would some day!" Pepita exclaimed.

"And can't we go no further?" demanded Brady.

"Can't you see that we are completely cut off?" snapped the girl.

"Faith, and how can I see when me eyes are tied up with this dirty cloth?" demanded the banker. "Will you be after shooting me if I take it off now?"

"Take it off!" replied the girl. "It doesn't make any difference what you see now. Nobody will ever go into the Blind Coyotes holdout this way again."

Brady pulled off the cloth in a hurry.

"Holy murder! Whoever got caught under that pile must be smashed to smithereens!" he exclaimed. "Sure, I thought it was an earthquake, so I did. I never looked to see anything like this."

"There you are! You see what it is now!" replied Pepita, springing from the saddle. "Ten to one they are all caught under it. There is no telling how far that pile of rock extends."

She unslung her rifle and walked toward it.

"Hello! Hello! Is anybody here?" she cried, in a shrill voice.

There was no answer.

By leaning forward Harry could have touched her, but he bided his time.

"It's a bad job, so it is," said Mike Brady. "What's to be done now?"

"To get back," said the girl, "you must take me into partnership, Mike Brady. Give me the paper you found under the floor of our house, and you and me will start on this treasure hunt together."

"I have no paper to give you!" growled the banker. "I told you that before. I told Joaquin the same thing. I gave it to Old King Brady, and besides it was written in Spanish, and I dunno a word it said. This talk about buried treasure is all nonsense, so it is. But you can help me to get back to Santa Fe, and I will pay you well."

The girl laughed harshly.

"That's pretty good!" she exclaimed. "The idea of Mike Brady paying any one well for anything makes me smile."

"Well, I am not so bad as you may think me, Pepita. I have got the money all right."

"I know very well you have, and you know where my grandfather buried the Pony Express money, too, all right. It won't work to say you never had the paper translated. What were you bargaining with Long Ike Rawley for, if that is true? Nō, no, Mike Brady! You will have to take me into partnership, that's all."

She backed up against the rock behind which Young King Brady was hiding as she spoke.

In an instant Harry had thrown his arms about her neck and held her fast.

"Let me come into the firm, won't you?" he exclaimed.

CHAPTER VII.

CLOSE TRAILING IN THE TAOS RANGE.

What Al Buckner did not know about the Blind Coyotes gang Jack Roberts, one of his cowboys, did.

Jack was a rough, whisky-drinking proposition, but Buckner assured Old King Brady that he was a good honest fellow for all that.

"The Coyotes have two or three holdouts, or used to, for they have not been around here this long time. The only one I think they would be likely to go to now is the Coyotes' blind corral," Jack said, as Old King Brady started in to question him.

"And where is that?" the detective asked.

"Back in the mountains about fifteen miles from where the train was attacked."

"We had better strike for there, don't you think, Jack?" put in Buckner.

"I think we had," was the reply. "But it seems to me that one of us had better go into Las Vegas and find out what the news is about the hold-up before we strike into the mountains. We might get on to something that would change all our plans."

Old King Brady approved of the suggestion.

He had left town so early that even the daily paper published at Las Vegas had not been on the street.

It was arranged that Buckner himself should strike for Las Vegas, and that they should all meet at the bridge near which the hold-up had taken place.

During the wait Jack Roberts and Old King Brady, having discovered the trail of the outlaws, followed it for several miles.

Roberts declared that it led in the direction of the Coyotes' blind corral.

This, he explained, was a deep valley or "sink" far up in the Taos range which was accessible only through a narrow canyon, the entrance to which was only known to very few.

Personally, the cowboy had never been there, but had only heard of the place from others.

Having come to this conclusion, Old King Brady and Jack Roberts returned to the bridge, and had been there but a few minutes when Al Buckner arrived.

"Great news, Mr. Brady!" exclaimed the rancher, springing from the saddle. "I am afraid we are working on the wrong lay altogether. Look here."

He handed Old King Brady a copy of the Las Vegas Star, which contained a fairly accurate account of the hold-up.

In another column was the following notice displayed in large type:

"Great defalcation! Mike Brady the Banker turned thief! Gets away with \$60,000 good graft; money taken from each of his chain of banks; Mike short all along the line; captured in disguise on the Santa Fe express

and run off to the mountains; the hold-up believed to be only a ruse arranged by Mike himself. Pepita Moragas seen working last night on the train, with her brother's gang; Sheriff Connor in hot pursuit."

Then followed a detailed account of the defalcation, which, as it scarcely concerns our story, need not be given here.

"The whole town is up in arms about it," remarked Buckner, as Old King Brady handed the paper back, "and I heard just as I was leaving that a thousand dollars reward had been offered for Mike Brady's capture."

"Yes?" said old King Brady. "Anything offered for the capture of the hold-up men?"

"If there was I didn't hear anything about it. That's the railroad company's business, and they are always dead slow."

"I see by the paper that they had a loss of \$12,000 from the express car."

"Yes, and some say it was more; but the railroad people don't want to give it out. Your name don't seem to have got into the paper at all, Mr. Brady."

"So I see; well, so much the better. We can do our work on the outside; but now let us be on the move."

The start into the mountains was made immediately.

For outsiders the trail would have no doubt proved difficult to follow, but it was not so to old hands like Jack Roberts and the detective.

Taking it up again at the place where they had left off, they followed on until they came to the gorge where the Blind Coyotes had turned away from the creek and gone up the mountains.

Here was the first puzzle to solve, for here the trail practically ceased.

The way up the gorge lay over solid rock, and it was the same up the stream through the canyon.

Which road the hold-up men had taken it was impossible to tell.

Al Buckner was for following the stream.

Both Jack Roberts and Old King Brady favored the gorge.

Their opinion carried the day, but the tedious climb up the ascent came to nothing, for after half an hour they found themselves at the end of the gorge up against an impenetrable wall of rock.

"It beats all!" growled Roberts, looking around. I made sure that this was the way, but it doesn't seem to be after all."

"I'm not so sure of that," replied Old King Brady. "I still think it is the way."

"But how can it be?" questioned Buckner. "Anybody can see that we can't go any further in this direction. That's plain enough."

"I don't admit it," said Old King Brady, stubbornly. "Have you forgotten the name of the place we are looking for, Al?"

"Not much. It's the Coyotes' Blind corral, of course."

"From which this gang takes its name."

"Exactly."

"Well, then, did you expect to walk right into this corral? Of course you didn't. The very name of it shows that it is not an easy thing to find."

"That's so. At the same time, it is just as likely to lie up the canyon as up here at the top of this gorge."

"Your reasoning is all right, but I happen to know that we are in the right spot."

"How can that be, when we have seen nothing of the trail since we left the canyon?"

"I beg your pardon, Al, but I have seen something of the trail since we left the canyon. I have seen it three or four times."

"Where? How?" exclaimed Jack Roberts. "I have kept as sharp a lookout for the trail as any one, but I have seen nothing of it."

Old King Brady smiled.

"Far be it from me to instruct an old cowboy like you," he said, "nor do I claim that the marks of the trail discovered by me were actually made by the Blind Coyotes gang. All that I know is that within a short time mounted men have passed this way."

"I wish you would put me next to your theory," said Jack. "I claim to know something about this sort of business myself, although I was never in this particular spot before."

"Why, it's plain enough that within a short time horses stood right here where we are," said the detective. "Look at that bush growing out of the crack in the ledge there on your left and tell me if the main shoot has not just been bitten off by a horse."

"By thunder, you are right! I never noticed it."

"Look ahead there close up by the wall—down on the rock, I mean. Don't you see marks like silver on that rock?"

"Yes, yes; but so faint that one would never have noticed them."

"I noticed them because it is my business to do so. You ought to know what they mean."

"A horse's shoe struck the rock there. The horse was prancing," said Buckner.

"Exactly," replied Old King Brady. "Strange that none of you could see those marks but me. In four or five places since we left the canyon I have seen similar ones."

But it was not strange, for the marks were very faint. The trained eye of the detective, accustomed as it was to taking in these most minute details of his surroundings, had discovered them.

The cowboys, on the other hand, were more used to trailing on the plains and grassy foothills, and had passed them by.

"We will see what this place has to offer," said Old King Brady, dismounting. "The Blind Coyotes were certainly here, and I don't think they turned back. Perhaps something can be found."

After a careful survey of the rocky walls, which rose

on three sides of them, Old King Brady produced a powerful lens and, getting down on his hands and knees, proceeded to examine the hoofmarks on the floor of the gorge.

The cowboys watched him, and saw him crawl on and on until he came up against the rocks which cut off their further advance.

Here the base of the ledge was much broken.

Great slabs of rock had fallen down from above, and lay helter-skelter against the cliffs.

Old King Brady had, successfully carried the trail up against one of these.

It was of singularly regular shape, and as the detective looked at it he made a great discovery which settled the whole question in his mind.

"Come here, Al!" he called. "You, too, Jack! Have a look at this!"

The rancher and his head cowboy immediately joined him.

"What do you think of this?" demanded the detective, pointing to the stone.

"It has been shaped out with a cold chisel, surest thing!" cried Al.

"That's what it has, and not recently, either. This is the secret of this place, and now to prove it."

The detective took hold of the stone and pulled with all his strength.

It moved considerably, but he could not pull it aside.

"This is more than one man's job," he said. "Lay hold here, boys."

By their united efforts the stone moved easily enough.

As it stood it had a sort of leverage of its own upon the rock against which it rested, and there was no difficulty in turning it completely over.

An iron chain came out with it, and an opening large enough to admit a mounted man was revealed.

"The way to the Coyotes' Blind corral!" cried Jack Roberts. "By thunder, this is great."

The chain ran through an iron pulley block overhead, and had a heavy weight attached.

By pulling on this weight, one man could bring the stone back into place.

"A natural cave and an ingenious mechanical contrivance to hide the entrance, that is what we have here," said Old King Brady. "This is our road, sure enough."

"You are the same old Brady!" declared Al Buckner. "What you can't find out isn't to be found out by any one."

"Mount!" exclaimed the detective. "We want to get a move on at once. Those fellows have start enough of us as it is."

Producing his electric dark lantern, the detective led the way into the cave.

The door was left open behind them, for Old King Brady felt that it might prove necessary to beat a hasty retreat.

The cave proved to be but a small affair.

Three hundred yards brought them out into the narrowest canyon Old King Brady had ever seen.

It was, in fact, a mere rift in the mighty ledge which towered above them.

Here the rocks were all loose sandstone, and the floor of the canyon was strewn with fallen pieces, many of which had been ground into sand, and in this sand the trail could be plainly seen.

A mile or more was covered, and the canyon began to widen.

At last they came to another, which cut directly across it.

Here the old detective drew rein again.

"Two trails!" exclaimed Jack Roberts.

"That's it!" said Old King Brady. "Some one of the party has returned on their tracks and gone up the cross canyon on the left, but the main body kept on ahead all right. Best thing we can do is to follow the lead."

They were now within half a mile of the scene of Harry's remarkable escape, and a short ride brought them up against the great mass of fallen rock. Of course this discovery threw the whole party into considerable excitement, and there was a general dismounting.

It could be seen at a glance that the rock had but recently fallen.

Indeed, as they stood looking at it another slab came crashing down and Al Buckner narrowly escaped being hit on the head.

"The whole blame mountain will be falling next thing we know!" he exclaimed. "We had better get out of this."

"Hold on! Not so fast," said Old King Brady. "Here are more signs to be studied, and it is up to us to find out just what they are worth."

For more than ten minutes Old King Brady prowled about in silence.

"Somebody didn't get through here," he then answered.

"Well, what do you make of it all?" demanded Al. "I see that somebody has been turned back from here. Three horses, I make it."

"Yes, that is it. The thing came upon one of the riders suddenly, and his broncho bucked and threw him; see, here is where he struck, thanks to the sand, it is all plain enough."

"And the riderless horse went away and came back again with two others," Jack Roberts remarked.

"That's right, too. Then all three went away. This looks as though the bulk of the party may have been buried under the rocks."

"One thing is certain," said Al. "We shall not get any further, and the best thing we can do is to follow the other trail."

Before the detective could reply all were startled by a loud shout.

"Old King Brady, the detective!" cried a voice. "The dead come to life again, by gaul!"

On top of the fallen rock a man had suddenly appeared.

His clothes were torn and his head tied up with a bloody cloth.

"Joaquin the Greaser!" shouted Jack Roberts, raising his rifle.

"Hold on! Don't shoot!" cried the outlaw, throwing up his hands. "There has been the deuce to pay here, and I am the last one of my band left alive."

CHAPTER VIII.

YOUNG KING BRADY GOES INTO PARTNERSHIP WITH PEPITA.

Young King Brady had captured his girl, while Brady the Banker at the same time made a capture of another kind.

This was a chance for freedom.

The little old schemer made the most of it.

Turning his broncho, he dug his heels into the animal's flanks, and away they went dashing up the canyon like mad.

"Hold on! Let me go!" screamed Pepita, struggling in Harry's arm. "Oh, you shall pay for this!"

"The privilege of holding you is worth paying for," replied Harry. "So! Now I have the rifle! That's enough! Do anything you like but draw on me, my fair lady of the road! I'm not a bit bashful. I'll surely fix you with your own rifle if you do."

Pepita had already drawn on him.

The instant Harry removed his arms she whipped out a revolver and started to cover him.

But Young King Brady was a bit too spry.

He had had other experiences with these wild western maidens and knew just how far they could be trusted.

"I'm it! Throw down that revolver!" he exclaimed.

"Surely you wouldn't kill me!" panted the girl, her black eyes flashing.

"Surely you don't expect me to play the wooden image—stand still here and let you kill me!"

"Oh, if my brother was only here, he'd fix you!"

"But he is not here! I am inclined to think that the fall of those rocks has fixed him. Will you throw down that revolver, or must I let my Winchester ask the question for me?"

"Your Winchester? It is mine."

"Mine now! Ah, that is better! Now the other, please."

"I have no other."

"Excuse me, but I know better—you have. Let it come. I mean business, miss. We are both in the same boat. It is going to pay us to be friends, but we can't be unless one of us is boss, and I propose to be that one."

"I have no other revolver," retorted the girl, sulkily.

"I hate to kill a woman, but I'm going to," said Harry. "I should have killed you long ago, if you had been a man."

The bluff did its work.

Still the sulky Pepita put her hand into her bosom and threw another revolver to the ground.

"Good!" said Young King Brady, seeing by the disgusted look upon her face that she had no more. "Now, we are just as we should be, so let us be friends."

At the risk of being jumped on, he stooped and seized the revolvers.

Pepita did not attempt to interfere with him.

She was like all her kind—once cowed, she was willing to submit to anything; once give her a chance to display her treacherous nature, and not an instant would she lose in doing it.

"You have got me foul, Brady," she said, with the marked Spanish accent, which we have not attempted to portray. "What do you propose to do next?"

"Talk matters over, first of all. You know what has occurred."

"We have lost Mike Brady, and I don't believe you realize how big a loss that is."

"Oh, I think I do. We could not have hindered his going through, even if we had tried, for he was too quick for us. You imagine that he has carried off something in the way of an important secret with him, I suppose?"

"I know he has, and so do you, or you wouldn't speak that way. He has told you all. You know the secret of the old Santa Fe trail."

"I don't deny it. What do you think of this business here?"

"It's bad enough," said Pepita, with a sigh. "You were ahead. You ought to know more about it than I do. Do you think my brother is actually dead?"

"I can't tell you. I know that at least three of the men must have been crushed under that rock. I was blindfolded, you know, so I can't tell how far he was ahead."

"And why were you not caught? I don't see how you escaped."

"My horse bucked and threw me."

"So much for being a tenderfoot. You would have been dead now, if you had known how to ride."

"Oh, I can do some riding, too. I was blindfolded. The first cracking of the rocks alarmed the horse, and he had me over his head before I knew it. Any one would have done the same."

Pepita leaned against the rock, and stood tapping her foot in silence.

"I'll let her alone until she gets calmed down a bit," thought Harry. "That's the best way."

For fully ten minutes neither spoke. The silence began to grow painful.

"Well, why don't you say something?" demanded Pepita at last. "Are we going to stand here all day like a pair of dummies? Why don't you speak?"

"Waiting for you," replied Harry. "I was wondering what you were thinking about in the meantime."

"And I was wondering what you purposed to do."

"Well, I'll tell you in a minute. First, you tell me just what the falling in of all that rock means to the Blind Coyote gang, if they are still alive."

"It means that they will have to climb over it, or starve to death, I reckon."

"I see. Their holdout is on the other side."

"Yes; in a valley which no one can get into or out of in any other way."

"I see. Is it far from here?"

"About a quarter of a mile."

"The rock may have fallen for that distance for all we can tell."

"That's so. I have no hope that any of them are alive. If they are they certainly would have climbed the rocks, and we should have seen something of them before this."

"That's the way I figure it out. Then if you and I are the only ones left it is up to us to make the best of the situation, don't you think so?"

"Of course I do. What do you mean?"

"There's the secret of the old Santa Fe trail yet to be solved and a pot of money for somebody when we have solved it. I heard them call you Pepita, and I say now: Pepita, let's you and I go into partnership and make a strike for that gold."

It was not so much that Harry cared whether the gold was found or not, but that it was necessary to get on friendly terms in some way with this girl, since he had been thrown in with her.

His principal thought was of Old King Brady, and the desire to know whether the detective was dead or alive.

Although he had seen him fall when Joaquin the Greaser fired through the car, he could not by any means bring himself to believe that the old detective was actually dead.

He had seen him play possum altogether too many times for that.

"I am with you," said Pepita. "I have got to tie to you, I suppose. Let it be as you say. We will make a strike for the gold, but after we get it, what then?"

"What do you mean by that?"

"I don't want to hang around here. I was seen on the train last night. I don't care to go to jail."

"You don't have to, so far as I am concerned."

"But you are a detective."

"I am also a man. I am not going to give you away if you stand by me and make no trouble."

"That's the talk. I want to go to Frisco. I've got friends there. Will you help me to get to them, Brady?"

"Sure I will, if you do the right thing."

"Then come along, partner. We will work together, and you won't regret your part in this job. The secret Mike Brady holds, if you can call it a secret when he has told it right and left, is the real thing! Unless somebody has got ahead of us and taken the gold, it is there."

"If it is there, we are bound to get it," replied Harry, and with this remark the long confab came to an end.

Harry's horse and the one Pepita had ridden had not

stampeded when Brady the Banker had rode away, and they stood there ready for them now.

"You know the road up to the Taos pass?" inquired Young King Brady.

"I do, perfectly," replied the girl.

"Then lead on and I will follow. If you conclude to make a mad dash ahead and give me the slip, why do so. I shan't attempt to interfere."

She gave him a peculiar look and then started her horse.

"Don't you worry, Brady!" she called back. "You can't shake me if you try. I am tied to you now."

"Heavens, she is figuring on housekeeping," thought Harry. "I must go slow."

It was an old story with Young King Brady.

Harry is a decidedly good looking fellow, and the girls are not slow in finding it out as a rule.

This was not the first time by many that he had made a quick contest of some western beauty.

Whether this was to prove another such experience or not, Harry could only guess, but he determined to be on the safe side.

He immediately began talking about the secret.

Pepita answered all his questions freely enough.

She told him that old Pedro Moragas, the guide, was her grandfather. She remembered him well, and spoke of him in the most bitter and contemptuous terms.

She said further that he had often boasted of his secret, but would never reveal it to the family, although they were miserably poor.

He lived in the hope of being able to get the gold himself, or at least claimed to do so; but, as a matter of fact, the case was utterly hopeless.

She added that after his death search had been made everywhere in the little adobe at Santa Fe for the paper, but it could not be found.

At last, when everybody had forgotten about it, Brady the Banker had foreclosed a mortgage on the property and pulled down the house.

Later it came to the ears of her brother that he had found the paper and he returned from Mexico with a new gang on purpose to get it, and the holding up of the train was the result.

"And did he get it?" asked Harry, when she came to that part of her story. "Had he it with him to-night?"

"Of course not. You have it, though."

"I have not."

"Mike Brady said you had. We searched him, but could not find the paper."

"Mike Brady lied. But I have read a translation of the paper, and that will do just as well."

"As I thought," said Pepita. "The game is in your hands."

They had now reached the cross canyon where Old King Brady had discovered the other trail.

"This is our road," said Pepita. "Five miles, ride through this canyon will bring us to the Santa Fe trail, and twenty more to the Taos pass."

They turned aside and rode on, Young King Brady wondering where all this was going to end.

CHAPTER IX.

THE TREACHERY OF JOAQUIN.

"Don't shoot the man," said Old King Brady, as Joaquin threw up his hands. "He seems to have had his troubles since we parted last night. Let us hear what he has to say."

A wicked glitter came into the eyes of the greaser.

Old King Brady saw the change, but he did not comprehend just then what it might mean, for Al Buckner began to talk.

"Hello, Joaquin!" cried the rancher. "You remember me?"

"Well, of course," was the reply. "I'm not likely to forget Al Buckner. Somewhere in my hide I'm carrying one of your bullets now; but let up a minute, will you? I want to know how Old King Brady came to escape."

"Escape from what—your bullet?" replied the detective. "It merely grazed my skull, and that is reason enough for you seeing me alive now, and ready to ask you what all this means and what you have done with my partner and Brady the Banker, and a dozen other things."

"Them is things I can't answer, I reckon," said Joaquin, slowly. "You can see for yourself that there has been a big drop of rock here. It caught us as we were on our way up to the Coyotes' Blind corral, and what happened to them behind me is more than I can tell. I know that I got a crack over the head which nearly put me out of business. I was pinned down under them rocks, too, and nearly tore the clothes off my back getting away. Boss, they call me the leader of a gang. Well, I'm ready to do the leading all right, but where's the gang? All dead?"

There was something solemn about Joaquin's way of putting it.

Old King Brady's heart sank as he put the next question.

"And my partner—the young man whom you took away with you from the train," he said, "is he dead, too?"

"He was behind me—that's all I know."

"It is so, then," thought the detective, bitterly. "Harry is actually dead. So much for this change of plan. Heavens! If I only had gone on straight to New York!"

But those who watched the old detective's face could form little idea of what was passing in his mind.

"And Brady the Banker?" he demanded, without even a tremor in his voice.

"Is dead, I hope," replied Joaquin, grimly. "The old skinflint, he ought to be dead. Besides——"

He checked himself, and his shifty eyes rested for a moment upon Old King Brady.

"You were going to say that besides that you got out of him all you wanted, I suppose? Old King Brady remarked.

"I'm not talking," replied Joaquin. "Here I am on top of the heap, and you are at the bottom. I can't go back to my holdout to starve, or to let you climb over these stones and capture me. What's to be done? Am I to consider myself under arrest?"

"Well, I expect that would be the best way," replied Old King Brady. "It would save a lot of trouble if you would come quietly down out of that."

"I rather think it would, and I believe I'll do it. You don't mean to shoot me offhand?"

"No," replied Old King Brady. "We don't propose to do that."

"I shall be taken to the Santa Fe jail and be given a fair trial?"

"Yes. I promise you that much, provided you give up the money stolen from the safe of the Atchison express car."

"I am ready to do that."

"How much was it?"

"We didn't get a chance to count it up. Somewhere in the neighborhood of ten thousand dollars, I made it, by a rough guess."

"Twelve thousand, the Las Vegas paper puts it."

"Mebbe there is. I can't say for sure."

"Where is the money now?"

"It's down below here, hitched to my dead horse. I'll go and fetch it, boss. I want to prove to you that I mean to do the right thing; so I'll pitch the money down first, and then come after it. How will that suit?"

"That will do all right, I think," said Old King Brady. "What do you say, Al?"

"Why, I've been letting you run this business because it's your business," replied Buckner, "but, all the same, I'd like to ask a question or two."

"Go ahead."

"Joaquin, where are them Navajos you took into your gang?"

Old King Brady saw the greaser's jaw snap.

"Who says I took Navajos into my gang?" he demanded.

"Well, I heard so. I heard that you had taken in a dozen or more."

"Whoever told you that lies, then, for it hain't true."

"And you are all alone there?"

"All alone, as you see. Now, do you want to ask me any more questions?"

"No; that's all."

"Let me ask you one, then. How did you fellers git in here?"

"We found the way."

"Did you open the door?"

"Could we have got in without it?"

"Yes, by coming around by the Santa Fe trail, but there has hardly been time for that."

"I say there has been time," replied Al, "but I'm not lying to you, Joaquin. We found out the secret of your door, and that is the way we come in."

"All right; that's all I want to know. Now, shall I go and fetch the money? It's up to you to say what I shall do, as long as I am under arrest."

"Go," said Old King Brady, "and be as quick as you can."

Joaquin disappeared, and they could hear him climbing down over the rocks.

"I don't like the look of that fellow nor the way he talks," said Jack Roberts. "He is up to some game, surerest thing."

"I am very much inclined to agree with you," said Old King Brady, "and yet, if he is telling the truth, what can he do?"

"I tell you one thing he has done," said Al Buckner. "He has lied about them Navajo Indians. I heard for sure that he had taken them into his gang."

"There were no Indians among the train robbers," answered Old King Brady, "and I'll tell you another thing—he made his story as long as possible. If that fellow isn't sparring for wind, I miss my guess."

"I'll bet you it's so!" cried Buckner. "Hadn't some of us better get up there and see what he is about?"

"We had better stay where we are and keep a sharp eye out," replied the detective. "I've had some experience with his kind. They don't give up so easy. Besides, it is going to be a tough job for any one to get up over these rocks. I don't just see how he is going to get down."

"Hark! Didn't you hear a noise behind us then?" Jack Roberts exclaimed.

"Thought I did," replied Al Buckner. "It was only a stone dropping, though."

They remained attentively listening for some moments, but there was not a sound.

"Reckon it was only the dropping of another bit of rock," added Roberts. "Strange how long Joaquin is."

"It's more than strange," said Old King Brady. "I'm afraid there's treachery in the wind."

The detective had scarcely spoken when a sharp cry rang out behind the rocks.

"A coyote!" exclaimed one of the men. "It must be that's he's penned up in there somewhere."

Jack Roberts smiled grimly.

"That thar's a two-legged coyote, all right," he exclaimed. "I smell trouble ahead."

"Get your guns, boys! Get your guns!" cried Buckner. "Half of you face down the canyon, and the other half face the stone pile. Be ready for business whichever way it comes."

Old King Brady gave no orders.

He also scented treachery, but he felt that Al Buckner and Roberts were the best men to handle a situation like this.

Suddenly a shot rang out, then another, and another; and with each shot a man went down.

The shots did not come from the stone pile, but from the opposite direction down the canyon, and yet not a man could be seen.

"Burning blue blazes! Them Indians, surest thing!" exclaimed Jack Roberts. "Are we all to stand here and be slaughtered like sheep?"

He had scarcely spoken when two shots came whizzing down from the rocks.

Buckner's hat went flying from his head. Old King Brady could hear the zip-zip of the bullet as it passed his ear.

"Caught in a trap. We've got 'em on both sides of us, boys!" he exclaimed. "We must make a bold dash for it."

"Forward!" cried Buckner, wheeling his horse and dashing ahead of his men.

A mad charge down the canyon followed.

It proved to be a veritable charge to death for more than one of the little band.

Men and horses went down before the raking fire, and yet no sign of the enemy was to be seen.

Old King Brady's horse was shot from under him, and the old detective was pinned down by its fall.

Al Buckner threw up his hands and fell backward from his saddle.

Old King Brady, as he saw him fall, made up his mind that the man was dead.

Within the space of a hundred yards four others fell, while the rest, led by Jack Roberts, who evidently regarded the day lost, dashed on down the canyon and disappeared.

"I'm up against trouble now, all right," thought the old detective. "So much for trusting a greaser, even for an instant. This is a bad job. I wonder what is coming next."

He had but a few seconds to wait before the worst was made plain.

Five Indians armed with smoking rifles came sneaking out from behind the big pieces of broken rock which lined the canyon on both sides.

At the same instant Joaquin appeared on the top of the stone heap again.

"That's the talk, Jack Rabbit!" he shouted. "You have put them on the run. Make the old man with the big hat a prisoner. I don't want him killed if he is not dead already, and I am afraid he is."

There were three men with the outlaw.

Two of them had their heads tied up, like himself, and the third had his arm in a sling.

The Indians made a rush for Old King Brady and Al Buckner, the latter having staggered to his feet.

"Don't kill me, Jack Rabbit!" he shouted. "You know I've done you many a good turn."

The Indian had him covered and stood hesitating.

"How, boss?" he called up to Joaquin. "Do I shoot this man?"

"Let him live, Joaquin, or you will never get the secret of Brady the Banker out of me!" shouted Old King Brady. "I suppose that is what you want. Mark my words, man, for I mean what I say."

And the old detective's warning had the desired effect.

"Hold on, Jack Rabbit!" he cried. "Tie him up! Let him live! Throw up your hands, Al Buckner! I'll take it back if you try any of your games."

"Joaquin, I have only one hand to throw up!" returned the rancher, raising his left. "A Navajo bullet has fixed the other. Do your worst."

A quick search was made, and his revolver taken away and his rifle picked up from where it had fallen.

Meanwhile Old King Brady lay powerless to move.

Al Buckner's left arm was tied behind him.

Joaquin and his men were climbing down over the rocks.

It was a difficult and dangerous task for these wounded men, but they finally reached the ground in safety.

"Now, who wins, Brady!" cried the greaser, shaking his fist in the old detective's face. "Tell me the secret of the Santa Fe trail, or I will shoot you where you lie."

He drew a revolver, cocked it, and pressed it against Old King Brady's forehead.

Old King Brady felt that he was in a bad box.

"If I tell him what I know he will shoot me sure!" he thought. "My safety lies in holding out against him."

"Pull that trigger, and the secret of the Santa Fe trail is lost to you forever, Joaquin," he said, with all the calmness he could muster.

"Tell it! Tell it!" cried the outlaw. "Tell it right now, unless you want to die!"

CHAPTER X.

YOUNG KING BRADY SOLVES THE SECRET OF THE OLD SANTA FE TRAIL.

Before Pepita and Young King Brady had ridden a mile they found themselves on very good terms.

The girl had evidently taken a great fancy to Harry, and while he did not particularly encourage it, he still responded sufficiently to lead her on.

"I suppose you think that I am hand in glove with my brother, Brady," she suddenly broke out at last. "It isn't so, though. He and I were always fighting. He is as rough as they make them, and we always quarreled. I only took up with him because I had to, for I wanted to get a share of this money and be off for Frisco. If we had hung on there a few minutes longer like enough we would never have got away at all."

"Why, what do you mean?" demanded Harry. "I don't understand."

"I know you don't, but I am going to explain. My brother was run out of this country a few years ago, and when he went he took a dozen or more Navajo Indians along with him. They have been living across the line in Mexico, but now they are all back again, and if Joaquin is dead chances are that the Indians would have captured me and run me back over the line. That is why I was so willing to light out as we did."

"But there were no Indians with you at the hold-up, Pepita," Harry replied.

"No; they would have been no use there. It takes white men to do that kind of work. Joaquin sent them off to have a look at a cattle ranch he intended to raid in a few days. They could not have returned, or we should have seen something of them on the rocks, for it isn't possible that they could have been killed, too."

"I hope they don't follow us up," said Harry. "I suppose we may expect hot work if they do, unless you are able to control them."

"Which I am not. That's a man's job. If Joaquin is dead I know just how it will be. Every one of the band is wanted by the sheriff. They will not stop around here a day, and Jack Rabbit, the chief, will surely make a strike to take me with him. I tell you this so that you may be on your guard. If we succeed in finding the treasure, we want to be off with it without a moment's delay; but for my part, I don't see how we are going to carry the blamed stuff."

"That's counting our chickens before they are hatched," said Harry. "We'll have to find it first, you know."

"Well, what do you think of our chances?"

"You ought to know better than I do, Pepita. You believe that this treasure actually exists?"

"I know it does. Don't I tell you that I have often heard my grandfather tell about it. I have been hearing the story of this buried treasure all my life."

"Then there you are! I guess it is true enough; but here is the end of the canyon. Where are we now?"

They had come out upon the open country at last.

They were high up in the Taos mountains, and the country for hundreds of miles lay spread out at their feet like a map.

The view was magnificent and awe-inspiring.

Young King Brady had never seen anything like it. He felt that he could have remained there for hours, taking in the wonderful scene.

A distinctly marked road ran on to further heights above them, and this, Pepita informed him, was the old Santa Fe trail.

"Why they ever went this way when they could have just as well gone through the valley I'm sure I don't know," she said; "but the old pioneers did not know the country, and they were afraid of the Indians, so I suppose that accounts for it. We are only ten miles from the Taos pass now, so I suppose we shall soon know about the treasure, if what you say is true."

"I've told you all I know," replied Harry, and this was true enough.

Situated as he was, Young King Brady felt that there was no use in holding back the secret and losing the girl's confidence, for he did not know the country, and she did; and the main object was to get back to civilization as soon as possible."

Pushing on up the mountain, they came suddenly upon the dead body of a man lying on his back directly across the road.

It was the shying of Harry's horse which first called their attention to it.

"Mike Brady!" cried Pepita, reining in.

The man certainly resembled the banker.

He had been shot through the heart and also scalped.

It was this that so altered his appearance as to make Harry doubtful.

He sprang from his horse and examined the body.

The man seemed to have been dead but a short time, as near as he could judge.

"I don't feel sure that it is Mike Brady," said Harry, at last. "He is a little man and quite old. With his face all covered with blood, as it is, and these points of general resemblance, I don't see how we can be sure."

"It looks like Mike Brady," said Pepita. "You ought to know."

"Well, I don't know about that, either," was the reply. "I only saw the man last night, and all the time I was with him it was more or less dark. I should say that it is you that ought to know, if you have been acquainted with him a long time, as I suppose you have."

"I never saw so much of him," replied Pepita. "You know how little a young girl looks at an old fellow like him; but all the same, I think it is Brady. Look at the coat he has on. That is surely the one Mike Brady wore."

"He must have been killed by Indians."

"That's right. Why don't you search his clothes? If he is Mike Brady there ought to be something about him to prove it."

"Just what I was going to do," replied Harry, and he proceeded to make the search.

There were papers in the inside coat pocket which the detective saw as soon as he glanced at them that they must have been the property of the fugitive banker.

This seemed sufficient identification. Young King Brady came to the conclusion that the man could be none other than the banker.

No money was found upon his body, nor was the Moragas paper among the rest.

Harry pocketed the papers and, leaving the body as it was, they rode on.

Pepita was very silent for some time.

"That's a sure sign of bad luck—finding a dead man on the road," she said, at last. "We needn't expect anything but trouble now."

But Harry laughed at her superstitious fears.

He was becoming keenly interested in the situation, and

was most anxious to reach the Taos pass, which they did at last without meeting any one.

Once the highway to San Francisco, the old Santa Fe trail had long since ceased to be used.

As they approached the pass the scenery grew wilder and more rugged.

Towering peaks rose on all sides of them now, but they were soon shut off from view by two great walls of rock between which the trail ran.

This was the Taos pass, Pepita declared.

She informed Young King Brady that it was two miles in length, and at the other end the descent into the broad valley in which Santa Fe lies began.

The question now was to locate the camel rock.

Harry took one side of the trail, and the girl the other, and every projection was closely scanned.

"I think that must be it," said Young King Brady at last, pointing to a most peculiarly shaped rock which rose from a ledge about fifty feet above the trail.

"It looks like an animal of some kind, but as I never saw a camel I can't tell," Pepita replied.

The rock was of most remarkable formation, and certainly did bear a strong resemblance to a camel lying down with its head raised.

To Young King Brady it appeared to be almost inaccessible, but when they came beneath it they saw that it would be a comparatively easy matter to climb up under it, though to get upon the rock would clearly be impossible.

"It is the place!" exclaimed Young King Brady, in considerable excitement. "We have located it at last."

"Why do you feel so sure?" demanded Pepita.

"Those two pinon trees growing directly beneath the rock tell the story."

"They were mentioned in the paper?"

"They were, particularly. The cave lies right between them, and in the cave we ought to find the gold."

"Look! There is a cave!" replied Pepita, suddenly. "What can this mean?"

Harry had not noticed it, but there it stood a little further on.

It was built of stone and stood on the left up against the high rocky wall.

"We will take that in first," said Young King Brady, and they rode on.

The house was only one story high, but it contained a loft above the two rooms on the ground floor.

It was but a rude affair, and utterly deserted. Young King Brady saw that it could only have been intended as a shelter for travelers through the pass.

"It must be an old post house," said Pepita. "I remember now hearing my grandfather say that after the death of Captain Winslow's party, a post house was built in the Taos pass. It seems to me that some one has been here within a short time. What do you think?"

"I am sure of it," said Harry. "You can see the foot-prints in the dust on the floor."

Harry called up to the loft, for there was a ladder, but he received no answer.

"It may have been Brady," said Pepita. "Yet, if he got this far I don't see what took him back to the place on the trail where we found his body."

"Or the Indians who killed Brady, if it was Brady," suggested Harry; "but there is no use in speculating about the matter. It is hard to tell."

Alongside the house was a rude stone barn, which yet remained to be examined.

Entering it, Harry found a horse tied up.

"Here you are!" he called to Pepita, who had lingered outside. "Is this the horse Brady rode?"

Pepita came hurrying in.

"It is!" she declared. "I am certain of it."

"Then this makes the mystery still more mysterious."

"It looks as if the Indians must have carried him off and scalped him when they got up where we found the body."

"But, if they caught him here, I can't see why they did not kill him here. I don't understand it at all."

After some further talk it was decided to put the horses in the barn and ascend to the camel rock at once.

Young King Brady was not a little puzzled to know what to do in case they should be fortunate enough to discover the treasure.

Three horses could walk off with a good deal of gold, and yet to attempt to return to Las Vegas would be to run the risk of meeting the Indians.

"I think the best way will be to take but little of it and hurry on to Santa Fe," he said. "There we can buy a wagon and come up after the rest."

"I wouldn't show myself in Santa Fe for anything," declared Pepita. "I am well known there, and the account of the bold hold-up must be in all the papers by this time."

"What else can we do, then?" asked Harry.

But Pepita had no suggestion to offer, and they now started to climb the rock.

The ascent was steep enough, but still it offered no serious difficulty.

Soon they came to the pinon trees.

"There is the cave!" cried Harry. "Some one has been here before us! The white stone has been removed!" It was so!

The stone had been pulled aside, and lay near the right hand pinon tree, while the entrance to the cave lay revealed.

Hastily producing his dark lantern, Young King Brady led the way inside.

"Eureka!" he exclaimed. "Here you are, Pepita! We have solved the secret of the old Santa Fe trail!"

CHAPTER XI.

AL BUCKNER'S LITTLE GAME.

"Shoot me, and you will never know the secret, Joaquin Moragas," repeated Old King Brady with perfect

calmness. "I take you to be a man of sense, and one who won't commit the folly of spoiling your own pie!"

"If I let you live will you tell it?" demanded Joaquin.

"That depends upon what you propose to do with me. Help me up. Let us talk this business over. I am ready to make a bargain with you, my friend; but I don't propose that it shall be altogether a one-sided bargain. You can't have everything your own way."

Old King Brady had won.

He knew it by the expression which came over Joaquin's face.

But, after all, the victory might only be a temporary one. It would be necessary to handle the man with the greatest care if he expected to preserve his own life and that of his young friend.

"Take him up, boys!" said Joaquin. "Pull the horse away!"

It was done, and Old King Brady experienced the immense relief of being freed from his cramped position and standing upon his feet once more.

"There! That is better!" he exclaimed. "Now we can talk. Al, poor fellow, how do you feel?"

"I've got a bullet in my arm and don't feel very comfortable," replied Buckner; "but it is good to be alive just the same."

"Which is more than you will be in a few minutes if Brady don't come to terms!" growled Joaquin.

"Come, old man," he added. "I don't propose to stay here talking all day. What's the word?"

"How much of the secret do you know?" demanded Old King Brady.

"I know that there is a quarter of a million in gold dust buried somewhere in the Taos pass," was the reply. "The secret is the property of my family. The owners of the gold are all dead years ago, and no one has a better right to it than I have. Even if it wasn't so, it's mine if I get it; so let us know what Brady the Banker told you."

"Well," said Old King Brady, "I will tell you what I will do. I admit that I read a translation of the paper telling about the gold. It is as you say, hidden in the Taos pass, and if you will take us there I will show you the spot, providing——"

"Well, providing what?"

"That you give us our share and let us go on our way to Santa Fe unmolested."

"Oh, I will promise anything," said Joaquin. "Yes, I will promise that."

"And the promise of a greaser goes for nothing," thought Old King Brady, "but; all the same, I have gained what I wanted, and that is time. A hundred chances may come to us before we can reach the Taos pass."

Aloud he asked:

"When do we start?"

"Now," replied Joaquin; "as soon as we can get the horses we will be off. Stand where you are, unless you

want to be shot down like a dog. I want to have a talk with these men."

All now withdrew some little distance and engaged in earnest conversation, the Navajo chief, Jack Rabbit, appearing to take an active part.

"Al, what's to be done?" asked Old King Brady.

"Blest if I know," was the reply, "but I've got one card up my sleeve that's not been played yet."

"I know. I read it in your face. I got that wink you gave me, all right, and was able to understand its meaning, too."

"Well?"

"You are no more wounded than I am, Al."

"Yes, I am. I did get a graze from a bullet. See the blood on my coatsleeve and my hand."

"Yes, yes! As you held your hand, I did not notice that; but what's your game?"

"Haven't any, Mr. Brady, except to spring some scare on them. I suppose you know what I mean?"

"Well, of course. I haven't forgotten what you once told me and showed me. I could scarcely believe it then; perhaps you will find a chance to work it."

"And don't you forget it, I will, Mr. Brady. Wait and watch me."

"Give me a clew, Al, so that I may know how to act."

"You don't understand the Navajo talk?"

"No, indeed."

"I do some. I have had two of these very fellows working for me on the ranch. One night, just for fun, I treated them to a little show. They firmly believed in it. Say, it was great."

"And do you think it can be worked now?"

"Surest thing, Mr. Brady, providing we get the chance."

"We shall have to make the chance. Meanwhile take a suggestion from me."

"Anything."

"Your arm hurts you so that you can hardly sit in the saddle on account of the pain. You want to sit with me, behind, mind you, so that you can hold on to me."

"I see."

"Hide a knife somewhere. Quick, while they are not looking. It may come handy before we get through."

Old King Brady had no more than finished speaking when Joaquin and his three companions returned.

To Al Buckner's disgust, the Indians hurried off down the canyon.

It was upon them that the success of his mysterious scheme depended, and their sudden disappearance did not suit him at all.

Joaquin's first words made it all right, however.

"They have gone for such horses as we have," he said. "Confound the luck! There are ten as fine bronchos as can be found in New Mexico in the corral behind the rocks; but what good are they to us now? Nothing for it but to let them starve to death, I suppose."

"It's a bad job," said Old King Brady, sympathizingly. "How long will Jack Rabbit and his men be gone?"

"Not more than half an hour at the most."

"Then let us all have a smoke," said Old King Brady, producing a handful of cigars and passing them around.

"Your cigars are all right, old man," said the greaser, he having lighted his; "and that reminds me that you may have a few other odds and ends about you worth sampling. Search the prisoners, boys."

It was useless to say anything. There was nothing for it but to submit.

Nothing of much value was taken from Old King Brady but his revolver.

There was a small derringer concealed in one of his secret pockets that they did not get, however.

The search over, the old detective began to talk in his most friendly fashion. Al Buckner meanwhile walked about like a man in pain, and kept growling about his arm.

"Where are your horses to come from, Joaquin?" the old detective asked.

"We always keep a few spare ones in a cave near here," was the reply. "My Indians were after them when we heard you coming. Say, they would have killed every mother's son of you, then, if I hadn't stopped them."

"They have done pretty well as it is," said Old King Brady, looking around at the bodies of the dead cowboys.

"Are you growling at the loss of a few cowboys?" flashed Joaquin. "Look at my unfortunate fellows! The whole bad except these three men wiped out; and my sister, too—she lies under that pile of stones."

"And my partner," said Old King Brady, sadly. "This affair has struck us all pretty bad; but what became of Brady the Banker? You haven't told me that yet."

"I have told you all I know," replied Joaquin. "My sister had charge of Brady. The old fool was no rider and kept slipping off his horse, so we had to let him go slow, and she remained behind to look after him. They must have both got caught."

Old King Brady sighed.

There seemed little doubt of Harry's death, then.

The talk which followed was of little consequence.

Soon the Indians came back with the horses.

There were not nearly enough to go around, and everybody had to ride double.

It was perfectly natural under the circumstances that the two prisoners should be put together on one horse, and it was so arranged.

The course taken was the same that Pepita and Young King Brady had followed before them.

Two Indians rode behind as a rear guard.

Joaquin and his wounded escort kept well ahead.

Secure in the belief that the prisoners could not understand the Navajo language, the two redskins began to talk to each other before they had advanced very far.

"Brady!" whispered Al Buckner, "I wish you could understand what those fellows are saying. By Jove, they are playing right into my hands!"

"What is it?" breathed the detective, without turning his head.

"Why, it seems that this band came into the canyon since the accident occurred. I should judge that they came through the Taos pass. Anyhow, on the way they fell in with an old Irish peddler named Murphy, who travels about this part of the country, and shot him, and afterwards scalped him, after robbing him of all his goods."

"The deuce! Bad for Mr. Murphy. They seem to be a bloodthirsty set of fellows."

"They are a bad bunch. Do you know what they are saying now?"

"Haven't the faintest idea, of course."

"They are afraid of me. They are wondering if I shall get on to their curves—you know how I mean."

"The deuce! Then they are playing into your hands with a vengeance. Are those the Indians who used to work on your ranch?"

"One of them is."

"It all seems to be working in your favor. When are you going to do your old act?"

"I'd do it now, only for you. I'd like to cut you free first."

"That won't do. It would be a dead give away."

"Of course it would. How shall we arrange it?"

"Leave me tied, and order me cut free later."

"Well, all right. Let me be quiet a minute, or they may suspect something. Don't be scared when you hear me yell."

They continued on until they came out of the canyon and entered upon the old Santa Fe trail.

Here Joaquin and the rest of the party, who had got considerably ahead, halted and waited for the prisoners to come up.

All of a sudden Al Buckner gave a frightful yell and fell against Old King Brady.

"Hold on!" cried the detective. "Stop the horse! Help me with this man! He's in a fit."

Old King Brady's wrists were tied together, so he could just manage to grab the reins.

He gave them a tug and stopped the horse, while the two Indians came hurrying up.

They immediately dismounted. One of them seized Al Buckner and lifted him to the ground.

Al's face was deathly white and his lips were twitching convulsively.

In his younger days before Al turned burglar he had traveled with a juggler and did a fake trance medium act.

He knew how to draw the blood out of his face and make himself white. He was also a skillful ventriloquist, and could throw his voice about in great shape.

In short, Al was a very clever performer at that sort of business, as Old King Brady had reason to know.

Now, except for the twitching, he lay quiet enough, while the Indians bent over him, talking excitedly.

Joaquin and the others, seeing what had occurred, came riding back.

"What in thunder is the matter here?" demanded the greaser. "Is the man in a fit?"

At the same instant a queer voice called out something in Navajo.

The voice appeared to come from behind the two Indians.

One of them gave a dismal yell, and both of them wheeled suddenly around.

"What is it? What is the row?" demanded Joaquin, galloping up.

"Hush, white man!" cried Jack Rabbit, getting in ahead of them. "It is the spirit of the dead who speaks. Disturb not the spirit of the dead!"

"To the deuce with the spirit of the dead!" shouted Joaquin. "Get that fellow up there! He is only shamming. This is some trick."

CHAPTER XII.

CONCLUSION.

"So this is the wonderful treasure cave!" exclaimed Pepita, looking seriously around. "Many is the time I have heard my grandfather speak of it. I never thought I should live to see it, but where is the gold?"

Her eyes had not yet become accustomed to the darkness of the cave.

Already Harry's had caught the glitter of gold on ahead.

He pushed forward, flashing his lantern, the light showing Pepita a pile of small wooden boxes heaped up against the wall of the cave, on their right.

Two of the boxes had been burst open, and the contents of one had been spilled on the rocks.

It was the reddish, copper-colored gold dust of the California placers of early days; and, although Young King Brady did not recognize the fact, an expert would instantly have known that it could not have come from anywhere else.

Pepita was greatly excited.

She kneeled down and examined the stuff carefully, taking it in her hand and running it through her fingers like meal.

"Brady," she said, "do you know I never really believed in the existence of this treasure, but now I see that my grandfather was no lunatic, as we always supposed him to be. This is great. If all those boxes are filled with this same stuff there is gold enough here to make us both rich for life."

"That's what there is," replied Harry, lifting box after box. "I guess each one carries the yellow dust all right. I don't see any reason to doubt it.

"First thing is to get the gold away out of this cave,"

he added. "Let's get back to the house and talk it over, and—heavens! What is this?"

He had been pulling over the pile of boxes, and now he suddenly came upon a long flat package wrapped up in a newspaper. The corner of the box he had just removed had penetrated the paper, and he could see greenbacks inside.

"More money!" exclaimed Pepita.

"Yes, and never put here by Captain Winslow, either. This paper is not more than a week old."

He tore the paper away and found that the package was made up of greenbacks of large denominations.

"Why, there are thousands of dollars here!" he exclaimed.

The words had scarcely escaped him when a loud noise was heard at the entrance of the cave, and what daylight there was suddenly disappeared.

"Back!" cried Harry. "Some one has shut us in! Some one has rolled the stone back in place!"

He darted to the entrance, to find that he had made no mistake.

A white stone barred the way, and just as Harry put out his hand to push it away he heard another come tumbling against it.

The white stone was not a particularly heavy one, as he had noticed; and he knew that he could easily have moved it. But now as he pushed against it he found that it resisted all his efforts.

"What can it mean?" gasped Pepita. "Are we prisoners here?"

"We are, surest thing!" cried Harry, and it means Brady the Banker. Hello, there! Hello!"

"Ah, there, me bold treasure hunters! Sure, an' you kint stay there," answered the voice of the banker on the other side of the stone. "It's mesilf that's been watching you. You will come poking your nose into me treasure house, will you? Well, then, stop there until I can get help to do you up and get away with that gold."

Pepita began to sputter, but Harry cut her short.

"Mr. Brady! Mr. Brady, you don't understand!" he shouted. "It is Young King Brady. I am working for you, you know."

A mocking laugh was the only answer, and they could hear the banker go scrambling down over the rocks.

Harry threw himself against the white stone again and again, but it would not budge an inch.

"How are we going to get out?" demanded Pepita.

But this was a question Young King Brady could not answer.

Hours passed, and the answer seemed just as far off as ever.

Young King Brady and Pepita still remained prisoners in the treasure cave.

* * * * *

"Don't interfere here, boss!" cried Jack Rabbit, as Joaquin began storming away at Al Buckner; and calling him a fraud. "How! How! What you know about spirit

business? *Nothing. Navajo, he know! You hold your tongue!*"

Joaquin stared at the Navajo chief and was silent.

Then, for the first time, Old King Brady began to hope that something might come of these strange proceedings, for he saw that the man was clearly afraid.

Meanwhile Al Buckner was doing his spiritual act.

"I was murdered by you red Injuns!" he called out, imitating the voice of the Irish peddler. "You scalped me! You left my body on the Santa Fe trail after you had robbed it. I want revenge, and I will have it, if you don't do what I say. Where's the Jack Rabbit? Sure, I want to talk with him. Let him come here, or I'll haunt his lodge for a hundred years. I'll put sickness upon him and upon his women and his children. I can do all I say."

One glance at Jack Rabbit's face was sufficient to show that he fully believed that this was the real thing.

He now dismounted and hurried to Al Buckner's side.

Al's eyes were closed and kept twitching. Evidently he knew how to fool the Indians, for Jack Rabbit asked in a trembling voice what was wanted—what he must do to prevent these threatened calamities from falling upon himself and his house.

"I will tell you," said Al, "but I can't tell you until you have proved to me that you mean to obey me in everything."

"I will!" said the Rabbit. "Tell me what I must do!"

"I'll not tell you out loud!" replied the spirit. "Bend down close here, and listen if you want to know."

Jack Rabbit obeyed.

What was said to him Old King Brady could not hear.

Jack Rabbit arose and, drawing his companions aside, whispered to them in the Navajo language.

Joaquin and his followers watched them nervously.

"Come! Come!" he cried. "How much longer is this nonsense going to last? I want to get on with my work. Jack Rabbit, you know where we are bound, and you know what I mean to do for you and the rest of the braves when we get there. Cut all this out and come along. Al Buckner is playing tricks on you. Leave him where he is."

The answer was entirely unexpected.

It was a diabolical yell from Jack Rabbit, in which all the Indians joined.

Then, so quick that it startled Old King Brady, prepared as he was for any strange move, they threw up their rifles and rushed upon Joaquin and his three men. They dragged them off their horses, tied them hand and foot and threw them down by the roadside.

Resistance was impossible, so quickly was it done.

The noise and confusion was deafening while it lasted, but, once made a prisoner, Joaquin lowered his tone, and began to whine to be set free.

Jack Rabbit paid not the slightest attention to him.

"Spirit, have I done right?" he asked, returning to Al Buckner's side.

"It is right! All right!" answered Al. "Now, go and leave us, and I will haunt you no more."

Without a word, Jack Rabbit mounted, and the rest of the band, following his example, they turned back on the trail and rode away.

Not until the clatter of their hoofs had died away did Al Buckner move.

Joaquin, meanwhile, was swearing like a pirate.

"Hold your noise," said Old King Brady. "You see I can't help you. It is your own fault that I am tied up as I am."

"It's a trick! It's all a fraud!" sputtered Joaquin.

"Sure it is," said Al, coolly rising; "and now, brother, let Mr. Brady decide whether we shall kill you or not. It is what we ought to do."

He hurried over to where Old King Brady still sat upon the horse and cut him free.

"Why, you are not wounded badly!" cried Joaquin, when he saw him use his right hand.

"Yes, I am, but not as bad as you thought for," returned Al. "Now, Mr. Brady, it is up to you to say what we shall do with these men."

"I think we had better leave them just as they are for the present," replied Old King Brady. "We will put them off the road and do a little gagging so that we will be able to find them when we come back."

"For heaven's sake, set us free, Brady!" pleaded Joaquin. "Don't leave us here to starve to death."

"No danger of that, my man," replied Old King Brady. "What I propose to do is to land you in jail, and I want to make sure there is no mess made of the job. But first I want to do a little searching, seeing that Jack Rabbit did not do it for me, as I expected he would."

Joaquin broke out into another torrent of abuse then.

"Ah, I see," said Old King Brady. "That means that you have got the hold-up money about you. I thought as much. Well, we want that."

And Old King Brady got it.

The search was a thorough one. He took over \$12,000 from Joaquin's clothes.

Then, in spite of their protests, the outlaws were securely gaged and laid away among the bushes where no passerby could possibly see them.

"Now what is your plan?" asked Al Buckner, when this was done.

"How far is it to the Taos pass from where we are?" inquired Old King Brady.

"Less than five miles."

"Then we will go there and see if we can locate the cave. That done, we will return to Las Vegas and notify the authorities that Joaquin and his three followers lie where we have left them. As to the removing of the treasure, should we find it, that must be a matter for after consideration."

"But what about these horses?"

"We will take them with us. There is no use in leaving them here."

Soon after they made the start and rode off along the Santa Fe trail.

* * * * *

"Brady, are you awake?"

"Yes. Here I am, Pepita. You have had a long sleep of it. I began to think that you would never wake up."

Pepita arose and rubbed her eyes.

"There is no change?" she asked.

"No change," replied Harry, gloomily. "It must be almost night now. You have been asleep several hours. I begin to think that we are destined to starve to death in this horrible hole."

"It's a bad business."

"Your grandfather wrote in the paper of the treasure having been a curse to him, and he expressed a hope that it might be a curse to whoever found it. Upon my word, it begins to look as if his words were coming true."

"He was a wicked old man, Brady. Dear me, I wish I had never gone in for this business. If I ever get safe out of this snap I mean to try and live from this time on."

"It will be a good idea, but really the case looks pretty dubious. I have tried over and over again to move that stone, but I can't budge it, and—hark! Some one is coming now."

It was so! Some one was coming up the rocks.

In a moment they heard footsteps approaching the cave, and the voice of Brady the Banker called out:

"Brady! Oh, Young Brady, are you there?"

"Where else could I be?" replied Harry. "Let us out of this. I—"

"Stand where you are!" shouted a loud voice, apparently coming from the road. "Throw up your hands, man! You are my prisoner!"

"Bad luck! It's the sheriff, so it is!" they heard the banker exclaim.

Confused sounds followed. They could hear men scrambling up the rocks.

Brady the Banker broke out in noisy protest.

Then a well known voice exclaimed:

"This is the treasure cave, sheriff. The gold contained in it is the property of the Wells Fargo Express company, and I claim it in their name."

"Old King Brady!" gasped Harry. "He always turns up on time!"

"Well, I am glad!" said Pepita, and as she spoke the stone was rolled away.

"Great heavens! Harry!" cried the old detective.

"Well, I've got the treasure, Governor!" replied Young King Brady. "What more do you want? I have solved the secret of the old Santa Fe trail!"

* * * * *

More owing to circumstances than any good wit the Bradys had won out again.

Old King Brady had encountered the sheriff and his

posse on the Santa Fe trail just before they reached the Taos pass.

Al Buckner introducing the detective, explanations followed, and then an advance was made to the pass just in time to see Brady the Banker come up alone in a cart which he had picked up somewhere.

They let him mount the platform and then pounced upon him.

Thus the matter was brought to a climax, and the arrest of the banker and the rescue of Harry and Pepita followed.

Of course Harry pointed out the treasure and, equally, of course, turned over the greenbacks which he had discovered hidden under the boxes.

Then Brady the Banker broke down and confessed that it was the money he had stolen from his banks, and with his confession the case closed.

Joaquin and his three followers were picked up on the return trip, and with Pepita and Mike Brady all were landed in the Las Vegas jail.

The Bradys, with Al Buckner and the sheriff, at once returned to the cave with another cart.

A guard had been left, and the treasure was now loaded on to the carts and safely deposited in the Las Vegas bank.

Old King Brady turned it over to the care of the Wells Fargo agent at Las Vegas, and with Harry promptly returned to New York, having put in a good word for Pepita before leaving.

And this saved the girl from prison, where her brother and his followers landed, along with Mike Brady.

Joaquin and his followers were hung. Brady the Banker got ten years.

Old King Brady insisted upon paying all funeral expenses for the dead cowboys, and would have rewarded Al Buckner, but the rancher refused to accept a cent.

He did not refuse a share in the handsome reward paid to the Bradys by the Wells Fargo express people, however, and with the money he purchased more land and enlarged his ranch.

It was some time before the good people of Las Vegas got through talking about the treasure cave or recovered from the excitement into which they were thrown by the strange case of The Bradys and Brady the Banker.

THE END.

Read "THE BRADYS' GRAVEYARD CLUE; OR, DEALINGS WITH DOCTOR DEATH," which will be the next number (254) of "Secret Service."

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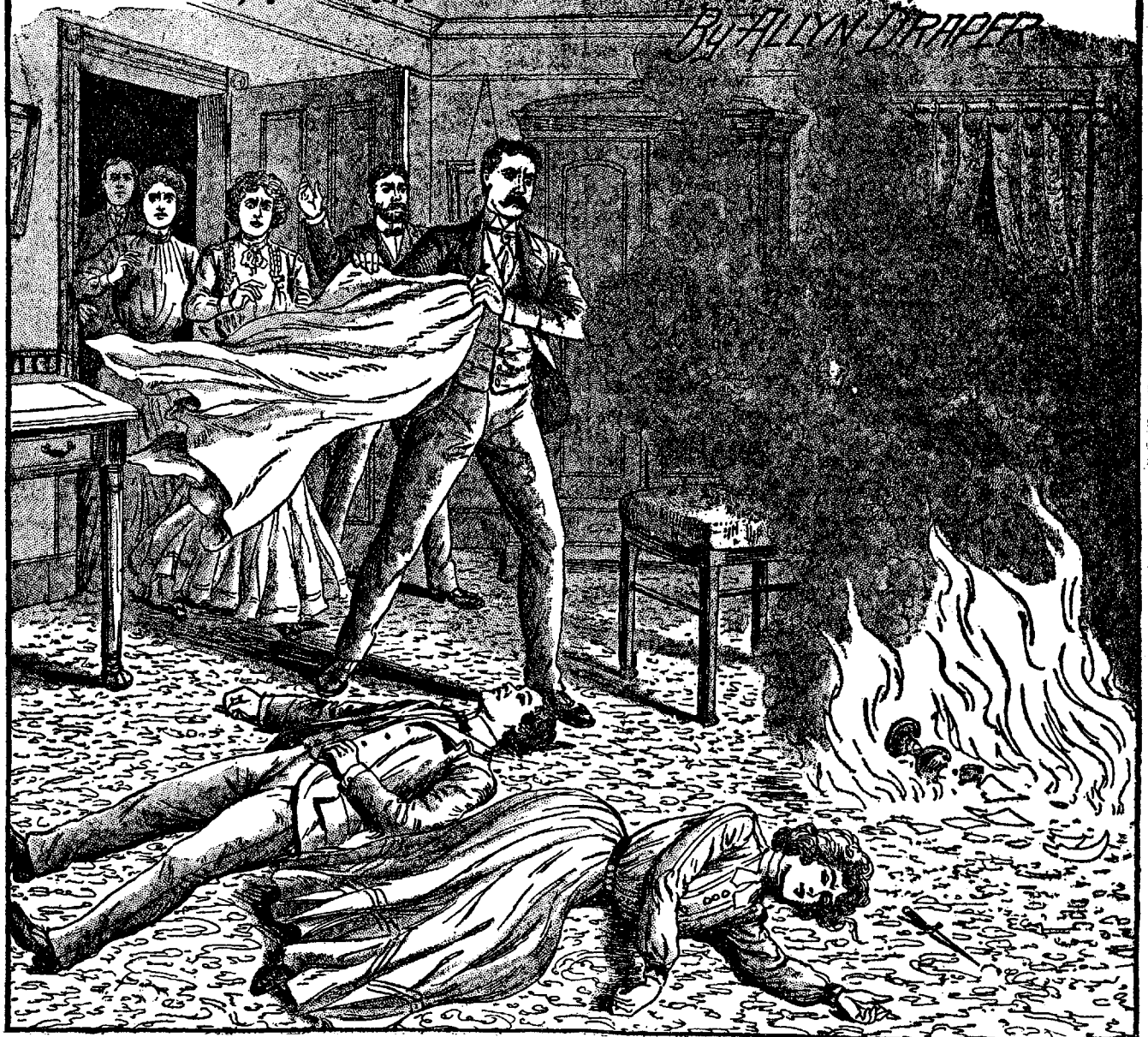
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