

SECRET SERVICE

OLD AND YOUNG KING BRADY, DETECTIVES.

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

No. 291.

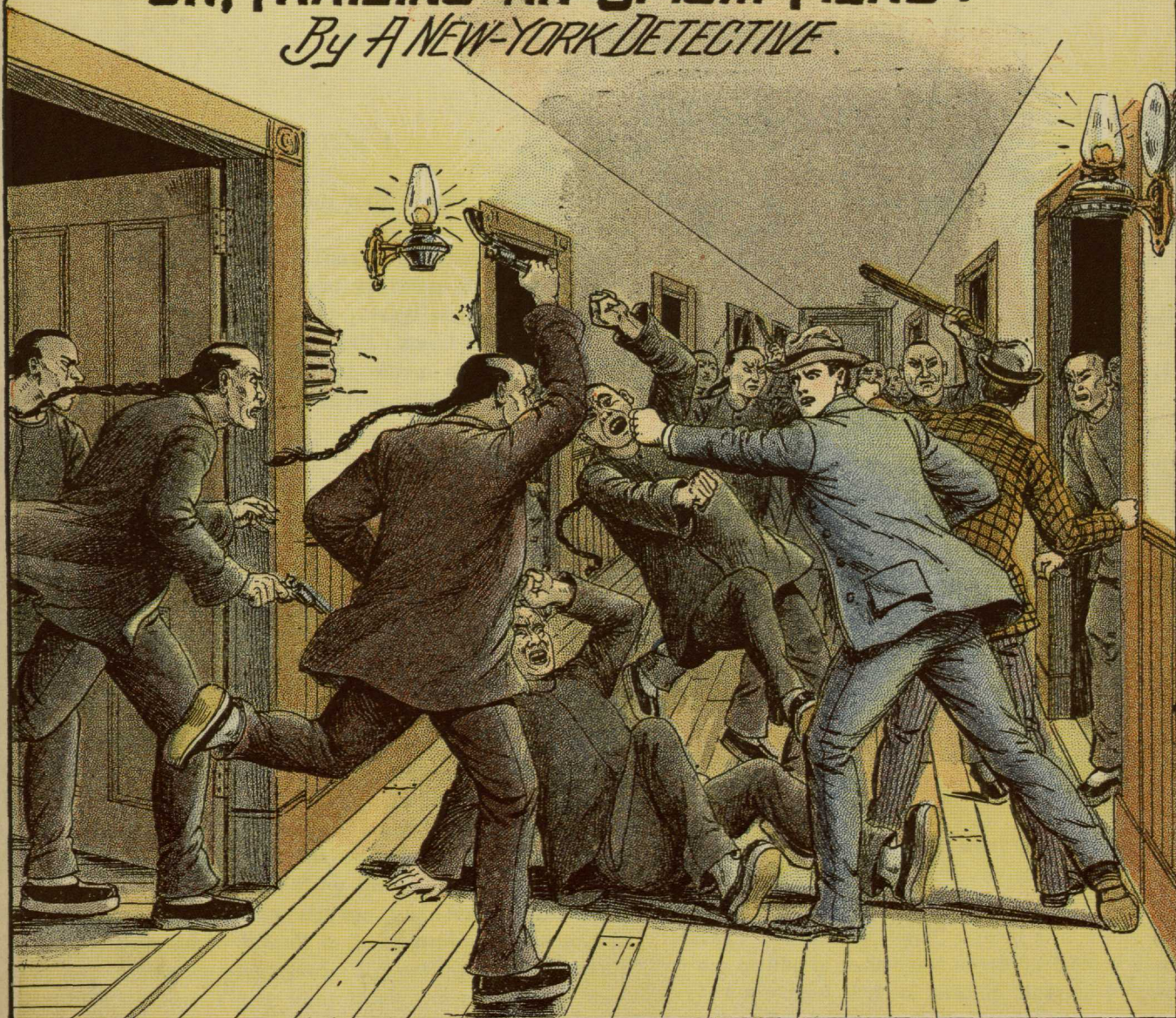
NEW YORK, AUGUST 19, 1904.

Price 5 Cents.

THE BRADYS' TRIP TO CHINATOWN;

OR, TRAILING AN OPIUM FIEND.

By A NEW-YORK DETECTIVE.



In an instant the hall was swarming with Chinamen. Every one had a big revolver, and they crowded about the young detective and his companion and headed them off in their retreat. "Highbinders!" gasped Harry.

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CHAPTER I.

A MIDNIGHT CALL WHICH TOOK A STRANGE TURN.

"This must be the place, Harry," remarked the old gentleman as the automobile drew up before the door of one of the handsomest of the many palatial mansions on upper Fifth Avenue, New York, opposite Central Park.

"Evidently it is," replied the young, well-groomed fellow who occupied the seat with him. "The chaffeur knows his business, of course."

Mr. Chaffeur had stopped the auto now and the pair stepped out.

"This is Mr. Merrilove's," he said, pointing to the house. "As you are expected you have nothing to do but to ring the bell. I don't like to leave the machine."

"That is all right," replied the old gentleman, and accompanied by his companion he ascended the steps.

The old gentleman's dress was somewhat peculiar.

He wore a long blue coat of antique cut with brass buttons in the style of sixty years ago.

A high stand-up collar and an old-fashioned stock matched the coat very closely. A high crowned white felt hat with an unusually broad brim put the finishing touches to his appearance, all combining to make him a marked man.

And, indeed, such was the case, for the old gentleman was none other than Old King Brady, the best-known detective in America, whose fame has of late become so extended that it would be difficult to find a professional criminal in any city in the country who had not heard of the man.

With him was Young King Brady, his partner and pupil—Harry, as he is named.

It was midnight, and the great detectives had been summoned from their house on Washington Square to attend

Mr. Marcus Merrilove, a young man but just over his majority, whose millions ran up high if rumor had it right.

All New York knew Marcus Merrilove.

His father, from whom he had inherited his great wealth, had been one of the railroad kings of twenty years ago, who, dying when his only son and heir was but a boy, had left him all he possessed.

From time to time the papers had noted the progress of young Merrilove's career.

When he came into his property there was a great stir in society, as he was a great catch for any girl.

All of this class were disappointed, however, for the following June the young multimillionaire astonished everyone by publicly marrying one "Madame Florabella," the leading danseuse of the reigning comic opera sensation.

The wedding had been one of the most elaborate affairs of its kind that New York had ever witnessed, and the happy couple had cut a wide swath at Newport during the summer.

But the summer was now over; this was October, and now the Bradys were ringing Mr. Marcus Merrilove's bell by request.

It looked a little—just a little—as if the famous Merrilove marriage had not turned out to be altogether a success.

"What do you suppose he can want to see us for, Governor?" asked Harry, as they stood waiting a response to the old detective's ring.

"Haven't the faintest idea," replied Old King Brady. "You are at liberty to imagine anything from a diamond robbery to a request that we look up Madame Florabella's lost poodle. But here comes someone. Now we shall soon know."

The door was opened by a stately butler, who upon receiv-

ing the name at once showed the detectives into an elegantly furnished library.

Mr. Merrilove will attend at once, gentlemen," he said.

He eyed the Bradys curiously, and then bowed and withdrew.

In a few moments a young man of pleasing appearance and athletic build entered.

He was a decidedly good-looking fellow, yet there was a look of intense melancholy upon his handsome face.

"Gentlemen, I thank you for your promptness," he said, after having carefully closed and fastened the door behind him. "You received my letter of yesterday, of course."

"Certainly. That is why we are here," Old King Brady replied. "Your letter requested that we hold ourselves in readiness for a midnight call."

"Exactly. I did not anticipate it would come so soon, however. Be seated, please. What I have to say will occupy but a few moments."

"Take your time," said Old King Brady. "I judge you are in trouble. Nothing will be gained by haste."

"And yet time may be precious to us, as you will understand when I have told my story. You have read of my wedding last June, Mr. Brady. You are aware that I married a ballet dancer, I presume."

"I know just as much as the public generally know of your private affairs, Mr. Merrilove, and no more."

"Exactly; and no doubt you think me as big a fool as the public generally regards me. But I want to prefix my story by stating that I married my wife because I loved her, and that I still love her, in spite of the terrible trouble she has brought upon me. I believe her to be in the hands of desperately bad people, from whom she is unable to break away. I believe that she loves me and that personally she is as good and pure as I believe her to be; in short——"

Here Marcus Merrilove, overcome by his emotions, broke down and shed tears.

As he sat there in the midst of his elegant surroundings he looked the picture of despair.

Old King Brady promptly came to the rescue.

"My boy," he said, "for you are nothing but a boy to me, you want to brace right up. If what you believe is true then you owe it to your wife to be manly and firm, and help her in her trouble. If, on the contrary, you are unfortunately mistaken, and Mrs. Merrilove is not worthy of the love and confidence you repose in her, why, the sooner you know it the better for all concerned."

"Yes," replied Marcus—such was his boyish appearance that we propose to call him by his first name—"that is just the way I reason the matter out. "And yet I have nobody but myself to blame. Inez—that's my wife—warned me when I first became infatuated with her. Three times she refused me, but I persisted. She told me that I would find myself up against it, just as I have. It has all come out true."

"And what is the trouble?" inquired Old King Brady, in the same kindly tone.

"It arises from the mysterious absences of my wife, Mr.

Brady. She has repeatedly left our home at night, and remained absent for a length of time varying from five or six hours to two or three days. She departs with no other warning than suddenly informing me that she must go, and she comes back when she gets ready, looking like a shadow, and often remains in bed for a considerable time afterward. As I stated, she warned me before our marriage that she would be obliged to go away thus. She made me solemnly swear never to make any allusion to the matter, and I have kept my word; but it has been hard—terribly hard—and I feel that I can endure it no longer. I must know where she goes, and why. I cannot play the spy upon her myself, and so—and so——"

"And so you want us to do it for you," said Old King Brady, finishing the sentence that Marcus seemed unable to complete."

"That's it."

"Well, we are willing now to get down to details."

"There are none, Mr. Brady."

"It may seem so to you, but not to us. Answer my questions, please."

"Anything I can tell you I will. You have been highly recommended to me, and I have determined to put myself in your hands."

"Very good. Mrs. Merrilove has gone out to-night?"

"Yes."

"State the circumstances under which she left the house."

"Well, I wanted her to go to the opera with me, but she declined. She said she had a headache and intended to retire early. She did not seem to care for my society—it is always so just before she makes one of these trips—so I went to my billiard room and was amusing myself as well as I could, knocking the balls about, when she suddenly entered dressed for the street, in the plainest garments she owns and informed me that she was going out. I kissed her good-night, and saw her in the hired coupe which she always uses when she takes these trips, and that is the last I saw of her, and the last I may see of her for two or three days."

"Or she may be back to-night?"

"Not to-night. She may turn up in the morning. She never yet came back the same night."

"Does she return in the coupe?"

"Never. Always on foot."

"And the servants, I presume, have commented upon all this?"

"I presume they do among themselves. She never makes any secret of her comings and goings. What do you suppose it can all mean, Mr. Brady? Where do you suppose she can have gone?"

"My dear sir, one can imagine anything in a case like this. What we want to get at is the truth."

"That's just it."

"What hour did she leave?"

"About half-past eleven. I sent the auto to your house at once, as I said I would do in my letter."

"Very well. We will take the matter right in hand."

"There is nothing that can be done to-night, I suppose?"

"I am not sure of that. I have not got through with my questions yet."

"Very well; go on."

"How about Mrs. Merrilove's jewels? She has a good supply of them, I suppose?"

"Mrs. Merrilove's jewels would sell for over two hundred thousand dollars at auction, Mr. Brady."

"What style of jewelry does she select for these trips?"

"None at all. She never wears any."

"Where are her jewels at the present time?"

"The greater portion of them are in her private box in the safe deposit company, the remainder are in a small safe in her bedroom."

"Have you the combination to the safe?"

"Oh, yes, I believe I have it written down somewhere, but I could not think of opening the safe. I never intrude upon Mrs. Merrilove's private affairs. That was the bargain before we married. She has her suite of rooms and I have mine adjoining. She does exactly as she pleases in everything."

"So I see; still, if we are to take the case you must place yourself entirely in my hands and do exactly as I say."

"And you insist upon seeing the jewels in the safe?"

"I do."

"Then I must yield, for I am determined to learn the truth. By the way, I have a confession to make."

"One moment. About this coupe. How is it summoned—from a livery stable by telephone?"

"Yes; that concerns my confession."

"Very good. Confess."

"I went as far as the livery stable to-night in my auto when it started for your house. I left a note for the coupe driver asking him to call here on his return. In the note I mentioned that it would be worth a hundred dollars for him to do so."

"Ah, I see! You have already begun the detective work."

"I thought you would probably want to talk with the man."

"I shall be glad of the chance. Now for the safe."

"Follow me, please, gentlemen," said Marcus, and the Bradys arose and passed out into the hall.

At the same instant a key was heard entering the night latch of the front door.

"Heavens! What does this mean?" exclaimed Marcus. "Nobody has a key to that latch except Mrs. Merrilove and myself."

The words were scarcely uttered when the door opened and a woman dressed almost entirely in black walked in.

"Inez!" cried Marcus darting forward.

The woman threw aside a veil which almost concealed her features, and waved him back.

"Stop!" she cried. "You have broken our agreement. You have brought detectives into this house. I know them! They are the Bradys! Choose between them and me!"

CHAPTER II.

THE FIRST CLEW.

It was a most embarrassing situation for the Bradys.

Harry hardly knew how to act, but Old King Brady, whose experience covers almost any emergency possible, was quite equal to the occasion.

"Your wife, Mr. Merrilove?" he said, bowing to the lady.

"My wife."

"Evidently she does not understand the case. Madam, permit me to explain."

"You can explain nothing to me," said Mrs. Merrilove, frigidly. "I am talking to my husband, sir."

"You are talking at cross purposes. We called here to give your husband a bit of secret information regarding certain securities in which he is interested. Evidently you seem to imagine that our business with him concerns yourself. Good-evening, Mr. Merrilove. If you will call at my office to-morrow we will continue our conversation if you wish to continue it, although as a matter of fact there is nothing further to say."

Marcus was dumb.

The lady started to make some answer, but checked herself.

Without another word the Bradys withdrew.

There was a coupe at the door, and the driver looked at the detectives in a half-frightened way.

As we have mentioned before, everybody knows the Bradys.

Evidently this coupe driver was no exception.

"She came back as she went, in the coupe," whispered Harry.

"Wait," said the old detective. He walked right up to the man.

"You know me, driver?" he asked.

"You are Old King Brady."

"Exactly. Mr. Merrilove sent for you."

"Yes, boss. That's why I came, but——"

"Did you bring the lady back?"

"No."

"You came because you received Mr. Merrilove's note?"

"Yes, boss."

"Very well. He cannot see you to-night. We will ride with you."

"But——"

"We will ride with you, and you are to take us where you took the lady," said the old detective, sternly.

He threw open the door and entered the coupe with Harry.

The driver immediately started his horse down the avenue.

"Is this a safe move, Governor?" Harry asked.

"Perfectly," was the cool reply. "A client of mine was robbed in this fellow's cab two years ago. I have had deal-

ings with the man before. But for me he would now be in Sing Sing. If I chose to open my mouth he might find himself there yet."

"That alters the case. Well, what do you think of it all?"

"Why, Harry, I couldn't begin to judge in a case like this. It is certainly mysterious enough."

"The woman seems to have been tipped off about our coming."

"Tipped off about the letter her husband wrote us more likely. She thought she would throw a bluff at him, and she has succeeded. I'm sincerely sorry for the poor fellow. He is up against it good and hard."

"Do you know anything about the woman?"

"Nothing. She came up in the theatrical world since my time."

"Well, that is the advantage of having a youthful partner. I happen to know that she had a husband before this one."

"She was known as Madam Florabella. Very likely Merrilove knows that, too."

"He may."

"Who was her husband?"

"French Louis, the confidence man."

"He is dead?"

"So it was reported. I doubt it."

"And why?"

"Because I saw a fellow most marvellously like him on Broadway the other day."

"Pshaw! His kind look so much alike. Do you want to swear that it was French Louis?"

"No."

"Then post yourself or drop it. Who told you that this Frenchman was the husband of La Florabella?"

"Oh, that was common rumor."

"Which goes for nothing. But our man is stopping."

"Third Avenue and 59th street," said Harry, looking out of the window.

The Bradys alighted.

"Is this the place where you brought the lady?" Old King Brady asked.

"It is, boss."

"She left your coupe here?"

"Yes, boss."

"Do you bring her here every time you drive her out?"

"I never brought her here before, Mr. Brady. She always goes to a different place."

"Yes, yes! And what did she do after she left?"

"Went up to the elevated station, same as she always does."

"And that is all you know about her movements?"

"Every blessed thing. I swear it, Mr. Brady."

"All right. That's enough."

"Hold on," said the driver. "The letter said something about a hundred dollars."

"I didn't write the letter," snapped Old King Brady.

"Go to the man who did."

The Bradys then took the elevated and went downtown, crossing at Eighth street to their home.

"We have been well fooled to-night," remarked Harry. "We have had our labor for our pains."

"Don't you believe it," replied the old detective. "That boy is an honorable, big-hearted fellow. He will do the right thing. We shall surely hear more of this mysterious case."

The next the Bradys heard of it came in the form of a letter received the following morning.

As Old King Brady opened it a check for \$500 dropped out.

The letter read as follows:

"Dear Mr. Brady.—Owing to the unexpected turn my affairs have taken, I think it best to drop the matter for the present. I enclose what seems to me a liberal compensation for your trouble.

"Thanking you for your promptness in responding to my request, I am, yours truly,
M. Merrilove."

"There! You see," exclaimed Old King Brady. "It is as I told you. For the present the deal is off, but we shall hear from the husband again, surest thing."

"What made you ask to look at that woman's jewels?" demanded Harry.

"Don't know," replied Old King Brady. "The thought came into my head, that's all."

And so the matter ended for the time being.

Next day the Bradys received a call from the Far West. They were gone a month and on their return they found a note from Marcus Merrilove awaiting them.

It merely asked that he be informed of their return, as he wished to see them.

Old King Brady promptly telephoned the Merrilove mansion.

The butler answered the call.

He stated that Mr. Merrilove was away, and had gone without leaving any other address than his Wall street banker's.

"Perhaps Mrs. Merrilove can tell where he is," replied the detective. "It is very important that I should see him as soon as possible."

This was merely a bait.

It brought immediate returns.

"Mrs. Merrilove has been away for three weeks," answered the butler. "She went before Mr. Merrilove. The house is closed."

"The Merriloves have evidently been having an interesting time of it," said the old detective in repeating the answer to Harry. "We shall have to wait until something turns up."

It turned up that day week.

Arriving at his office one morning Old King Brady found Marcus Merrilove waiting in the passage.

The young millionaire was carelessly dressed, and his face wore a gaunt and haggard look.

"Ah, good-morning," he said. "You see I am back to the Bradys with my troubles."

"It is a good place to come," replied Old King Brady. "Walk in."

"Your partner is not here?" said Marcus, dropping into a chair.

"No; he is busy on a case which he expects to finish up to-day."

"Is it a matter of importance?"

"On the contrary, it is a matter of little importance."

"You are busy, too?"

"No."

"You can take up that matter of mine?"

"I see no reason why I should not. Things are no better?"

"They are a great deal worse."

"Your face shows it. You have been drinking heavily of late."

Marcus turned red.

"You are very blunt, Mr. Brady," he said.

"I am an old man. I would give you a warning word."

"Well, I need it. I shall go to the dogs entirely unless something is done. The whole wretched business is bound to come out, and I never can stand it. If it does I shall put a bullet into my head."

"Nonsense! You are no such fool. Even if it comes to divorce, what then? Others try that remedy and seem to get along very well."

"Not for me. But never mind all that. I want your help. Mrs. M. is gone again."

"She has been gone some time?"

"How did you know?"

"Telephoned your butler yesterday, and was so informed."

"We are supposed to be traveling together, but I haven't left New York, Mr. Brady. I have been wandering about in my old clothes trying to learn something of Inez. I have slept in all kinds of queer places. I—well, I'm making too much of it. It is enough to say that I never knew what New York was till now."

"New York is a very remarkable city, Mr. Merrilove," said Old King Brady, gravely. "Very few do know it, although many think they do; but now let us come down to business. Tell me all that has happened in the matter since our visit to your house."

"Well," said Marcus, "the affair was patched up that night. She accepted your explanation, and for a week or so things went on as usual. Then Mrs. M. disappeared for two days."

"In the same way?"

"Just the same."

"And then?"

"She returned and was sick for three or four days. At the end of the week she went out again and I have not heard of her since."

"This is very serious. What did you do?"

"Wrote you and called here first of all. When I found you were away I started in to see what I could do my-

self. I have been almost crazy. I shall do something desperate if this business isn't settled soon."

"Do you think she can be dead?"

"That is what worries me. She may have been seized with one of her sick spells while away, and died. Just the same she was alive the middle of last week."

"How do you know that?"

"I saw her walking down the Bowery from the window of an elevated train."

"Sure?"

"I could swear to it. I left the train at Grand street, and hurried back to see if I could find her, but it was no use."

"How did she look?"

"Much as usual as near as I could see. I didn't get a good look at her. Her clothes were shabby, though."

"So are yours."

"I know it! I never was used to taking care of my own clothes. I don't know what my valet would think if he could see me now! It is so very strange, Mr. Brady. Here am I worth millions of dollars, and I am wandering about New York like a tramp, and my wife going about the same way."

"It is certainly very remarkable. Now, as I understand it, you want me to take right hold of the case."

"As soon as possible."

"Well, that means now. I am at your service."

"What is to be our first move?"

"Have you a key to Mrs. Merrilove's box in the safe-deposit vault?"

"No, it is in her own name."

"That is unfortunate. I would like much to see the inside of that box."

"I don't see how it can be arranged."

"It can't be without making a stir. We will take up the case where we laid it down. You shall open the little safe in Mrs. Merrilove's room."

"I did that after she left."

"Her jewels were all safely there?"

"Of course, I have no means of knowing what she put there, but there were a great many expensive pieces of jewelry in the safe."

"I would like to see them."

"And you shall. Call this evening."

"Why not now, instead of losing another day?"

"I want to get cleaned up. I am ashamed to return home as I am."

"As you will."

"I'll go! My valet shall take me in hand. I don't care what the servants think."

"Very well. We will start at once."

They went uptown on the Third Avenue elevated, and crossed over to the Merrilove mansion.

The butler stared hard when he met his master in the hall—he came running upstairs when he heard the latch-key enter the lock—but he was too well-trained a servant to express any surprise.

"I'm back again, Burns," said Marcus. "Is there any news?"

"None, sir."

"I understood from Mrs. Merrilove's last letter that she would reach town before me. Has she arrived?"

"She has not, sir. I have not seen Mrs. Merrilove since you went away."

"Very good. Have a bottle of Roderer sent up to my room. I have particular business with this gentleman. We shall remain there for a while."

Burns bowed and withdrew.

Marcus now led the way to the sumptuous apartments on the floor above.

"This is my wife's room," he said, opening a door and ushering Old King Brady into the front chamber. "Wait till I can get outside a glass of champagne and we will tackle the safe."

The wine made its appearance in a moment, but Old King Brady declined it. He was anxious to get down to work.

"May I ask why you are so anxious about these jewels?" inquired Marcus.

"I couldn't tell you," replied the detective. "It was merely an idea. I always act upon my ideas."

"We will see what comes of this, then," said Marcus, and he proceeded to open the safe, producing the drawer which contained the jewelry.

There were about ten pieces altogether.

With scarce an exception they were combination pieces, a large colored stone surrounded by small diamonds.

Old King Brady after looking them all over selected a sunburst pin with a huge ruby for the center piece.

"Did you buy this for Mrs. Merrilove?" he asked.

"I did," replied Marcus. "It was specially imported for me by Tiffany. It cost me over five thousand dollars."

"Indeed! You will be surprised when I tell that the center stone is false."

"That ruby! Never. That's where the value lies."

"It is false, Mr. Merrilove. Take this emerald breast-pin, now. How much did that cost?"

"Twenty-five hundred."

"The emerald is false and so is that sapphire ring. All three stones are doublets."

"But it can't be!"

"It is, young man. I know my business. I do not doubt that you paid for the real thing and got it. The stones have since been removed and doublets substituted."

"And the diamonds?"

"Are genuine. But what do they amount to? All are small stones."

"True. But what can it mean?"

"Oh, well," said Old King Brady. "It's the old story. You have been grossly deceived."

"Never!" cried Marcus. "My wife is as true as steel! Why should she do this thing? If she had asked me for hundred thousand dollars she would have got it and never a question asked."

"Can't help it," said Old King Brady. "Those stones are false, and that is our first clew."

CHAPTER III.

OLD KING BRADY MAKES A START ON THE MERRILOVE CASE.

Seated in Marcus Merrilove's bedroom Old King Brady, having listened patiently to a long description of the absent Mrs. Merrilove's virtues, took up the ball again.

"Now, let us look this matter squarely in the face," he said. "I take those pieces of jewelry. Such rubies and emeralds don't float around the New York market very long without attracting the attention of someone. They are bound to shed light on this mystery. Will you place them in my hands?"

"Certainly," replied Marcus. "You have them, keep them as long as you wish."

"Very good. Now I'm going to ask you a leading question. Did you ever suspect your wife of smoking opium?"

"Never!"

"You are aware that many professional people are addicted to the pipe?"

"Yes. I have heard so."

"It is a habit which once acquired is almost never relinquished. Allow me to look over such photographs of your wife as you have."

"I have a great many of them. I have her album in which all her professional pictures are kept."

"Let me see it."

The album was produced and Old King Brady studied the photographs for a long time, also others of later date.

"Well, what do you see in her face?" demanded the infatuated Marcus. "Isn't she a beautiful woman?"

"She certainly is."

"Do you see anything to make you suspect that she is an opium fiend? That is what you are looking for, of course."

"To be frank with you, I see much in her earlier pictures to confirm my suspicions. In those taken since her marriage I see nothing at all."

"What, for instance?"

"It would be hard to explain to you, and could do no good, for it may be only my imagination. Now, Mr. Merrilove, I will suggest that you take a trip to Chinatown tonight with the Bradys. Not that I expect to find your wife there, but we may meet others who formerly knew her. Ah! Someone calling on your telephone. It may be my partner. I left word at the office that I was coming here."

Marcus answered the call and reported Harry at the phone.

Old King Brady immediately started in to talk with him.

The first part of the conversation was not intelligible to Marcus, for Old King Brady merely said yes and no.

Suddenly he called:

"Go to Tourgenet on John street. Tell him I sent you. Ask him what he knows about any extra large ruby or emerald having been offered for sale on the New York market during the past six months. Be as quick as you can, and call me up here."

"I see you are not losing any time in working up your first clew, Mr. Brady," remarked Marcus, with a faint smile.

"There is no time to be lost. The boy is downtown, he can find out in a few minutes."

And, indeed, within fifteen minutes Harry called up. His report was brief.

A large ruby had been offered to Tourgenet himself about three months before. The person who brought it to him was a queenly looking woman in black, wearing a heavy veil. Thinking her manner suspicious he refused to purchase, but he had since seen the stone in the hands of another wholesale jeweler who informed him that he had bought an emerald of unusual size, also a large sapphire of the same woman later on.

This information Old King Brady communicated to Marcus without comment of any sort.

It was some minutes before the infatuated young man could trust himself to speak.

"This would seem to leave no doubt that Mrs. Merrilove has been guilty of stealing her own jewels, Mr. Brady," he then said.

"I never had any doubt of it," replied the detective, quietly.

"But why should she do such a thing when all she had to do was to ask me for the cash to get it up to any amount?"

"Heavens, man! How little you know about women! There can be no question that Mrs. Merrilove has been paying blackmail to someone right along. Do you imagine for a moment that she was going to come to you continually for cash to meet the demands of those who were bleeding her?"

"She would have got it."

"She is not the woman to ask it, evidently, and for that she is to be respected. I tell you I respect her, for she could have robbed you right and left if she had chosen. It is my opinion that the reason she left your house was to prevent you from being robbed further."

Marcus sprang up and seized Old King Brady's hand.

"Bless you for those words, Brady!" he cried. "I never looked at it in this light. My eyes are just beginning to be opened. Oh, how blind I have been!"

"It is your ignorance, if you will allow me to say so," replied the detective kindly. "But that you can't help. A rich man's son is at a terrible disadvantage in the battle of life. Everybody deceives him, everybody lies to him, everybody tries to smooth his path and make him believe that life is a bed of roses, when in reality it is no such thing. Your wife warned you repeatedly what you would have to expect if you married her, but you wouldn't listen. I have no doubt the poor woman has tried to do the best she could."

"You relieve my mind immensely," said Marcus. "Now, I am more determined than ever to find her. What is to be done?"

"Summon your valet, clean yourself up, take a good sleep. To-night put on your oldest clothes, pick out those which are likely to attract the least attention, and meet my partner at our office at eight o'clock. He will tell you what to do."

"But aren't you to be with us, Mr. Brady?"

"I shall not be with you, and yet I shall not be far away. Now I leave you for the present."

"Do me one favor, Mr. Brady."

"Certainly. What is it?"

"See if you can't buy back those gems. I give you carte blanche for any amount."

"Never think of it! Never mention the matter if you are fortunate enough to get your wife back again."

"Perhaps you are right."

"Of course I am right. Now good-morning. Rest assured that I shall turn up again at the right time."

Old King Brady now left the Merrilove mansion and hurried over to the west side, where on a certain street which must be nameless he rang the bell of a shabby old brownstone mansion which stood among others of its kind in the middle of a block principally given up to factories and tenements.

It was a neighborhood which had once been inhabited by some of the most respectable of the old families of New York, but now far gone on the road to that great change which has come over so many of the west side streets.

His ring was answered by a young darky who held the door on the chain.

"Who you want to see, boss?" he demanded. "Dis am a private residence, dis am. No strangers hain't allowed."

"I am no stranger to Madam Berger," said the detective. "Here is my card. Tell her I want to speak with her on business. Ask her not to keep me waiting, please."

The darky glanced at the card and threw open the door.

"Yo' can come in," he said. "I reckon madam will see yo'!"

He ushered the detective into a shabby reception-room, and withdrew.

The first thing Old King Brady did was to throw up the window.

"Pah! How this place reeks with the stale fumes of opium!" he muttered. "How can they stand it? I should think it would turn their own stomachs, but I suppose they are proof against all that sort of thing."

He had scarcely seated himself when a tall woman, wearing a pink kimono and having her hair done up in curl papers, came sailing into the room.

She must have been fifty years of age at least, and her face still bore some traces of former beauty, although sadly altered by age.

A faint smile overspread her features as she extended her hand to the old detective and called him by name.

"Well, Edith, and how do you find yourself in these days?" inquired Old King Brady, shaking hands.

"Only so so, Brady. Like yourself, I'm getting no younger. I'm alive, that's about all."

"And how is business?"

"Bad; very bad. My joint is a back number. Those who don't smoke in the Chinatown joints go to the more fashionable places further uptown."

"Such is life, Edith; we have either got to keep up with the times or fall behind in the race, one of the two."

"That's what's the matter. But now, Brady, what brought you here? Looking for someone? I'm afraid you will be disappointed. Only a few old timers come here nowadays."

"This is the party," replied Old King Brady, producing the photograph of a beautiful woman.

It was one of Mrs. Merrilove's pictures which the old detective had managed to slip into his pocket unobserved.

Madam Berger studied the face attentively.

"Don't know her," she said. "She never comes here."

"You don't surprise me."

"Who is she, Brady?"

"Since you don't know her I prefer not to tell. This was one of my errands, but I have another. What do you know about French Louis in these days?"

"Louis! Oh, I see him once in awhile."

"He is alive then?"

"Sure he's alive."

"It was given out that he was dead."

"Oh, I know. He started that yarn himself for reasons of his own, but there was no truth in it."

"And his wife, what's become of her?"

"His wife! Let me see, she was an actress, wasn't she?"

"Ballet dancer."

"Oh, yes, I forget her name."

"She performed under the name of Madam Florabella."

"What! The woman who married that Fifth Avenue millionaire?"

"Did she marry a millionaire? You must be mixed, or maybe she got a divorce from Louis."

"Perhaps I have got her mixed in my mind with someone else. Anyhow, I don't know her. But what about Louis?"

"I wanted to ask him a question if I could put my finger on him. Perhaps you could give me the tip where I'd be likely to find him?"

"I can't. He seldom does business now. You see green goods have got to be so risky, and the old bunco game is all played out."

"Don't he ever drop in here for a smoke?"

"Oh, yes, once in a while; but you might wait a month and not see him."

"That won't suit me at all, Edith. I want to see him to-night. I tell you on my word it's straight goods. I have no knife up my sleeve for Louis, but I have a twenty-dollar note to exchange for a straight tip as to where I can find him."

"Honestly, Brady, I don't know where you will be sure to

find him. I heard him say he smoked in Mo Lee's on Pell street once in a while."

"All right. I can try Mo Lee's. Does he ever smoke at Moy Toy's?"

"I never heard him say so."

"Very good, Edith. There's your twenty for luck. If Louis should happen to drop in here tell him I was asking for him and just mention that it will pay him to drop into my office if you will be so good."

"All right, Brady. I'll do it; much obliged."

Old King Brady then withdrew.

"It's too bad," he thought as he hurried down the street.

"If I could only have put my finger on that man something might have come of it."

He felt perfect confidence that Madam Berger had not deceived him.

The keeper of this old-time opium joint was well known to the detective, and was under deep obligations to him.

There is no one so difficult to locate as a professional confidence man, who has reasons of his own for keeping out of the way.

Old King Brady knew that his only hope of finding French Louis lay in making a trip to Chinatown.

"Can it be possible that Mrs. Merrilove would dare to marry that young money king if she was actually the wife of French Louis?" the detective asked himself.

He could scarcely believe it, and yet it might be so.

But Old King Brady had now accomplished all he had set out to do on the Merrilove case, during the day, so he went about other business, feeling that in proving that Mrs. Merrilove had been selling her jewels he had made a start, if nothing more.

CHAPTER IV.

THE BRADYS STRIKE IN AMONG THE CHINKS.

At eight o'clock that evening Marcus Merrilove entered the office of the Bradys prepared to join the detectives in their trip to Chinatown.

We say "detectives," for although Old King Brady was not in evidence he proposed to take in the hop joints, too.

It was his intention to let Harry work openly, while his work was to be done secretly, and on the side.

Young King Brady, who had been fully posted by his chief, received Marcus in his usual genial fashion.

"You don't want to worry your head about anything to-night," he said. "I will attend to it all; you have nothing to do but to keep your eyes open, and we shall see what we strike."

"Has Mr. Brady done anything more in my matter since he left me this morning?" Marcus asked.

"I believe not."

"Can you give me the description of the woman who sold those gems on John street just as it was given to you?"

"Certainly," replied Harry, and he gave it in detail.

"Do you think it fits your wife?" he asked.

"Unfortunately, yes."

"Still, someone may have personated her."

"Old King Brady does not think so. He feels sure that she sold the gems herself."

"What we want is to find your wife; that's the first thing to be done. If we are lucky enough to succeed in that leave me to put the question to her. She will soon explain."

"She never will."

"Don't worry. We detectives have all sorts of ways of getting at these things which people generally can't understand."

"Have I got to smoke opium in those horrible Chinese joints?"

"Why, certainly not. I have been going in and out among them for several years. I never smoke the stuff myself, and I am sure I would not allow anyone in whom I felt an interest to do so if I could prevent it. You may have to pretend to smoke, but as long as you don't inhale the smoke it can do you no harm. Suppose we have a preliminary smoke now? Here is an excellent cigar. I don't care to start mine before o'clock; in the meanwhile we will sit here and chat. If you have anything you want to tell me about Mrs. Merrilove now is a good time."

Marcus accepted the cigar, but he had nothing to tell.

While he was not willing to talk about anything else than his troubles, when it came to trying to pump him about his wife Harry made very little headway, and at last he gave it and announced himself ready to depart.

"Have you ever been through Chinatown?" he asked as he and Marcus walked together up Park Row.

"I have never been inside any of the houses. I have walked through the streets several times."

"Then this will be a new experience to you, and it cannot fail to be an interesting one."

"My interest in it all is too horrible. I am half mad with thinking about it. I cannot and will not believe that my wife is an opium fiend."

"Even if it is so, with all the money you have at your command, you ought to be able to cure her of the habit."

"How can it be cured? I have always understood that a cure was next to impossible."

"It is difficult but not impossible. Many have been cured."

"But how? What would you recommend?"

"You own a yacht, I suppose?"

"One of the finest in New York, if not in America—the Undine."

"I have heard of her."

"She is not in commission now. I have no use for yachts or anything else as long as this terrible cloud hangs over me."

"We are going to dissipate the cloud, rely upon that."

Since you ask my advice about this matter I should immediately have my yacht put into commission and take Mrs. Merrilove on a long cruise. I should engage the best physician I could find, and take him with me. Of course, if it is a bad case you will have trouble, but with everything that money can buy to help you it seems to me that you ought to win out in the end."

"If I could keep her away from it for a month or a year, yes. But here we are talking as though it was a settled fact that Mrs. Merrilove is an opium fiend, and that is something I don't admit. I never dreamed of such a thing till Old King Brady suggested it."

"Right; and it may not be true; but here we are at Doyers street. Have you a picture of your wife with you?"

"Yes. Old King Brady told me to bring one along, and I have it in my pocket."

"Then we will strike into Quong Lee's first. Quong is a great friend of Mr. Brady's, and anything he can do to help us he surely will."

Harry turned into the narrow crooked alley which leads off Chatham Square between Mott and Pell street.

Now at once they found themselves in Chinatown.

Slouching Celestials with their hands thrust up their sleeves went shuffling past them.

As they neared the Chinese theater an old white man wearing a long shabby coat with the collar turned up and a black soft hat pulled low down over his eyes crowded off the narrow sidewalk.

"Beg pardon," he grunted, and he turned upon them a face so begaunt and haggard that Marcus drew back with a shudder.

"Is that an opium fiend?" he asked.

"He looks very much like one," replied Harry, with an inward chuckle.

He had received a secret sign as the man shuffled by and he knew that the supposed opium fiend was nobody but Old King Brady in disguise.

"Heaven help him, and heaven help me!" muttered Marcus. "It is horrible—just horrible! To think of such people being associated with my wife. It makes me fairly sick."

"Brace up," said Harry. "You will soon get used to it. Have you much money about you?"

"Three or four hundred dollars."

"I am sorry. Old King Brady should have warned you to come with empty pockets. On no account let anyone know that you have this money. I pay for everything and we reckon up afterward—see?"

"I won't forget; but where are we going now?"

"This is Quong Lee's. You don't have to do any talking. Just follow me."

Young King Brady led the way down a flight of steps into Quong Lee's famous opium joint; now on Doyers street, but formerly on Chatham Square.

A middle-aged Chinaman with haggard yellow face sat on a stool at the entrance, just inside the door.

He nodded sleepily to Harry, but did not speak.

Young King Brady walked through a long passage lined with unpainted boards, and rapped upon a door.

Immediately a little slide in the upper part of the door was opened, and an aged Chink with a pair of big, round, horn-rimmed spectacles peered out.

"Hello, Blady boy!" he croaked. "So you come?"

"I am here, Quong."

"Ole man say you come, yes. Dis de gent who gal get lost in Chinatown? He, he, he!"

Harry could see that Marcus was furious, but he was able to control himself, and did not speak.

"Come in," said Quong Lee, throwing open the door. "Few here yet. Too early time. Come after midnight, den plenty come in."

There were only two hop fiends in the dirty joint.

A row of wooden bunks built along the wall formed the principal feature of the place.

Each bunk was provided with a wooden headrest, and alongside of two of the lower ones were little Turkish stools, upon which were opium layouts.

In each of these bunks lay a man partially dressed.

The ghastly white faces were turned upward, and the eyes of both were closed—both were deep in the opium sleep.

In the middle of the room, standing on the floor, was a strangely shaped brass lamp of considerable size.

It was not lighted then, but later in the evening it would be, and then left to burn all night.

The atmosphere was sour and stifling, but this was nothing to what it would be in the wee small hours, when Quong Lee's place was always crowded with crooks, confidence men and thieves, for this was one of the most notorious of Chinatown's joints, and the one particular one which was never interfered with by the police.

"What does it all mean?" whispered Marcus, looking at the layout.

He did not intend that Quong Lee should hear, but the old hop-joint keeper's ears were as keen as needles.

"Me show you," he spoke up. "Me 'splain."

"Do it, Quong," said Harry, anxious to put the old Chink in good humor, although it was evident that Old King Brady had prepared the way for them.

"Belly vell den," said Quong, and he took up the bamboo opium pipe which lay on the tray alongside the unconscious man.

"Dlis yen tshung," he said, putting the pipe in his mouth. "Dat de pipe what smokee de hop. Dlis"—pointing to a queer little lamp—"yen dong. Makee fire. Big yen dong dere on floor. Light little yen dong by big yen dong—see? No lightee now. Nobody here. Dese fellers money allee gone. When dey vakee up me trow 'em out—see?"

He picked up a queerly shaped knife from the tray, and remarked:

"Dlis yen ngow. Scrapee ash outee pipe bowl—see?"

Dlis box yen she hop—puttee ash in. Sometimes bad hop fiend eatee ash. Dlat no good."

Quong Lee then went on to inform them that a long steel needle was used for impaling the opium pill and holding it in the light of the lamp.

A pair of scissors he called kiao tsien, and the lacquered tray upon which all these articles rested was yen poon.

Marcus' interest began to flag, while the garrulous old Chink chattered on.

"Now, Quong, look at the lady's picture," said Harry. "Tell me if you have ever seen her in your joint."

Marcus produced the photograph, and Quong Lee walked over to a bracket lamp, making a sign for Harry to follow.

"Stay where you are," said Young King Brady. "He wants to speak to me alone."

Quong Lee was pretending to study the photograph when Harry joined him.

"Lookee here, Blady boy," he whispered. "You blossom in here while ago and show me same ting. Me see dat woman many times, but it long while ago. You say she dat feller's gal? Me tellee you she French Louis' gal. Dlat right. She nebber come here now."

"What about Louis?"

"Me see him on de street. Me see him las' night. He hang out Hop Toy's sometime. Me tellee Old Kling Blady alle dlat. He say you go eatee chop suey. You showee him fantan. Makee tings pleasant. He give you de tip blime-by."

"All right, Quong. What name is the woman known by in Chinatown?"

"Big Alice, Blady."

"You are sure it is the same woman?"

"Cock sure. Oh, yair. Bettee you life."

"Is she a fiend?"

"You bettee. Smokee too muchee."

"Is she in with a gang?"

"Me not know. French Louis he nebber say nloting since he come from Sing Sing. Nodder woman used to travel with her. Look whole lot likee her. Mebbe her sister—yes?"

"I know nothing about that, Quong."

"Belly well, I lettee Old Kling Blady know so I hear anything sure popee. Yes."

"He has nothing to tell us," said Harry, when he handed back the photograph.

"I thought so," replied Marcus, triumphantly. "I was sure you were all on the wrong tack."

"You smokee, mlister?" inquired Quong, shuffling up.

"No, no!" replied Marcus, turning away in disgust.

Seeing that their work was all over in Quong Lee's, Harry hustled him out on Doyers street.

"Let's take in the Chinese theater," he said. "It is barely possible that we might accomplish something there. It is too early for the hop-joints yet."

"I'd like to see a game of fan-tan," said Marcus. "Suppose we take that in and leave the theater till later on."

I have been in one in San Francisco, but fantan I never saw."

"All right," replied Harry. "Fan-tan let it be."

He led the way through to Pell street, and turned in at a dirty doorway alongside a Chinese grocery.

As he did so he caught sight of Old King Brady in his disguise, talking to a queenly looking woman who was dressed in black and bore little resemblance to the usual run of white women seen in Chinatown.

At first Harry was going to call his companion's attention to the woman, but Old King Brady raised his hand and made a signal for him to attend to his own end of the affair.

Accordingly Harry took Marcus' arm and hurried him into the fan-tan joint.

CHAPTER V.

DICKY DABBS SOUNDS THE ALARM.

If any man living knows the ins and out of New York's Chinatown, Old King Brady is that man.

The keen old detective is also quite as well acquainted with the original Chinatown in San Francisco beside which the New York district is a mere baby.

And when it comes to the Chinese quarters of Boston, Philadelphia, and Chicago, Old King Brady is all there, too.

The old detective had been working hard for two or three hours before Harry and Marcus Merrilove hit Doyers street.

While it cannot be said that he had made very much headway, he still felt that he had learned enough to show him that he was on the right track.

"Quong Lee, Hop Toy, and Mo Lee—all keepers of hop-joints, had been interviewed in turn.

Each one declared that the picture resembled a woman who had frequented the joints with French Louis a year or more before, and who passed by the name of Big Alice.

Now it was this name which puzzled Old King Brady.

He had seen Inez Merrilove, and it seemed a stretch of imagination to call her big, for she was just an ordinary-sized woman and nothing more.

Now it happened that among the many—there are so very many—shady people with whom Old King Brady is more or less acquainted in New York there was a ballet girl who had once made her fame in comic opera, but who had long since fallen out of the profession, and was now married to the Chinese keeper of a fan-tan joint.

"Bertha Winn" was the name she now passed by—if we gave her true name it would be at once recognized.

Old King Brady's main object was to locate this woman, and he had just run into her on Pell street, after a long and unsuccessful search, when Harry came along.

"Isn't that your partner, Brady?" the woman asked.

"Yes," replied the detective. "He is at work on another

matter. What I want is a few moments' conversation with you."

"Then what's the matter with blowing me off to a little supper at Wing Fang's?" Bertha asked.

"Nothing at all if you wish it? What will Dock Sing have to say?" Bertha asked.

"Dock's in Boston. I'm a grass widow to-night. Come, I'm hungry. If you want to pump me you will have to pay for it. We can't talk in the street."

Nothing loath to get under cover, Old King Brady crossed over to Wing Fang's famous Chinese restaurant on the opposite side of Pell street.

Here he allowed Bertha to order an elaborate spread at his expense, and knowing the ways of her kind, the old detective waited patiently until she had nearly finished everything in sight before broaching the matter in hand.

Indeed, it was Bertha herself who opened the ball.

"Come, Brady," she said at last. "Why don't we get down to business. I understood you were going to pump me, but you have scarcely said a word."

"I'm ready."

"Then so am I."

"Big Alice, French Louis' former wife, is the person I have in mind."

"What about her?"

"You know her?"

"Very well."

"Seen her lately?"

"Not in a year."

"Is she alive or dead?"

Bertha gave the detective a shrewd look.

"Just as though you didn't know that she married old Merrilove's son under her stage name of Florabella," she replied.

"What!" cried Old King Brady, pretending to be greatly surprised.

"Oh, cheese it!" laughed Bertha. "You can't fool me."

"I'm afraid I am on the wrong track altogether," replied Old King Brady, with an air of concern. Just take a look at this photograph and tell me if you know the original."

Out came the photograph, and Bertha took a long look at it before she replied:

"Well, it looks like Alice, but I wouldn't want to swear to it."

"You are not sure you ever saw the original?"

"I can't say. Pictures are so deceiving. It certainly looks like Alice. I couldn't say any more."

"You disappoint me. I have particular reasons for wishing to prove who this woman really is."

"I can't help you, I'm afraid. You know very well that I would if I could."

"I am sure of that."

"If you would tell me the whole case perhaps it would give me what your detectives call a clew."

"Right. I haven't the least objection. I am looking for this woman, who has been missing for nearly a month. She

is married to a respectable man who is in great distress about her. Claws point to Chinatown. I have reason to believe that she is a hop fiend—that is about all I have to say."

"Her name?"

"Cannot be told."

"And it wouldn't do any good, of course."

"Of course not."

"Have you shown the picture to the joint keepers?"

"To nearly all."

"And what do they say?"

"Same as you—that the picture looks like this Big Alice. If I could see the woman she might be able to help me out, for I don't mind telling you that my party was formerly in the same line as yourself."

"A danseuse! The deuce you say! Let me look at the picture again. No, I can't make it out. It looks like Alice, that's all I can say."

"Haven't you seen Alice for a year? Come, honest now. There's money in this in case I succeed."

"Is the woman wanted by the police?"

"No, she isn't. By her husband, that's all."

"Well, then, I'll own up. Alice has been around lately. She smokes in the joints with Louis. I saw her in Mo Lee's not a week ago."

"Then Mo Lee lied to me, and I'll make it hot for him. Where does Louis hang out?"

"You mean in Chinatown?"

"Sure."

"He keeps a room on Mott street, Brady, a suite of rooms, in fact. There are four of his kind living there. I believe he has another room uptown."

"Then surely that is the place to look for his wife."

"Oh, Alice was divorced from him two years before she married."

"I don't know anything about that, and I don't care. If Big Alice has a double who smokes in the joints she will be pretty apt to know who she is and where she can be found. What's the matter with getting her and bringing her here?"

"I don't think she lives there, Brady. I surely should have seen her oftener than I have if that was the case."

"You know the place?"

"Yes."

"Do you mind making a try for it?"

"No, I suppose not, if the pay is all right. I don't propose to butt in for nothing. I tell you that straight."

"About what would be your idea of the value of the job?"

"Fifty."

"Done. Here's your cash. I'll wait here until you return."

"You swear she is not to be arrested?"

"I swear it."

"All right, then. I'll go. You will want to be patient. It may require some persuasion to get her to face you."

"All right. I leave it to you."

Bertha arose and left the restaurant.

Old King Brady was after her like a streak.

He had not asked the woman to what number on Mott street she was going, for he knew it would be useless. The only way to get her help was the way he had chosen.

Old King Brady shadowed her to Mott street, and saw her enter an old-fashioned brick house and ascend the stairs.

He lost no time then in getting back to the restaurant again.

Here he waited the best part of an hour.

At the end of that time Bertha returned.

She appeared a good deal agitated, and Old King Brady at once saw that she had something on her mind, although trying to conceal it."

"Well?" he demanded. "What's the word?"

"I don't know," replied the girl. "I can't understand it. That woman is not Big Alice. She is made up to look like her, though. I came near getting myself into trouble."

"How so?"

"Why, when I knocked at the door she opened it herself. She didn't know me."

"But you said——"

"No matter what I said: I said I had seen her within a week, but I wasn't speaking to her. We haven't been on speaking terms this long while. Alice knows me all right, but this girl didn't. I'm sure of it. I hardly knew what to say, and while I was trying to edge up to the business who should come in but Louis himself. He knew me and he has kept me there ever since."

"Then you did nothing?"

"Nothing but come away as quick as I could. I got afraid. She and Louis were making signs to each other, and he began asking me questions. What was I there for? Hadn't I quarreled with Alice? Had we made it up? If not why not, and what did I want, and all sorts of talk. I tell you I got scared."

"He called her Alice?"

"He did, sure."

"And you say she was not the woman you formerly knew as his wife?"

"I'll swear to it, and yet she looks just like her."

"And like the picture?"

"You'd think she was the same person."

"Was my name brought into the talk?"

"Sure not! Do you think I am a fool?"

"I don't. I think you handled the matter as shrewdly as you could have done. I am very much obliged to you. If you ever get into trouble and want help, why call on me."

"What are you going to do?"

"I am going around there to see for myself, if you'll show me the house."

"Sure I will, Brady. I wouldn't have done it if it had been Alice, in spite of our quarrel, but I don't know this woman, and she don't know me."

"And so Old King Brady was piloted to the brick house on Mott street, where he entered and Bertha stole away.

But the detective did not venture upstairs.

He knew that it would be useless to do so, for he could not identify the woman either as Big Alice or Mrs. Merrilove.

There was but one thing to do, and that was to find Marcus and Harry.

Then laying aside his disguise, Old King Brady proposed to force an entrance to French Louis' apartments, and leave Marcus Merrilove to do the identifying for himself.

"If the woman is his wife that ends it," thought the detective. "Ten chances to one it is so, and she has returned to her former husband. The boy may as well be undeceived first as last. There is no use in prolonging his agony."

So, as soon as Bertha was out of the way, Old King Brady ran down the steps and started to look up Harry.

This proved to be a difficult task.

To the old detective's disgust at the end of an hour he had found no trace of them, although he had visited almost every place of public resort in Chinatown.

He was just making for a certain fan-tan joint when suddenly a hand was laid upon his arm.

Old King Brady turned to find himself facing a character whom he knew but was always glad to avoid.

"Well, what do you want with me, young man?" he coldly asked.

"You are Old King Brady. Oh, I know you."

"Don't shout my name out so that all Chinatown can hear it, then! Come, come, Mr. Dabbs, if it's a strike for money name your price to cut away."

"But it isn't a strike for money this time, Mr. Brady. Harry is in danger. Mebbe he's killed?"

Old King Brady was all attention in a moment.

This fellow was known as Dicky Dabbs.

He was an old schoolmate of Harry's, and while nominally a reporter, was actually little better than a drunken bum.

Old King Brady detested him, and had ordered him out of his office on more than one occasion, for he was always after Harry for money, which it is needless to say was never returned.

"Speak out. Tell me what you have to say, quick!" the detective exclaimed.

"Why," said Dicky, "I was just coming down Mott street, and all at once I seen a window go up and a feller looked out and hollered for help. It was Harry. He seen me, and he hollers: 'Dicky! Dicky! Hey, Dicky! Find Old King Brady and send him here! He's somewhere in Chinatown. Find him, quick!'"

"The deuce! Where was this?"

"Right around on Mott street. I'll show you the house."

"Didn't he say what the matter was?"

"No, he didn't. He just hollered, and said what I told you."

"Then he didn't say anything about wanting help?"

"Why no, not in so many words, but that's what he meant, of course."

"It may not have been. He may have wanted me for

some other purpose, and seeing you passing, called down to you, for he knew I was in Chinatown to-night. Come, show me the house without delay."

Dicky led the way around to Mott street, for it was on Pell street that they had met.

Here he pointed out an upper window in an old-fashioned, red-brick house.

It was the house to which Bertha had taken the old detective.

"That's the room," said Dicky, "and I'll tell you something, Mr. Brady, that there is the holdout of French Louis, the confidence man, and a lot of others of his kind. It's as bad a gang as you can find in New York to-day."

"Confound the luck!" muttered Old King Brady. "Why couldn't the boy have kept quiet as I told him to do? But no! He had to go butting in, and like enough has spoiled the pie."

The windows were all dark on the floor indicated by Dicky Dabbs.

Around the basement entrance several Chinamen were standing.

They eyed the old detective sharply, and evidently did not like the way in which he stared up at the house.

"Come," said Old King Brady. "I'm going up there, and you may as well go with me if you want to earn a dollar."

"Sure I do, and sure I will," replied Dicky, promptly. "I'd do anything for Harry. You can say what you like about his not wanting help, Mr. Brady, but I tell you he was scared all right, and don't you make no mistake."

Followed by Dicky, Old King Brady ran up the rickety stairs and knocked loudly on the door.

CHAPTER VI.

TRAPPED IN CHINATOWN.

The fan-tan joint to which Young King Brady conducted Marcus was on Mott street, just before you come to Pell.

The proprietor was one Mow Wow, who was said to be a "Highbinder," that is, a member of the famous Chinese society of thugs.

To be a highbinder, while not considered altogether respectable by the Chinese of New York, is still recognized as a regular trade, and the members of this strange society are feared by all, for if one Chinaman has a grudge against another, it is a common thing to hire a highbinder to kill, maim, or rob him.

The highbinders are sworn to secrecy, and although many of them become known, there are many others who are members of the band without their friends and acquaintances being aware of the fact.

As a fan-tan joint in Chinatown is one of the peculiar institutions of that singular locality, we must turn aside in

our story to describe what Young King Brady and Marcus Merrilove saw upon entering Mow Wow's.

Entering through a long hallway into a large and brilliantly lighted room in the rear, Young King Brady using his detective's shield to take them past the guards, they found themselves at once in the midst of a crowd of Chinamen gathered around a long table, some standing and some sitting on high stools.

All wore hats except one who sat at the head of the board pushing about the Chinese brass coins known as "cash," with a short stick.

This was the dealer, and as a new game was just beginning, Harry, in a low voice, proceeded to explain to Marcus how it was played.

"You see," he said, "the game is now ready; the dealer takes a handful of cash from the box in which they are kept, and carefully lays them in front of him, and then places over them that round brass bowl which is known as the 'cover.' This is done so that they may not be counted.

"Now the players begin to bet. You see them putting coins on the board; these represent the amount of their bets.

"Now you see the dealer separating from the common pile, or pot, four pieces of cash at a time with his stick. The game turns upon the last draw whether it be an odd or even number of coins. They are also betting as to whether the last draw will be one, two, three, or four pieces. Again, they make bets on one number as against the other three, or two numbers against two, and so on. Whatever number of pieces remains under the cover for the last draw, that number wins."

"Where does the bank come in?" whispered Marcus.

"Why, it's this way," replied Harry. "In playing, the money bet is placed on the board. The location in which it is placed determines the bet. You see Chinese characters on the board, or rather you could see if you were nearer. These correspond with the sides, 1, 2, 3, 4.

"If a player places one dollar on the corner of the board where sides 3 and 4 join he is betting against those who put coins on sides 1 and 2. If he loses his loss is one dollar. If he wins he receives ninety-three cents, the remaining seven cents being 'soi,' which means water. Seven per cent of all winnings are retained by the bank. That's their profit."

"I see that the dealer scoops in the money every time," said Marcus.

"Yes," replied Harry. "The dealer takes all, and pays the winners minus the soi."

Suddenly there was a great jabbering, and a quarrel seemed to be on hand between two Celestials, when a young Chinaman who had been standing quietly by, making no bets, stepped in between them, and with a few rapidly spoken words seemed to settle the matter.

"That fellow is the 'lookout,'" explained Harry. "He watches the board to see if there is any carelessness or mistake in placing the bets, and that no bettor takes up money which don't belong to him."

"What's the limit, do you know?" inquired Marcus.

"The usual limit," replied Harry, "is five cents as the lowest bet, and \$500 for the highest, but the average bet is not over a dollar. As you see, many are betting quarters, halves, and even nickels. As many are allowed to play as can crowd about the board. Fan-tan is one of the simplest gambling games in existence if you understand it, which very few white men do."

They continued to watch the game for more than half an hour.

No one paid the least attention to them; the Chinamen seemed to be oblivious to their presence.

Soon after the atmosphere of the place grew so stifling that Marcus whispered that he was ready to pull out and they returned to the street.

"Now which way?" asked Marcus. "We don't seem to be making much headway."

"That's right. Our time will come later, when the hop-joints are in full blast. Then we will make the rounds of all of them. Next thing, it seems to me, we ought to take in the theater if it is only for a few minutes. What do you say?"

"Oh, I am in your hands, so I don't say anything," replied Marcus. "I'll go wherever you wish me to, of course."

"Well, then, let's take in the theater for luck," said Harry, and they bent their steps back to Doyers street again.

The Chinese theater in New York has been so often described that it seems hardly necessary to give any detailed account of it here. Young King Brady and Marcus pushed their way in through a crowd of Chinamen who had gathered about the door for some purpose unknown, and found themselves half-deafened by the squeak of the one-stringed fiddle, the twang of the moon banjo, the crashing of cymbals, and the banging of gongs.

Upon the stage were two players dressed in elaborate Chinese costumes, going through with the interminable dialogue which is the principal feature of a Chinese play.

There was quite a large audience that night, mostly Chinamen, of course, although there were not a few white people scattered about the benches looking and listening to the play which they could not possibly understand.

Harry took in each face in turn, hoping to see someone whom he knew who might be of service in the mission which he had undertaken, but all were strangers to him, and he was just about to consult his watch when Marcus suddenly sprang to his feet, exclaiming:

"Merciful heavens! There's my wife now!"

A white woman was just leaving the theater, and before Harry could speak Marcus had shot through the door after her.

Young King Brady, of course, started to follow, but by bad luck he managed to stumble over some inequality in the floor, and fell flat.

Before he could regain his feet Marcus had vanished, and when Harry reached Doyers street the young man was nowhere to be seen.

"Confound the fool!" muttered Young King Brady.

"That's the way he goes and spoils it all! Ten to one it wasn't his wife at all. He'll get himself into all kinds of trouble. Now, which way did he go?"

It is a very easy matter for anyone to slip out of sight on Doyers street.

A few steps takes one to Chatham Square, and a dozen in the other direction from the Chinese theater you are around the turn and out on Pell street.

For the moment Harry stood there undecided which way to go when a man stepped up to him whom he knew.

The man was a ward detective.

"Hello, Brady!" he said. "What's troubling you? Lost your man?"

"Oh, is it you, Burns," replied Harry. "Yes. He has given me the slip. Young fellow with a brown derby. Did you see which way he went?"

"Short coat, rather good-looking sort of guy?" asked the detective.

"Yes."

"Out on the Square. He was following a woman."

"Yes. Who was she, do you know?"

"No, I don't; she's a new one on me. What, are you off?"

"Can't stop an instant," replied Harry, and he darted down Doyers street and turned into Chatham Square.

"Hello! There he is," he muttered, for Marcus was just turning into Mott street.

He had caught up with the woman, and they seemed to be talking in an animated way, but in a second they had vanished, and Young King Brady had to go on the run again.

Again he saw them as he turned the corner, but only for the minute.

They were still together, and before Harry could catch up he saw the woman run up the steps of the old brick house which had been the object of Old King Brady's scouting a little while before.

Marcus hesitated for an instant, and then when the woman turned at the top of the steps and beckoned to him, he followed her into the house.

"That's his finish!" muttered Harry in despair. "I don't believe the fool knows his own wife when he sees her. I'll take my affidavit that's not the woman I saw at his house."

Knowing the dangers of Chinatown as he did, Harry would have hesitated to enter the house had he been acting only for himself.

But he felt that he had the best of reasons for believing that Marcus had been beguiled into the house for mischief, and he pushed on up the stairs without an instant's hesitation.

But he was all too late to see anything of Marcus, for the young millionaire, as well as the woman, had disappeared.

Harry knocked on the first door he came to, and knocked with a vigor which showed that he meant business.

There was a shuffling of feet, and a Chinaman poked his head out.

Before Harry could say two words the Chinaman slammed the door in his face and turned the key.

Harry passed on to the next door, that of the front chamber of the old house, knocking there.

It was opened after a moment by a tall, foreign looking man with dark, sinister features.

Instantly Young King Brady recognized him, and knew that he was recognized in turn.

"Louis!" he exclaimed.

"Well, what's wanted?" demanded the man, with a scowl.

"You know me?"

"Yes; Young King Brady, the detective."

"A man and a woman entered here a minute ago, did they not?"

"Perhaps they did, and perhaps they didn't."

"I must know, Louis. Unless you want to get yourself into trouble you must own up. The man is in my charge."

"Then why the blazes didn't you keep him in your charge? I've nothing to do with your business. I've got as much as I can do to attend to my own."

"It won't work," said Harry. "This is a serious matter. I want to see that man. Is he here?"

Somebody spoke behind the man, who then said:

"Well, he is. You can come in."

"Tell him to come out here."

"He's in the other room. Step inside, and I'll call him. It won't pay either of us to disturb the whole house."

Young King Brady stepped in through the door.

To his surprise he saw that the room was entirely unfurnished.

"Stand where you are," said Louis. "I'll be right back."

He closed the door, and turning the key, slipped it into his pocket.

"Open that door!" cried Harry.

"Wait," was the reply, and Louis, catching up a lamp which stood on the mantel, darted through an inner door and disappeared.

"Thunder! I don't like this for a cent," muttered Young King Brady.

He strode to the inner door and tried the knob.

The door was fast locked. No sound could he hear behind it.

Harry darted back to the other door, and whipping out his bunch of skeleton keys, soon found one which fitted and unlocked it.

But still the door would not yield.

"Bolted on the outside," muttered Young King Brady.

"This is a pretty piece of business. I have walked into a trap, surest thing."

He hurried to the window, and throwing up the sash, looked down on Mott street.

There was an electric light in front of a fan-tan joint across the way, and the street was as bright as day.

It was then that Harry caught sight of Dicky Dabbs, who was just passing.

On the spur of the moment he called down to him.

"Stop that!" spoke a voice behind him, and he turned to find himself facing a revolver held in French Louis' hand.

CHAPTER VII.

OLD KING BRADY STARTS WORK IN THE Highbinder's HOUSE.

Harry had put himself into a bad hole, and it was past Old King Brady's power to immediately help him out of it, as it proved.

When the old detective and Dicky Dabbs got upstairs they found the door of the room into which Harry had entered standing ajar with a "to let" bill pasted upon it.

Old King Brady, throwing a hasty glance inside, turned and faced Dicky with an angry look on his face.

"You've been fooling me, young man!" he cried.

But Dicky's answer knocked that theory in the head.

"Ah, come off! Do you think I'd fool Harry's boss when he's good for a half every time I pull his leg? I'm giving it to you dead straight, Mr. Brady. Out of that window Harry hollered to me, and don't you forget it. What's more, I know that French Louis was keeping house in these rooms only two or three days ago."

"Enough," said the old detective. "I believe you."

He strode to the inner door and tried to open it, but it did not yield.

Old King Brady hammered on the door.

A shuffling of feet was heard and a Chinaman wearing only a suit of pajamas looked out.

"Vat vant? Too muchee latee! No can showee rooms now," he said.

"You'll show me all there is to show, then," said the detective, seizing him by the shoulder and thrusting him aside.

The Chinaman began to protest violently in Chinese.

"Ah, shut up, you yeller geezer!" cried Dicky. "Don't you know dat's Old King Brady, de detective—soy?"

Dicky seemed to think that by dropping into Bowery slang he was talking pure Chinese.

"Ole Kling Blady!" mumbled the Celestial, in an awe-stricken tone.

He made no further resistance, but the detective's intrusion did him little good.

This room was in a state of disorder.

The carpet had been torn up and the cheap furniture was evidently ready for moving.

There was no one in the place but the Chinaman, and he was not disposed to talk.

"Where's French Louis? I want to see him right away," said Old King Brady.

"Me not know," replied the Chink.

"He was here to-night?"

"No, no! Not here night."

"I say he was, and you know it. Tell me where he is or I'll pull you in."

"No can. Me not know. You pullee me in den me no can help. Me no know."

"Has Bertha fooled me? Was it all a lie. I shouldn't wonder if she had just worked me for the supper," the old detective thought.

But he could not rest with that.

"Dick," he said, "you go down to Moy Jin Kee's, No. 10 Mott street. Tell him to send me up an English-speaking Chink at once. Come back with him yourself—make no delay."

Moy Jin Kee was the official court interpreter for the Chinese. He was also a man of authority in Chinatown, and one who knew Old King Brady well.

"Hadn't I better bring a cop?" asked Dicky. "Something serious has happened to Harry, surest thing."

"No," replied the old detective, stubbornly. "I want no cop. I'm able to manage my own business, and Harry is able to manage his."

Dicky vanished, and Old King Brady faced the trembling Celestial, who seemed scared half out of his wits.

"You want to think about all this, John, and think mighty hard and quick," said Old King Brady, carelessly producing his revolver. "Heap trouble for you if you lie to me."

The Chinaman mumbled something, and sat down upon the edge of the bed.

"Me no know Flench Louis. Me no know nloting," he growled.

"Very well," said Old King Brady, opening the door of a hall bedroom which opened off the apartment. "We'll see."

The hall bedroom was vacant and unfurnished.

This ended the suite of rooms, and Old King Brady, lighting a cigar, took a chair and waited.

In a few moments Dicky Dabbs returned, accompanied by an intelligent looking young Chinaman wearing American clothes and minus the pig-tail.

"Moy Jin sent me," he said in perfect English. "What do you wish me to do?"

"Have you been told anything about this business?"

"No, sir."

"Not a thing," said Dicky. "Mr. Brady, you don't suppose I would?"

"Right! This young man saw my partner looking out the front window calling for help a few minutes ago. He called me; we came up here and find only this man. Make him talk. Ask him what it means."

The young Chinaman tried it.

Words enough passed between the two Chinks, but the result was nothing at all.

"He swears he knows nothing about it," the interpreter said.

"What do you know about this house?"

"It bears a bad reputation, Mr. Brady. The Highbinders used to meet in these rooms."

"Ha! How lately?"

"A year or so ago."

"Do you know French Louis, the confidence man?"

"No, sir. I don't know any of that sort of people. I never smoke opium nor visit the joints."

"Do you know any of the Highbinders who met here?"

"I know several by sight, but I have nothing to do with them."

"You can be of little help to me, I am afraid; but we will try once more. I shall take him to the Elizabeth street station if he does not tell me all he knows about French Louis."

"I'll try it, Mr. Brady, but I don't think it will be any use. He is very stubborn, and swears that he is just taking care of this furniture over night for a man who has moved out."

"Try it."

Another seemingly endless jabber in Chinese followed.

"He admits that French Louis is the man," said the interpreter at last. "He says he moved away this morning."

"Does he say where to?"

"He says to Brooklyn."

"Street and number?"

"He says he doesn't know them."

"All right. He is to be arrested. Dick, go for an officer."

"No, no! No officer!" broke in the Chinaman. "Me teller now!"

"Tell then, you yellow-faced hop-fiend, or I'll send you to the island for a year!" the detective cried.

"French Louis he go way with young feller," said the Chinaman.

"When?"

"Ten minute before you come in."

The Chinaman's English was suddenly improving.

"He lies," said Dicky. "I met you within three minutes from the time Harry called me."

"May I speak to you in the other room a minute, Mr. Brady?" said Lee Yong, the interpreter.

"Follow me," said the detective, adding:

"Dick, take this revolver and keep guard over that fellow. Shoot him if he tries any tricks."

"I think you had better arrest him," said Lee Yong, as soon as they were out of hearing. "He is a Highbinder, I am sure. I tell you in the Highbinder's house there are always secrets. You get him away and we watch. By and by we find out what we want to know."

Old King Brady pondered.

To take the police into his confidence would be to expose Marcus Merrilove's private affairs, and that was just what he felt unwilling to do.

Moreover, he reasoned if Harry was concealed somewhere in the house, then probably Marcus was here also.

"This place must be searched from cellar to roof," said Old King Brady, answering Lee Yong at last. "You are

right. The fellow had better be arrested. It is the only way to make him talk."

He returned to the room, and despatched Dicky to the Elizabeth street station with a note to the sergeant asking for the officer best posted in Chinatown affairs, with another to aid him in searching the house.

So prompt was Dicky that he was back with two policemen inside of fifteen minutes.

The officers saluted Old King Brady with immense respect.

One, Officer Mallon, Old King Brady had known for several years, and he hurriedly explained as much of the situation as he cared to tell.

"It's just as Lee Yong says," replied Mallon. "This floor used to be used for the Highbinders' lodge; in fact, the whole house was full of them."

"And what about French Louis?"

"I've seen him hanging about Chinatown lately, but I never knew that he lived here."

"Try if you can make that Chink talk."

The attempt was made, but it proved entirely unsuccessful.

Nothing further could be got out of the Chinaman in spite of the fear and excitement under which he was evidently laboring.

"It's a case of Highbinders, Mr. Brady," Officer Mallon declared at last. "That fellow is afraid of the police, but he is more afraid of the Hip Sing Yong, as the Highbinders' society is called by the Chinks. He'll never tell you what he knows, for if he did his life wouldn't be worth two cents."

"To the station with him," said Old King Brady. "We will attend to his case later on. For the present we must make a thorough search of this house. There's no one needed but you and me, I suppose?"

"No; we can do it all right, with these two fellows to help us. The Chinks will never lay a hand on a cop, as you know very well."

The Chinaman was then led away by the other officer, and the search began.

The fan-tan joint in the cellar was visited, and the living apartments of Chinese on the parlor and top floor, but it all went for nothing.

After an hour's hard work in the house Old King Brady was bound to admit that he was completely baffled.

Harry's disappearance began to wear a very serious look.

"There is only one thing for me to do, Mallon," said Old King Brady, after they had left the house, "and that is for me to return here secretly and make a night of it."

"I agree with you," was the reply.

"Do you want me along?"

"No, it would be better not, but I would like to have someone stationed in one of the houses opposite where he will be within easy call."

"That's easy done, Mr. Brady. I know a Chink across the way who will let me have a room. Two of us will

stop there till morning. If we are wanted a signal out the window here is all that will be necessary."

"Very good. Let it be so arranged. I will get around to the station and try that man again, and also make a charge. I'd rather tackle this contract in my usual dress than in disguise."

"Yes, it will be better. Want me to stay here?"

"Only to get across the way and keep a watch in case French Louis leaves before I return."

Lee Yong was then dismissed, and Dicky Dabbs followed Old King Brady to the station.

"You may as well keep by me to-night, Dick," said the detective. "You will be company for me, and it will give you a chance to earn a little money, which no doubt you need."

"I'll be glad enough to do it for Harry's sake," was the loyal reply. "You can pay me or not just as you please."

Old King Brady's visit to the station amounted to nothing more than a chance to throw aside his disguise, for the Chinaman, now that the worst had happened was dumber than ever. In fact, he refused to talk at all.

It was now growing late, and the old detective and Dicky returned to the house, quietly slipping upstairs.

It had been arranged with Officer Mallon that in case French Louis showed himself he should be immediately arrested and brought around to the station, and as this had not been done, Old King Brady assumed that the man had not been seen.

"And now, Dick," said Old King Brady, as he started to close the door of the front room, "you and I will have to tackle this mystery single-handed, I think——"

"Hold on!" exclaimed Dicky. "By jove, this is a queer door. There are bolts on the outside as well as the inside. What about that, Mr. B.?"

"It is discovery No. 1," replied Old King Brady. "Our work in the Highbinders' house has begun."

CHAPTER VIII.

PRISONERS IN THE SECRET VAULT.

"Hold on, there!" cried Harry, as he faced the revolver. "I am up against it, Louis! Don't shoot."

"And why are you up against it?" snarled the confidence man, who was not a true Frenchman, but a French Canadian, and spoke as good English as Harry himself. "Why the mischief couldn't you mind your own blamed business and leave me to mind mine?"

"Hush, hush! Don't talk like a fool," said Harry. "As you know very well, my business is to look into other people's business. Put up that gun and let us talk it out."

Louis whistled and then pocketed the revolver.

"I put up my gun because there is another covering you through the crack of that door," he said. "Look out that

it don't go off, for as sure as it does there will be a dead detective in Mott street to-night."

"Keep your threats to yourself," replied Harry. "Do you know why I am here?"

"I can guess, but you had better tell it."

"Very well, then. I will tell it. I was doing Chinatown to-night with a friend, and some woman of your gang has lured him in here. I want him out of this—that's all."

"Well, you won't get him, then."

"What's the reason I won't?"

"Your friend is just one of your clients. His name is Merrilove, he is looking for his wife. As it happens, I want him, too."

"His wife or your wife?" said Harry, with an ill-concealed sneer.

"I said his wife, and I mean it. Don't you go butting into my private affairs, Brady, unless you want to die."

"You have threatened my life so many times that I begin to feel quite secure. Do I get my man?"

"No, you don't get your man."

"Very well, then; let me go."

"That's what I won't. Are you working for Merrilove?"

"None of your business."

"You bet it's my business, as you are going to find out pretty blame sudden. Is Old King Brady out gunning for me around Chinatown, too?"

"Nobody is gunning for you. I tell you that you have brought this thing on yourself."

"You won't talk?"

"Not about Marcus Merrilove's affairs."

"You will then."

"I warn you to let me go."

"You must be a fool to think it. Toddle through that door."

The inner door was thrown open as French Louis gave this command.

There stood two men whose faces showed them to be crooks to Young King Brady's well-trained eyes.

There was nothing for it but to obey, for each man was armed with a revolver, and Louis now drawing his own again, Harry found himself covered by all three.

"Now, who's up against it?" sneered French Louis.

"You are up against Old King Brady, that's what!" cried Harry. "You know the man, and you know what it means. I warn you that you had better beware!"

"Enough of that! Blind him, boys!" said the confidence man. "Resist, Young Brady, and I'll shoot you dead."

Harry made no resistance.

In such cases the Bradys never do.

Old King Brady's favorite saying is, "By seeming to yield you gain time and there is always a way out, but butt up against trouble and you are sure to go down."

Harry's eyes were then blindfolded by a thick cloth being tied over them.

He was then searched and relieved of his revolver.

Somebody took him by the hand then, and led him through a door and down a flight of steps.

That they were not the regular stairs of the house Young King Brady knew, for they were not only very steep, but very narrow.

At the foot of these steps one or two turns were made, and Harry was then led along a passage.

A halt was then called, and the sounds of a door being unlocked heard.

Then suddenly Harry was pushed forward with great violence.

He almost fell on his face.

Someone sprang upon him and seized hold of him.

At the same instant an iron door clanged behind him.

"Thunder! Have they got you, too!" the voice of Marcus Merrilove was heard exclaiming, and then the bandage was pulled away from Young King Brady's eyes.

There was Marcus standing before him.

His clothes were all torn and disarranged, and there was an ugly cut on his face.

"We are in for it!" he cried. "What on earth are we to do?"

Harry looked around before answering.

The place in which he found himself was a mere vault, bricked up on all sides, with the damp earth floor beneath his feet.

"So this is what you brought us to?" he said bitterly. "What on earth made you leave me that way?"

"I was mad," replied Marcus. "I thought I saw my wife."

"It don't do to try such tricks in Chinatown. In trying to save you from the consequences of your folly I have tumbled into the same trap myself."

There were a couple of stools and an old rickety table upon which burned a lamp; this was all the furnishing of the vault.

As Harry sank down upon one of these Marcus seated himself on the other, and throwing aside the bandage which he had pulled from Young King Brady's eyes he burst out with a harsh laugh.

"Well, don't take it so much to heart, Brady," he said. "Of course I was dead wrong to cut away from you like I did, and now I am paying up for it. Here, have a smoke. Let's calm down and try to think. They would never dare to kill us. You are supposed to be up in this sort of business, and I shall have to put it up to you to find some way to undo the harm I have done."

"Right," said Harry, accepting the cigar. "I'll do no more kicking. I didn't have to follow you up. So far my troubles are of my own making. Now tell me just what happened, and be quick about it, for we are liable to be unpleasantly interrupted any time."

"Well, I saw a woman in the Chinese theater who I thought was Inez, my wife, so I just ran after her, fool that I was."

"It proved not to be Mrs. Merrilove."

"That's it. She looked marvellously like her, though;

the strange part of it was she seemed to know me, and called me by name."

"Ha! We have been shadowed. I suspected as much. What did she say?"

"Why, she looked around before I caught up with her. Then she stood and waited for me.

"'You are Mark Merrilove,' she said. 'You are looking for your wife.'

"By that time I saw it wasn't Inez, so I replied:

"'That's who I am, but who are you? You look enough like my wife to be her twin sister.'"

"Hello! Did you say that? That would explain——"

"Hold on! You haven't heard the end. 'Yes, that's who I am,' she answered. 'I'm so glad to meet you. If you have the courage to follow me and cut out that detective I'll bring you face to face with Inez in five minutes' time!'"

"You don't mean it! If she held out that promise to you I don't wonder you yielded. You could hardly help it so."

"So it seems to me. I followed her to this house. I held back, and she ran up the steps and beckoned to me. Well, I followed her, worse luck!"

"I saw that."

"Were you so close behind me then?"

"I was. What happened next?"

"Oh, she took me into a room upstairs, and there I was set upon by three men. I put up as good a fight as I could, Brady. You see the result. They tore my clothes, and pretty nearly hammered the life out of me. It was all done in a moment. Then they brought me down here."

"They must have been quick, for I was right behind you. I heard no sounds of a scuffle."

"It was only a moment, as I said. Well, here we are. Now, what can we do?"

"How did they get you out of that room? Were you blindfolded?"

"Yes; they tied a handkerchief over my eyes. I can't tell you just how we went, for by that time I had been knocked half silly. You got off easy, I should say."

"Oh, I put up no fight, for I knew it wouldn't be any use. Now, let me tell you that we are in the hands of French Louis, an ex-convict, and one of the most notorious confidence men and crooks in New York."

"Is that a fact! Tall, dark man?"

"Yes."

"That's the fellow who struck me first. What can be his object?"

"I think I can see through his motives."

"Then for heaven sake tell me what you know."

"I would if I felt sure how you would take it."

"Come, come, Brady! Surely the time has passed for either of us to hold back."

"I have no disposition to, except to spare your feelings."

"Hang my feelings! They have been racked enough. They can stand any amount of prodding now."

"Did you ever hear Mrs. Merrilove speak of a twin sister?"

"Never! It was part of our agreement that I should never ask any questions about her family."

"I see. She passed under the name of Madam Florabella. Was she supposed to be a married woman?"

"A widow."

"What was her real name?"

"Thebaud was the name of her husband. Her maiden name was Inez Renier."

"Where was she from originally?"

"Montreal. Her parents were French Canadians."

"Can you give me any other particulars concerning her?"

"I honestly cannot. I have now told you every blessed thing I know about Mrs. Merrilove's past."

"Then let me tell you something. This French Louis' real name is Thebaud."

"Heavens!"

"It was generally rumored at the time of your marriage that Mrs. Merrilove was his wife."

Marcus reeled.

"It cannot be so!" he replied, in a hollow voice.

"I don't say it is so. I merely tell you of the rumor which was circulated at the time."

"But his name must be Louis Thebaud."

"Then there is some mistake. Inez told me that her first husband's name was Jacques. He was an actor. They only lived together for a short time. He was killed in a railway accident out West."

"And you believe this?"

"I never had any reason to doubt Mrs. Merrilove's word."

"All this can be easily proved if we ever get out of this."

"Have you any more distressing suggestions to spring upon me?"

"No."

"Tell me what you think of it all."

"Tell me first wherein this woman differed from your wife."

"She was taller and a larger woman in every way."

"Yet there was a resemblance?"

"A very strong resemblance."

"It all seems to bring us back to Old King Brady's original theory that Mrs. Merrilove had objectionable relatives who have been blackmailing her. It is his belief and mine that she sold her jewels for the purpose of raising money to keep these people quiet. Is it not possible that not satisfied with that they have been trying to make her give up her diamonds which you believe to be in the safe deposit company's vaults, or to strike you for a large sum, both of which she has refused to do, and they are holding her until she consents?"

"It is all possible. Brady, I am almost insane. When that fellow Louis comes I believe I will offer him any sum he may demand in reason to give me back my wife and set us free."

"As a last resort only that might be done."

"You seem to have hope."

"I have Old King Brady behind me. Do you know what people say of him?"

"I don't know what you mean—no."

"It has always been the saying that Old King Brady never fails."

"Then I hope to heaven it may prove true in this instance."

"It will, depend upon circumstances. Now, let me tell you something which may encourage you a bit."

Harry then related how he had called to Dabbs from the window.

"And do you think he will find Old King Brady and put him on our track?" Marcus asked.

"He surely will. Old King Brady is a regular sleuthhound. More than that, these Chinatown crooks are horribly afraid of him. They will never dare to treat him as they have treated me."

"Then you propose to sit quietly here and wait for Old King Brady to act?"

"Not by any means! If there is a way into this place there must also be a way out. Come, let us jump right into work, and see what can be done."

"Agreed!" cried Marcus, springing up. "You give me courage. Let us fight these thugs and blackmailers to a finish. There is surely something in Old King Brady's theories. I begin to believe that Mrs. Merrilove is actually in this house."

"Yes, and it may prove the luckiest thing which ever happened to us that we were brought here," replied Young King Brady. "Ha! What noise is that? There seems to be someone outside the door now."

CHAPTER IX.

OLD KING BRADY CAPTURES BIG ALICE, BUT FAILS TO FIND HARRY.

Old King Brady put in about one minute in examining the double bolts on the door.

"It's plain enough what this means," he said. "This room has been used for trapping unwary Chinks by the Highbinders. They enter and are bolted in and held prisoners till they are made to give to that beautiful society of thieves, that's all."

"I guess that's it," replied Dicky. "Suppose we get nipped in the same way. Won't it be a good scheme to head them off?"

"We will head them off by taking these two bolts off. I expect they were used on Harry and that is what made him call out of the window. The boy ought to have been a little sharper than that."

Producing a small screwdriver from one of his secret pockets, Old King Brady promptly removed the bolts.

Then they bolted the door of the front room on the inside, and going into the back room, began investigations there.

"Dick, your business is to do the lookout act," said Old King Brady. "Plant yourself near the door and listen with all your ears while I make a careful examination of these walls."

"All right, Mr. B. Do you mind if I smoke a cigarette?"

"I mind so much that I shall be under the painful necessity of throwing you out if you light one. Do you want to let every Chink in the house know that we are here? You might as well blow a fish-horn or beat a drum."

"Well, it's hard lines, but I suppose I must submit," assented Dicky.

"What you really want is a pipe of hop," continued Old King Brady. "Pity you can't cut that out, Dick. You are really a bright lad if you would only let the dope alone."

"Well, that's so, Mr. Brady. I own up. I do smoke."

"Of course you smoke, and equally of course it will land you in Sing Sing or the mad-house in the end. You want to cut it out while there's time. You were saying that you knew French Louis was living here. What do you know about the man?"

"Next to nothing. I have seen him in the joints and I have had some talk with him, that's all."

"Do you know anything about a large, good-looking woman who goes around with him?"

"Sure. Big Alice."

"Well, what about her?"

"She's his wife, so they say."

"It was said that Madam Florabella, who used to dance in the Golden Hand was his wife."

"Naw!" said Dicky, contemptuously. "Tain't true. I was right in it on reporter work when Florabella was the rage last year. I met her several times. She wasn't Louis' wife. It was her sister. They were just alike in looks, and the story got around that Florabella was married to Louis. I heard that he was some relation of hers, too, but never her husband, that's all bosh! She's married to a swell guy among the four hundred now, you know. I forget his name."

Here was a discovery and in some respects the most important one Old King Brady had yet made on the Merrilove case.

"You are sure of this?" he asked Dicky.

"Dead sure."

"You knew both sisters?"

"Of course I did."

"Dick, were they both dope-fiends?"

"Come now, Mr. Brady. You are asking me too much. I don't want to give anyone away."

"You have answered my question. They were."

"Well, there are others."

"Of course. Now, I'll take you a little further into my confidence and tell you that I have a particular reason for asking you these questions. You'll be paid for all the help and information you give me."

"That's all right then. If there is anything in it for

Harry I don't mind telling what I know about them girls. Only thing is, I don't want to throw no stones in anybody's way."

"You'll not be doing it."

"Fire away, then. Ask me whatever you like. I can't think of anything more to tell you about them girls only that it's a fact they smoked."

"Were they very far gone?"

"Alice was—that's Louis' wife. She's a thoroughbred. Inez wasn't so bad."

"She was what you might call a periodical doper?"

"Yes. She'd smoke for two or three days, and then she would quit it for a month and never touch a pipe until the fit came on again."

Old King Brady sat for a few moments, silently pondering.

The secret of Mrs. Merrilove's strange conduct was all out now.

The woman was simply an opium fiend with disreputable connections.

She had been trying to conceal the fact from her husband.

So far all was plain, but it was only a step forward on the trail.

The cause of the unfortunate woman's long absence was yet to be revealed.

"Dick, you have done me a great service," Old King Brady said at last.

"Inez is missing, and you are working for her husband, trying to find her," replied Dicky.

"I'm not saying, but you can draw your own conclusions."

"I have already drawn them."

"All right. Ask me no questions. Have you seen Inez around the joints since her marriage?"

"Twice. Once in Hop Foy's and once in Mo Lee's."

"Lately?"

"No; I haven't seen her in a couple of months."

"Who was she with?"

"Her sister the first time. Second time French Louis had them both in tow."

"Exactly. You are sure you haven't seen her lately?"

"I'm giving it to you straight, Mr. Brady. That's all I can say."

"Then we will cut the matter out after I have told you what I propose to do for you in return for this information."

"I like to hear what people are going to do for me," said Dicky. "Bust ahead, Mr. B."

"As soon as we find Harry and get this business straightened up I shall give you a hundred dollars and a complete new outfit. Then I expect you to cut the hop out forever and stick to your journalistic work."

Tears came into the eyes of the unfortunate reporter as he caught Old King Brady's hand.

"Mr. Brady, you're an angel, if there ever was one," he exclaimed.

"Oh, no," chuckled the old detective. "No wings."

"Never mind the wings, but I want to say to you that what you ask is not so easy. You see, about all the work I've been able to put in the papers for the last two years has been stories about the hop-joints. To collect the material for those I must go into the joints, and the instant I do I'm gone."

"But is there no paper which will give you regular work?"

"Not one. They all expect me to stick to my line. It was these editors who made me what I am by giving me assignments to the joints. You don't understand."

"I do understand and it's a scandalous shame," replied the detective. "Well, there is only one thing for you to do, and that's to cut out New York and strike for some other city, and there begin over again. Do you think you could cut out the dope if you were started in a strange place?"

"Yes, I do."

"Well, then, we will help to start you, Harry and I."

"For which I shall bless you to my dying day."

"Enough of this," said Old King Brady. "We must get to work now."

But Old King Brady had actually been at work all the time.

Not with his hands, but with his eyes.

They had been taking in everything that was to be seen about the four walls of that back room.

As everybody who has followed up the career of the old detective is aware, one of Old King Brady's strong points is his skill in discovering secret panels, doors, and hidden passages.

This Old King Brady has reduced to a science, and he found himself up against a particularly easy proposition now.

Even while talking with Dick Dabbs he had discovered that there was a lap joint in the wall-paper on the partition which was supposed to separate the room from the hall beyond.

Now the old detective stepped into the hall bedroom.

Here he immediately made the discovery that the bedroom was larger than usual in such houses.

Actually the part of the partition in question was against the bedroom.

On the side toward the big room it ran straight, but on the other side it was on a slant.

"Space between here," muttered the detective.

He returned to the larger room and examined the partition.

Turning back the lap in the paper he saw it concealed the outlines of a narrow door.

"What are you doing?" demanded Dicky.

"Finding secret doors, that's all," the detective replied.

"Good crop?"

"Why, yes. I've found one. Next thing is to get it open."

"By gracious, you're a wonder, Mr. B. It takes you about two minutes to do what would take other people a year."

"Oh, don't throw bouquets at me. It makes me tired. Besides, I haven't got the door open yet."

"All the same, you have decided that Harry went through that door."

"I have very little doubt of it. Ah, here you are, Dick. I've found the spring."

But instead of opening the secret door Old King Brady, with a quick movement, suddenly backed away from it and blew out the light.

"What's that for?" asked Dicky.

"Hush! Someone coming."

"The deuce!"

"No talk! Are you armed?"

"Nixy."

"Take this revolver. Now, then, here they are. Not another word."

The sounds behind the secret door were now unmistakable.

Someone was coming upstairs with light, catlike tread. Old King Brady, having placed Dicky on one side of the door, took up his own stand on the other.

Then there came a moment of silence.

"Listening," thought the detective. "Heavens, I hope that fellow don't speak!"

But Dicky was as dumb as an oyster.

In a minute the door was suddenly opened.

Quick as lightning Old King Brady flashed his dark lantern at the same time covering the intruder with his revolver. Dicky attended to business on the other side.

It was a woman!

This to Old King Brady's immense disappointment.

He had hoped that it would be with French Louis that he should have to deal.

Scared and trembling, the woman at first made as if she would have closed the door, but a warning word from the detective caused her to stand still.

"Hello, Alice," said Dicky, carelessly. "It's only me here with a friend."

"What right have you here? What does this mean?" the woman demanded in a voice which trembled with rage and fear.

"It means business!" said Old King Brady. "Enter this room and close the door."

"I won't! You would not dare to shoot me!"

"Enter the room or it will be the worse for you! I am an officer of the law!"

As Old King Brady flashed his shield Big Alice stepped into the room, the door closing behind her of its own accord.

"There you are! This is as it should be," said the detective. "You have saved me some trouble, and I'll tell you my business quick, if you have not already guessed."

"You are Old King Brady the detective. I know that much."

"Yes, and I want Young King Brady the detective, who

in some way has been enticed into the secret room which these walls conceal."

"I don't know what you are talking about."

"Yes, you do, and I'll give you just six seconds to decide. Either lead me to my partner or I shall gather you in."

"It's a mean, dirty trick of yours, Dicky Dabbs!" screamed Alice. "I'll fix you for this! I'll queer you in the joints, I——"

Old King Brady seized her by the arm and swung her around.

"Do as I order you and be quick about it!" he sternly said. "Refuse and not only you but your husband, French Louis, shall be landed in the Tombs."

Now Big Alice began to realize that the situation was serious.

"I suppose you've got me foul and I shall have to obey," she snarled. "You can follow me."

She opened the secret door, revealing an ordinary stable lantern standing at the top of a flight of narrow steps.

"Look sharp, Dick!" said the detective. "Don't hesitate to shoot in case anyone attempts to interfere with us."

Alice led the way down the steps in silence.

They seemed to be built between the partitions.

On the level of the ground floor they took a queer turn and there was a second descent.

This brought them to a boarded-up passage which appeared to run through underground to Pell street.

Following this passage to its end they came to two iron doors.

"He's in there," growled Big Alice, pointing to the door on the right.

"Open the door!" was the detective's order.

"I haven't the key."

"Who has?"

"I don't know."

"There you no doubt lie. Probably you know that your husband French Louis has the key."

"If he has it won't do you any good, for you can't get the key from a man who isn't here."

"Where is Louis?"

"I don't know where he is, and I wouldn't tell you if I did."

"Stand where you are. Keep her covered, Dick."

"Trust me!" said Dicky. "Alice knows of old what a determined fellow I can be if I try. She won't try any of her tricks on me."

Old King Brady now produced his skeleton keys and went to work on the door.

While talking he had been attentively listening for sounds behind it, but he had heard none.

In a moment he found a key which would work, and the door flew back.

"You have lied to me, woman!" he cried.

The vault was dark and empty.

"I tell you they were there! I don't know what has become of them!" exclaimed Big Alice, with a sneering laugh.

CHAPTER X.

UP TO THE OPIUM FIEND AT LAST.

In the matter of secret doors, etc., Young King Brady is almost as expert as his chief.

Having finished his talk with Marcus, Harry at once set himself to work to investigate the situation.

A brief examination of the walls of their prison showed him that there was no other opening except the iron door.

"If this thing is bolted on the outside then we are prisoners here all right," he said. "But if it isn't I think I can handle the case."

He produced his skeleton keys, and went to work.

"Do you think you can do anything with those queer-looking things?" asked Marcus.

"They have opened many a door before this," was the reply. "Give me a few moments' time, and I guess I can surround the problem all right."

The door came open even while he spoke.

"Wonderful!" said Marcus.

"Easy enough," replied Harry. "It is part of our regular business. Now here we are in a secret passage. Question is what to do next. Having lost my revolver, I am not overanxious to tackle that man French Louis again."

"And as I had no revolver, I am just as badly off."

"Did they get your three hundred, by the way?"

"No, they didn't. They did not search my pockets. I don't know why, for they had every chance to do it while I was in their power. Still, it was not done."

"Here's another door," said Harry. "If it is all the same to you I had just as soon take my chances this way as to attempt to push back through that house."

"I am with you, Brady. Anything you say goes."

"Good! Then we will tackle iron door No. 2, for better or for worse. It's hard to tell what we shall run up against. Will you be good enough to hold that light?"

Marcus took the lamp, and Harry started on the second door with his skeleton keys.

It opened readily enough.

A narrow flight of stairs was revealed.

Young King Brady now produced his little electric dark lantern, which had not been taken from him, and so arranged the slide that its light was thrown downward and not forward, unless the lantern was turned at an abrupt angle.

"Put that lamp down on the stairs and blow it out," he said. "We will work with this. There must be a road to the street this way. It is up to us to find it—that's all."

They ascended the steps, passing through a door which was not locked, and found themselves in a dark hall.

"We are up against an opium joint," whispered Harry. "Can't you smell the smoke?"

"It smells horribly here. Is that burning opium?"

"Yes."

"I wonder if this hall leads to the street?"

"It heads toward Pell street, unless I am altogether turned around."

"But we are on Mott street."

"Don't you believe it. That underground passage through which we were both carried led through to Pell street, that's a sure thing. Hush, now! We have got to go slow. Follow me."

The hall was but a short one.

It ended against a door, and there were two other doors, one of which stood ajar on their left.

Harry pushed this door aside, and found that it led into a vacant room.

Through the cracks in a board partition roughly covered with wall paper which had broken away in several places, light came streaming, and the sound of voices could be heard.

"I tell you what we want is to bleed Mark Merrilove. It will pay us better than to attempt to muss with her diamonds, which we can never hope to get out of the safe deposit company's vaults without discovery—that's sure!"

The words were distinctly spoken, the sound coming from the room beyond the partition.

"I don't know but what you are right," replied a different voice. "I am for bringing the matter to a head dead sudden, old man."

"We have got to with Old King Brady on our trail. It's no joke."

Silence followed.

Harry put his eye to the crack in the partition. Of course, he had shut off his dark lantern entirely upon entering the room.

The room beyond was large and not ill furnished.

There were two broad couches in the open part of the room. Upon one lay a young woman apparently asleep, with an opium layout beside her.

On the other were two men, with a second layout resting upon a Turkish stool alongside this couch.

One was French Louis and the other one of the men Harry had seen with him in the Mott street house.

The reason of their silence was at once apparent.

After a while Louis spoke:

"I tell you, we want to keep our heads to-night, for we are liable to run up against Old King Brady. We have both had enough of it for the present. Now we want to decide what's to be done with Mark Merrilove if you are ready to talk."

"Oh, let's have a sleep and talk afterward."

"No; we must settle it now."

"I think that what we need to decide first is what is to become of young Brady."

"Hold him a day or so, then give him a big dose of dope and dump him in the lots somewhere. I wouldn't want to

kill him. He saw Alice, no doubt, and it would kick up altogether too big a row."

"Consider that settled, then. Now, about the other."

"Well, I say that our best course is to speak him fair, tell him that we have it in our power to restore his wife to him, and that we will do it to-night, and land them both in their own house if he will plank down say a hundred thousand in cash."

"That's all right, but do you imagine he carries that amount in his pocket? Come now, Louis, the dope must have gone to your head."

"Not a bit of it. I'll take his checks."

"He'd stop them, surest thing."

"Not he. Think of the scandal. I'll tell him the truth, and——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What are you laughing at, you guy?"

"The idea of you telling the truth, Frank Friend."

"I shall give him my word of honor that he shall never be disturbed again."

"When he sees what a wreck his wife is I fancy he'll be for queering us all. I think he had better be kept over till Alice has a chance to cash the check. She looks enough like her sister to fool the bank teller. She can fix herself up some way."

"And Alice won't cash the check then," said the woman, suddenly rising up from the other couch. I tell you both right now that Alice has had enough of this evil business. Why the mischief couldn't you let poor Inez alone? She was doing the right thing by us. She coughed up liberal, didn't she? I say it's a shame to wreck her life like we have."

"Who has?" demanded French Louis fiercely. "I didn't do it. Inez came here of her own accord. She always smoked and she always will till she dies."

"It's a lie!" cried Alice fiercely. "You urged the dope upon her till you have near put her out of business. She's been in it near a month now, and it's all your fault, with your trying to make her give up her diamonds and black-mail her husband."

"It's blamed little help we get from you anyway, except to spend what cash comes in," growled Louis. "But I don't want no more of this jaw!"

"Alice! Alice! I want a drink of water. Alice!" called a feeble voice from behind the curtain. "Come to me, Alice! I think I'm going to die to-night."

"My wife!" exclaimed Marcus, in an audible voice.

He made for the door and would have rushed out into the hall if Harry had not caught his arm and pulled him back.

"Who spoke then? Somebody in the other room!" shouted Louis, and there was a shuffling of feet inside.

"Confound you, man, you have ruined all!" gasped Harry. "Out through the hall with you—quick!"

"Never!" shouted Marcus, struggling to free himself.

"My wife! I want my wife!"

He broke away from Harry and dashed into the hall.

"Madman!" gasped Young King Brady, springing after him. "Now we are up against it for all we are worth!"

CHAPTER XI.

OLD KING BRADY FINDS THE OPIUM FIEND.

"Alice, you are butting against Old King Brady, do you know that?" cried Dicky Dabbs. "You are making a big mistake."

The old detective had closed the door of the vault and stood looking fixedly at the girl.

"You hear the advice of your former friend, daughter," said the old detective, solemnly. "You will do well to heed it. I am not a man to be trifled with. This will land you in the Tombs."

"I can't help it," was the reply.

"We will return to the rooms, Dick," said the detective. "You can give the signal to Officer Mallon. This woman must be run in. We will then return and look into French Louis' case."

Suddenly Alice broke into a passion of tears, and flung herself at Old King Brady's feet.

"Oh, save me! Save me!" she cried. "Save my poor sister! People say that you are a kind-hearted man. Get us both out of this dreadful den! I can stand it no longer. I will even give up my husband to see the last of this horrible life."

"Daughter," said Old King Brady, in a voice full of deep sympathy, "it is to save your unfortunate sister that I made this trip to Chinatown to-night. I am with you! I will surely help you if you will help me!"

Alice was sobbing so that she could hardly speak.

"I'll do it," she said at length, "but I run a terrible risk. Louis will surely kill me if he ever catches me after this."

"He never must—he never shall! Speak! Tell me all! Talk to me just as you would to your own father."

Alice gave a hollow laugh.

"My own father was a thief and a scoundrel," she said, "so your comparison is a poor one. But I am in the mind to help you for poor Inez's sake. Take me back to the room upstairs. I have been hitting the pipe heavy all day. Give me time to pull myself together and think."

"But my partner. How will the delay affect him?"

"It can do him no harm. Already he is in the hands of the Highbinders, and my brother-in-law, Marcus Merrilove, is a prisoner, too. Where they have been taken I do not know, but I can find out. Only let me get calm."

"Come," said Old King Brady. "You shall have all the time you want. Lead the way back, Dick."

They were back in the room in a minute.

Alice flung herself on the lounge, and burying her face in her hands for a time lay so without speaking.

In a few minutes Big Alice sat up and arranged her hair.

"I'm all right now, Mr. Brady," she said. "Now I'm

going to confess. Don't interrupt. Listen to what I am going to tell you while the mood is on me, for it may change. First tell me, were you hired by Marcus Merrilove to find his wife?"

"Yes."

"Then it's a great pity that you did not come straight to me in the first place. If you had done so a lot of trouble would have been saved. Inez Merrilove is my sister. She is here in Chinatown to-night, and she has been here for nearly a month. Of course, you know what that means. She has smoked and smoked until she has reduced herself to a skeleton. Her mind is about gone, she is too weak to stand on her feet. I would have got her out of it and sent her home long ago if I could, but it was out of my power. In the first place she would not listen to me, and in the next my husband would have surely killed me if I had made the attempt. It is a shame! Her life is wrecked, and it did not have to be. She has been so good to us, too. She even sold her jewels to give us money which she was too proud to ask her husband for. Listen! To-night I met her husband in the street. I started to take him to her. I thought my husband had gone out. I was mistaken. Merrilove was captured and then along came your partner and he was captured, too. Both were locked up in that vault. In some way they managed to get out, and they came on to where we were. Merrilove heard Inez speak, and he made a break for her. Well, he was captured again, and so was your partner. Louis turned them over to the Highbinders, and as true as heaven hears me I don't know where they are now."

"And that's your confession?" said Old King Brady.

"That's my confession, down to the last word. It separates me from my husband forever, but if it results in saving my sister I am satisfied."

"And where is Mrs. Merrilove now?"

"In a house on Pell street, where she has been for weeks."

"She was seen on the Bowery within a couple of weeks."

"No, no! She hasn't been off her bed in a fortnight. If anybody thought they saw her it was me. I have but just left her. I came up here to get some of my things. We are about quitting these rooms."

"And French Louis. Where is he?"

"I don't know. He went off with the Highbinders. I haven't seen him since."

"Dick, call the officers," said Old King Brady.

Alice sprang to her feet.

"Do you mean to go back on me! Do you mean to arrest me, after all?" she cried. "Well, I might have known!"

"No, my dear! No! You are not in it at all. Stick to me and all will be well, but your sister must be removed from the house in which you say she is."

Dicky hurried to the front window and was fluttering his handkerchief now.

A moment later and Officer Mallon and two other policemen came tramping up the stairs.

Old King Brady stood with the door of the back room open, ready to admit them.

Behind him stood Big Alice, trembling all over. She still had her doubts. She was not ready to trust Old King Brady yet.

"Have you found him?" asked Mallon, as he entered the room.

"Not yet. I am on his trail, however," Old King Brady replied. "Here is a lady who is going to help us. You know her?"

"Big Alice? Oh, yes. I know her and she knows me. Do you want her pulled in?"

"Not at all. The programme is altogether different. In the first place I want an ambulance from the Hudson street Hospital called for on the phone. Alice, where shall it come to?"

Alice gave the number of the house on Pell street.

"Let the ambulance wait across the street till summoned," said Old King Brady, "and let there be three officers with it at least. Dick, you can go and give the call from the Elizabeth street station. Mallon, give him a line to the sergeant so that he can get prompt attention. You and your two partners are to stay with me."

Dicky departed.

"We go now," said Old King Brady. "Alice, lead the way through the secret passage."

"An' sure is there a secret passage between here and that house on Pell street!" exclaimed Mallon. "I always thought it. Twict fellers have given me the slip in that house. This explains it now."

"Come on! Let us waste no further time in talk," said Old King Brady, throwing open the secret door. "Officer, is there any excitement below on the street?"

The last was addressed to one of Mallon's companions, who had just come in from the front room.

"There's a few Chinks around the door," was the reply. "There's a fan-tan joint in the basement, and I suppose they think we are going to raid that. There's an officer below, however. He'll see that no one come up the stairs."

"Enough," said Old King Brady, "bolt the door in the front room. "Now, Alice, follow us, and keep up a good heart."

Big Alice had now grown quite self-contained.

She led the way down the secret stairs and through the underground passage to the two iron doors.

Opening the one on the left she passed on and at length entered the room into which Harry and Marcus had looked through the partition.

"Alice! Alice! Have you come at last?" called a feeble voice from behind the curtain. "Come here, quick. Cook me another pill. I must have a smoke right away or I shall die!"

Alice drew aside the curtain, revealing the attenuated form of a once beautiful woman stretched upon a low cot bed.

It was a pitiful sight.

The unfortunate victim of the deadly drug was wasted almost to a shadow.

She raised herself upon her arm and screamed in terror.

"Oh, Alice! You have betrayed me! Oh, oh, oh!"

"Be calm, Mrs. Merrilove," said Old King Brady, stepping up. "We have come to save you!"

At last Old King Brady had reached the end of his trail. He had come up with the long-missing opium fiend.

CHAPTER XII.

CONCLUSION.

Clutching Marcus by the arm and pulling him away from the door of the other room, Harry tried to drag him through the passage toward Pell street.

"Let me go! Unhand me!" shouted the millionaire, struggling. "My wife is in that room! You shan't stop me! I will have her out!"

But Harry's was the superior strength, and he succeeded in holding his own.

"Calm yourself! For heaven sake calm yourself! You are spoiling everything!" he breathed. "What we want is to get out on the street. Then the game is in our hands!"

Long before this Harry expected to see the door fly open and to find revolvers planked at his head.

It did not work that way at all.

The door opened slightly.

Somebody peered out into the passage, but Harry could not see who it was.

Then the door was closed, and a key heard to turn in the lock, after which all was still.

"Brady, let me go," panted Marcus.

"To the street! Not back in there! See, the way is open before us. The only way to help your wife is to save ourselves."

"You are right!" replied Marcus, now realizing the mistake he had made. "Unhand me! I'll be good."

Harry let go his hold, and threw open the door at the end of the passage.

As he did so a bell somewhere in the distance rang sharply.

"Quick! Quick! That means that they are going to try to head us off!"

They groped their way on through the darkness, coming to a flight of stairs leading down.

There was a grimy bracket lamp burning in the hall below.

"Downstairs with you," said Harry, not daring to trust Marcus behind him.

They bounded down two steps at a time.

Gaining this hall the light of Pell street could be seen through the open door at its end.

Now the way seemed clear, and yet actually the game was altogether lost.

Before they had gone three steps, doors flew open ahead and behind them.

In an instant the hall was swarming with Chinamen.

Everyone had a big revolver, and they crowded about the young detective and his companion and headed them off in their retreat.

"Highbinders!" gasped Harry.

"Don't shoot! Don't shoot! Catch 'em, boys!" shouted a voice from the head of the stairs.

A fierce struggle followed.

Harry and Marcus struck out right and left, both using their fists for all they were worth.

Harry laid out three Chinamen, and Marcus felled two.

But the end was what might have been expected.

Harry was floored by a fearful blow on the back of his head, which for the time being deprived him of his senses.

When his wits returned he found himself lying on the floor of a low-ceilinged, dingy room almost bare of furniture, with his hands securely tied behind him.

Marcus, in the same fix, lay beside him, with his head all cut and bleeding.

There were as many as a dozen Chinamen in the room, all jabbering away unintelligibly.

So great was the noise and confusion that if Young King Brady had not known the Chinese character as well as he did he might have supposed that his last hour had come.

"They will never kill me," he thought. "My shield is my protection. These are Highbinders, of course, and while they are ready enough to kill a Chink I never heard of a detective being killed by them. It is French Louis we have to fear."

A groan from Marcus attracted him then, and he rolled over and faced his companion.

"Now see where we have landed!" moaned Marcus. "This is the end."

"No, no! Have courage. We will work out of this. Give me time to think," replied Harry. "Are you much hurt?"

"My face is cut, and I've been kicked half to death—nothing worse. But oh, my wife! My unfortunate wife! You heard, Brady. Think of the dreadful fix she is in."

"Hush!" answered Harry. "Here comes French Louis. We shall know more now."

The door opened, and Louis entered, accompanied by a villainous looking fellow whom Harry soon recognized by his voice as the man addressed as "Frank Friend."

Louis began taking gibberish with the Chinamen, all but three of whom then left the room, those who remained stationing themselves near the door.

"Well, so you fellers were trying to give me the slip, eh?" said the confidence man, approaching. "A nice mess you have made of it. Doing a little spying into my private affairs, eh? That's all right, too."

"My wife! What have you done to my wife? You have fed her on opium till you have murdered her!" cried Marcus. "That such a thing could be done in New York! It is scandalous! Oh, you will pay for this!"

Louis laughed.

"You have got the cart before the horse, my respected brother-in-law," he replied. "Instead of me it is you who is to do the paying. If you had stopped quiet where I put you then there would have been no trouble. I don't want to keep your wife. She came to me of her own accord, and she has remained with me because she chose to do so. Perhaps you don't know who I am."

"I don't know you and I don't want to know you," flashed Marcus. "But if you know when you are well off you will set us free."

"Cool down. Come off your perch and listen to reason," said Louis. "Come now, young Brady! You needn't be making big eyes at me. You know that I am a man to be feared if this fellow don't."

"You had better cut all this out, Louis," replied Harry, with as much calmness as he could assume. "If you have got a proposition to put to Mr. Merrilove, why put it, and let us know the worst at once."

"That's what we have," put in Frank Friend. "We've got a proposition to put to him that's straight goods, and will end this here business at once. I see no sense in dragging it out. I——"

"Shut up, Frank!" broke in French Louis. "You're doped. Don't you go buttin' in, for there's no call for it. If you do there'll be trouble—see?"

"I butt in all I like. I'm as much interested in this business as you are."

"You are, hey? This man is my brother-in-law, I want you to understand, although he may not know it. This is a family affair, and I don't want no interference from no professional dope fiend like you."

"Who's a dope fiend?"

"You are!"

"You're another! You're doped now. You don't know what you're talking about. You would go on all night jawing like you have been. Meanwhile there hain't nothing doing. What we want is cash."

"And what I want is my wife!" Marcus broke out. "Quit your interference, you man! If French Louis is married to Mrs. Merrilove's sister as I understand he is, then he's the only person I shall listen to."

"You hear, Louis," said Young King Brady. "Put your proposition. Be done with all this nonsense!"

"I want a hundred thousand dollars cash. For that I'll restore your wife and set you free," said Louis. "Now you know the worst."

"And it's too little," growled Frank Friend. "If it was me I'd make it two hundred thousand or nothing."

Marcus took it more coolly than Harry expected would be the case.

"Give me time to consult my friend here," he said. "Pull out and come back in ten minutes."

"Not on your life," said Louis. "We want an answer right now."

"Do you suppose I carry any such sum of money about with me?"

"I'll take your check."

"Then you'll be a fool!" broke in Frank Friend.

"Who are you calling a fool?" flashed Louis, turning on him in a rage.

A fierce quarrel followed.

Both men were half-crazed with their deep indulgence in the opium pipe.

As they raved away at each other Harry nudged Marcus with his elbow.

"This matter is getting serious!" he whispered. "They'll stick each other in a minute. It will be a case of the Killenny cats."

"It's dreadful," breathed Marcus, "and to think that my poor wife is lying suffering—dying perhaps—upstairs."

To repeat the talk which passed between the two irate confidence men would be to soil our pages with language unfit to print.

As the quarrel progressed the door opened and several Chinamen glided into the room.

"Those fellows mean mischief!" thought Harry. "This affair is taking a strange turn."

The thought had no more than crossed his mind when Louis hurled an epithet at Frank Friend which was a little too rank to be borne.

Then came the climax.

Quick as lightning Friend whipped out a knife.

There was a rush, a cry, and a fall.

French Louis, with a stab wound above the heart, fell face downward to the floor.

"Now I'm it!" roared the maniac—for Friend was little more.

He waved the bloody knife and made a rush at Marcus.

"You'll give up or you'll die!" he shouted.

But he never reached his man.

To his own astonishment as well as that of the Highbinders assembled, up leaped Young King Brady, and seizing the hand which held the knife, twisted the wrist until Friend dropped it, while with his disengaged hand Harry clutched him by the throat.

"Help, you Chinks!" he shouted. "You all know Old King Brady! Beware of his vengeance if you go back on me now!"

Then in the fierce struggle which followed the Highbinders closed around them, jabbering like so many monkeys.

Were they coming as friends or foes?

Young King Brady could not tell, and once again he raised his voice in a wild appeal for help.

* * * * *

"She is dead!"

"No, she has only fainted. Here, force a few drops of this whisky down her throat. It may not revive her for the moment, but it will help to keep her alive."

It was Old King Brady who spoke, in answer to Officer Mallon's exclamation, when Mrs. Merrilove fell back unconscious on the bed.

Big Alice brushed them both aside.

"Hush," she cried. "It is nothing. She is often this

way. What we want is to get her to the hospital. You were right, Mr. Brady. It is the only way to save her. I should have acted long ago."

"She cannot be moved as she is," said the old detective. "Stand aside, please. I'm something of a doctor. This woman's life must be saved."

Producing his whisky flask the detective forced a swallow of its contents between those white, set lips.

The effect was most satisfactory.

Mrs. Merrilove opened her eyes. She appeared to be quite collected when she faintly said:

"Alice! Am I arrested?"

"No, no! We all want to help you, Inez. We are all friends here."

"Alice!"

"Well, Inez?"

"What did they do with him? Poor fellow! How much I have made him suffer! Louis won't harm him, will he? Tell him I will give him all my diamonds. All I ask is that he bring my dear husband to me."

"It shall be done, Inez. It shall be done right away."

Alice drew away from the bed and beckoned to Old King Brady to follow her out into the hall.

"Look here," she said, hurriedly, "there is only one way to save her and that is to do as she asks. See Hop Toy! Below his joint there is a secret passage communicating with this house. It starts from rooms which are now occupied by the Hip Sing Yong, or Highbinders' lodge. I have no doubt that Louis has your partner and my brother-in-law prisoners in the Highbinders' hangout now. Pull the place and lose no time, for on being reunited with her husband my sister's life depends. There, Brady, I have played my last card. I have told you all I know."

"Settled," said Old King Brady. "It shall be done. Mallon, come here!"

Officer Mallon responded on the instant.

"Leave your two men here and come with me," said Old King Brady. "Alice has given me a clew at last. We must pull Hop Toy's."

"It's a tough proposition, Mr. Brady. Hop Toy has a big pull himself. He could break me if he chose."

"He'll never break you. Trust me to prevent it. Come!"

They hurried downstairs and out on Pell street.

The ambulance had not arrived but four policemen had. They were standing with Dicky Dabbs on the opposite side of the way.

Pell street was almost deserted.

The sudden appearance of the police had sent the Chinks and their followers skurrying into their foul hiding places like rats into their holes.

"Follow me, gentlemen," said Old King Brady.

He crossed the street with his men behind him, and they entered the dark hallway leading to Hop Toy's notorious opium joint.

"I'll stay and watch out for the ambulance," said Dicky

Dabbs. "It would queer me in the joints forever to be mixed up in this."

"Let it!" cried Old King Brady. "Nothing better could happen to you. If you are the friend to Harry that you profess to be stick close to me now."

"By thunder, I'll do it!" cried Dicky. "Here goes, hit or miss."

A moment later and Old King Brady, tumbling the Chinese guard into the corner, had kicked in Hop Toy's door.

The opium joint was crowded with smokers, both Chinese and whites.

Many started up, terrified at the sudden appearance of the police, but others were too deep in the dope to pay heed.

"What want? Whatee m'atter, Blady!" screamed Hop Toy, pushing up to them with terror written all over his face.

"Take us to the Highbinders' lodgeroom at once, or we'll pull you in and close your place," thundered Old King Brady.

Hop Toy thought fast.

His decision was reached in just one second.

"Dis way!" he said, flinging open a door. "Down dose stairs."

And then, as Old King Brady, followed by the officers, hurried down the dark stairs, a wild cry for help came up from the depths below.

* * * * *

Young King Brady found himself with a tough contract on hand.

It was not as friends, but as foes that the Highbinders came upon him.

They seized him from behind, and tore him away from Frank Friend, who was crowded into a corner.

"Kill de Blady detective! Kill! Kill!" they shouted. "He queer de Hip Sing Yong!"

"Yes, kill him! Kill him!" shrieked Frank Friend.

"Help! Help! Help!" yelled Marcus at the top of his lungs.

Harry, struggling for all he was worth, never dreamed that the appeal would be heard.

But it was!

Still struggling, he tore himself free, and struck out right and left.

Down went a Chink on the right, over tumbled another on the left.

Harry was just blackening the eye of a third Highbinder when the door flew open, and Old King Brady, followed by Dicky Dabbs and the police, burst into the room.

The Chinks skurried away like so many rats.

Dashing up to Frank Friend, Harry cried:

"Arrest that man! I charge him with attempted murder. Oh, Governor! You came just in time!"

It was indeed as timely an arrival as Old King Brady had ever made, for in the unequal struggle it is more than doubtful if Harry could have held his own.

It was all over in an instant, of course.

Frank Friend was arrested, but French Louis was found to be just breathing his last, slain by the hand of his companion in crime.

No Chinaman was detained, and the officers retreated, much to Hop Toy's relief.

Five minutes later Marcus Merrilove had folded his wife in his strong manly arms.

"There's true love for you," Old King Brady whispered to Harry. "If he can cure her he may get a good wife yet."

The Bradys' trip to Chinatown was ended, and we propose to draw the veil over Marcus Merrilove's private affairs.

Sufficient to say that the suffering woman was removed to the Hudson Street Hospital, her sister accompanying her.

The death of French Louis, which occurred before the Bradys left the Highbinders' lodge room, was not communicated to Alice till later.

Mrs. Merrilove promptly responded to treatment, and in a few days was removed to a private institution, still accompanied by her sister, where both remained for a month.

Later the sisters sailed away with Marcus in his yacht. They made a tour of the world, and were gone a year.

Upon their return Marcus informed Old King Brady that both were entirely cured of the baneful habit which had so nearly wrecked their lives.

Dicky Dabbs, put on his feet by Harry, is now a reformed character, and is doing well at his profession in a Western city.

Frank Friend went to the chair for the murder of French Louis.

It is doubtful if the Bradys ever received a more liberal reward than came to them at Marcus Merrilove's hand.

"You have saved my wife's life and my own," he declared to the detectives.

Perhaps the last was true. Who can tell?

Certainly great good came to the young multimillionaire through the Bradys' trip to Chinatown.

THE END.

Read "THE BRADYS AND DIAMOND DAN; OR, THE MYSTERY OF THE JOHN STREET JEWELS," which will be the next number (292) of "Secret Service."

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