

# SECRET SERVICE

OLD AND YOUNG KING BRADY, DETECTIVES.

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No. 318.

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Price 5 Cents.

## THE BRADYS DESERT TRAIL; OR, LOST ON THE DEADMAN'S RUN. *By A NEW-YORK DETECTIVE.*



The Indians rushed in, seizing the Bradys, who were too weak to offer resistance. "Let the old man drink if he will," cried the Greaser, "but look out for the young fellow; there's fight in him yet."



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## THE BRADYS' DESERT TRAIL

OR,

### Lost on the Deadman's Run.

BY A NEW YORK DETECTIVE.

#### CHAPTER I.

##### THE BRADYS' "ROARING" WELCOME AT SODA SPRINGS.

Late upon a certain dreary afternoon in the month of April two men mounted upon bronchos might have been seen riding over the desert some forty miles southwest of Reno, Nevada, at no great distance from the famous Tonopah district, which has of late become so famed for its wonderful output of gold.

The elder of these travelers was a man of peculiarly striking appearance.

Tall, with strongly-marked features, he was a person who would have attracted attention anywhere from his personal appearance alone, but his dress made him more marked still.

He wore a long blue coat of odd and antiquated pattern.

An old white felt hat with an unusually broad brim helped to render him still more striking, not to mention an old-fashioned stock and pointed standup collar.

There is but one such man in America, and his quaint makeup is so well known that it scarcely needs for us to mention his name and business.

He was Old King Brady, the world-famous detective, whose remarkable work has attracted general attention now for many years.

His companion was a good-looking young fellow, dressed comfortably for his business and the rough country in which he was now traveling.

This was Young King Brady, partner and pupil of the old detective, or "Harry," as he is named.

Once more the Bradys were on the warpath in the far West, but this time they were out upon an unknown mission.

Engaged by a prominent Wall street multi-millionaire, they had been ordered to report at the Jessie mine, a val-

uable gold property located in this remote region not far from the town of Soda Springs.

Proceeding direct to Reno via the Union and Central Pacific railroads, the Bradys had there purchased horses, after their usual custom, and were now making the best of their way to their destination over the dreary trail.

"What a horrible country it is, Governor!" remarked Harry, looking off at the many isolated ranges of low, treeless mountains, which would seem to have been gathered up by some giant hand and scattered at random over the sandy, alkali-covered plain.

"The worst in the world, unless one excepts the desert of Sahara," replied Old King Brady.

"It makes me sick to look at it. This tiresome sagebrush gives me the horrors. If there is anything I hate it is a job in Nevada, but we have to take it as it comes."

"Surely, Harry, we could not refuse a call from so good a customer as General Dutton."

"Certainly not. That would have been impossible. All the same, I think he might have given us some *clw* to the nature of our job."

"He was just leaving for the South. He had no time for an interview, so his secretary reported when he called me up on the 'phone."

"Tell me, Governor, are all these reports we have heard about the gold finds in this Tonopah district correct?"

"They are, substantially so. In the line of gold discoveries there has never been anything like it for high-grade ore. In the Tonopah country it is a poor mine which does not yield ore averaging two hundred dollars to the ton, and several of the mines have ore which averages a great deal higher than that. Millions have been taken out already, and yet the work is but just begun."

"All of which rather goes to give the lie to those croakers who are forever saying that more money is sunk in mines than ever comes out of them."

"Such people speak without knowledge, and are consequently fools. All the real money there is in the world came originally from mines. The annual output of gold is constantly increasing. There never was nor never will be a better investment than a good gold mine. It is literally making money to work it; but those who invest in cheap, well-advertised mining stocks are fools."

"Of course. Around every successful mine fraudulent ores are found to spring into existence."

"Certainly, and fraudulent experts are ever to be found ready to testify to their value if they are paid for it; but it strikes me, Harry, that we are nearing our journey's end. Surely those are houses in the distance, or is it only the mirage?"

Young King Brady, producing his powerful fieldglass, surveyed the distant objects which had attracted his partner's attention.

"Yes, they are houses," he said. "Still, it may not be Soda Springs."

"As I understand it there is no other mining camp in this immediate vicinity. But we shall soon know."

They pushed on and were soon able to see the little settlement more distinctly.

Located directly on the desert between two ranges of mountains, it seemed to consist of some fifty or sixty frame buildings, none of any great size.

Up on the side of the range at the left they could now discern several quartz mills and other mining buildings.

One group, larger than the rest, Old King Brady mentally put down as the Jessie, and he learned later that in this he was correct.

It was just before sundown when the Bradys rode into the town.

Without having the faintest suspicion of such a thing, they were to be treated to a reception which was as well deserved as it was unexpected.

Across the main street, stretched from the high, false front of the "Desert Home" to the "Golden Palace," the two saloons of the place, was a strip of muslin upon which had been painted in big black letters:

"WELCOME TO THE BRADYS."

From each saloon big flags were flying, and there were many smaller ones projecting from the store fronts.

"Come!" cried Harry, "our fame has gone before us, it would seem."

"Evidently," replied Old King Brady, with a smile.

"If we don't know why we are here it would seem as if these people did."

"There can be no doubt about it, and I am quite curious to know what it all can mean."

There were quite a number of men hanging around the outside of the saloons and others going and coming from the different stores.

All at once a tall, husky fellow with a hat wider brimmed

even than Old King Brady's turned and stared at the approaching horsemen.

Suddenly he shouted something and then everybody else turned to look, too.

"It's the Bradys! It's the Bradys!" the detectives could hear them shout.

"Heavens, Harry!" exclaimed Old King Brady, "this isn't much like our usual style of sliding into one of these Western mining towns unobserved.

"Well, I should say not," replied Harry. "I wonder what it all means! This beats the band!"

As there appeared to be no regular hotel in the place, the Bradys rode up in front of the Desert Home and reined in under the "Welcome" banner.

They were instantly surrounded by a crowd of men.

The miner who had first observed them acting as spokesman, pushed forward with outstretched hand as the detectives dismounted.

"Good-evening, gentlemen!" he exclaimed, with a strong accent upon the last syllable. "You be the Bradys, I take it? No? Yes?"

"I am old King Brady, and this is my partner," replied the old detective, shaking the outstretched hand.

This was enough to start the crowd going.

"Hooray for the Bradys!" they shouted. "Three cheers for the biggest detectives in the world!"

The Bradys were right in it, so it would seem.

It was of no use for them to protest. They were in the hands of their friends, and that was all there was to it.

Their horses were taken from them and led away, they knew not where.

The detectives themselves were conducted into the Desert Home, much to the disgust of the patrons of the Golden Palace, who loudly insisted that theirs was the proper drink dispensary to receive them.

Once inside there was nothing for it but to treat and be treated, but the treating part did not work, for the crowd would not have things that way, and the detectives were informed that they "couldn't spend a cent in Soda Springs that night."

The man who first discovered the detectives introduced himself as Pete Potts, and then took upon himself to introduce everyone else.

To describe all that was said and done is needless.

The Bradys put in an hour of it before the miners would let go, and through it all, in spite of their close listening, they could not make out what it all meant, or what was expected of them at Soda Springs.

There appeared to be a highly popular girl missing.

There was talk about finding the "Colonel," and that if the Bradys could not do it nobody could.

There were also many allusions to "the gold."

Thus while they could gather no details, the detectives learned in a general way that they were expected to find stolen gold and a girl that nobody else had been able to find.

Harry jumped at the conclusion that the "Colonel" had

run off with both, but all was mystery when the detectives at last managed to shake off their admirers and get Pete Potts alone in the room back of the Desert Home, which had been prepared for their reception.

"And now, Mr. Potts," said Old King Brady, "all this is very pleasant and we appreciate it very, very much; but I am going to tell you a secret. We came here consigned to Dr. Dunphy, but why, we haven't the least idea."

"Gee!" cried the miner. "Is that so?"

"It is so. When and where can we see the doctor. That's the question now, Mr. Potts."

"Now say, please don't call me Mr. Potts, but just Pete, plain Pete," drawled the miner. "If there is anything I hate it is to be called by my last name, which is sure the worst ever."

"All right, Pete; you shall have it your way, but about the doctor?"

"Waal, the doctor is up to the Jessie most likely. He never goes nowhere. Orders was to take you up thar fust thing in the morning if you arrived to-night."

"Is there any reason why we shouldn't go to-night?"

"None in life, Mr. Brady, except that it's a blamed rough trail, and thar hain't no sleeping accommodations for you up thar."

"What is the distance?"

"Five."

"Miles?"

"Yes."

"Would it be possible to get a guide?"

"Sure; that's me."

"I think, then, that as soon as we have eaten our supper we will go."

"O. K. I'm with you."

"But tell me, Pete, what is this thing all about? We were called suddenly to this case by General Dutton, and he had no time to explain to us. You know the general, I suppose?"

"Know him! Waal, I guess! Blamed high-toned snoozer! Gaul busted Wall street thief! Know him, yes! 'Twas him what got the Jessie away from Jed Duckle who located it for less than half of what it was worth. Gaul bust his soul, if he ever dar's to show hisself in Sody Springs he'll get a roarin' reception, too; but it won't be the kind we give you uns to-night. No, no!"

Old King Brady changed his tactics at once.

Praise up a New York or Boston millionaire who has touched mining investments to the average Western miner and you usually put your foot in it.

That it was so in this case was easily seen.

"Never mind about General Dutton, Pete," said the old detective. "Just tell me about this business of the girl and the gold?"

But the Bradys did not get their answer then.

Pete had turned sulky.

The mere mention of General Dutton's name had been enough to accomplish that, it would seem.

"If you don't know, then I'm not telling yer," he

growled. "Let Doc Dunphy attend to his own business. It's as much as I can do to attend to mine."

"Right," replied the old detective, promptly letting the matter drop.

Nor did he attempt to renew the subject again at any time during their five-mile ride up into the mountain to the Jessie mine.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE BRADYS STUDY THEIR CASE.

The Jessie mine was a paying proposition. Indeed, the whole region around Soda Springs was that.

At the Jessie there was everything in the way of modern machinery which could be carted across the desert and dragged up the mountainside.

Lights twinkled from the office windows and from the window of the big boarding-house as the Bradys approached.

Pete Potts, who worked there, was enthusiastic in his praise of the way things had been managed by "Boss Newland" in the past, but he had very little to say about Dr. Dunphy.

The Bradys were left to form the conclusion that the doctor was not altogether a popular man.

They halted in front of the office, and, leaving Pete to take charge of the horses, ascended the steps and knocked, as the door was fastened.

They were immediately admitted by a young man with a pen behind his ear.

"Oh! the Bradys!" he exclaimed when the old detective introduced himself. "Dr. Dunphy will be glad to see you."

He knocked at an inner door.

"Show them right in!" called a pleasant voice behind the door.

Then it was the Bradys' welcome by Dr. D., and it proved as hearty in its way as their welcome at Soda Springs.

The doctor, who was a little man with round face and gold spectacles, closed the door and, having placed chairs for the detectives, said:

"I am very glad you come up to-night, gentlemen. The sooner this matter is taken in hand the better; it is now two weeks since Colonel Newland and his daughter disappeared."

"Doctor, we know nothing whatever about the business we have been retained for," said Old King Brady, and he went on to explain why.

"That's just like General Dutton," replied the doctor. "He is a most arbitrary man."

"We have had several cases for him. We have always found him a fair man."

"Very likely. Well, it is not a matter of much consequence, I suppose. The case is easily explained."

"We await your explanation, Doctor."

"It is like this. Colonel Newland and his daughter Ma-

rietta, a remarkably pretty girl of about eighteen, who was immensely popular with the miners in this region, have mysteriously disappeared, and with them has gone a shipment of gold bullion amounting to over one hundred and fifty thousand dollars."

"And who is this Colonel Newland?" Old King Brady asked.

"He is the superintendent of this mine," replied the doctor. "I am only acting as such, having been engaged simply as chemist and assayer."

"And what is supposed to have become of the colonel?"

"It is generally believed that he has been captured by some band of outlaws and carried off into the desert across what is known as the Deadman's Run, a horrible country in which many a prospector has perished."

"And why should the outlaws take their prisoners and the captured gold into such a country?"

"Because beyond it lies a better country, where there are springs and a chance for farming. This region, the location of which is not definitely known, has still been repeatedly heard of by us all. It is believed to be rich in mineral deposits, and it is known that there are outlaws living in there. We call it Happy Valley, but just where it lies no one who knows will tell."

"It is known that outlaws live there?"

"That is certain. They are working the mines in a crude way and are getting rich."

"But who are they?"

"That no one knows. Prospectors don't tell their business. They come and go mysteriously. Some of them may be in Soda Springs at this present moment for all we can tell."

"I understand; but we are getting a bit ahead of our story, Doctor. What are the circumstances of the disappearance of Colonel Newland and his daughter?"

"Briefly these," replied the doctor. "Colonel Newland is an expert mining man who has been employed here as superintendent ever since General Dutton took hold of the Jessie. With his daughter he occupied rooms overhead here and was very popular with his men; while I, on the contrary, do not seem to be able to make myself so."

"About two weeks ago Miss Newland, having determined to go East to visit friends, her father undertook to escort her as far as Reno. It was time for a bullion shipment, and they started to accompany the two bullion wagons in a buggy. That is really all we know about them. They never reached Reno, the buggy was found deserted and the horse wandering about. No trace has been discovered of the bullion wagons beyond a trail leading down into the desert, directly contrary to the direction it should lead."

"How far has the trail been followed?"

"Twenty-odd miles, and there it loses itself on the borax plains, where the wind blows the alkali about to such an extent that no trail can last long."

"How many men accompanied the colonel and his daughter?"

"Four; two as drivers and two as guards."

"They were reliable?"

"Entirely so. They were among the best men we have at the mine."

"And this is all?"

"Absolutely all we know. Every means has been exhausted to learn the fate of these people. There seems to be no doubt that they were captured by the Happy Valley outlaws. More than likely the colonel and his men are dead and the girl carried a captive into this mysterious valley. Doubtless she was known to her captors. I think it very likely that some of them may have worked here at the Jessie. We are changing men constantly. Very often some old prospector applies for a job, and if he seems to be any good at all he is usually engaged."

"And we are expected to find these people, I suppose."

"Or to learn their fate and to recover the gold if you can."

"A strenuous proposition, Doctor."

"I can imagine nothing more difficult."

"If it is as you say, then it is a great pity that our coming has been made so widely known."

"That comes of General Dutton wiring his agent at Reno. Tom Wells is a chuckle-headed fellow; he was very much in love with Marietta, who would have nothing to do with him. He goes around raving about the girl all the while. He has spread the information of your coming broadcast. Well, it can make little difference. These miners are rough fellows, but they are, as a rule, good-hearted. Marietta was a great horsewoman, and so became known to everyone. There was not a man around Soda Springs who would have hurt a hair of her head."

"But all the same, if these outlaws have their spies here it may make us a whole lot of trouble. We have been given a rousing reception. Everybody knows that we are here and what for. I dare say half the men in Soda Springs expect to be organized into a band to-morrow to go with us down into the desert."

"Mr. Brady," said the doctor, gravely, "while you may have the reputation of usually being right in your conjectures, and doubtless are, there you are certainly wrong. You will find it difficult even to get one man to go down on the Deadman's Run with you, even for the sake of their favorite, for all firmly believe that it means death."

"Is it so?"

"It certainly is."

"And is there no water at all on the Deadman's Run?"

"Very little at any time, none at all for nine months in the year."

"Now should be the time."

"March would have been better. Our snows in the mountains are about all melted and this soil absorbs the water which runs down out of the mountains as soon as it finds the level. I tell you frankly, gentlemen, that, much as I respect Colonel Newland and his daughter, I would not venture on the search for this Happy Valley for any money."

"And yet these outlaws cross the Deadman's Run and live?"

"It is generally so believed. Who can tell if it is true? The valley may be only a myth."

"Then you can render us no assistance, Doctor?"

"None whatever. I believe your mission to be a fool-hardy one, and I so told Tom Wells when I heard you had been engaged."

"Would not he go? It is a pity we did not know of the man while we were in Reno."

"You don't want to know him. He is of no account whatever—half a fool."

"Still, Doctor, we shall go into this thing. You say Mr. Wells has followed up the trail?"

"I didn't say it, but he has, or at least he claims so."

"I should like very much to meet him and hear what he has to say."

"It wouldn't do you a bit of good. Tom is just a plain, every-day fool, and why General Dutton keeps him in his employ is more than I can imagine."

"Still I hang to my point, Doctor. It is a way I have."

"I tell you what it is, Doctor," said Harry, breaking in for the first time. "When Old King Brady sets his mind on anything there is mighty little use arguing. I found that out long ago."

"Oh, very well," said Dr. Dunphy, evidently somewhat sniffed. "That being the case, I haul off. Indeed, if Tom can tell you anything I shall be only too happy."

"I don't suppose there is any way of getting at him except to go back to Reno," remarked Old King Brady.

"Oh, yes there is."

"You can get him on the 'phone? I noticed the line across the desert."

"Yes, that is our line. It is also used by some of the other mines around here. I can call up Barney Biggins' faro bank at Reno. Tom is almost always in there of an evening. Shall I do so?"

"If you please," said Old King Brady, and the doctor went into the outer office then.

"What do you think of it all, Governor?" whispered Harry.

"Tell you later," breathed the old detective.

"Shall you go down into the desert?"

"If we can, yes. It won't be the first time I have tackled the Nevada desert, although I never happened to hit it in this particular part."

The telephone bell was ringing now.

"Not in town?" they heard the doctor call.

And then it was:

"What do you say? Tom has disappeared?"

Old King Brady gave Harry a significant glance.

In a moment the doctor returned looking puzzled.

"Mr. Brady, are you a wizard?" he said.

"No wizard," replied the old detective, quietly. "Nor did I ever hear of this man Tom Wells until I entered your office to-night."

"It is very strange."

"What is strange?"

"Tom Wells rode out of Reno on his horse three days ago, saying that he was coming down to Soda Springs, and hasn't been seen since."

"Exactly," replied Old King Brady. "It is always so. The man who makes the most noise over a case like this is the man who should be most closely watched. All the same, it is by no means sure that this man has done anything more than to go and blow off his head through love of the missing girl."

"It looks as though Tom was mixed up in the matter in some way or another," replied the doctor. "It certainly does."

There was considerable talk after that, but it is hardly worth recording here.

Dr. Dunphy informed the Bradys that Pete Potts was right, and that it would not be possible to accommodate them at the mine that night.

As it was evident that nothing could be gained from the doctor beyond the information he had furnished Old King Brady soon announced his intention to depart.

"Shall I see you again?" asked the doctor, as they took leave of him.

"I doubt it," replied Old King Brady, "unless, indeed, we are fortunate enough to come back with Colonel Newland and his daughter."

"And it may prove so," said the doctor, "but I am afraid that can never be. I judge you do not intend throwing up the case then?"

"Certainly not!" replied Old King Brady. "When were the Bradys ever known to do a thing like that?"

The detectives mounted then and rode off with Pete Potts.

"Waal, gents!" drawled Pete, as soon as they had started, "I s'pose you know all about the business now?"

"Yes, Pete, we know all about it," replied Old King Brady, quietly.

"And what be you going to do?"

"To follow this desert trail."

"Gee!" cried Pete. "That's what the boys all said you would do—at least most of 'em did. I hope Doc Dunphy has give it to you straight. I s'pose you know that there hain't one chance in a hundred that you will come back alive?"

"We know that, Pete. Just the same we go. How many men do you suppose we shall be able to raise in Soda Springs who will be willing to go with us for Marietta Newland's sake?"

"Just one," replied Pete, grimly.

"No more?"

"Not a blame one."

"Does this man know the country? Has he ever crossed the Deadman's Run?"

"He knows just as much about the country as any man around these here parts; he has tried three times to cross the Deadman's Run and has failed each time."

"So?"

"Yes."

"And what is his name?"

"His name?" demanded Pete. "So long as he is willing to go does it make any difference about his name?"

"Surely if he is to be in our company we want to know who he is."

"Very good, then, you shall know. His name begins with a big P."

"You?"

"Yes siree. Even so. That are one man is me—Pete Potts!"

### CHAPTER III.

#### THE BRADYS START ON THE DESERT TRAIL.

"Pete, you're a brick!" cried Harry. "You are the sort of man I like to meet."

"Yes," added Old King Brady, "it is refreshing to find one brave man; but I am not saying a word against any of our friends in Soda Springs, Pete. I suppose it is a very dangerous business to attempt to follow up this desert trail?"

"You bet it is," replied Pete. "After you strike the borax country it is just taking your life in your hands."

"How far is it from the beginning of the borax country to this Deadman's Run?" Old King Brady asked.

"Something like fifty miles," replied Pete.

"How long are you in the borax?"

"Twelve miles."

"Has anybody been through the borax looking for the trail of these bullion wagons beyond?"

"Yes."

"Who?"

"Me."

"Oh, you have already been there?"

"Yes."

"Find the trail?"

"Not a trace of it."

"Still you think these outlaws did the job?"

"Sure they did."

"Have you any idea who they are?"

"No. They don't never show up around here. They hang out around Carson City or Bodie, or some of them places."

"Then how came they to suddenly appear in this region do you suppose?"

"Oh, that's all right."

"Now, Pete, these mysterious hints go for nothing. You want to save Colonel Newland if he is still alive?"

"Sure I do. The colonel treated me white. As for Miss Marietta, if she had been my own darter, and I hain't got none, not having no wife, I couldn't have loved her no better than what I did."

"Then speak right out. Whatever you say will never go any further, you may depend."

"Waal, then, Mr. Brady, them fellers got their tip that the bullion was going forward."

"And whom do you suspect?"

"Sure you won't give me away, Cap?"

"Bank on it, Pete, you can."

"Then all I've got to say is the doctor is mean enough to do it, and I believe he did."

Old King Brady rode on in silence for a few minutes."

"You don't believe that?" said Pete at last.

"I'm sure I don't know," replied Old King Brady. "I found the doctor a very civil man."

"Civil be blamed! Did he try to urge you to back out of this?"

"Well, he did."

"Of course he did. He'd just let the matter rest as it is. Coz why, he's got the colonel's job, if nothing else. Oh, I know the man clear through."

It was evidently a case of jealousy and nothing more.

Old King Brady changed the subject then.

"What about this Happy Valley, do you believe in it, Pete?" he asked.

"Sure I do," replied Pete.

"But how can these outlaws go in and out over the Deadman's Run if it is so dangerous?"

"Oh, they know the trail. They know where the springs are located. It isn't so dangerous for them. Besides, ten chances to one there's some dead easy way of getting in and out. Oh, you can bet your life on it, Mr. Brady, the Happy Valley is no dream."

"Did you ever know anyone who had been in there?"

"I did."

"Who?"

"Waal, now, you hit me hard. It was my brother Bill, but he's dead and he wouldn't never tell me nothing about the trail nor who bossed the gang."

"How long since he died?"

"A year."

"Then there is no help in that quarter?"

"No. Bill was shot in Barney Biggins' faro bank at Reno. He died with his boots on. I allus told him he would."

"Then you who have investigated this situation so thoroughly, Pete, see nothing else but for us to try the desert trail alone with you?"

"There isn't any other way, Mr. Brady, and it won't succeed unless by good luck we hit it, or ketch one of the gang and make him show us the trail; or ketch an Indian who may know the way across the Deadman's Run. Once we get across I believe we could find that ar' valley, but s'posin' we did, what good is it likely to do us? Can we stand up against a big gang?"

By this time they had reached the foot of the mountain and were about to strike across to Soda Springs, whose lights could be seen twinkling in the distance about two miles away.



They had no sooner turned their horses in that direction when:

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Three shots came ringing out behind them. It was the greatest wonder in the world that one of the party was not hit. Their escape can only be attributed to the darkness which prevailed.

"What the mischief does that mean?" roared Pete Potts, and he had other things to say, too, which would not look so well in print.

But there was no stopping to talk.

The Bradys were too old birds at this sort of business not to realize that the one thing to do was to clap spurs to their horses and light out.

They were not followed, contrary to their expectations.

It was not until they had put a good mile between themselves and the mountain that speed was in the least relaxed.

But during this rapid run Harry had several times looked back to see if they were being followed.

Such was not the case.

He could not see a soul.

"Slow down, we are safe now," said Old King Brady at last, adding:

"Pete Potts, who could that have been? Have you any idea?"

"You bet your socks I hain't got no idea," retorted Bill. "If I had I'd blamed soon spit it out."

They rode on in silence.

"What do you think about it?" demanded Pete at last.

"Someone trying to kill us," replied Old King Brady, abruptly.

"That's sure so, boss."

"Looks as though all the friends of the outlaws were not located in Happy Valley just now," added Harry.

"Too many know our errand in this place," replied Old King Brady. "If it would do the least good I would go back to Reno and make a start from there."

"Useless on account of the telephone," said Harry.

"Exactly. We shall have to keep a sharp eye out, that is all. Pete, when can we start?"

"Well, boss, I shall have to go back to the Jessie in the morning to report and get permission from Dock Dunphy to go. I don't want to lose my job, you see."

"Isn't there a telephone from the mine to the Springs?"

"There was a line, but it's out of business just now."

"Still you don't have to go. I have an order from General Dutton directing the doctor to supply men, horses and provisions; he cannot refuse you."

"You don't intend to call upon him for anything, do you?" questioned Harry.

"No. What I would like to do is to fit out to-night. Pete can send word that he is going off with us. The doctor dare not discharge him. What do you say, Pete? Could you get together a camping outfit during the night, so that we could make an early start?"

"I think I could," replied Pete, "and I agree with you, boss; it's the only way."

"Of course it is," replied Old King Brady. "After what has happened we must not be seen leaving the Springs."

They soon reached the town and, going directly to their room at the Desert Home, left Pete, to whom Old King Brady had supplied money to do the rest.

As soon as they had locked the door Harry began his questions.

"Do you think the doctor could have been responsible for those shots?" he asked.

"No, no! Never!" said Old King Brady. "Don't let Pete's jealous talk influence you in the least, Harry. The doctor is all right, you may depend."

"Then who could it have been?"

"Useless to speculate, my boy; quite useless. We might suspect this man Wells, but after all it would be mere guesswork. The best thing we can do is to turn in, get what sleep we can and be ready for our Desert Trail."

It still wanted an hour of daylight when the Bradys were aroused by a knocking on their door.

"That you, Pete?" demanded Old King Brady, instantly aroused.

"Yes, boss. Time to get up," was the reply.

"Is everything ready?"

"All ready."

"Very good. We will be with you in ten minutes' time."

"Get out the window, boss, and sneak through the alley.

You'll find me waiting. I don't want a soul to hear us go," Pete whispered through the keyhole in a sepulchral voice.

"All right," replied Old King Brady, and he and Harry immediately got up and began to dress.

Pete met them at the end of the alley and they hurried to the outskirts of the town, where they found four horses ready.

Two were their own, the one Pete had ridden was with them; also a strong packhorse which was loaded down with tent, bags of provisions and other things.

Two kegs of water were slung over the saddle, and everything appeared to be in readiness for an immediate start.

"I wish we had more water," remarked Pete, "but it is all we can carry."

"Yes, the horse is loaded pretty well as it is," replied Old King Brady.

"The supply should last us across the desert all right."

"The coming back will be the worst," remarked Harry.

"Unless we reach the Happy Valley we shan't need any water coming back," replied Old King Brady, grimly.

"And that's cold truth," growled Pete, "but here's hoping for success."

Pete pulled out a flask and helped himself to a good swig.

"Have some?" he asked, remembering his companions then.

"Not a drop," replied Old King Brady, "and I advise you not to hit that stuff too heavy; it won't help us a bit."

"There isn't enough here to do me any harm," retorted Pete, and, concealing the flask, he mounted.

The Bradys followed his example and they rode off over the desert.

Desert did we call it?

Indeed it was so, but there was sagebrush here, and Pete knew where there were springs.

This was fertile country compared with that in which they were to find themselves soon.

Their way for the first hour led them toward Reno.

At last they reached a point where Pete halted, and here they waited for the dawn, as their guide was anxious for them to see the beginning of the trail where it turned off toward the south.

It was well defined. The Bradys could distinctly see the imprints of the wagon wheels in the sand.

Pete explained that great care had been taken not to disturb the impression, and fortunately there had been no heavy wind since the disappearance of Colonel Newland and his daughter.

They did not start immediately.

Old King Brady spent half an hour examining the ground thereabout.

"There was a band of several mounted men here when the wagons turned off," he at last answered.

"Yes," replied Pete. "I seen them hoofmarks, but you must remember that lots of fellers have ridden up here since."

"I'm making due allowance for that," said Old King Brady. "See, these prints run south right alongside the wagon ruts. They are indistinct, it is true; but still there they are. Come, I am through here. Let us get in."

The twenty-mile run to the borax country was soon covered.

Such a desolate region as they now entered Harry had never seen, despite of the fact that once before he had been in the borax country at another point.

Here the old detective halted again.

"Now, Pete," he said, "what direction did you take when you crossed here before?"

"Due south," replied Pete, "and that's the way we want to go."

"It's just the way we don't go," replied Old King Brady. "We strike southwest and head for that range of mountains on our right."

"And why for?" demanded Pete. "I don't see no sense in that ar'. The shortest route across the borax is due south, as everybody knows."

"Can't help it," replied Old King Brady. "I'm going for that hut."

"Hut! What hut?" cried Pete, in amazement. "Thar hain't a livin' soul in this stretch. You don't see no hut, boss."

"Look on the side of the range over there," said Old King Brady, pointing.

"No, not in that direction," he added. "Don't you see those two pinon trees which stand out so boldly halfway up the side of the mountain?"

"Yes, I do; but I don't see no hut between them," replied Pete.

"There is something between them," said Harry.

"I did not say that the hut was between the trees," continued Old King Brady, "but just the same such is the case."

"That ar's a rock!" cried Pete. "Who would live up thar—who could?"

"That is not for me to say," replied the old detective, "but the thing we see is a hut, all right. Here, let us have a look through my glass."

Old King Brady then produced his powerful fieldglass and handed it to the guide.

"Waal, it is a hut," cried Pete. "Long as I've been around these parts I never seen that before. How could you ever see that without a glass, boss?"

"My friend," replied Old King Brady, "my eyes have long since been trained to see things that others can't see. Come, let us be going. We want to know who lives in that hut, and if we are fortunate enough to find someone there we want to know what that someone saw on the day when Colonel Newland and his daughter disappeared."

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE DISCOVERY OF THE LONE MOUNTAIN.

No pen can depict the horrible desolation of the vast borax plains of Nevada.

Those who cross this singular state in the parlor cars of the Central Pacific railroad may go on their way to more highly powdered lands, thinking that they have seen the alkali, but they know nothing about it.

The surveyors of the C. P. R. R. ran their lines along the Humboldt river, and, although this country is desolate enough and the ground thickly enough strewn with the strange deposit so generally found throughout the state, to the south it is many, many times worse.

The region into which the Bradys had now entered carried upon the level desert a deposit of powdered borax from three to five inches deep.

It was wonderful to look off upon it.

Anyone would have supposed that it had been snowing here who was not familiar with the country.

But when one comes closer he is very quickly undeceived.

For miles and miles the whitened plain stretched out before the Bradys now.

Stirred up by the horses' hoofs, the dust of the borax rose in clouds, producing an intolerable thirst and causing the most painful choking sensations at the start.

This, however, soon passes away, but the thirst remains.

To drink much is almost fatal, for the dust collecting in one's mouth is dissolved and swallowed, very often producing serious results.

Before drinking one wants to thoroughly cleanse the

mouth, and that, when water is scarce, is not always an easy thing to do.

The best way is to endure the thirst as long as possible, for then one grows accustomed to it.

The Bradys knew all this and did not propose tapping their water cask then.

Pete took another pull at his flask and let it go at that. It would be time enough to tap the water later on.

But all three tied handkerchiefs over their mouths, which, excluding the worst of the dust, helped some.

"How far do you reckon it is to that hut, Pete?" asked Old King Brady.

"It can't be less than twenty miles," replied Pete. "It might be a good bit more. It's all-fired hard to tell in this country."

"What causes all this stuff to collect on the ground, Governor?" asked Harry, his voice sounding thick behind the handkerchief.

"Geology tells us that in ancient times the Gulf of California extended up into this region," replied the old detective. "Once this was the bottom of the sea. The borax is formed from the salt deposits remaining in the sand, but just what the process is I am not chemist enough to explain."

"Say, that ar's all nonsense," put in Pete. "The Indians know a blamed sight better. There was a time when it rained soddy. This here stuff was all formed up in the clouds."

"Well, well!" said Old King Brady, "so that was the way, was it? I'm only going by the books, that's all."

"Books be blamed!" sneered Pete. "What do them fellers know about Nevada what writ them? A lot of tenderfoots. They hain't depended upon. What they write is only a pack of lies. If you want to get the true history of this country you want to strike an Indian. His people have lived here since the time of the flood."

"Right!" replied Old King Brady. "Commend me to an Indian for accurate information every time."

"Now you're laffin at me," growled Pete. "All the same, what I say is true."

"I side with Pete," put in Harry, anxious to make peace.

"And I don't propose to do much talking," added Old King Brady. "It only lets more borax into my mouth, and I get enough of that as it is."

To describe this ride through the borax country in detail would make it almost as monotonous for the reader as it was for the Bradys.

There was no such thing as making a halt.

The lives of the horses, if not their own, depended upon the rapidity of their run, and the detectives put it through to the foot of the mountains without drawing rein.

Long before they reached the range they lost sight of the hut, and even the two pinon trees were no longer to be seen.

Just before they reached the range Harry made a welcome discovery.

There was a stretch of green grass growing at the foot of the rocks.

Pete refused to believe it when Harry first called his attention to the fact, but it was real.

A stream came trickling down the mountain, and, running through a shallow depression for a few hundred yards, lost itself in the sand.

"There you are," said Old King Brady, removing the handkerchief from his mouth. "Now you can see that all this country needs is fresh water to make it as fertile as any other. Pete, does it ever rain here?"

"I never seen nor heard tell of no rain much south of Sody Springs, boss," was the reply, "and there is blamed little there."

"Except up in the mountains," added Old King Brady.

"Except in the mountains, of course," replied Pete. "It rains and snows both up thar."

"And that's the strange part of it," said Harry. "I can't understand why it should snow in the mountains and not on the plains."

"Don't ask me to explain," replied Old King Brady. "It is entirely beyond my knowledge."

"Say, what's that ar'?" demanded Pete.

"Heavens! The trail!" cried Old King Brady.

And it was fortunate that he struck the wagon-tracks just as he did, for he certainly would have had trouble in explaining his words to Pete.

And the trail was real.

In the grassy ground the prints of the wagon-wheels were plainly seen.

There were two sets of them.

Besides these there were many hoofmarks.

It was too evident to be mistaken.

They had stumbled upon the trail of the missing bullion wagons on the other side of the borax country.

It was one big point scored.

"Mr. Brady, you are a wizard for me," cried Pete, highly delighted. "I wouldn't have believed that they could have come so much out of their way."

"Out of their way nothing!" replied Old King Brady. "Because you have been in the habit of striking due south across the borax it don't follow that everyone else must do the same. This spring was the attraction. See, here is where the horses drank."

"You can read the trail as well as I can," exclaimed Pete.

Old King Brady thought that he could read it a great deal better, but it would not have done to put his thoughts into words.

Here they drank and spread out their provisions.

Pete acting as cook soon had a fairly good dinner ready, which, after their disagreeable experience, the detectives greatly enjoyed.

"And now for the hut, Harry," said the old detective, when it was over. "There has got to be some mountain climbing done."

"It's a big proposition," said Harry. "We have lost the range of the place altogether."



"You won't be able to find it in a week," growled Pete. "We might search the whole blamed range and then fail."

"We shall have to do nothing of the sort," said Old King Brady, emphatically. "If that hut was ever inhabited, which, of course, it must have been, then the path up to it is surely somewhere near this spring, unless there is another spring near at hand."

"Which there isn't, you can bet your life," said Pete.

"We'll go on the search right now," added the old detective. "Pete, we are taking no chances with the horses. You will stay here and guard them. Don't you stir till we come back."

"Very good," replied the guide. "I shall be comfortable here. Only thing is, don't you expect me to hunt for you if you don't come back."

"And don't you go off and leave us," replied Old King Brady.

"Trust me, boss," said Pete. "While there is a mouthful of grub left I don't stir."

The Bradys then started off to find the mountain trail.

They skirted the base of the range for a considerable distance.

Everywhere it was just a mass of rugged rocks until they had covered about half a mile, when they came suddenly upon a break in the ledge some four feet wide.

"This is it," said Old King Brady, "and someone has been here recently. Look, Harry! you can see a man's foot-prints in the sand."

"That's what, Governor. Who can he be?"

"I look to find Indians up there."

"But how could anyone support themselves in such a country?"

"Oh, there is game up in the mountains, no doubt. It takes very little to keep a Digger Indian, and our friends of the hut can hardly belong to any other tribe."

There was but little difficulty in ascending along the seam which nature had opened in this mighty ledge.

Indeed the rock seemed to form natural steps, and the Bradys scrambled on until they had gained a height of several hundred feet.

They now came out upon a level stretch which, though exceedingly narrow, seemed to run for a considerable distance along the line of the range.

"There are your two pinon trees," said Old King Brady, pointing to the right.

"And there's the hut, by thunder!" added Harry. "Governor, it takes you to be a guide. As for that fellow down there, he isn't worth two cents."

"He knows nothing of the country," replied Old King Brady, "and he is horribly afraid of it, which makes him worth less than he otherwise would be. But now for the hut. I can see no one. Chances are we shall find it deserted."

"But the footprints. They were fresh."

"I don't mean that the hut is not occupied, but anyone who would want to live here must have some reason for wishing to keep out of the way. No doubt we have been

seen and these people have already gone into hiding, wherever they may be."

They pushed on toward the hut and reached it without having seen a soul.

It was a mere shack built of old weather-worn boards. Inside there was a bench, an iron pot hanging in the open fireplace, a bundle of blankets in one corner, a rude table which had evidently been made on the spot, and a few odds and ends in the way of dishes and cooking utensils.

Not a soul was to be seen, but there was the remains of a fire smoldering on the hearth, which proved that the occupants of the hut could not be long gone.

"One man lives here alone," said Old King Brady.

"How do you know?" demanded Harry.

"Oh, I am sure of it," replied the old detective. "You see—ah!"

Suddenly the door was darkened.

There stood a man of hideous aspect.

"Go!" he said. "You go way! You no wantee come here!"

## CHAPTER V.

### THE TREACHERY OF PETE POTTS.

The Bradys caught their breath and stood gazing in horror at the hideous being who darkened the door of that lonely mountain hut.

He was a Chinaman, and his face, twisted out of all semblance of anything human, was a mass of great, bulging knobs filled with open sores.

So distorted was the poor fellow's countenance that his eyes were almost invisible.

His clothes were mere rags, his lower limbs seemed to have swelled to twice their natural size.

"Horrible!" gasped Harry, turning his head away.

But Old King Brady stood there and faced the miserable creature.

"You are a leper, my poor friend," he said, in kindly tone.

"Yes," replied the man. "Me leper, me belly bad. Soon me die. Oh, me wish you takee dat gun and shoot me now. Yes me do."

"It would be a mercy, but I cannot do it for you," replied the old detective. "How come you in such a plight?"

"You must no talkee me," broke out the leper. "You catchee, catchee. You must go away!"

"No, my friend. The latest opinion in your disease is that it is not catching unless one actually touches your sores," replied the detective. "Believe me, Harry, there is no danger. I have studied carefully into this disease. It is so."

"Me wish evlybody tink so," replied the Chinaman; "den me no have to lib here."

"What is your name?" asked Old King Brady, passing out of the hut.

"Quong Toy," replied the Chinaman.

"Where are you from?"

"Me born in Sandwich Islands; me keep laundry in New York. When me get sick me go into countly, bimeby me get so bad dat dey chase me away. Den I go back to New York and get 'lested. Nobody would have me. Dey put me in flight car to send me to 'Flisco. Me most die."

"But how came you here?"

"Me here most tree years now. When me get to Reno me all starved to death; me holler from car, den dey open it. When dey see me dey chase me into de desert with guns."

"Barbarous!" cried Old King Brady. "How can such things be?"

"Dey all afraid," said Quong Toy. "Well, what me do? Me hab no money—not much. What little me hab me give Indian. Me say takee me some place where me can die in peace. Den me comee here to dis old hut!"

"You came here with the Indian and have been here ever since?"

"Yes, boss. Dlat it."

"And how do you support yourself?"

"Indians help me."

"Are there Indians in these mountains?"

"Oh, yes. Ten, twenty, me no know how many. Whole lot."

"I would not have believed it. Do they bring you food?"

"Oh, yes, boss."

"And how do you pay them?"

"No pay. No hab money now. Wish me had money, den Indians do more for me."

Old King Brady's kind heart was much moved.

He immediately produced four five-dollar goldpieces and tossed them to the leper.

"Don't let your Indian friends see them all at once, Quong," he said. "The money may help you some, I hope, I am sure."

"Tank you, boss. Tank so muchee. Now you go. You catchee sure."

"No catchee, John, no catchee. Now that we are here I want to ask you a few questions."

"Me tell you ebyting, boss. You good man—yes."

"Tell me about two wagons which came across the borax two weeks or more ago."

The leper gave a quick start.

"It belly good you come!" he exclaimed. "Me see. Me know. Me feel belly solly for dat gal. You sheriff?"

"I am the sheriff, John, but I won't give you away, be sure of that."

"Me wishee you would. Me wantee die. Miners come shootee me, den I be glad."

"But about the girl, John."

"Dey have her on horse, she and man. Dey stop to dlink

at spring and to let the horses dlink. I see all. I lookee down on dem. I never see wagon here before."

"Did the girl seem to be a prisoner, John?"

"She mlust be. Dose belly bad fellers. Why she go with dem if she no vas plisoner?"

"You know those men?"

"Yair—des vos bum greasers. Dey no good."

"Were they really greasers—Mexican greasers, I mean?"

"One vas Mlexican, yes. Odders vas Yankees. Den dere vas Indians, too."

"Yes, yes! You interest me very much. Who are these men, do you know?"

The leper now for the first time seemed to grow a little reticent.

"How I can tell," he replied.

"But see, John, there are not so many who come this way that you would be likely to forget them. Have you ever seen these men before?"

"Dere vas gold in dose wagons, boss?"

"Yes, there was."

"Dey steal dat gal?"

"Yes, and her father, the man who was with her."

"Belly vell. Den I tell. Anyhow dey no see me. Dley no can know I look down on dem flom de rocks."

"Go on, John. I am waiting to know who these people were."

"Dley belly bad men, boss. Dley lib in Happy Valley over by de Deadman's Run."

Old King Brady was triumphant.

Here on this desolate mountain, beyond the dreaded borax country, in the last place on earth where one would have expected to find it, he had gained just the clew he sought.

For half an hour and more he continued to talk with the poor leper.

Harry, who had not the confidence of his partner, got to the windward of Quong Toy and kept there throughout the entire interview.

And the leper told Old King Brady a lot.

He assured the old detective that the Happy Valley was an actual place.

He led the Bradys to a certain rock where they could look off on the country south of them for an immense distance.

Here there were hundreds of ranges in sight.

Between them were great stretches of desert white with alkali and the true borax, which alkali is not.

Far to the south, twenty miles distant at least, there was a break in the ranges and a long stretch of flat desert country could be seen stretching still southward for an immense distance.

The wretched Chinaman informed the Bradys that this was the Deadman's Run, and that it was fifty miles across.

He assured them that there was not a drop of water to be had anywhere on that vast stretch of desert except at a certain spring located about midway on the run.

He went to great pains to explain the exact location of this spring as he had heard it described by his Indian

friends, at the same time assuring the detectives that he had never been there himself.

Beyond the desert, dimly seen in the distance, was a range of mountains.

This range marked the end of the Deadman's Run, and on the other side of it, Quong Toy declared, the Happy Valley lay.

And this was the sum of his information, except that he told the detective that there was another and easier way out of the Happy Valley.

He would not admit that he knew the name of the leader of the outlaws, but Old King Brady felt satisfied that he could have revealed it had he chosen to tell.

At last they left him and started back down the mountain.

Old King Brady was jubilant over their discoveries, but Harry did not respond to his enthusiasm.

"I hope it's all right, our meeting that Chink," he said; "all the same I wish we could have got our information from someone else."

"You are nervous about it still," said the old detective.

"I admit it. Anyone would be."

"Can't you take my word for it that there is not the least danger?"

"I'm trying to, Governor."

"Well, you may then. I assure you it is so."

"I shall try to think so. What a horrible object he was."

"And how barbarously treated. It is a sin and a shame that a human being so afflicted should be made to suffer what that man has suffered in this civilized land."

"That is true. There ought to be some provision for these lepers out here."

"That is so; but we can do nothing for the poor wretch. Now, Harry, I warn you upon no account to mention this man to Pete. We shall have to deceive him, or he will certainly desert us. I will fix up a story of our having met an old Indian in that hut who has given us the information. Leave all the talking to me."

Harry agreed to this, but as matters turned out they need not have troubled themselves to form any plan for deceiving Pete Potts.

When they reached the spring they found only three horses instead of four.

The guide was nowhere to be seen.

"Heavens!" exclaimed Harry. "What does this mean?"

"Simply that we have been deserted," replied the old detective, "that is all."

"The scoundrel! And he has gone off and left us!"

"We can't be certain just yet. I am thankful to see that he has not taken our provisions or water."

"Do you think he caught sight of the leper?"

"I am afraid that is it. Hold on a bit now. Perhaps we can sight him. Follow me around the bend of the range."

They hurried forward and soon reached a place where they could see the full stretch of the borax country.

"Ha!" exclaimed Old King Brady. "There he goes!"

Far in the distance speeding his horse across the borax was the solitary figure of a man.

The old detective got out his glass and turned it upon the rider.

"Yes, that is Pete," he said. "He is making off post-haste."

Harry felt like saying things, and he said them; but all that did no good.

"That man never saw the leper," declared Old King Brady. "He simply made off as soon as our backs were turned. If it was not so he could not have covered the distance he has."

"Of course he has been standing in with the gang."

"I don't believe it. My idea is that the more he thought about it the more scared he grew. He was afraid to tackle the Deadman's Run."

"And you, Governor?"

"Well, what?"

"You don't give up."

"Not I, unless you are afraid, too."

"Nonsense!" cried Harry. "I'll go wherever you want to go."

"Very good," replied the old detective. "Then the sooner we start the better. Saddle the horses, Harry, and we'll be off for the Deadman's Run."

Now this was genuine courage.

It is safe to say that if all Nevada had been canvassed not one man in a thousand could have been found willing to undertake the dangerous task which the Bradys had set for themselves then.

With no one to guide them and the future all uncertain, they were about to undertake the passage of that fearful country known as the Deadman's Run.

## CHAPTER VI.

### OFF ON THE DEADMAN'S RUN.

When the Bradys rode away from the range they looked back to see if they could catch a last glimpse of poor Quong Toy.

There stood the leper upon the very rock from which he had pointed out the way.

Raising his hand he waved it solemnly and the detectives waved their hats in return.

"Poor wretch!" exclaimed Old King Brady, as the Chinaman turned and disappeared among the rocks. "I don't suppose we shall ever see him again."

"And I am sure we never want to," added Harry, with a shudder.

Old King Brady dropped the unpleasant subject.

But Harry knew his partner well enough to understand that even then Old King Brady was undoubtedly turning over in his mind some scheme for aiding the wretched man.



The Bradys had now entered upon the serious stage of their journey.

This journey across the Deadman's Run was destined to prove one of the worst the brave detectives had ever undertaken.

The five miles between the Leper Range, as Harry had dubbed these unnamed mountains, and the beginning of the Deadman's Run was covered, and without mishap.

So far everything had gone swimmingly but for the desertion of Pete Potts.

All the way they had the trail with them.

It was strongly marked and there was no possibility of mistaking it.

This, of course, encouraged the detectives immensely.

"Those fellows know their business," declared Old King Brady. "If we can only hold this trail we shall have but little difficulty in making this just an ordinary case of chasing bad men. If our usual luck holds we ought to be able to down them in the end."

"It's a big if," replied Harry. "Chances are we shall not be able to hold the trail clear through to the Happy Valley. The coming back will be the worst."

"Stop!" cried the old detective. "I positively refuse to think of that. We will get there first. As to the return trip, that must be left to take care of itself."

But the trouble anticipated by Harry proved to be real, and it struck the Bradys soon after they struck the Deadman's Run.

Harry had been wondering how they would know the Run when they came to it.

On this score he was not left long in doubt.

Just before they reached it they came upon a small oasis in the desert where there was a spring of sweet water and plenty of green grass.

Here a halt was made, of course.

"Strange Quong Toy did not mention this spring," said Old King Brady. "We must be almost at the Deadman's Run now."

"Probably it lies beyond that next range," suggested Harry.

"Very likely," was the answer. "We must know. Now you unslip the goods and hobble the packhorse and yours, letting them have a good feed and all they want to eat and drink. I will ride on around the range and see how the land lies. If it is really the Deadman's Run I think we had better pitch our tent here, put in the night and make a strike across the desert in the morning. If we press the horses for all they are worth we ought to be able to cover the fifty miles in one day and be done with it. Certainly we can do this if we have the trail."

So Old King Brady rode off alone, and still following the trail was soon around the end of the range.

Involuntarily an exclamation of disgust escaped him.

He now had an uninterrupted view of many miles, and a more horribly desolate country he had never seen.

There was no doubt of its being the Deadman's Run—not the slightest.

Here the ranges fell off to the right and left, the land between them being as flat as a floor.

Evidently the bottom of some ancient sea, the ground was strewn with coarse sand without a trace of alkali.

Upon this the sun beat down with fearful intensity. It was blinding to look at it.

Where Old King Brady was the temperature was not so very high, but out on the desert it looked to be roasting hot. That it was so the detective was to learn later on.

Far in the distance could be seen the range of mountains pointed out by the leper, beyond which the Happy Valley lay.

So far so good, but the wagon trail was poorly defined after it entered the desert.

As Old King Brady sat there watching he saw what looked like a puff of smoke in the distance.

Suddenly it began to whirl, and he knew that it was a sandstorm.

Bigger and bigger grew the whirling column, higher and higher it reached until it towered some seventy feet above the plain.

Then suddenly breaking, the mass of sand went whirling off over the desert in a southwesterly direction.

Old King Brady had seen enough.

He turned away sadly, for the hope of holding the trail across the Deadman's Run had already vanished—blown away by the sight of that whirling sand.

"Well," demanded Harry, upon his return, "are we anywhere near the Deadman's Run?"

"Right up against it. Begins just around that range."

"And the trail?"

"It extends in on the Run as far as I can see, but I doubt our being able to hold it any great distance. You had better go down there and look for yourself."

And Young King Brady did later.

That what he saw failed to encourage him need scarcely be said.

Following out the old detective's plan, the tent was erected and the Bradys passed the night at the oasis.

Morning dawned upon the warmest day the detectives had encountered since their arrival in Nevada.

Old King Brady was up cooking breakfast as early as four o'clock.

At five, with every preparation complete, they started off over the desert.

As Old King Brady anticipated, their progress was rendered slow by the yielding sand, and it was difficult to keep the horses on a trot.

It was either gallop or walk with them, and the galloping could not be kept up for any length of time.

"We shall have to put in at least one night in the desert," Old King Brady at length declared. "That being the case, we must make every effort to locate the leper's spring."

They had now covered about ten miles of the Deadman's Run, the trail being distinguishable all the way.

Old King Brady got out his glass and began surveying the distant mountains.

"Looking for the big black rock the leper spoke of?" asked Harry.

"Exactly. Hold on a minute. Let me take in the whole sweep of the range."

"But as long as we are able to hold on to our trail we don't need it."

"We shall surely lose our trail, Harry. Don't you flatter yourself that it will be otherwise."

"But it seems to hold all right so far."

"Still you persist. You should have seen what I saw. If a sandstorm such as that has struck the trail there can be nothing left of it. You thought differently last night."

"Governor, you are croaking."

"Not at all. I am only preparing for the worst. Stop now and let me find the rock."

It was fully ten minutes before Old King Brady lowered his glass.

"Got it?" asked Harry.

"Yes, at last!"

"Where?" Old King Brady pointed off at the range.

"I can see it even without the glass," he said, "but I doubt if you can until you have located it first."

"I see a black spot on the range not far from that tall tree which stands out alone."

"Then you are sharper than I gave you credit for being. That is it."

"And we want to steer directly for it?"

"Yes, until we strike the spring. After that we head for the range to the right of it, always keeping the rock in sight on our left."

Thus encouraged, the Bradys pushed on, covering another ten miles.

The heat had now become intolerable. The tired horses showed every sign of fatigue, and the detectives themselves were parched with thirst.

"We shall have to tap one of the water kegs, Harry," said Old King Brady, halting at last. "We will give the horses a good drink now and then no more until nightfall."

"We must be half across, don't you think?" questioned Harry.

"Somewhere near it. I figure that we have done about twenty miles."

"And still our desert trail holds, Governor. It is not so bad."

The horses drank eagerly of the water which Harry let run out of one of the kegs into a pail which he had brought along.

Harry cut them short, however, and the detectives were very sparing in their own potations.

Soon they were on the move again, and the next five miles brought the trouble Old King Brady had so long anticipated.

They lost the trail.

For some time the imprints of the wagon-wheels had been more distinct than ever.

Then all at once they vanished and beyond was nothing

but an unbroken stretch of sand as far as the eye could reach.

"It is as I thought," remarked Old King Brady. "The sandstorm has done this. Now to locate our steering point again."

He produced his glass and easily found the black rock. It was as it should have been, directly ahead of them.

"So far so good," said Old King Brady. "Thanks to the leper we are not in the soup yet."

Pausing only for a cold bite in the way of dinner, they pushed on again, frequently sighting the rock.

In all they had covered about thirty miles, when the sun began to sink behind the range, which seemed to recede before them as they advanced and really looked no larger than it had done when they set out in the morning.

"Shall we put it through to the spring?" Harry now asked.

"We must if possible," was the reply. "It can't be at any great distance from us now."

It was but a little while after this when Harry called Old King Brady's attention to a movement of the sand in the distance.

"There is wind gathering there," said the old detective. "We shall feel it pretty soon."

"Is there danger of a sandstorm, do you think?"

"Can't tell. We must watch out sharp and be prepared."

Three minutes later and Harry would not have asked the question.

Suddenly a column of sand was seen to rise.

Instantly it assumed a rotary motion, and, increasing in size, with great rapidity came whirling toward the detectives.

"Thunder! We are up against it!" cried Harry. "If we only had camels now which knew enough to lie down."

"But we haven't, and so must do the next best thing," replied the detective. "Turn your back to it, boy! Get the packhorse around. Be quick!"

And indeed there was no time to be lost.

Two minutes later and the sand struck them.

The rush and roar was frightful.

Strange suffocating sensations seized the detectives.

Open their eyes they dared not.

The horses whinnied piteously.

It seemed an interminable time before the pelting of the sand upon the detectives' backs at length ceased to be felt.

When it was all over and they ventured to look about they found their horses standing in four feet of sand, while beyond it was all heaped up in little ridges.

It was now growing quite dark.

The Bradys rode ahead about half a mile, and, coming to a place where the sand was level, they pitched their tent and prepared for the night.

The heat still continued even after the sun went down.

If he had been able to find fuel, Old King Brady would have built a fire in spite of this, for he dreaded the coyotes, those prowlers of the desert.

This being impossible, it was decided that one of the detectives should remain constantly on the watch.

By the time they had given the horses their second watering and drank what they needed themselves, the detectives found one keg entirely emptied and the other pretty well encroached upon.

Old King Brady reckoned now that they only had water enough left to supply the horses once more.

It was a bitter disappointment to the old detective not to have been able to find the spring that night, and he wondered what would happen if the early hours of the morning did not bring them success.

Harry took first watch.

Midnight came without any happening.

The coyotes could be heard howling in the distance, but they never came near the tent.

The night was perfectly clear, but there was no moon and the spring stars shone but faintly.

Just as Harry was about to awaken Old King Brady his attention was suddenly attracted by a distant shout.

The sound came from the other side of the tent.

Harry stepped around and looked off over the desert.

He could dimly discern moving figures at a distance.

At first he thought they must be coyotes, but after watching a few minutes he saw that they were mounted men moving rapidly toward the range.

They were five in number, but whether Indians or whites it was quite impossible to tell.

"Wake up, Governor!" cried Young King Brady, hurrying into the tent. "Your sleeping time is over and we haven't got the Deadman's Run all to ourselves, it would seem!"

## CHAPTER VII.

### LOST.

"Harry, they have halted. That must be the spring!"

"Do you think so?"

"I'm sure of it. See, they are dismounting. They are Indians, all right."

The Bradys stood in front of their tent watching these mysterious night riders over the Deadman's Run.

"How can you be sure?" questioned Young King Brady. "They must be almost a mile away, and in spite of the clearness of this Nevada atmosphere, it doesn't seem possible that you can see them any better than I can, and I declare I can't make them out at all."

"I judge by the way they move about their horses," replied the old detective. "But let me get the glass out and you shall have first look."

"Yes, they are Indians," declared Harry, after a long look through the glass. "That must be the spring. They are certainly watering their horses. What a pity we didn't find it ourselves."

"I don't know about that," replied Old King Brady. "I

look at it differently. Suppose we had discovered the spring before sundown. Then we should be encamped there now, and a nice fix we would be in. No, thank you, Harry. I prefer things as they are."

"And what are you going to do about it?"

"Nothing but wait and watch."

"I don't see it so, then."

"Why, what would you advise?"

"Getting everything ready for an immediate start. These Indians can't be about anything else than heading for the Happy Valley. If we follow them we may find ourselves across the Deadman's Run before dawn."

"Too risky. They would be sure to see us. Then there would be trouble."

"That don't follow. They may prove friendly enough."

"Not if they are bound for the Happy Valley and form part of the outlaw band. Remember what the leper said, that there were Indians in the gang."

The Bradys continued to discuss the situation for some time.

Harry seemed possessed to get a nearer view of the Indians, who were disposed to linger at the spring.

"Well, to satisfy you we will mount and ride over that way for a short distance," said the old detective at last. "Perhaps, after all, it would be better to definitely locate the spring while we have a chance. We might not be able to find it in the morning, after all."

So, leaving their packhorse and the tent behind them, the Bradys mounted and rode slowly toward the horses dimly seen in the distance.

Of the Indians themselves they could now see nothing.

Harry felt sure that they must have thrown themselves down upon the sand and gone to sleep.

Be this as it may, they did not remain so long.

All at once the detectives spied them about their horses again.

Old King Brady instantly halted.

"We must go no further," he said. "They are getting on the move."

A moment later the Indians were in the saddle and went dashing off over the desert.

They did not appear to have seen the detectives, who watched them until they were out of sight.

"Come!" exclaimed Old King Brady, "all this ends in nothing, just as I supposed it would. It is time we returned to the tent."

"What's the matter with going ahead and locating the spring?" questioned Harry. "I don't care a rap whether I get any sleep at all to-night. Let's do it while there is time."

"Harry, we run a great risk. Look behind you."

"Well, what? I noticed you looking back a moment ago."

"Can you see the tent?"

"By jove, no I can't!"

"Exactly. Something has surely happened to it. In my opinion the tent is down."



"But Governor, how can that be? There is no wind."

"No; but we left a hobbled horse prowling about. Ten to one he has knocked the tent over trying to get at that bag of oats."

"Well, even so, we can easily put it up again. What's to hinder us from going ahead to the spring?"

"With nothing to guide us back?"

"Suppose we miss the spring in the morning?"

"Suppose we miss our way to the tent to-night?"

"Oh, all right!" exclaimed Harry, somewhat irritated by Old King Brady's persistency. "I suppose we had better go back right now."

"I think we had, decidedly," replied the old detective, "but not before we have left a guiding mark here."

He dismounted and scraped up the sand, making quite a large heap.

"There!" he exclaimed, "we ought to be able to find that easy enough. Now to get back and find out what has happened to the tent."

It is really strange how often it occurs that Old King Brady has an intimation of what is going to happen.

The old detective had all at once become terribly anxious, and for this Harry could see no good cause.

His thoughts on the subject changed in a few minutes, however.

The Bradys rode rapidly over the desert, but they did not come in sight of the horse or the tent.

"Halt, Harry!" cried the old detective at last. "We are making a great mistake, and it bids fair to be a fatal one. We must use the compass, or we shall never find our camp."

"Is it so serious as that, Governor?" questioned Harry, now beginning to be alarmed.

"Indeed it is. We have been riding in a constantly widening circle. I tell you, boy, this is a very serious matter."

And so it proved.

Even by the use of the compass the detectives were unable to retrace their way to the camp.

The employment of the compass had come too late.

As soon as this was definitely determined Old King Brady gave it up.

They now hobbled their horses, and, throwing themselves down upon the sand, remained there until sunrise.

Poor Harry never slept a wink.

Bitterly he blamed himself for his insistence.

Heartily he wished that he had allowed Old King Brady to have his way.

To describe the disappointing doings of the early morning hours is needless.

Enough to say that the Bradys were now lost on the Deadman's Run.

They could find neither spring nor tent.

Even the packhorse which should have been visible somewhere on the desert could not be discovered.

Old King Brady now arrived at the conclusion that, instead of describing a circle in their movements the night

before, they must have gone off on a tangent covering a distance of several miles.

After that their movements, guided by the compass instead of helping matters had only made them worse.

At all events by ten o'clock the detectives were forced to give up and admit that they were lost on the Deadman's Run.

"There is but one thing to do, Harry," said Old King Brady then, "and that is to make for the range and get off the Run as quick as possible. I can't imagine that we are more than five miles out of our way. We ought surely to be able to make the range before night, no matter how slow our progress may be."

Harry promptly assented.

He was past putting up any kick now.

"I don't seem to see the black rock," said Old King Brady, producing his glass. "Let us locate it again and then we will make our start."

But here came another difficulty.

Try as he would, the old detective found himself entirely unable to locate the black rock.

Indeed the range seemed to have assumed altogether a different appearance.

It looked to be more distant than it had done the night before.

And right here let us state that nothing is more confusing than distances on the Nevada deserts.

In that clear atmosphere one can see for a hundred miles.

It is next to impossible to determine how far these mountain ranges are from the point of vision.

Moreover, once a man becomes lost under such circumstances as the Bradys were in now everything looks wrong.

The Bradys were lost on the Deadman's Run, of that there was no doubt, and the ride of that dreadful day did not help them one bit.

At night the mountains appeared to be just as far distant as ever.

Indeed, their progress had been frightfully slow, owing to the great depth of the sand.

This seemed to increase as they advanced until at sundown the horses were wallowing through a depth of two feet.

Of course, not a morsel had passed their lips since the night before.

But the thirst was the worst.

The day had been intolerably hot, and the craving for water increased with every hour.

At last toward night Harry's tongue began to swell.

He could now only speak with difficulty, but these symptoms abated somewhat after the sun went down.

Old King Brady's sufferings were equally severe, of course, but never once did he allude to them during that dreadful day.

As for the horses, they were almost used up, and it was perfectly certain that another day of it would finish them.

"We shall have to stop where we are," announced Old

King Brady, when darkness settled down upon them at last.

"Dismount, Harry; hobble your horse and we will lie right here on the sand."

"You lie down now, Governor. I'll attend to your horse," was the reply.

"I think I will," said Old King Brady, feebly. "I don't know that I ever felt more used up in my life."

The old detective was in a troubled sleep when Harry finished with the horses.

And later Harry slept, too, and thus found partial relief.

It was long after midnight when he awoke to find Old King Brady pacing up and down.

"Governor, how are you feeling?" inquired Young King Brady, springing up.

"Well, I don't know how I feel," replied the old detective. "My throat is in a terrible condition, but as I suppose you are just as badly off I don't know that there is any use to say a word."

"I am feeling better. The swelling in my tongue has gone down a lot."

"I am thankful to hear it then. Well, let us hope we shall live to see the end of this trial."

"Governor, you lie down and sleep yourself."

"Harry, I can't. Do you know I am having the strangest notions. Sometimes it seems to me as if I was going off my head."

"I suppose people do go mad with thirst," said Harry, in a low voice.

"Of course they do. I am surprised that it should come upon me so quickly, though."

"It has been an awful day."

"Yes; and we must not deceive ourselves, there is a worse one in store for us, unless things take a turn."

"Then you lie down and get your sleep so as to be ready for it," said Young King Brady, emphatically. "I tell you I won't hear to anything else."

Thus engaged, Old King Brady did lie down, and at last he slept.

Harry watched until morning and at sunrise his partner had never once stirred.

As daylight came Harry, looking down upon Old King Brady, was struck with the strange look upon his face.

His cheeks seemed to have fallen in and his whole face to have shrunk.

"He is too old a man to stand this sort of business," thought Harry, greatly alarmed. "Heavens! He don't seem to breathe a bit! What if he should be dead!"

## CHAPTER VIII.

SAVED FROM A HORRIBLE FATE.

But Harry was mistaken.

Old King Brady was not dead.

The old detective awoke at last, much refreshed by his deep sleep.

Still the sunken cheek and restless eye told the story.

Old King Brady could not stand much more of the terrors of the Deadman's Run.

As for Harry, it was all he could do to hold himself together and appear cheerful.

As there was no breakfast to bother with, the Bradys immediately after sunrise started in to discuss their plans for the day.

"I can't see that the range looks much nearer, Governor," Harry remarked.

"It is the deception of this glaring light upon the desert," Old King Brady replied.

"Of course there is nothing now left for us to do but to push ahead."

"Nothing, absolutely nothing. To attempt to return would be simple madness. Our only hope now lies in connecting with the outlaws of the Happy Valley, and that may mean death."

"Now is the time we cannot wonder so much at the desertion of Pete Potts."

"Pete was wise in his generation. What he didn't personally know of the terrors of the Deadman's Run he had heard from others. No, I don't wonder at his course. All the same it might——"

A choking fit seized the old detective then, and he gave up trying to speak.

"All the same we might have succeeded in crossing the Run if we had stayed by the tent and not gone chasing after those Indians," said Harry, bitterly.

"I did not say it."

"No; but you think it, and it is true."

"Useless to regret!" muttered the old detective. "I can talk no more. See to the horses, Harry. While they last we must use them for all they are worth."

"And after they fail us, then what?" thought Young King Brady, as he started in to obey.

Of course the cooler night air had refreshed the horses somewhat, but still they were in pretty bad shape.

The Bradys were off fifteen minutes later.

It was with great difficulty that Old King Brady got into the saddle, but he was able to hold his own once they were under way.

The day came out hotter than ever.

It is nothing uncommon to encounter hot weather in Nevada in the early spring.

This was unfortunate for the detectives.

Hourly their sufferings increased.

To describe them in detail would be needless.

Enough to say that as the day wore on matters grew worse and worse with the Bradys, until at last, about three o'clock, it became with them a case of life and death.

They were now almost at the end of their dreadful journey across the Deadman's Run.

Before them the great range loomed up ragged and treeless, save for a pinon or live oak here and there.

Silent and grim rose those fearful precipices, but among them all no trace of the black rock could be discovered.

The range was now not over three miles away, but to cover that three miles was beyond the strength of the detectives.

Of course the tortures of thirst had been horrible.

It was a wonder that the old detective had not gone mad, as many a man has done on these Nevada deserts in the past.

But Old King Brady was beyond speech now.

His tongue was worse swelled than Harry's, and his lips were all parched, cracked and bleeding.

The change which had come to the man was wonderful.

He seemed suddenly to have wasted to a shadow to Harry's eyes.

Without knowing it, Young King Brady had undergone almost as great a change himself.

And now that the Bradys had ceased talking per force, the loneliness and horror of their situation greatly increased.

Harry could still speak, but it was painful to him to watch Old King Brady's futile efforts to reply, and he had given it up entirely when, at three o'clock, the horses both began to show signs of complete collapse.

The end seemed very close at hand when Harry, suddenly reining in, pointed toward the range.

Old King Brady saw and understood.

About half a mile distant was a coyote.

They had seen a number of these ugly beasts during the day.

Apparently conscious of what must soon happen to the detectives unless help came to them, the coyotes had hovered in their wake ready to pounce upon them when the time came.

A shot from Harry's rifle had always scattered them.

But now here was one ahead of them standing still with his head thrust down into the sand.

"A spring, Governor!" murmured Harry. "That beast is drinking, sure!"

Old King Brady nodded and waved his hand ahead.

They pushed forward, the coyote taking to his heels as they approached.

And it was indeed a spring in the desert.

The discovery, however, had come too late to save the horses.

They had no sooner reached the place when Old King Brady's horse sank beneath him, throwing the old detective from the saddle.

Harry instantly dismounted and staggered to his partner's side.

Before he could get there he heard a thud behind him, and, upon looking back, saw that his own horse had also gone down.

"We are lost!" thought Harry. "The horses are gone now and the Governor is dead."

"But no! Not yet!"

Before Harry touched his partner, Old King Brady feebly

rose to a sitting posture, and, raising his hand, touched his ear.

"Listen!" the gesture meant in the secret signal code which the detectives employ between themselves.

"Someone coming!" gasped Harry, for he could hear the sound of approaching footsteps now.

He turned to look, and as he did so strange sensations seized him.

All seemed to be suddenly growing dark.

"Water! Water!" he gasped, and staggered toward the spring, falling in a faint beside the hole in the sand where a well of pure, sweet water bubbled up from some unknown source.

How long the fainting fit lasted Harry never knew, but it could not have been for more than a few minutes.

When he came to himself he saw hurrying toward them from the direction of the range a large man wearing the fanciful dress affected by some of the Mexican greasers, followed by five Indians, whose small stature seemed to indicate that they belonged to the Piute tribe.

Old King Brady was sitting where Harry had left him and he made a sign which said:

"Attempt no resistance."

But Harry scarcely needed the warning.

All he could do was to wait and hope.

The Indians rushed in, seizing the Bradys, who were too weak to offer resistance.

"Let the old man drink if he will," cried the greaser, "but look out for the young fellow. There's fight in him yet."

But this warning was equally unnecessary.

There was no fight left in Young King Brady.

His powers of endurance had reached the limit.

As the Indians seized him, Harry collapsed in their hands.

This time it was no fainting spell, but complete unconsciousness.

The rest was all a blank.

It was hours before poor Harry came back to life again.

When he did so the scene had completely changed.

Young King Brady now found himself lying in a bunk in a room comfortably enough furnished in the style usual in hut life in the far West.

He was alone and not tied up in any way.

The air was cool and delightful.

Outside he could hear birds singing and the shouts of men or boys apparently engaged in playing some game.

Starting to rise to get a closer view of all this, back came the swimming sensations in his head again.

"Too weak," thought Harry; he dropped back in the bunk and in a moment was sound asleep.

The next Harry knew it was the early morning.

He awoke to see dawn appearing at the little window of his hut.

Stretched upon the floor were two Indians partly rolled in blankets and sound asleep.

"We are in the Happy Valley, of course," thought Harry,



quite comfortable now. "At least I am. Heaven knows where Old King Brady is. He may be dead."

There was a pitcher containing water on a chair beside the bunk, and Harry, picking it up, drank freely, shuddering as he thought of his sufferings on the Deadman's Run.

Then he lay back and watched the day come, wondering why the Indians did not wake up.

Their time came in about half an hour.

Then a young man dressed like a Mexican entered and, kicking the redskins vigorously, soon had them on their feet.

"Out of here!" he exclaimed in Spanish. "The captain wants you. Lively, now!"

The Indians gathered up their blankets and hastily departed.

The young man then approached the bunk, and, looking down at Harry, said in English:

"Well, and how are you?"

"Alive, thank heaven!" replied Harry. "That's all I can say."

"You might add that you are comfortable. I have taken mighty good care to make you so."

"You?"

"Yes."

"Thank you."

"I won't say you are welcome. You don't deserve any care or attention on my part, you blamed spy!"

"Spy! Well, my dear fellow, who have I been spying upon? I haven't the faintest idea where I am at the present moment. You are all at sea there."

"No!"

"Suit yourself."

"I know you."

"I shouldn't be a bit surprised. It seems to me as if I had been asleep for months. I may have talked in my sleep."

"You are Young King Brady, the detective. You came West for General Dutton. You see, I know."

Harry looked at the young man attentively.

"Surely I have seen this fellow's face before," he said to himself.

Then the memory of it came back to him.

"Standing on the platform at Reno the night we arrived there," he thought. "Yes; I remember just how he stared at us. I think I can guess his name, and I am going to do it, too."

"You are right," he said, aloud. "I am Young King Brady, and you are Tom Wells."

The man gave a quick start.

"What nonsense!" he exclaimed. "You never saw me before in your life. Who is this Tom Wells you mistake me for—say?"

"No matter if it is a mistake."

"But tell me."

"Oh, I only guessed at it," said Harry, wearily. "Of course I am wrong. You look like a fellow I knew of that name."

"You are lying to me, Brady. It won't pay you for a cent."

"Well, put me right, then. I'm willing."

"I will put you right. You refer to General Dutton's agent at Reno, but you never saw the man. Don't try to chuck any further bluffs at me."

Harry laughed.

Everything depended upon getting on the good side of this young man.

"You are all right," he said. "Say, you are the sharpest proposition I have come up against in a long while. I don't know you. It was only a bluff, as you say."

"Well, then, don't chuck any more bluffs at me if you want to get out of this snap."

"All right, I won't; but say, if your name isn't Tom Wells, what the deuce is it? I have got to call you something, you know."

"Call me Tony."

"Right. Tony, you have saved my life, and I shan't forget it—there."

"Brady, that's the truth. I did save your life, for I sent my father and the Indians to hunt you up in the desert."

"I believe you."

"You were almighty near being a dead one then."

"Indeed I was. Now tell me what I want to know more than anything else. Is my partner still alive?"

"Old King Brady—yes."

"Good! And he is here?"

"Yes."

"Can I see him?"

"You can."

"When?"

"Any time you wish."

"Good enough. I have no more questions to ask."

"Yes, you have."

"What do you mean?"

"You want to know where you have brought up and what is going to be done with you. You want to know if Colonel Newland and his daughter still live; whether the gold stolen from the Jessie is here, and a dozen other things."

"You're a mind reader, Tony."

"Of course. That's no dream. Let me answer all these questions. You are in the Happy Valley. What is to be done with you has not yet been decided. Colonel Newland and his daughter are also here; so is the stolen gold."

"Thank you for the information. It is all very interesting. You have answered each one of your own questions. The dozen other things will keep."

"Exactly. Now get up and dress yourself if you feel able. I will help you if you don't."

Harry was weak, but he managed to dress with some little help from Tony.

And while this was going on Tony informed him that it was three days since he had been rescued from the Deadman's Run, and that during all that time he had been in

a state of semi-unconsciousness, being able to do little else than to eat and sleep.

After he was dressed Tony threw open the door of the hut and ordered Harry to follow him.

Then Young King Brady was treated to his first sight of the Happy Valley.

It was wonderful to see green grass and trees growing in Nevada, but there are a few such spots.

The width of the valley was less than half a mile and a small stream ran past the row of huts by which Harry was led.

On the bottom-land by the stream vegetables were growing.

Several Indians were working among the beds.

Harry saw four or five women and several children, some Mexicans, others Indians.

Standing near one of the huts were three Mexicans with their serapes, or shawls, thrown about them.

They were smoking cigarettes, and as Harry passed they stared at him, but did not speak.

Further on there was a stretch of green grass, where a number of horses were feeding.

There were also four wagons near a large hut, which looked as if it might be used as a barn.

"Well," thought Harry, "we got there, anyhow. There is still a chance that the Bradys' luck may hold."

"In there," said Tony, halting then and pointing at the door of the last hut of the row.

Harry entered, and to his great satisfaction saw Old King Brady looking much as usual, lying back in a comfortable chair smoking a cigar.

"Mr. Brady, let me introduce Mr. Brady!" cried Tony, and then he immediately withdrew.

## CHAPTER IX.

### PRISONERS IN THE HAPPY VALLEY.

Old King Brady sprang to his feet as Harry entered and shook him warmly by the hand.

"And how is it with you, my boy? Are you all right again?" he asked. "I thought as I looked at you last night that you never would recover, but it appears that I was mistaken after all."

"I am weak, Governor, but that's the worst of it. I am all here."

"For which we can never be sufficiently thankful."

"And you?"

"Oh, I'm not a dead one yet, by any means. I didn't get down as low as you, although you may have thought so. I am a hard man to kill."

"But how are you, anyway? You haven't told me that yet."

"A bit shaken, Harry. Nothing worse."

"Good! You did not lose your head then?"

"Never for an instant, in spite of my fears. But tell me, how much do you remember of all that happened to us after help came there at the spring?"

"Nothing whatever."

"Is it so! And yet there was a time when you talked and seemed to understand what was said to you."

"Is that so?"

"It is."

"All the same I must have been quite daffy."

"You were able to eat and drink all right. I think there must have been some sunstroke mixed up with your case."

"Let's cut it out. Tell me what happened after that man came with his Indians."

"That man, Harry, is Luis Perez, a Mexican of considerable intelligence. Captain, they call him. Tony is his son."

"I was thinking that Tony——" began Harry, when Old King Brady checked him with a secret sign which said:

"Be careful! Every word we say is being listened to."

Harry's answering sign meant:

"O. K. I catch on."

"I was going to say that I like Tony," he added. "He seems to be a right good fellow."

"We owe our lives to his father, and particularly to Tony," replied Old King Brady. "It seems that Tony spied us on the Deadman's Run from a height near by here. That was how they came to go out after us. Well, Harry, I suppose you know that we are in the Happy Valley at last."

"So Tony told me."

"And yet we are less than two miles from where we collapsed. Captain Perez had horses near, although we did not see them. We were brought up through some mountain pass to this place, which must be several hundred feet above the desert. Just how we came I don't know, for I was blindfolded at the time."

"They didn't take that trouble with me, I suppose."

"Oh, but they did, although you did not know it, and it was quite unnecessary. Well, here we are. We have come right to the place we set out to come to, and now the question is, what is going to happen to us next?"

"I suppose you know that Tony knows who we are."

"Oh, yes."

"And that Colonel Newland and his daughter are here."

"Certainly. I have already met them. Very pleasant people. Tony has been telling you the whole story I see. He is a fine young fellow. I don't think I ever met anyone quite so frank."

Old King Brady tipped Harry the wink and they then fell to talking about their adventures in the desert.

But not a word about the Newland case passed the lips of either.

A little later on a young Indian entered and said:

"Gentlemen, breakfast ready. Captain Perez say come."

"I don't think I can eat a thing," said Harry. "My strength is beginning to leave me. I feel more like going back to bed."

"You must brace up," replied Old King Brady. "Come, you will see Colonel Newland and his daughter now."

Harry followed Old King Brady out of the hut.

He fully expected that he was going to be conducted to another hut; instead of that the Indian boy led the way up the stream.

Here they soon came to a place where the cliffs bulged out almost to the water's edge, concealing whatever lay beyond.

Passing around this bend, Harry saw a larger hut than any in the collection behind them, a two-story affair, and beyond that the buildings of a mine.

There was a small mill—two stamps, Old King Brady informed him—and a tunnel in the hillside, with a large dump projecting from its mouth.

"That tunnel has been worked a long time," remarked Harry.

"Since 1860, Captain Perez informs me," replied the old detective. "It was opened up in the old days of the Bodie excitement, but lay idle for many years."

The Indian boy was now slightly in advance, and Old King Brady said in a low whisper:

"Be very careful. What they intend to do with us heaven knows, but we have to deal with very shrewd people. Make no talk to me unless in some such case as this, when you are sure of not being overheard."

"Right. No common outlaws?" breathed Harry.

"Nothing of the sort. They have a very rich mine here."

"Yes. You have been in it?"

"I have. Everything but the way to civilization has been shown me. That is what is worrying me, my boy. I have no idea that they intend to let us live."

"They might just as well have left us to die in the desert then."

"And why they didn't, heaven knows. There is some deep scheme afoot."

"What does Colonel Newland think?"

"The colonel is now in charge of the mine. He has no idea what to do. He believes that he was captured on account of his well-known skill at working up gold ore, and I shouldn't wonder if he was right."

"And the stolen gold?"

"It is here, they say. It was brought here, at all events."

"Governor, Tony is nobody but Tom Wells."

"Oh, certainly. Did you guess that?"

"It was just a guess. Nothing else."

"Then you hit it."

"Is he really the son of this man Perez?"

"Guess he is. They look very much alike."

"He is really in love with the girl?"

"Of that there is no doubt."

"Strange state of affairs this desert trail of ours has brought us up against."

"Strangest ever. I am more than curious to see where it will all end."

They had reached the large hut at the mine by this time.

The Indian boy threw open the door and the Bradys entered a comfortably furnished room.

The morning air was cool up here in the mountains, and the fire of pinon logs upon the open hearth threw out a grateful warmth.

Over the fireplace was a magnificent elk's head.

The furniture was rather old-fashioned, but must have cost a lot in its day.

In the middle of the room a table was spread for four, but when the Indian boy retired the Bradys had the place to themselves.

"Any danger in talking here?" asked Harry by means of a secret sign.

"Yes. Hold your tongue," replied the old detective in the same way.

"I am all beat out, Governor," remarked Harry, which was the truth, and he sank down upon a broad lounge.

A moment later and the door was thrown open by a grave-looking man of fifty years or more, whose face wore a troubled expression.

"Good-morning, Mr. Brady," he said. "I am glad to see you looking so well. This young man is your partner, I suppose."

"Yes," replied the old detective. "Harry, let me introduce Colonel Newland."

"Your fellow-prisoner in the Happy Valley," said the colonel, reaching out his hand. "Don't rise. I am glad to see you so much improved. Heavens! but don't I wish it was my own house at Soda Springs I was welcoming you to, gentlemen. It is hard on you, this being dragged into my trouble. Ah, Marietta! You have come. I hope you slept well, my dear. Let me introduce young Mr. Brady, of whom you have heard so much."

A young girl of considerable beauty had entered the room.

Harry got off the lounge then and was able to do the polite.

Marietta spoke very pleasantly to him, but it was easy to see that she was in a state of agitation and very nervous.

They seated themselves at the table and Colonel Newland rang a bell.

A young Indian entered.

"Breakfast. We are all ready," said the colonel imperiously.

The Indian bowed and retired.

An excellent meal was served by the Indian a few moments later.

It consisted of broiled antelope steak, fresh vegetables, good bread, eggs, and coffee.

The Indian waited in silence. He had evidently been well instructed in his work.

It was not until he had retired and Old King Brady and Colonel Newland had lighted cigars that much talking was done.

Harry now returned to the lounge, and after Marietta had left the room listened to a lot about the mine.

"I don't care whether we are being spied on or not," re-

marked the colonel, ignoring a warning glance from the old detective. "I didn't come here of my own free will. I was captured by these Indians on my way to Reno. I shall think what I please and say what I please."

"I am afraid we are all doomed to do what Captain Perez pleases," said Old King Brady, with a sigh.

"For the present," replied the colonel; "but it is a long lane which knows no turning. Naturally your partner wants to know how the case stands. It seems, young man, that I have been brought here to work this mine, and I don't wonder Captain Perez has been musing with it for two or three years, but there is more gold in the dump than would make an ordinary man feel rich."

"Is it, then, such very fine ore?" questioned Harry.

"Fine ore!" cried the colonel, "some of it runs as much as eight hundred dollars to the ton; gold with a lot of silver combined, which can be saved under proper treatment."

"That is rich enough for anyone."

"I should say it was. My work is to put this mine on a paying basis, it appears, and I have been offered big inducements to do it. I wouldn't have minded a bit if the thing had come around naturally, but I don't like to be forced."

"Certainly not," said Harry, "but how in the world has this place been kept secret so long?"

"It was originally developed by three men, all dead now, who swore to preserve the secret," replied the colonel. "It has lain idle for years. In some way Captain Perez learned the secret and located here, as you see."

"But how can he hope to do business in this out-of-the-way place? How can he get his gold out over the Deadman's Run?"

"Out-of-the-way nothing," said the colonel. "That depends upon from where you start. Young man, you'll be surprised when I tell you that we are within twenty miles of Bodie and no desert to cross worse than that around Soda Springs."

Scarcely were these words spoken when the door was thrown open and the greaser who had rescued the Bradys on the Deadman's Run entered the room.

"What! Colonel Newland!" he exclaimed, in good English. "Chattering about my business again. Come, sir, you will make me sorry I ever engaged you if this sort of thing is to go on."

## CHAPTER X.

### CAPTAIN PEREZ PUTS A PROPOSITION.

Colonel Newland took the interruption very quietly.

"Captain Perez," he replied, "it is an old proverb that listeners are apt to hear what they don't like. You can make me work for your interests, sir, but you cannot stop my mouth. I tell you that straight."

The Mexican's face grew dark.

He flung himself angrily into a chair, and without speaking began to roll a cigarette.

"Yes," continued the colonel, "these gentlemen have risked their lives to save me and I cannot forget it. What I know they shall know. It makes no difference whether you spy upon me or put others to do that dirty work. I shall talk my mind right out."

"You are certainly very outspoken, sir," replied the Mexican, with mock politeness. "May I trouble you for a light?"

"Certainly. Help yourself," replied the colonel, carelessly handing over his matchsafe. "I'm dead open and shut, Captain Perez. That's all there is to me."

"Except your expert knowledge of ores and the mining business generally, Colonel."

"Just so."

"Suppose we confine our consideration to that."

"As you will. I am your slave."

"Nonsense, man! You can be my partner if you wish. How did those assays turn out last night?"

"I have just weighed them up. There isn't a button averaging less than eight hundred dollars to the ton. One sample ran over a thousand."

"Fine ore, Colonel."

"Best in the world, sir. Knocks the Tonopah silly."

"Mr. Brady, this mine is a great investment," said Captain Perez, turning to the old detective, then.

"It appears so."

"How would you like to enter?"

"As a member of a company?"

"Yes."

"Is such a course open to me?"

"It may become so."

"I did not so understand it."

"I have not had time to take up your case. I thought it well enough to wait until your partner had somewhat recovered. I see he has reached that desirable point now."

"Yes, Captain, thanks to you. Believe me when I say, the Bradys are not ingrates. We do not forget that you saved our lives."

"I am glad to hear you say so. We will now talk a little about your connection with this business. I am not exactly the sort of man you may have taken me for with my fancy dress and quaint surroundings. Not exactly a common greaser, sir."

"I observed that from the first."

"Shall I go back to my work, Captain?" inquired Colonel Newland, rising.

"No; remain, please," was the reply. "I have decided that it is for the best that we all came to an understanding. I am going to speak right out after your fashion. It will clear the air and make us all feel better."

"Just so," said the colonel, lighting a fresh cigar.

"Yes," continued Captain Perez, "instead of being 'that dirty greaser,' as you Americans like to term the people of my race, I was born and bred a gentleman. I have been worth my million. That was in your city, Mr. Brady. For

a number of years I resided in New York. Wall street was my ruin. Believe me, sir, your fame as a detective is not quite unknown to me."

"You do not surprise me," said the old detective. "I was quite prepared to hear something of the sort."

"Yes, such is the case," continued Captain Perez. "As to my motive for isolating myself here and all the rest of it, that is my private business. I will say, frankly, that I am, in a certain sense, an outlaw. I do not care for the business, however. I brought Colonel Newland here because I believe him to be one of the most expert mining men in the United States. I brought his daughter with him because my son Antonio adores her and wishes to make her his wife."

"And I may butt in by saying that Antonio, under the name of Tom Wells, has been, until a few days ago, General Dutton's agent at Reno," said Colonel Newland, sarcastically. "You may as well know exactly who this young man is."

"And let me advise you, Colonel, not to butt in again, as you call it," said Captain Perez, coldly. "My dear sir, I am prepared to stand a good deal from you; look sharp that you do not try my patience too far."

"Thanks for the hint," said the colonel, lightly. "I'll bear it in mind."

"What he says is true, Mr. Brady," continued the captain. "My son knew of your coming. He came here to warn me, knowing the trail across Deadman's Run. He had accomplished the purpose for which I placed him in General Dutton's employ, and I wanted him back here again. Fortunate for you that it was so. It was he who saved your lives."

"Yes, I know," replied Old King Brady, "and I am very grateful. But who was it that tried to shoot us at Soda Springs?"

"I will again be frank with you. That was done by my orders. It failed. You had the courage to proceed with your business. I admire courage. I am now disposed to let you live."

"I confess, Captain Perez, that to live would suit us better than to be assassinated in the dark," replied the old detective, with a smile.

"Naturally. Well, it can be arranged. All I ask is that you drop this business of working against me and work with me. I understand that you are already a very rich man, but at the same time I believe there never was or never will be a man who considers himself rich enough. We have a wonderful property here, Mr. Brady. With the gold I have taken the liberty of borrowing from General Dutton and with Colonel Newland's assistance I shall now be able to put up a proper mill, stock it with machinery and make the Happy Valley mine the biggest paying proposition in the country. What is to hinder you from dropping your detective business and acting as my agent on the outside. You can do the purchasing of the machinery and organize a company. My past will be forgotten. With

your help and that of my friend, the colonel, here, I ought soon to be able to throw this place open to the world."

"And I am right with you," said Old King Brady, with every appearance of earnestness; "that is, if my partner don't object."

"I'm sure I have no objection to offer," added Harry. "If there's money to be made I shall be only too happy."

"Good!" cried Captain Perez. "That's the sort of talk I like. We will arrange the details later. Meanwhile you shall stop right here in the house and work with Colonel Newland as soon as you are able—you, I mean, young man. The colonel needs a helper. As for you, Mr. Brady, just make yourself at home in the Happy Valley. I am going away for a few days. When I return we will get down to business and settle this affair."

Thereupon Captain Perez withdrew.

The colonel broke out again as soon as he had left the room, but Old King Brady would not join him in his talk against the outlaw.

A little later one of the Indian servants appeared, who took the Bradys to a large, upper room well furnished, which, he informed them, was to be theirs.

Harry, feeling much fatigued, did not attempt to leave the room again that day.

During the afternoon Marietta knocked on the door and asked if there was anything she could do for him.

Harry thought not, but the girl persisted, and offered to read to him, adding that there were a number of interesting books in the house.

Harry consented and the reading lasted an hour, when Old King Brady, who had been down in the little laboratory with Colonel Newland, entered the room.

"Hello!" he exclaimed. "This looks cosy."

There was something in his tone which Marietta did not seem to like.

"And so it is!" she said. "I hope you have no objection to it, Mr. Brady. I am sure I want to do what I can to help your partner to get well."

"None in life, my dear, if only it don't get you into further trouble, this showing kind attentions to us," the old detective replied.

"Trouble! What trouble can it lead to?"

"Your answer lies right out there," replied Old King Brady. "Just step with me to the window."

The girl did so and her face flushed as she looked out of the window.

Turning hastily away, she exclaimed:

"Well, I don't care!" and out of the room she bounced, slamming the door behind her.

"What is it, Governor?" asked Harry, quietly.

"This thing must stop," said Old King Brady, decidedly.

"Heavens, Governor! I didn't seek it. I couldn't refuse the girl, though."

"No, my interesting invalid. You couldn't refuse her that time, but you must hereafter, or we shall all be in the soup. Just look out here for yourself!"



Behind the hut and within a stone's throw from it rose the rocks of the mountain-side.

There on a line with the window, rifle in hand, stood Tony with a face as black as night.

As his eyes rested upon Harry he scowled, and, turning away, hurried off down the hill.

"Jealous," laughed Harry. "Well, it is none of my affair."

"But you must make it your affair, then," said the old detective, decidedly. "We want to get out of this, and the only way is for the girl to pretend to encourage that fellow."

"She will never do it."

"She must be made to do it. As for you, fight shy of her and get well just as quick as you can."

"You have got something up your sleeve, Governor."

"I have, and the girl plays an important part in my plan. I am going to have a heart to heart talk with her the first chance I get."

The chance came that night, and after that Marietta only saw Harry at meal times.

Old King Brady's heart to heart talk must have been successful, for now Marietta received daily visits from Tony.

Not a day passed without the pair being seen strolling together through the valley.

Tony played the guitar very well, and Marietta often sang to his accompaniment.

Meanwhile the Bradys kept on the side, and as Harry's health improved he went into the laboratory and studied the mysteries of assaying under Colonel Newland's direction.

Old King Brady wandered about making the acquaintance of the Indians and greasers, all of whom, except a few who did the farming, worked in the mine.

And so two weeks slipped by, and not unpleasant, but still Captain Perez did not return.

## CHAPTER XI.

### THE CAPTURE OF CAPTAIN PEREZ.

One evening nearly three weeks after the coming of the Bradys to the Happy Valley, the old detective hurriedly entered the laboratory, where Colonel Newland and Harry were just finishing up a lot of ore samples which they had been crushing and packing in crucibles to be assayed next day.

"Hello, Governor!" exclaimed Harry. "You look excited. What's in the wind?"

"Perez has returned," replied the old detective, carefully closing the door and dropping his voice to a whisper. "The time has come for us to act."

"I'm ready!" exclaimed the colonel. "Count me in, whatever this mysterious plan of yours may be."

"Not so loud, please," replied the detective. "While I am astisfied we are no longer being spied upon, we must

still take no chances. Tell me, has Marietta succeeded in worming the great secret out of Tony yet?"

"You refer to the road out of this place?" questioned the colonel.

"Certainly. That is the whole thing."

"Well, then, I am proud and happy to say that my daughter considers that she has been successful. She has made Tony believe that she is learning to love him, and he in return has bestowed his whole confidence upon her, even to the extent of showing her the beginning of the secret trail."

"Good! And when did she get this information?"

"Only to-day. She told me at noon."

"And the way out lies where?"

"At the head of the valley, as you supposed."

"I was sure of it, for the reason that the man Carlos, or one of his companions, is always on guard there. Marietta is sure that she can find the place in the dark?"

"She is; still she does not feel quite sure that she has not been deceived."

"There is always that chance. Still, she has done enough. Now, Colonel, hear my plan. We must go to-night. Tell me, would it be possible for you to imprison Captain Perez in the tunnel. I don't mean by tying him up, but to arrange it so that he could not by any possibility escape without help from the outside. Something that could be done in a moment."

"It is," replied the colonel, after a few minutes' reflection.

"So I thought. You have been sinking on the vein during the last two weeks."

"Yes."

"How far in?"

"A hundred and fifty feet from the entrance. I have the shaft down twenty feet."

"Good! I have not been in there lately, and so could not feel quite sure. Then what you want to do is to trump up some excuse to get the man down into that shaft this evening at as late an hour as can be arranged. At the same time Marietta wants to indulge in a moonlight walk with Tony. She must entice him up to the head of the valley and hold him there till we come. Is she game for that, think?"

"She is. She will do anything to escape. You can trust her fully."

"Then fix your time and let her know before supper, so that she may have time to inform Tony and arrange her plans. Let me know at just what time you can have the captain at the bottom of that shaft and I will do the rest."

"But the details of your plan, Mr. Brady. It is only right that I should be fully informed."

"My dear sir. I have no desire to have it otherwise. But Captain Perez is right behind me, and—hush! He is here!"

A heavy step was heard in the hall outside.

The colonel and Harry immediately returned to their crucibles.

Old King Brady clapped a cigar in his mouth and was

standing with his hands in his pockets calmly smoking when the door opened and Captain Perez, dressed now like an American citizen, entered the room.

"Ha, Captain! Back again. Glad to see you, sir!" cried Old King Brady effusively, at the same time extending his hand.

The Mexican shook hands with a doubtful air.

"Gentlemen, I salute you all," he said. "Mr. Brady, you saw me before, I believe, but you seemed to be in such a big hurry to get away that I had no chance to speak to you."

"It is not for me to intrude upon the master of this camp," replied Old King Brady, quietly. "You were engaged in talking with your son, and I made up my mind that when you got ready to speak with me you would come my way."

"Which I have done now. Very good. How have matters been progressing at the mine, Colonel?"

"Fine!" cried the colonel, with a sudden display of enthusiasm. "Nothing could be better."

"I am very glad to hear it. What is the report?"

Colonel Newland threw a side glance at the Bradys.

"I—er—I will go into details later," he said. "I have something very important to show you."

"Oh, if we are in the way we will get out," said the old detective.

"Stay a minute," said Perez. "Before the colonel and I talk business let me understand how you both stand now in regard to the proposition I made you before I went away."

"For my part!" cried Colonel Newland, more enthusiastically than ever, "I agree to it. This mine is a wonder. It's the greatest ever. The only real objection I had to your plan was the dislike my daughter had to your son's advances, but that appears to have been overcome."

"So I understand," answered Captain Perez, evidently greatly pleased. "Then you have no objections to a partnership now?"

"I say again, none. As long as Marietta is happy, why should I? Of course, it is understood that the secrets of this place shall be made known to me and that I shall be allowed to come and go as I please."

"Certainly. The only thing is we don't want to show ourselves too freely until we are in position to square up with General Dutton. I have a plan for returning that gold which I think will work, but just at present we need every ounce of it to help build our mill."

"Right," said the colonel. "All that can be arranged."

"And you, Mr. Brady?" inquired Perez. "How do you stand?"

"Just where I did before," replied Old King Brady. "I am willing to go into this deal to put money into it to any extent within my means."

"Could you raise half a million?"

"Easily. Of course, it would mean returning to New York."

"Oh, certainly. I have just returned from New York

myself. By the way, I had an interesting interview with Dutton. He believes you are dead."

"Perhaps it would be better not to undeceive him for awhile."

"Well, we will talk about that later. I have a plan, as I said, for returning the gold. We shall have to do it before Colonel Newland can come and go freely or he will surely be accused of stealing the bullion. But all this can be discussed later. Now, leave me alone with Colonel Newland for a few moments, please."

The Bradys retired to their room then.

"Governor, what bold game are you thinking of playing?" demanded Harry, as soon as they were alone.

"It is a bold game," replied the old detective, "and the chances of its success are perhaps small. Still, it is the only thing that suggests itself to me, Harry. I mean to make a prisoner of Perez, the father, and capture Perez, the son, carrying him off with us."

"And the gold?"

"It will have to be left behind to be picked up later if we can."

Old King Brady then proceeded to discuss his plan in detail, but as all that he said will be developed later, it need not be gone into now."

Just before the hour for supper Colonel Newland came hurrying into the room.

"I have stuffed him full of guff," he said in a hurried whisper. "We go into the mine at ten o'clock."

"Good! And you have posted Marietta?" replied the old detective.

"Yes; and she has agreed to have her end of the business in proper shape. I have found out more, too. This mine doesn't belong to Perez at all, but to certain New York parties who bought it years ago and have never been able to locate their purchase. Perez went there to try and buy them out, but they would not sell."

"Is the mine really so valuable, Colonel?"

"It certainly is. I propose to go into it if we can down this man. You had better join in with me in that case."

"Not at all," said Old King Brady, emphatically. "We are detectives and nothing else."

Supper was served as usual, and upon that occasion Tony was present and made himself very agreeable.

After supper there was music, and at eight o'clock the Bradys strolled out in the camp.

Before they had gone far they met Captain Perez and walked up and down with him in front of the huts for an hour talking over their plans.

Everybody connected with the gang saw them together, and this was just as Old King Brady wanted it to be.

Soon after nine the detectives returned to the house and shut themselves in their room.

Never did an hour pass more slowly than the one which succeeded.

Lights had been extinguished in the Bradys' room, and this enabled them to more readily see any light moving about outside.

It was exactly ten when they caught the glimmer of a lantern moving up the hill.

"There they go!" said Old King Brady. "Now then, Harry, our time has come!"

He threw up the sash and both detectives, lowering themselves from the window-sill, quietly dropped to the ground.

They stole up the steep incline to the tunnel and entered a few minutes after Colonel Newland and Captain Perez.

Fortunately for his purpose, Old King Brady at the time of his capture had not been very carefully searched.

Thus he had been able to retain several valuable articles in the secret pockets of the wonderful blue coat.

A small revolver was one; the little electric lantern which both detectives invariably carry was another. Both were coming into play now.

"Hush, Harry! Not a sound," whispered Old King Brady. "We will wait until we hear them descend the shaft."

The wait was but a brief one.

At the other end of the tunnel they could hear voices talking, and presently the light vanished.

"They are down," breathed Harry. "Do you think he will put up a fight?"

"He may."

"And in that case."

"There is but one alternative. He must be shot. The man is a criminal, and we have a perfect right to do the best we can in a case like this."

They crept on with as little noise as possible, and at length reached the mouth of the shaft.

With darkness all around them and the light beneath they had no difficulty in seeing.

Colonel Newland was pointing out the beauties of the ore body when suddenly Old King Brady's deep voice rang out:

"Colonel Newland, you are to come up the ladder! Captain Perez, you are to throw up your hands or be instantly shot!"

"What in thunder! The detectives!" cried the colonel.

Dropping the lantern which he held, he scrambled up the ladder.

The light was extinguished.

But there was no interval of darkness.

Harry had the little electric lantern ready for business, and he threw its light full upon the outlaw, who so far had not uttered a word.

Nor had he raised his hands, and now, like a flash, one went behind him.

Bang!

The revolver was not drawn.

Perez's hand fell helpless at his side and he sank back against the wall with a deep groan.

"So, my friend, you see we mean business," said Old King Brady. "The next bullet will be for your head."

"Burn you!" hissed the outlaw. "You'll pay for this treachery, old man!"

"No treachery, sir. Business! We are thief-takers. You are a thief!"

Fearful imprecations followed, to which the detectives paid not the least attention.

The instant the colonel was off the ladder he pulled it up after him.

"Mercy!" called Perez then. "This is not the way I treated you, Mr. Brady. Don't leave me here to die!"

But to this no answer was returned.

Back through the tunnel the Bradys and Colonel Newland hurried.

"It does seem kind of tough," remarked Harry. "That man, bad as he may be, did save our lives."

"Not a word about it!" cried Old King Brady. "I regret even a show of treachery as much as you, Harry, but that man is a thorough scoundrel. He would have killed us long ago if it had not been for the hope of obtaining money from me to help him work his mine."

## CHAPTER XII.

### CONCLUSION.

"Thank heaven the first act is over!" cried Colonel Newland, when they came out under the stars. "Now what is to be the next, Mr. B.?"

"The next is to get horses and make a sudden dash up the valley," replied the old detective. "It is a strenuous proposition, I know; but by this time everybody but Carlos, the guard, must be asleep. I am afraid we shall have to shoot him, too."

"And Tony?"

"I leave him to Marietta to keep quiet until we can jump on him."

"It all looks very doubtful."

"Try and think of it differently. There is no danger that Perez can make himself heard."

"Not the least."

"Then the quicker we go the better. We make for the horses. We shall have to ride bareback, I suppose."

The stretch of grass-land where the horses were hobbled was midway between the mine and the row of huts.

As the Bradys came out from the shadow of the house the old detective suddenly seized Colonel Newland by the arm and pulled him back.

"Look! Look!" he whispered. "We are not the only ones playing traitor to-night!"

Near the first hut, which was always kept locked, and where the Bradys understood that the gold was concealed, were the two wagons belonging to the Jessie mine.

To each of these two horses had been harnessed, but not a soul was to be seen.

The door of the hut stood open, however, and a light could be seen burning inside.

"Can it be?" breathed Colonel Newland. "Do they intend to make off with the gold?"

"It's nothing else, you may depend," replied Old King Brady. "Ha! Here they come!"

Three men emerged from the hut. They were carrying bullion boxes, and these they loaded into the wagon, then returning for more.

Just then a fourth man appeared.

He was armed with a rifle and stood looking toward the mine.

"Laying for Perez!" whispered Old King Brady. "They mean to kill him if he returns. It is all as plain as day. Those fellows are preparing to slope with the gold."

"And that knocks all our plans in the head," said Harry.

"Not necessarily," replied Old King Brady, hurriedly. "Let me think! Let me think."

"I see no way out, and I fear for my daughter's life," said Colonel Newland. "We are unarmed. We cannot hope to stand up against those men."

"But are we unarmed?" replied Old King Brady. "Where are the rendrock cartridges kept that you use in the mine?"

"Right there in that shanty."

"And you have the key?"

"Yes."

"Quick! Get six of them and the battery you use to explode them."

"That's in the tunnel about halfway to the shaft."

"Harry will get that."

"But what do you propose?"

"To head these fellows off at the end of the valley. To bring Tony in with us and then capture him. We shall not only get out of here, but we shall take the gold with us if we succeed."

Fortunately Colonel Newland was a man of quick action.

In less than three minutes he had the cartridges and Harry returned with the battery within five.

"And now for a sneak up the valley," said Old King Brady. "We will keep in the shadow of the rocks, and I think we can pass them unseen. Then we go behind the huts and then on the run till we connect with Tony and Marietta. Now we go!"

And while these preparations were in progress the three greasers continued to load on the gold.

\* \* \* \* \*

Distasteful as it was to her, Marietta Newland had played her part well.

She had completely blinded Tony.

The young Mexican was right in clover that evening.

He felt certain that he had at last succeeded in winning the love of this interesting girl.

Marietta was sitting on a rock beneath a tree, with Tony lying on the ground beside her.

His head was in her lap and love-making was in full swing when suddenly footsteps were heard behind them and out sprang Colonel Newland and the Bradys.

Tony leaped to his feet, and even Marietta was startled.

If the young Mexican had had his rifle, as usual, there might have been trouble.

As it was, he reached for his revolver, but was checked by Old King Brady's stern voice.

"Hold on, Tony! Don't shoot your friends. There's trouble enough in this camp to-night!"

"Wha—what's the matter," gasped Tony. "What brings you here? What does this mean?"

"Where is your father?"

"I'm sure I don't know. In his hut, I suppose."

"Then indeed he is not. Let me tell you that Carlos and three others are at this minute engaged in loading the bullion on to the wagons. You can guess why."

Tony was furious.

He was for starting right back, but again Old King Brady checked him.

"Stay, you can do nothing that way," he said. "We have a better plan. We will catch these fellows in the act. How is it that Carlos is not here?"

"I sent him back. I wanted to be alone."

"Then you see how he has improved his time. We propose to place these cartridges here in the road and attach a fuse. We have the battery. We shall let them come on until the first wagon is right over the cartridges and then spring out and challenge them. Let them shoot if they dare. If they do we shall blow them sky high!"

"Good! Good!" cried Tony. "Say, do you think they have done up the old man?"

"We pounded on the window of his hut as we sneaked past behind it, but could get no answer.

"Then every man of them dies. Oh, how I wish I had my gun!"

"But you have your revolver, Tony," said Marietta, soothingly.

"Pity we are not all armed," growled Tony.

"You only have the one revolver?" inquired Old King Brady.

"That is all."

"Then we must do the best we can. Come, Colonel, let us get to work."

The cartridges were placed in the road and the fuse attached.

It was all properly done, for Old King Brady meant to use it if necessity required.

The wait which followed was but a brief one.

In a few minutes they could see the wagons moving forward.

All now concealed themselves behind the many loose rocks which lay scattered about.

Old King Brady took pains to keep close to Tony, who, it was understood, was to challenge the men.

Colonel Newland remained by the battery on the other side of the road.

"If it wasn't for spoiling those wagons I'd blow the scoundrels up anyway," Tony growled.

"We'll start them on the run, that will be the best way," said Old King Brady. "They can't escape from the valley, I suppose?"

"Not unless they take to the Deadman's Run," replied Tony. "If they do that they are as good as lost."

"Then the other way out of this valley lies ahead of us here?"

"Never mind about that, old man," replied Tony, suspiciously.

"So long as we down them I don't care," said Old King Brady. "It's a shame to have this thing happen just as your father and all of us had come to an understanding."

There was no further talk after that, for the wagons were coming rapidly forward, their wheels making but little noise on the grass-grown trail.

All now breathlessly waited.

There were only the four men and Carlos in the forward wagon.

Old King Brady waited until they had almost reached the cartridges, and then nudging Tony, whispered:

"Now!"

Instantly Tony sprang to his feet and shouted in Spanish:

"Hold! You are over six cartridges! Stop those horses or we will blow you to pieces!"

All sprang up then, except Marietta.

Colonel Newland's hand was upon the battery as the men in the wagons plainly saw.

The man Carlos, who was driving the wagon, immediately reined in.

His face was the picture of terror.

He leaped from the seat, as did his companion.

At the same instant Tony fired and Carlos fell dead.

The bluff had worked like a charm.

The two men in the other wagon sprang out, too, and followed by two more shots from Tony, took to their heels.

"We win out!" cried the Mexican. "Pity my revolver is empty! I can do no more."

"Yes, you can, son," said Old King Brady, sternly.

And as with his left hand he wrested the empty revolver from Tony he drew his own weapon and covered him with his right.

"Get into that wagon and drive us out of this valley!" he cried. "Not a word unless you want to join your dead friend!"

\* \* \* \* \*

"Someone will have to go ahead and part the bushes. I can't drive the wagon through them."

Tony said it.

They were at the end of the Happy Valley now.

Dark rocks frowned above them; further advance was apparently impossible.

Tony and Old King Brady were in the first wagon. Marietta, with her father and Harry, were in the second.

The bushes referred to grew thick in the bed of the creek.

"We take to the water?" demanded Old King Brady.

"Yes."

"There is a natural tunnel leading under the mountain through which the creek flows?"

"Yes."

"Oh, it's all true!" cried Marietta. "He told me all about it, the horrid little wretch. It's all right, Mr. Brady."

Tony sat motionless, and as Old King Brady looked at the boy he could see the tears running down his cheeks.

"He really loved her," thought the old detective. "Well, it is hard on him."

And then and there he resolved not to attempt to hold Tony.

Colonel Newland got down and parted the bushes and the wagons were driven in under a low roof of rock.

The old detective had his lantern ready, and the wagons rolled on over the stony bed of the creek by its light.

"Tony," said the old detective, in a kindly tone.

"Well!"

"I am sorry for you."

"Keep your sorrow to yourself."

"No, no! Don't say that. Listen. It is enough that the girl has broken your heart. When we get through here you can go back if you wish."

There was a few moments of silence and then came a faint "thank you."

Old King Brady had won.

"After all, the boy is not so bad," he thought, "and I can never forget that he was the means of saving our lives."

The length of the tunnel was less than half a mile.

It had evidently been cut out by the creek in times long passed.

Those who have only seen the Nevada creeks—or rivers, as they are usually called—at a time of low water may be excused for doubting the possibility of this, but it will be doubted by no one who has seen them at a time of flood.

At last they came out at the foot of the range on the other side.

A vast slope lay before them extending with gradual descent down to a desert stretch to the westward.

Far in the distance lights could be seen twinkling.

"Is that Bodie?" asked Old King Brady.

"Yes," replied Tony.

It was only in this brief way that he had spoken since his capture.

"Then we had better part here."

"Tony sat motionless.

They had come up out of the creek and halted.

"We don't want to stop here!" called Colonel Newland.

"That's Bodie where those lights are, surest thing."

"Do you want to go back?" asked Old King Brady.

"I suppose I must. There is no hope for me with—"

The boy's voice was choked with sobs.

"Not a bit. She has only been fooling you."



"Then I go."

"You can wade through the creek?"

"Yes. I have done it often."

"Take the lantern. It will be a help to you."

Tony dismounted from the wagon and started back to the creek.

"You are not going to let that little wretch go, are you?" screamed Marietta.

"I am," replied Old King Brady, sternly, "and nothing shall prevent me, so say no more."

Tony walked away looking like a whipped cur.

"Tony!" called Old King Brady, "you can look for your father in the shaft at the end of the tunnel. We left him there."

Tony made no answer, but, passing under the rocks, disappeared.

"Forward!" cried Old King Brady, and the wagons started down the hill.

\* \* \* \* \*

Within two hours they turned up safely at Bodie with their precious load.

Colonel Newland was for at once raising a force and going back to the Happy Valley after Captain Perez.

But the Bradys would not listen to anything of the sort. They had rescued the Newlands and were now about to bank the bullion at Bodie.

Their work was done.

Colonel Newland, however, persisted, and was busy getting men together when the Bradys took the train for San Francisco, which city they proposed to visit before their return East.

The detectives did not, therefore, learn the end of the affair until they reached New York, where General Dutton, who expressed himself entirely satisfied with their work, showed them a letter from Colonel Newland, which stated that, upon penetrating to the Happy Valley, they found the place deserted.

Not for two years did the Bradys hear of the Happy Valley again, when one day, meeting General Dutton, Old King Brady was informed that he had purchased the property of its New York owners and that Colonel Newland was then working the hidden mine, a road having been run through a pass in the mountains to more effectually connect it with the outside world.

We may mention in addition that the amount of General Dutton's fee went a long way toward compensating the Bradys for their sufferings in the desert.

One afternoon three years later Harry came rushing into the office, exclaiming:

Governor, who do you suppose I saw on a Broadway car just now?"

"I'm sure I don't know," replied Old King Brady. "Who?"

"Captain Perez. I am positive of it."

"Well, and what did you do?"

"Nothing. He stared at me and I stared at him."

"Right," said Old King Brady. "On no account would I wish to interfere with that man."

And the old detective was right.

Bad as Captain Perez might be, he had still saved two lives.

But for him there would have been a very different ending to the case of The Bradys' Desert Trail.

THE END.

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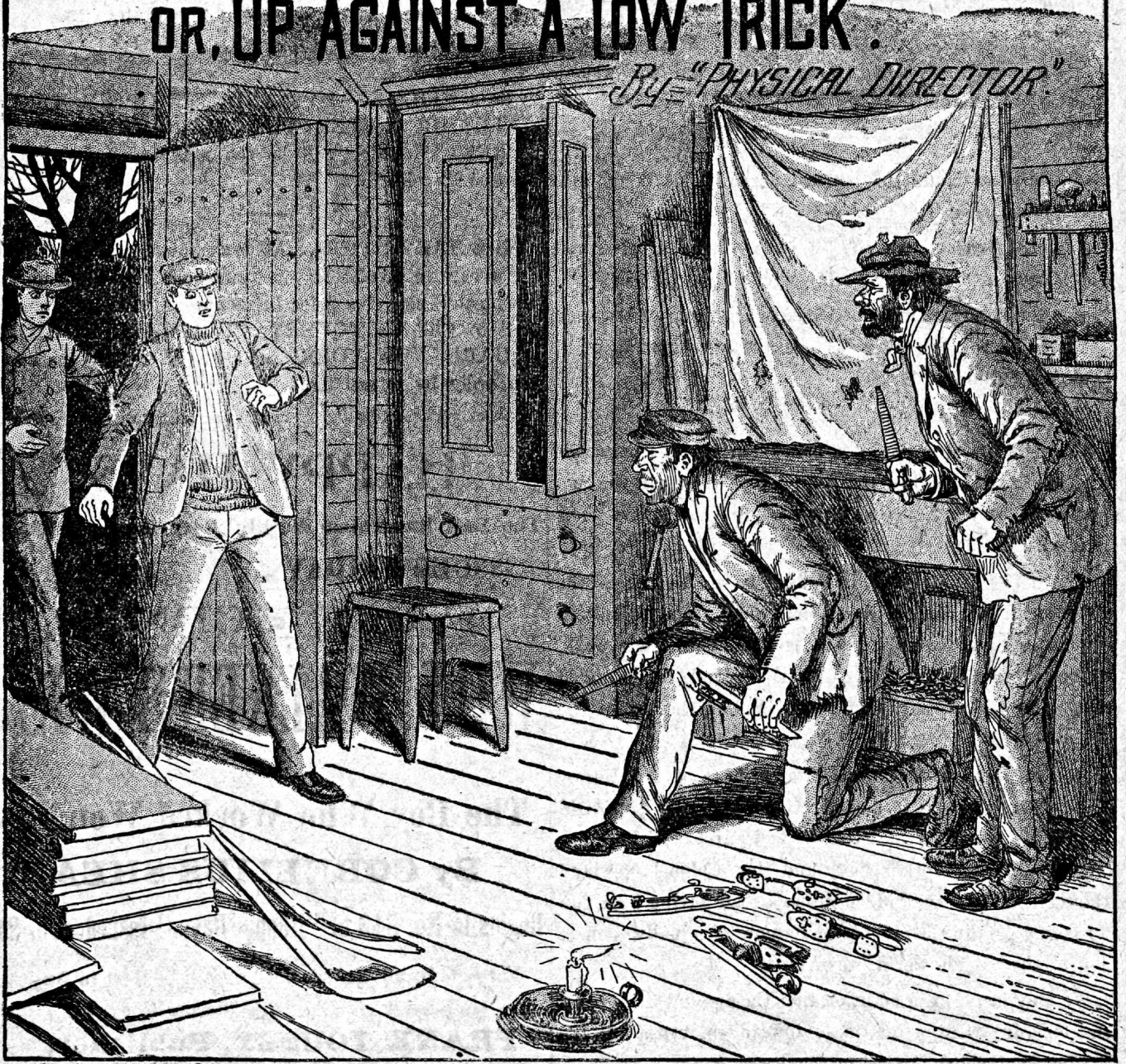
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




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