

SECRET SERVICE

OLD AND YOUNG KING BRADY, DETECTIVES.

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

No. 434.

NEW YORK, MAY 17, 1907.

Price 5 Cents.

THE BRADYS' BLEECKER STREET MYSTERY; OR, THE HOUSE WITH A HUNDRED DOORS.

By A NEW-YORK DETECTIVE.



The Bradys entered, Harry carrying Alice in his arms. Before they had advanced ten feet three doors flew open. Behind each was a dusky figure in Oriental dress holding a sword. They stood as motionless as statues.

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CHAPTER I.

THE DALADOUZE KIDNAPPING CASE.

The cases which fall in the way of the famous Brady Detective Bureau are many and various, and come to them in all kinds of ways.

For, while devoting the bulk of their time to such business as comes to them through the United States Secret Service, the Bradys, with their female partner, Miss Alice Montgomery, still find opportunity to handle outside business.

Sometimes these outside cases dovetail with those of the Secret Service Bureau.

Such a case was the now famous "Bleecker Street Mystery," which, by the way, was by no means confined to Bleecker street, but took the detectives into several cities and States.

So far as the Bradys were concerned, this case began when the famous detective, Old King Brady, and his pupil and partner, Young King Brady, were hurrying through Bleecker street in the city of New York, one evening in the month of June, a few years since.

The haste of the detectives was caused solely by their desire to get out of this unsavory neighborhood as soon as possible.

For Bleecker street, once one of the most fashionable thoroughfares in New York, has sadly fallen from her high estate.

To-day the once elegant mansions, now dirty, tumble-down and begrimed, are occupied by newly arrived emigrants of such nationalities which can find congenial quarters nowhere else.

Here also is the famous Mills Hotel No. 1, which nightly shelters so many of the "hard luck" order who have not yet fallen to the level of the Bowery lodging-house.

We could write pages about this street with a history, and make them interesting reading, but at present we are concerned only with the Bradys, who as they crossed Sullivan street saw ahead of them a thin, swarthy foreigner, perhaps forty years of age and exceedingly well dressed for this part of the city, who was carrying an expensive grip and leading by the hand a beautiful boy who could not have been more than six years old.

The child was as different in appearance from the man as could well be imagined.

His features were regular and aristocratic, surmounted by a mass of golden curls.

He wore a suit of the prevailing fashionable style for children of his age, which made the little fellow appear decidedly out of place among the ragged, dirty urchins of the neighborhood.

Both man and child looked so out of place here on Bleecker street that the attention of the detectives was attracted at once.

"Governor, that's a singular outfit," remarked Young King Brady. "Can that be a kidnapped child?"

The Bradys had just passed the pair when this remark was made.

"It struck me the same way, Harry," replied the old detective. "That child is evidently not of foreign stock, while the man is manifestly a foreigner."

"Suppose we tackle him?"

"I think we had better."

Was the tall foreigner a mind-reader?

It almost seemed so.

He did not wait for the Bradys to tackle him, nor even for them to turn around.

Quickening his steps, he was right behind them now, and so noiselessly had he come that neither of the detectives were aware of the fact.

"Pardon, saires," he said, touching Harry's arm, "but I am one strangaire in New York; is it that you can direct me to one sheep, respectable hotel ver I can the night spend vith my leedle boy?"

Of course, before he got through with this long sentence the Bradys were facing him.

"I can direct you to a dozen, my friend," replied the old detective, displaying his shield, "but are you sure that child is your son?"

"No, saire; not my son. De son of my sister, yes, saire."

The Bradys eyed the child attentively.

The little fellow's face was singularly dull and heavy. He seemed to be half asleep.

"Where are you from?" demanded the old detective.

"From New Orleans, saire. I just come from the steamer. You are a detective?"

"Yes, and I tell you plainly I have my doubts about this child belonging to you."

"Oh, saire, you wrong me. My nephew dot I loof so. Speak to de gentleman, Paul. Tell him I am your uncle, is it not?"

"Yes, uncle," murmured the child. "Oh, I am so sleepy. Put me to bed."

"He is tired out, saire. But pardon my trouble you."

"Do you want to go with this man, Paul?" demanded Harry, bending over the child.

"Yes. I'm sleepy. I want to go to bed."

"Don't you want to go to mamma?"

"My mamma go to heaven. I want to go to bed."

"Ah, saire, how can you suspect me?" demanded the foreigner reproachfully. "My dead sistaire's child!"

"Where is your papa?" asked Harry.

But the child began to cry and whine for bed.

Evidently no further information would be forthcoming.

"What is your name?" demanded Old King Brady.

"Yon Pitnec, saire."

"You are Hungarian?"

"Translyvanian, saire."

"But this child is evidently American or English."

"He get his look from his father, saire; he is an American."

"Oh, his father is alive?"

"Yes, saire; but he no good. I support de child."

And this was all that came of the Bradys' questioning.

As the little fellow did not appear to be in the least afraid of the man, the Bradys did not feel justified in interfering further.

Old King Brady accordingly directed Mr. Pitnec to the Mills Hotel, and the detectives passed on.

If they could have seen the diabolical look which came over the foreigner's swarthy face as soon as their backs were turned they might have regretted their action.

But they gave the matter no further thought then, although it was destined to occupy all their thoughts later.

The man trailed behind them for a block or so, looking at the various signs.

Soon he spied one upon an old mansion which read "Hotel Danube."

Beneath this in the corner was the word "Szgamy."

Either the sight of this outlandish word or something else suited Mr. Pitnec, for he promptly ascended the steps, and passing between the artistically carved pilasters of the grand old doorway, disappeared with the child.

He had picked out a hotel which is absolutely unique.

The word "Szgamy" is used in Hungary and Transylvania to denote the Gypsy race.

This "Hotel Danube" was kept by a gypsy.

The appearance of the word on his sign was intended to inform any gypsy who perchance might for once prefer a bed to a tent of that fact.

It would thus appear that Mr. Pitnec knew very well where he was going.

Certainly, as far as appearance went, he himself might have been a Szgamy.

The Bradys were to have all these things brought to their attention shortly.

It began the following evening.

The detectives were seated in the library of the old house on Washington Square, where for some years they have kept bachelor's hall.

With them was Miss Alice Montgomery, the talented female partner in the Brady Detective Bureau.

Alice, who lives at a boarding-house on Waverly Place, opposite the Square, had been dining with the Bradys that evening.

It had been a snug little family party, so to speak.

Most enjoyable are such occasions for Young King Brady, who is in love with Alice, and that without having received very much encouragement from the lady of his heart as yet.

Business at the Bureau had been very quiet for some time, and the conversation turned upon this fact.

"It is a full month since we have had a Secret Service case," remarked Alice. "It begins to look as if nothing more from the Government Bureau was coming our way."

This remark was made to Harry, and before he could reply Old King Brady, who was glancing over the evening paper, broke in:

"Why, look here, Harry, this is one on me! Great Scott! I ought to have listened to you last night."

"What is it?" demanded Harry.

"Remember that man we met on Bleecker street last night?"

"Certainly. The one with the child?"

"Yes."

"What about him?"

"He appears to have been murdered. Listen to this."

And Old King Brady read the following item:

"Murder or Suicide? This morning, when Albert Jokal, proprietor of a cheap lodging-house on Bleecker street, which is conducted under the name of the Hotel Danube, went to call one of his guests, a man by the name of Pitnec, he found him in bed with a silk handkerchief tied about his throat so tightly as to produce strangulation.

"The man was black in the face, and had evidently been dead many hours.

"Pitnec applied for a night's lodging the evening before, saying that he had just arrived from New Orleans.

"With him was a little boy, whom he announced was his nephew. The pair were shown to their room after Pitnec had purchased from Jokal a flask of slivervitz, or Hungarian plum brandy.

"This was the last seen of the man alive, and when the room was entered this morning by Jokal the child was missing and the empty flask found on the floor. Coroner Metzel is in charge of the case."

"What is it all about?" demanded Alice. "What have you to do with this man?"

Harry told of the meeting the night before.

"We ought to have arrested that fellow," he remarked. "I'd like to bet he kidnapped that child."

"It is singular business, certainly," replied Old King Brady. "Still, the fellow may have committed suicide, and the lodging-house keeper or his wife have taken a fancy to the child and secreted the little fellow before the case was reported."

"We ought to do something about it, Governor."

"Oh, I don't care to butt in on a police case, Harry. That is a little out of our line; but call up Metzel, and tell him about our meeting the child. He can have the house searched. It is all we can do."

So Young King Brady got the coroner on the telephone.

"The verdict is suicide," said Harry, after hanging up the receiver. "The coroner says that he had the house thoroughly searched, and the child could not be found. He thinks the little fellow was frightened because the man got drunk on the plum brandy, and that he ran away. The police have his description, and will be on the lookout."

"They will never find him," said Alice.

"Small chance," replied the old detective. "Well, I don't see that we can do anything more."

And so the matter was dropped for that night.

Next day there appeared in the papers an item stating that the six-year-old son of Congressman Daladouze had been kidnapped in Washington.

There was not enough detail to attract more than passing thought with the Bradys, but as the days went on the case of the little Daladouze boy began to be more and more talked of in the papers in New York.

The Bradys now learning that the name of the missing boy was Paul and his age between five and six, Harry called up the chief of the Washington police, and related what had happened on Bleecker street.

This, of course, was as far as they felt justified in going.

But when next day the picture of little Paul was published, both Old King Brady and Harry felt satisfied that he was the child they had seen on Bleecker street.

This fact was also communicated to the Washington chief.

The answer was that the Bradys must be mistaken, as the Washington detectives had positive evidence that the child had been kidnapped by a band of gypsies, who had carried him off into the mountains of Virginia, where search was then being made.

Thus turned down, the Bradys, having other and important business to take up their time, dismissed the matter.

Several days passed, and they thought no more about it until one morning who should walk into the office on Union Square but Mr. Clemens, United States Secret Service Commissioner in New York, accompanied by a grave-looking gentleman.

"Good-morning, Mr. Brady," said the commissioner to the old detective. "Allow me to introduce to you Congressman Daladouze, of Louisiana."

CHAPTER II.

OLD KING BRADY TACKLES THE BLEECKER STREET MYSTERY
BY ORDERING SLIVERVITZ.

"I am the father of little Paul Daladouze," said the Congressman. "I suppose, Mr. Brady, you have read in the papers of the kidnapping of my son?"

"Indeed, yes," replied the old detective. "Be seated, please."

"Here is an order from the chief of the Secret Service Bureau for you to take this matter in hand," said Mr. Clemens, handing Old King Brady a paper. "It is by the President's special request."

"The President has been very kind," said Mr. Daladouze, speaking in a slow, heavy fashion. "I applied to him for permission to retain you at the suggestion of the chief of the Washington police, who informs me that you possibly have some knowledge of my boy."

"It was not necessary," replied Old King Brady. "A personal application to my Bureau would have served you as well."

"I did not know. You do outside work?"

"Oh, yes."

"If you will kindly tell me about this child you saw."

"Willingly," replied Old King Brady, and he related the circumstances.

Mr. Daladouze questioned him closely about the little fellow's appearance.

He then produced a photograph of little Paul.

Old King Brady studied the picture attentively.

"I only saw the child with his hat on, and that in the dark," he said. "I would not undertake to assert that this is the same face."

"From your description I have no doubt you saw Paul," said the Congressman.

"I will call my partner. Say nothing. I will spring the photograph upon him suddenly."

He rang an electric bell twice, and Harry came in from his private office.

He nodded to Mr. Clemens, and looked inquiringly at the Congressman.

"Look at this picture, Harry," said the old detective. "Have you ever seen that child?"

One glance was enough for Young King Brady.

"It is the little boy we saw on Bleecker street the other day," he promptly said.

A faint expression of satisfaction appeared upon Mr. Daladouze's face.

"You are sure?" he asked.

"Positive."

"That is all right, then. Now, Mr. Brady, will you undertake to find my son? Many have had a hand in it, but all have failed."

"Certainly," replied the old detective.

"I suppose you will want me to dismiss the Washington detectives?"

"I make no such proviso. The point is to recover the child. Do as you please."

"Indeed, I think they have about given it up, anyway. Shall I relate the facts of Paul's disappearance?"

"I would prefer to have you answer my questions. Experience has shown me that we can quickest get at facts in that way."

"Very well. Ask your questions."

"One minute. I desire to have my partner, Miss Montgomery, present."

Old King Brady pressed an electric button three times, and Alice came in.

Mr. Daladouze was introduced.

The examination then began, Harry taking shorthand notes.

It is not necessary to detail all Old King Brady's questions, nor the Congressman's answers.

The substance of the matter we shall briefly describe.

It appeared that Mr. Daladouze represented certain Louisiana "parishes"—as the counties in that State are called—in Congress.

His wife had died at the birth of Paul, his only child.

In Washington the Congressman boarded, and little Paul attended a pay school.

It was while on his way home from school that he disappeared.

As the school was located within a block of the Congressman's boarding-house, the little fellow was accustomed to go and come alone.

As to the circumstances of his disappearance, Mr. Daladouze had nothing to tell.

He was away all day, and when he returned in the evening he found the boarding-house in a state of excitement on account of Paul's non-arrival from school.

A colored nurse who looked after his wants was out searching for him.

She returned without the least clew to the manner of his disappearance.

Practically this was all.

Of course, there was a lot of talk about the different clews the Washington detectives had followed up.

But as these had resulted in nothing, Old King Brady brushed them all aside.

"And now, Mr. Daladouze," he said at last, "one or two further questions, and I am done. Have you any enemy whom you could put this job up to?"

"Not one in the world that I know of, sir," was the prompt reply. "Of course, I have political enemies, but —"

"But they don't count, unless you happen to know of one revengeful enough to steal your child."

"I can think of no one who would fill that bill."

"Very well. You have no solution of your own to offer, then?"

"None."

"That brings us up to our Bleecker street mystery. I believe the man with whom my partner and I saw the child might have been a gypsy. The house from which the child disappeared is kept by a gypsy, I am told."

"There was a gypsy camp out at Georgetown at the time Paul disappeared."

"So you said. If gypsies did the stealing it certainly complicates matters, for we know so little of this strange people in this country that it is impossible to fathom their

motives. However, we will get right at work, and see what can be done."

Mr. Daladouze offered a retaining fee, but Old King Brady declined it.

Shortly afterward the Congressman withdrew.

"Now, then," exclaimed Old King Brady, "here is our Bleecker street mystery thrown back at us like a bouncing ball. What's to be done? Alice, you polyglot, who speak all languages, even to Chinese, what can you do with the talk of the Szgamy, as these Hungarian gypsies are called?"

"Nothing at all," replied Alice. "The Romany language is one too many for me."

"And Hungarian?"

"Count me out."

"You are a poor polyglot. The old Irishman, who knows only English, will have to take hold. In other words, I tackle the case first. So here goes for Bleecker street. I will see what I can do."

A little later Old King Brady left the office in his usual peculiar dress.

His peculiarities consist of a long blue coat with brass buttons, an old-fashioned stock and stand-up collar, and a big white felt hat with an extraordinarily broad brim.

Many people in New York know the old detective by sight on account of his peculiar attire.

But Bleecker street has become so changed and so foreign that his acquaintance in that section was but slight. Still, it was necessary to make the most of it.

To jump in at the Hotel Danube merely as a private detective Old King Brady felt would scarcely work.

And so instead of going directly to Bleecker street, Old King Brady went down on Avenue A.

Here he entered a shabby little Hungarian restaurant kept by one Anton Streiz.

This section of New York has, of late years, become known as "Little Hungary."

On the avenue and on the cross-streets north dwell the bulk of the Hungarian and the Bohemian population of New York.

As it happened, Old King Brady knew Anton Streiz well, and the Hungarian was indebted to him for many favors.

For years Old King Brady has made it a practice to cultivate the acquaintance of such people.

Usually he has a man of this sort to fit every emergency.

But there was no gypsy on the old detective's list.

Whether or no Anton Streiz would fill the bill was a matter of doubt.

The restaurant keeper was behind his bar, but on sight of Old King Brady he promptly turned over his place to another, and withdrew to a table in the rear.

"I want your help, Anton," said the old detective.

"Vell, some of my people been going wrong?" demanded the man.

"Not at all, unless you are a Szgamy."

"I am not! Thank heaven I was born under a roof, and not in a tent."

"This is a kidnapping case."

"De Szgamy vas great kidnapers."

"Why do they steal children, Anton?"

The Hungarian shrugged his shoulders.

"Oh, you would not understand if I tell you," he said.

"Perhaps I would. I am not such a fool. Out with it."

"Vell, sometimes of course they steals dem for money."

"Very seldom. When a child is stolen by gypsies we rarely hear of them asking for a reward."

"Gypsies! What's dem?"

"It is English for the Szgamy."

"Oh, yair! Vell, dat's so."

"Of course it's so. Tell me what you have in mind."

"De Szgamy vas great fortune tellers."

"Yes."

"People tink dey always tell lies, but in mein country ve knows better. So often dey tells de truth."

"Yes; well?"

"Vell, how dey get at de truth?"

"Blest if I know. Do spirits tell them?"

Anton looked wise, and laid his forefinger against his nose.

"Now you talk sense," he said. "I tought you would laff at me so."

"Not I. Go on. Is this the reason they steal children, because they think they can get spirits to talk to them through children easier than through grown people?"

"Mister Prady, dot vas schust it. Dey fear to put dere own children in de spirit—vot you call it?"

"Trance?"

"Yair; trance. So dey steals a child if he or she vas de right kind, und de old vitches dey can always tell. So dey use dem und it mages dem no good for noting else never afterwards."

"That is just what I supposed was their reason."

"You don't believe in dose tings? Yes, no?"

"I know very little about them. But read this, Anton, and you will understand what I am driving at."

Old King Brady then handed the Hungarian certain newspaper clippings relating to the Bleecker street mystery.

The restaurant keeper toiled through them.

"Do you know that man Jokal?" the old detective asked.

"I do not. Never heard of him."

"On his sign he has the word Szgamy painted."

"Den he is a Szgamy. No Magyar would entertain a Szgamy in his house."

"Magyar," by the way, is the name the Hungarians apply to themselves.

"Can you speak the Szgamy language, Anton?" demanded Old King Brady now.

Anton looked highly insulted.

"It is not my language," he flashed.

"I didn't say it was."

"I am a Magyar."

"Of course, but——"

"Vell?"

"I suspect you know a little Szgamy."

"Vell, mebbe I do. I wouldn't tell dat to a Hungarian, Mr. Brady, but to you—dot is different. Ven I vas a leedle feller my fader lived in Transylvania. I play mit de Szgamy poys. Vell, I can speak a leedle."

"And understand all they say?"

"Pretty goot."

"You're my man, Anton. Come over to Bleecker street with me and help me to talk to this fellow Jokal, and I shall be a thousand times obliged."

But the Magyar was not giving something for nothing. He immediately changed the subject, and began to talk of a certain anarchist who had been sentenced to Blackwell's Island for a year for incendiary talk at an anarchists' meeting.

Could Old King Brady get his sentence commuted?

The old detective thought it likely.

Would he try?

He certainly would.

Then in that case Anton was ready to try his hand at pumping information out of the despised Szgamy, and to Bleecker street he and Old King Brady went.

They entered the Hotel Danube, and Anton ordered slivervitz for two.

Then he asked for Jokal.

The man behind the bar assured them that he was not in. Anton looked at Old King Brady helplessly.

As a detective the Magyar was certainly a failure.

It was time for Old King Brady to take a hand in, and he did it.

Showing his shield, he announced himself as a detective.

The man behind the bar was undersized, very slim, and had a face as dark as a mulatto.

His hair was jet black, coarse, and straight.

His eyes looked like two little jet beads. There was a cringing servility about his voice as he said:

"I am very sorry. Mr. Jokal has gone to Boston. He will not be back for a week. I suppose it is about the missing child you want to ask?"

His English was so good that Old King Brady almost felt that he had been wasting time in hunting up his Hungarian.

"It is," he replied.

"The police and the detectives have found our house open. We have given them every information. We have no more to tell."

"The case is out of their hands now, and in mine. Do you know me?"

"I do not."

"I am Old King Brady the detective."

The man bowed profoundly.

"I have heard of you," he said. "If I could do any-

thing for you I would do it. I can only show you the room where the man strangled himself. I can do no more."

Old King Brady turned away abruptly and motioned to Anton to follow him."

"Call again, gentlemen!" the man shouted after them. "Come any time. All is open here."

"Sneak back and tell him that he is Jokal. Tell him in Szgamy," whispered Old King Brady. "Tell him that I have a big pull and will have his license taken away unless he talks."

"Are you sure he is Jokal?" demanded Anton, doubtfully.

"Sure? Didn't you notice that his picture hangs behind the bar? Would Jokal let the bartender hang up his phiz? I guess not. Do as I say."

Anton went back.

A minute later Old King Brady again entered.

The two were jabbering away in some language which sounded different from anything he had ever heard.

"Well, Mr. Jokal, are you ready to talk?" demanded Old King Brady, going up to the bar.

The Szgamy did not seem to mind a bit having been caught.

"Sure," he said, with a fawning smile.

"You are Jokal?"

"Sure."

"You are the proprietor here?"

"Sure."

Old King Brady tossed a five-dollar bill on the bar.

"Another round of slivervitz, and you join us," he said. "Keep the change."

CHAPTER III.

OLD KING BRADY STRIKES AN IMPORTANT CLEW.

"Anything for money with a Szgamy," is a Hungarian proverb.

There are others.

But it was with Jokal the Szgamy that Old King Brady had to deal, and he struck him just right.

The plum brandy was served.

Old King Brady merely touched it to his lips.

"I brought this gentleman with me as an interpreter, but his services don't seem to be needed," he said.

"No," replied Jokal, with a broad smile. "I kept a public five years in London. I speak English well enough."

"You speak as good English as I do. Now, let's get to business. Show me the room in which this man Pitnec died."

A woman had been watching them at a side door.

Jokal said something to her in the Romany tongue, and she took his place behind the bar.

"This way, gentlemen," said the gypsy, and he led

them to the third story, where he opened the door of a rear hall bedroom.

The floor was bare, and the walls badly stained.

A cot bed, a chair, and an iron washstand with bowl and pitcher were all the furniture it contained.

"It was here," said Jokal. "He choked himself to death on that bed."

Did the gypsy really believe it?

Old King Brady would have given a lot to know.

But there was no reading the mind of Mr. Jokal.

"Look here, friend," said the old detective, "on that night I met this man Pitnec and the little boy here on Bleecker street."

"You did?"

"Yes. He then had a new leather grip with him."

"Yes."

"He had it when he came to this house?"

"No."

"Jokal, he did. Look here, I don't want to arrest you. I don't want to recover the things you stole from that grip, but I do want to find the child who was stolen from his father. You help me or I'll make it hot for you—that's all."

"Well, well!"

"No shuffling. Where was the grip when you came into the room?"

"On the floor."

"Open or shut?"

"Open; everything lay scattered about."

"There wasn't much, and you took it all."

"Well, I was entitled to the pay for my room."

"He paid you in advance, you rascal! You have the grip now?"

"Yes."

"When I am through asking questions go get it. You can keep it. I only want to look it over—see?"

"All right."

"Now we get along better. See here, Jokal, I pay for information. If I am satisfied with what you give me I'll be liberal."

"All right, boss. I want to help."

"Was the door of this room locked when you came to arouse this dead man?"

"No."

"You told the coroner it was?"

"Yes."

"That's the way I want you to answer up. Why did you do this?"

"I didn't want trouble."

"The front door—is that open all night?"

"Yes. It is never locked. I lock the inside doors. My guests come in at all hours."

"Then there would have been no trouble in a man coming to Pitnec's room and strangling him?"

"None at all."

"Was the key in the lock on the inside?"

"Yes."

"You think he was drunk and forgot to lock his door?"
 "Yes."
 "What did he drink?"
 "Slivervitz."
 "How much?"
 "He bought a pint. I found the bottle empty on the floor."
 "Jokal, you believe this man was murdered and the child stolen?"
 "That's right. I do."
 "Sure you didn't steal the child yourself?"
 "Don't think it. I want no more children here. I have five of my own. It is enough."
 Old King Brady's eye was right on the gypsy. He was inclined to believe that he spoke the truth.
 "Tell me who you think killed him?"
 "I think he was followed up from Philadelphia by someone."
 "A Szgamy?"
 Jokal shrugged his shoulders.
 "I suppose so," he said.
 "And why?"
 "Perhaps they wanted his money. Perhaps it was the child."
 "Did he have much money?"
 "I don't know. I only saw a couple of dollars."
 "Which he paid you for the room and the slivervitz?"
 "Yes."
 "You are sure none of your guests knew him?"
 "Sure, yes. He was a stranger to us all."
 "He was a Szgamy?"
 "Yes."
 "Where from?"
 "He claimed to come from Varna."
 "The Transylvania port on the Black Sea?"
 "Yes."
 "Do you come from there?"
 "No. I am of another tribe. My people were wanderers."
 "Regular gypsies?"
 "Yes."
 "This man told me he came from New Orleans."
 "I know nothing of that. He told me Philadelphia."
 "Did you think he had stolen the child?"
 "Sure, yes. How could I help it? The child was no Szgamy."
 "Did you say anything to him about it?"
 "No. It was none of my business."
 "Go get the grip."
 Jokal left.
 Anton Streiz looked at Old King Brady admiringly.
 "You always get dere, Mr. Prady," he said.
 "Not always, but I seem to have got there this time, all right. You think he has told the truth?"
 "Yes, I do."
 "And so do I; but still I may be mistaken. The man may have been murdered for his money, but I doubt it.

I think what you said is correct. Some other gypsy wanted the child."
 "That's what I think; but here he comes."
 Jokal re-entered the room, carrying the identical grip which Old King Brady had seen in the dead man's hand.
 "That is it," said the old detective.
 He took it and opened it upon the bed.
 The grip was to all appearance empty.
 "I can show you the things we took," said Jokal. "Believe me, it was not much."
 "Very well. You keep them. Later I may want to see them. But tell me, was there anything among them to make you think that this man might have come from New Orleans?"
 "There were some time-tables of the Southern roads, and one of the New Orleans steamship line."
 "Where are they?"
 "I threw them in the fire."
 While talking Old King Brady's fingers were busy. He was running them about the lining of the grip. In a minute from behind a hole in the lining he pulled out a long envelope.
 It bore no address, but there were papers inside.
 "Ha, you missed this, friend Jokal!" he exclaimed.
 "It is so. I never saw that before."
 Old King Brady took out the papers.
 There were several sheets written in some foreign language.
 There were also two letters addressed:
 "J. Pitnec, 9 Jersey Alley, Philadelphia, Pa."
 Old King Brady took the letters from the envelopes. They were in the same language.
 "German, Anton?" demanded the old detective, passing the papers over to Anton.
 "Yes," replied the restaurant keeper.
 "Very good. I keep these, Jokal."
 "All right, boss."
 There was nothing else in the grip.
 "9 Jersey Alley, Philadelphia," said Old King Brady, reading the address aloud. "Do you know anything about that place?"
 "It is a house like mine," replied Jokal.
 "Where gypsies put up?"
 "Yes."
 "Who keeps it?"
 "His name is Peter Fumstec."
 "A Szgamy?"
 "Yes."
 "You know him?"
 "No, I don't know him. I have heard of him often, though."
 "Well, that is all, and here are ten dollars for your trouble. If you are a wise man, Jokal, you will not talk about this visit of mine here."
 Jokal shrugged his broad shoulders.
 "Oh, you can trust me, boss," he said.

Old King Brady and his companion pulled right out then.

"Shall I read those letter for you?" asked Anton. "I can read German all right."

"No; I can easily get them read," replied the old detective. "Much obliged for your trouble, Anton, and here is a ten-spot for you."

They parted at Broadway, and Old King Brady hurried back to the office.

Harry was out, but Alice was in.

Both read German as easily as they can English.

Throwing the envelope down upon Alice's desk Old King Brady explained how he came by it, and asked her to translate.

Alice tackled the letters then.

The first, which was dated at Washington some three weeks back, read as follows:

"Jack.—I have located the child described by the Voodoo Queen. I have watched D.'s house. The child can easily be taken on his way home from school. Shall I bring him to Tumstec's? Perhaps it would be best to take him to New York. Hotel Danube, on Bleecker street—I forget the number—is kept by a Romany. I forget his name. Shall we meet there? We must make no mistake. This means big money for us if we can kill the niggers and get the treasure.

"Your friend,

"K. Waltzec."

"Just as I supposed," muttered Old King Brady. "This is no ordinary case. There is some deep mystery underlying it all. Next."

The other letter was dated at Washington the day little Paul disappeared from that city.

It was very brief, and ran thus:

"Jack.—I have the boy. I have him drugged. I think it best to lie in hiding a few days, then I will fetch him to Fumstec's. Now, look here, brother, if you go back on me beware! I suspect you. You know me! Again I say beware!—K. W."

"Trouble between the kidnappers," remarked Alice.

"Evidently," replied the old detective. "This Waltzec is probably the murderer of that man; but read the other sheets, Alice."

"It is the copy of some old letter," said Alice, picking up the sheets.

"Read!" replied the old detective, leaning back in his chair.

And Alice read as follows:

"A true copy of the letter I found in the house of a hundred doors.

"October 10th, 1863.

"The Yankee gunboats are coming up the river. The

spoilers sent out by Beast Butler are burning plantation houses, seizing cotton, and running off our slaves.

"I am alone in Belle Voir with no one but old Bellshazzer to help me; he of all my slaves has remained loyal to me, a dying man.

"Oct. 11th.

"Yankees reported close upon us. Colonel Bowie's house was burned last night. Capture is certain, and unless I take the oath of allegiance to the Union, which I will never do, my fate is sealed. This being the case, I am determined upon my course. I shall instruct Bellshazzer to fire the cotton sheds and their contents. I shall bury the money I have so long hoarded, over two hundred thousand dollars, and Bellshazzer shall alone know its hiding place. He has promised to reveal the secret to no one but my son, but in case he should die or be killed I shall write the secret here after the treasure is hidden. I am so weak I can scarcely stand. I feel that the excitement of this terrible time will cause my death. Fool that I was not to have gone to New Orleans, where at least my life would have been safe."

Alice laid down the last sheet.

"And that is all?" said Old King Brady.

"That is all."

"This man must have died without finishing his statement."

"Or perhaps whoever translated the paper into German preferred to hold back the last sheet."

"It may be so. Now we see something of the motive for all this."

"But why should these gypsies steal this child if the money was what they were after?"

"I have my own idea about that."

"Which you are not telling."

"Not just yet. It is enough to say that in my opinion it is through the child they expect to recover this hidden treasure. I don't believe the document was ever completed. Still, I may be wrong. But we must get hold of Congressman Daladouze at once if we want to obtain a further clew in our Bleecker street mystery."

CHAPTER IV.

OLD KING BRADY DECIDES TO GO SOUTH, AND HARRY CONSULTS A GYPSY FORTUNE-TELLER.

Young King Brady came into the office while Alice and the old detective were talking over these matters.

He read the papers for himself, and agreed that Old King Brady had unearthed a most important clew.

As for the next move in the case, the old detective promptly laid out a course of action.

"Call up Mr. Daladouze at the Fifth Avenue Hotel,"

he said. "He may not have returned to Washington yet, although he told me that he intended to start to-day."

Harry obeyed, and soon reported that the Congressman was still in town, although not then at the hotel.

"Tell the clerk to put a note in his key-box stating that one of our firm will call on him at three o'clock. He probably intends to take the night train for Washington," Old King Brady said.

"That's your job, Alice," he added. "Take these papers to Mr. Daladouze and read them to him."

"Harry, you get over to Philadelphia first train, and look up the Fumstec man. You had better take a local ward detective with you. The man must be made to talk, and it will save time. I'll get busy at the railroad station and steamship offices, and see if I can find any trace of the child. I believe the little fellow was started off South on the night of the murder."

As there was just time to catch a Philadelphia train—they run every hour—Young King Brady left the office.

At one o'clock Alice received a call from Congressman Daladouze over the telephone.

He was coming down to Union Square and would wait on the Bradys, he said.

Alice told him to come along, of course, and in a short time the Congressman walked in.

"You have found a clew to the whereabouts of my boy?" he demanded anxiously.

"Not exactly that, sir," replied Alice, "but we are certain that we are on the right track."

"Where is Mr. Brady? Can I see him?"

"He is out just now, but I have the facts. If you will be seated I will run over what we have discovered."

And Alice exhibited the gypsy documents, and explained the manner in which they had been obtained.

She then read them to the Congressman in English, as he could not read German.

He listened with grave attention.

"This is a very singular turn the case appears to have taken," he said musingly. "There is no doubt that the writer of that document was my grandfather, the late Francis Furnier, of Belle Voir."

"Did you ever hear anything of this business?" demanded Alice.

"Oh, certainly. My mother was Adele Furnier. At the time General Butler ran things in New Orleans she was away at a convent in St. Louis. Her brother, the son alluded to, was an officer in the Confederate army. He was killed at Gettysburg, and never returned to Belle Voir after his enlistment. My grandfather was found dead in bed by Butler's raiders, who ascended the Red river for the purpose of capturing cotton. He was much of an invalid, and it was supposed that he died of fright when the raiders came."

"And did he have such a sum of money as is mentioned in the document?" inquired Alice.

"It was so believed," replied Mr. Daladouze. "The old gentleman was very much of a miser, and was accus-

tomed to keep large sums of money in the house, as he had no faith in banks. It was always supposed that the Union troops got the money at the time of the raid."

"And this old negro, Bellshazzer?"

"He was shot by the Yankees, whom he refused to admit to the house."

"Was any search ever made for the money?"

"Oh, I daresay. I'm sure I don't know. All this was before I was born. It is just a family legend."

"And the property?"

"Passed out of the family. My mother sold it when I was a mere child. Later I heard that owing to a change in the course of the Red river that Belle Voir was left in the middle of a dense swamp. I was never up in that country in my life."

"It certainly looks as if somebody had unearthed a genuine document written by your grandfather, Mr. Daladouze," remarked Alice.

"It does indeed. But why should they want my child? What can he possibly have to do with recovering this treasure, if that is what they are after?"

"That seems to be the mystery, but we have put the kidnapping up to the gypsies, all right."

"You certainly have. Does Old King Brady believe the man Pitnec to have been murdered by the writer of those two letters?"

"He does, and Young King Brady is now on his way to Philadelphia to see what can be discovered at this gypsy boarding-house on Jersey alley."

Just at this juncture Old King Brady came in.

"I am on the trail, Mr. Daladouze," he said, with some enthusiasm.

"So Miss Montgomery tells me. She has read me those letters. I—"

"Oh, I have advanced a step beyond that."

"Well!"

"Little Paul, with a man bearing every resemblance to a gypsy, sailed on the New Orleans steamer on the day following this Bleecker street murder."

"You are sure of this?"

"I hold absolute proof. Paul's picture was identified by the dock superintendent, and also by the clerk in the steamship office on Broadway, where the man bought tickets."

"Under what name?"

"Regensburg—assumed, of course. It is the name of a German city—the one we call Ratisbon."

"Can this gypsy have taken the child to Belle Voir? It seems incredible."

"Tell me what you know about this treasure business."

Mr. Daladouze went over the same ground which he had done with Alice.

"That is what it is," said Old King Brady. "There is Voodoo business in this. These gypsies expect to find that money. They propose to do it by the aid of voodooism, or spirits, in other words. Doubtless they think that the

spirit of your grandfather can be raised by the aid of this child, his descendant."

"It is absurd enough; but then there is nothing too absurd for our negro voodooists. It certainly looks as if it was as you say."

"I am so firmly convinced of it that I propose to start for New Orleans just as soon as my partner returns from Philadelphia, or perhaps to go on and meet him."

"I must say I think you are on the right track. I wish I could go with you."

"Is it impossible?"

"It is. There are important bills pending in the House. My constituents would never forgive me if I were to ask for a leave of absence."

"How do we get to Belle Voir from New Orleans?"

"Your quickest way will be by the Red River Valley railroad, leaving the train at Bayou La Chute. My grandfather's plantation was near that place. I really can give you no further information, but of course there are plenty of people in New Orleans who know the Red river country well."

"When the writer of that letter speaks of the house of the hundred doors you take it that he means Belle Voir, do you not?"

"Why, I presume so. I know nothing of the place. I do not even know that the old house still stands. But go on, Mr. Brady. I will draw my check for a thousand. Pitch in and see what you can do."

But Old King Brady declined the money, as he always does when his clients are supposed to be reliable.

When Congressman Daladouze left it was understood that the Bradys were to start at once for Belle Voir.

In the meantime Young King Brady was being whirled away to Philadelphia.

Consultation of a map of the Quaker City had revealed Jersey alley as running out of Arch street near its river end.

Harry did not altogether relish the idea of taking a ward detective along with him.

He determined to look the ground over alone first, at all events.

The neighborhood was certainly anything but an attractive one.

Jersey alley on both sides was lined with those odd little two storey brick dwellings which the old Quakers were so fond of building.

Once highly respectable, no doubt, the alley was now given over to the lowest classes.

Children swarmed in the dirty doorways, women hung out of the windows calling and screaming to each other.

Anyone dressed as Young King Brady was necessarily found himself out of place.

"The Governor was right," thought Harry. "I can do nothing here without help."

Still he pushed on, desiring to get a look at No. 9.

It was away down at the end of the alley, which was in reality a narrow street covering several blocks.

At the lower end Harry spied a cab which nearly blocked the way.

Just then two fashionably dressed women were seen to come out of one of the houses.

They entered the cab, and were driven in Harry's direction.

They looked out at him as they passed, and he took them to be actresses.

"What brought them here?" he queried.

He had noted the house from which the women emerged, and when he drew near to it the mystery was explained.

It was No. 9.

The sign over the door read simply:

"Furnished Rooms to Let."

In a window on the first floor was another sign, reading:

"Madame Squagentz. Gypsy Fortune-Teller. Price, 50 cents."

This was evidently Fumstec's place.

"What's to hinder me from consulting the gypsy?" Harry asked himself.

He could see no good reason why he should not.

So he passed in through the open doorway, and finding another door with Madame Squagentz's sign upon it knocked.

The door was immediately opened by a little boy.

He was a red-headed, freckle-faced, little chap of about ten years, and looked to be anything but a gypsy.

"Another kidnapped kid, perhaps," Harry said to himself, as he inquired for Madame Squagentz.

"She is in," said the boy, "but I don't know whether she will see you or not. She has just been giving a sitting for two ladies, and is all tired out. I suppose you want to get your fortune told."

"That's it," replied Harry. "Ask her. Tell her I'll pay double price."

"Give me your handkerchief," said the boy.

"What's that for?"

"So madame can tell whether to see you or not."

"Well, here it is."

The boy took the handkerchief, and retreated into the inner room.

He was back in a minute.

Harry had just time to glance about the room, which was neatly enough furnished in a poor way.

"She will see you," said the boy. "She will be in here in a minute. Sit down."

Harry tossed the boy a quarter, and dropped into a chair.

In about ten minutes the door opened, and an immensely stout woman came waddling in.

She looked the gypsy all over.

She was dark and had small, piercing black eyes, and very black hair.

Hanging from her ears were long gold ear-rings; around her neck was a string of beads of real agate and turquoise;

there were many rings on her fingers, several of very peculiar form.

One represented two coiled snakes, another a tiny gold toad.

Such was the gypsy fortune-teller, and she fixed her little beady eyes upon Harry as she croaked:

"Cross my palm with silver, young man, if you wish to have your fortune told!"

Young King Brady slipped two half-dollars into her hand, and took back the handkerchief which she extended toward him.

"Give me your hand," said the gypsy.

She held it between both her own, and studied the lines upon the palm.

"Ha! What is this?" she suddenly cried, looking at her own right hand. "Your life line crosses mine! Ha! I see! My cousin who was murdered! You will avenge him! It is so! You are a detective, young man."

She suddenly dropped the hand, and pulled Young King Brady's coat lapel aside, displaying his shield.

And this was done so quickly that Harry had not the least chance to prevent it.

"She has seen my picture, and recognizes me," thought Young King Brady. "I am in for it now."

And this was probably the explanation, and accounted for the decidedly mysterious knowledge which this gypsy fortune-teller displayed of the Bradys' Bleecker street mystery.

CHAPTER V.

THE GYPSY'S PROPHECY.

"You seem to know me, then," said Young King Brady, not a little vexed with himself for having entered the gypsy's lair.

"Yes, I know you," replied the woman. "Wait. I will tell you more."

She stamped her foot, and the red-headed boy appeared.

"Lock the door of the back room," she said, "and then come here."

When he returned she took the boy by the arm and thrust him out into the passage.

She then locked the door, and returned to Harry's side.

"Take back your money," she said excitedly, and thrust the two half-dollars upon him. "This is not to be paid for. I want revenge, and you have been sent to me. Give me your hand."

She seized Harry's hand, and rattled off the following, speaking so rapidly and with such a peculiar accent that he had all he could do to follow her.

"You seek the strangler. He killed my cousin. You will succeed. You go to the South, you ascend a river. You go far, you go into a swamp, you pass through many perils, but you will conquer all, and my cousin shall be

avenged. I see much money, but it is not yours, although you will handle it. I see a curly-haired child, a boy; you will restore him to his father. It is well. A life has been taken. It must be avenged. You will not go back whence you came. Friends will join you in Philadelphia, and you will all go South. When all is over remember the gypsy and what she told you, if you will."

She dropped the hand, and motioning toward the door said:

"Go!"

"Not so fast, mother!" cried Harry. "You seem to know a lot. Tell me more. When was your cousin killed?"

"At the Hotel Danube, in New York."

"How?"

"Why ask when you already know that he was strangled to death?"

"But by whom? If you want his murderer avenged then tell me his name, if you know it."

"No. That I will not do. Even if you come here with the police I will not, but if you will go straight on, as I told you, then you will arrest the murderer and recover the child."

"Then if you will not speak the name I will. Karl Waltzic killed your cousin. Is it not so?"

"You say it. I will not contradict you."

"Is this Peter Fumstec's house?"

"It is; but unless you are a fool you will not come here with the police. Do as I tell you, and success is sure."

"Why was the child stolen—tell me that?"

"I will not."

"Why did Waltzec follow up your cousin and kill him?"

"Ha! Well, I will tell you that. It was the greed of gold. My cousin robbed him in this house. He took the child from him. He thought so to get all for himself, but he brought his fate upon his own head. One lent money to the murderer, who so followed him—you know the rest."

It seemed all so strange that he should stumble upon this information that Harry naturally pressed Madame Squagentz for more.

But not another word would the singular woman utter.

"Go," she said. "Go! Fate has been good to you in sending you to me. Unless you are a fool you will leave this place at once. You are known, and there are those now in this house who if they knew you were here would kill you. Go!"

Harry concluded to heed the warning.

"Take the money, mother," he said.

"No. It will bring bad luck. But if I have helped you, when all is over remember the poor fortune-teller, my son. Now will you go?"

Deeply puzzled, and not a little impressed, Young King Brady pulled out.

And we may as well add right here that he never had

any explanation of the mysterious knowledge of his affairs displayed by this woman.

Still, when he came to think it over, there was nothing said which one familiar with the papers found in the dead man's grip, who also knew that the Bradys had taken up the Bleecker street mystery, could not have told.

And it is a fact that Harry felt not a little relieved when he found himself out of Jersey Alley and safe on Arch street again.

Personally he felt satisfied that he had done all he could at 9 Jersey Alley.

"What more could the wardman help me to learn?" he asked himself.

Still, he could not feel sure that Old King Brady would be satisfied with this unusual way of obtaining information.

He determined to go to the Bingham House and telephone his chief.

This is the hotel at which the Bradys usually stay when in Philadelphia.

When Harry reached it he found a despatch for himself.

"A. and I coming," it read. "Meet us Reading station eight o'clock ready go Washington."

"I'm done," thought Harry. "If the Governor don't like my methods he can speak for himself."

So Harry, at the appointed time, was on hand at the Reading station. Old King Brady and Alice came off a Pullman car to meet him.

"Have you learned anything?" demanded the old detective. "We are on our way to New Orleans, and you are to go with us, unless you have unearthed something to detain you here."

"Nothing," replied Harry, and he ran over his interview with the gypsy fortune teller.

"Very odd," said Old King Brady; "but really I don't see that you could have learned any more, if this woman is to be believed."

"You would have believed her if you had heard her talk, Governor."

"Possibly. Well, I see nothing more to be done. Probably we have been shadowed by gypsies. We must be on our guard. Get your ticket and come along. I have a berth secured."

"Do we stop at Washington?"

"No; we go right through to New Orleans," replied Old King Brady.

And this is what the detectives did.

In due time they turned up at the Crescent City, after an uneventful trip.

They went to the St. Charles hotel, and the first move made was for Harry to visit the steamer, which was still in port.

Here Old King Brady's discoveries in New York were confirmed.

A man and a little boy had come down in the steerage. The boy kept his bunk almost continuously.

The man, who gave the name of Regensburg, claimed that he was seasick, and remained close to him almost all the time.

Harry talked with one of the steerage stewards, who admitted that from what he had seen of the little fellow he thought it very likely that he might have been doped.

But from the time they left the steamer all trace of the pair appeared to be lost.

Meanwhile Old King Brady looked up a man who claimed to know all about the Red river country.

This was a cotton buyer named Quinault, who had an office on Poydras street.

As Old King Brady was introduced to Mr. Quinault by a well-known local detective, he found him very communicative.

"I know the whole country all around Bayou La Chute," he said. "The plantation you mention is about fifteen miles this side down the river. They say it used to be a fine place, but it is all a swamp now. You will find it very dangerous going in there."

"On account of the swamp?"

"On account of the niggers. They say that is where they hold their Voodoo meetings. It is sure death for a white man to enter a Voodoo camp."

"I know something of that. Is it certain that such meetings are held in the swamp, or is it only rumor?"

"You must take what I say for what it is worth. I am just repeating the common rumor of the region, of course."

"About Belle Voir, the old Furnier plantation house, I mean. Does it still stand?"

"It does, I am told, but it is a complete wreck. You see, before the war the Furnier family had their plantation all diked off. The dikes went to pieces, and the course of the river changed. Backwater set in then, and now the whole of that section is a swamp, which will probably never be reclaimed."

"Are there any houses around there? Any place where we could stay?"

"I know of none nearer than Bayou La Chute. You better get tents and carry them with you. I hope you may succeed, but you will find it a wild section. What makes you think that the Daladouze boy was carried in there?"

"We have excellent reasons for believing it, which I do not care to state."

"Oh, I suppose you know your business. Was the child kidnapped by niggers, then?"

"By gypsies, as we believe."

Mr. Quinault looked grave.

"There was a band of gypsies camped near Bayou La Chute last winter," he said. "I saw them myself."

This went to confirm Old King Brady's theory.

No further particulars of interest were drawn from the conversation with Mr. Quinault.

Acting upon his suggestion the Bradys purchased a suf-

ficient camping outfit, and had it packed in as small a compass as possible.

This took time, and it was not until the morning of the next day that they were able to start.

They left New Orleans by the earliest train on the Red River Valley railroad.

It was a three hundred mile run to Bayou La Chute, and the schedule time was ten hours, although the Bradys were informed that the train was very liable to be late, owing to washouts caused by the heavy rains.

This was discouraging information.

The rain itself was still more discouraging. It was pouring when the detectives left Now Orleans.

Under ordinary circumstances they could have reasonably hoped to reach Bayou La Chute that evening.

The detectives took a section in the one Pullman which was attached to the train.

The car was crowded with drummers out on the tail end of their spring trip, and not a few cotton buyers bound for the back plantations to make arrangements for moving the coming crop.

As these people were a loud, noisy set, and anything but congenial company for the detectives in the crowded smoking compartment, Old King Brady left Harry to devote himself to Alice, and went forward into the smoking car to enjoy his cigar.

Here another queer crowd was gathered.

As this was new territory for Old King Brady, it was somewhat difficult to place them all.

But there was one man who at once attracted the old detective's attention, and this partly because the man appeared to be instantly attracted to him.

This person was a low-sized, swarthy man, who much resembled the gypsy hotel-keeper on Bleecker street in his general appearance.

A foreigner he certainly was.

To Old King Brady he looked more like an Italian than anything else, and he doubtless would have so placed him but for his recent experiences with Transylvanian gypsies.

The man was well dressed, wore an expensive diamond ring, and a flashy scarf-pin made up of a genuine sapphire of considerable value set around with diamonds.

Altogether he carried about him a prosperous air, which did not harmonize with his peculiar facial appearance.

"That man will bear watching," Old King Brady said to himself, as he lit his cigar.

The man was seated in front of him, and several times he turned and glanced at the old detective.

But as each time he found Old King Brady's eye right upon him, he gave this up.

The day wore on.

The train was now far up in the interior of Louisiana. Harry had been forward, and had sized up the stranger in the smoker.

He felt quite certain that he was a gypsy.

Thus the Bradys arrived at the conclusion that they

were probably either being shadowed, or that this was was in some way connected with the kidnapers.

At four o'clock they were all seated together in the Pullman when the train was suddenly stopped on the air-brakes.

The conductor rushed forward. In a minute the train backed a few yards and then stopped.

All in an instant loud shouts and crashing sounds were heard.

"We are up against something," exclaimed Old King Brady.

He felt that it was probably due to high water.

All day they had run at times over land more or less submerged.

Harry thought of the fortune-teller's prophecy.

"You will pass through many perils," Madame Squagetz had said.

He sprang up and with others hurried outside.

"Shall we go out and see what the matter is, Mr. Brady?" demanded Alice.

"No," replied the old detective. "We'll stop right here and wait for Harry's report."

And in a few minutes Young King Brady came back again with a report which was certainly discouraging enough.

"We are in trouble now, for fair," he said. "A bridge has gone down, carrying the engine with it. They just had time to uncouple and save the train."

CHAPTER VI.

WHAT HAPPENED TO THE GENERAL BUNKER.

Old King Brady looked out the window at the gloomy forest through which they had been riding now for an hour with scarcely a break.

"More delay," he said. "A poor prospect for the rescue of little Paul. But come, let us see how the case stands."

They all went out now, and most of the passengers followed them.

Right ahead was a river which had been crossed by a wooden bridge built on piles.

This was a wreck, and the engine had gone down with it, while the baggage car hung over the brink.

It appeared that the engineer had felt the bridge sinking—the train was moving very slowly—and had stopped and tried to back off the bridge.

Finding this impossible, he and the fireman had just time to uncouple and save themselves when the crazy structure collapsed.

"This means a twenty-four hours' blockade in this country," said Old King Brady. "There is absolutely no hope."

While they were talking the swarthy stranger from the smoker approached them.

Raising his hat politely he said:

"Dis is pad pee-zness. We are stuck—yes?"

"It certainly looks so," replied Old King Brady.

"Too bad! too bad! It make me much loss. What we do now? Huh!"

He seemed determined to catch on to the detectives.

The Bradys were not objecting.

They talked with him further, and found that he also was bound for Bayou La Chute.

He gave Harry his card, which read: "Henry Mayer, Lumber, 586 Canal street, New Orleans."

Harry felt sure that the card was a fake.

He handed out one bearing the name of Thompson. He spoke of Old King Brady as his father, and Alice as his sister.

"Mr. Mayer" spoke of buying timber lands, and asked Harry his business.

The answer he got was that "the Thompsons" were thinking of buying a cotton plantation.

Meanwhile Old King Brady had gone forward and talked with the conductor.

"They say that there is no chance of our getting out of here to-night," he said. "The conductor tells me that it is only five miles by the river road to Robeline Landing, and that we ought to catch the up-boat on the Red river about nine o'clock. It seems to me that the best thing we can do is to make a strike for that. Most of the passengers will go, I think. As you can see, some are starting now."

"Let us try it," said Harry. "But what about our things?"

"It will be quite impossible to get at them, and we could not carry them in any case. We shall have to abandon them—that's all."

"I will go, too," said Mr. Mayer. "I must get ride through to Bayou La Chute."

And as the majority of the passengers appeared to be of the same mind, there was soon quite a procession on the road.

This was an unusually well-built affair for this part of Louisiana.

It followed the windings of the swollen river, and also answered the purpose of a levee, having been built high above the water.

Robeline Landing was just no place at all.

There were merely cotton-sheds here, and a few negro huts.

There was one cottage occupied by the agent of the steamboat line. This man informed the Bradys that the steamer General Bunker was due at any time after eight o'clock. He told them also that it was very doubtful if they could get sleeping accommodations, as the steamers were running full on account of the uncertainty of the railroad at this time of flood.

So there was nothing to do but wait for the boat.

There were several ladies in the party besides Alice.

All took up their quarters under one of the cotton-

sheds, the agent providing benches and chairs for them, but as there were not enough of these to go around, many of the men had to stand.

Mayer now dropped the Bradys, much to their relief.

At half-past nine the lights of the Bunker were seen coming around the bend.

In a few moments the steamboat was making her landing.

Harry was the first to jump aboard when the Bunker tied up at the levee. He was fortunate enough to secure a stateroom for Alice, but he did not attempt to get another, as the purser informed him that there were only two more, and he felt that the ladies should have first chance.

By the time the railroad passengers had all swarmed aboard the Bunker the steamer was a pretty badly crowded boat.

The steward announced that at eleven o'clock what spare mattresses they had aboard would be thrown down on the saloon floor, which was all they could do in the way of sleeping accommodations.

"We won't turn in at all, Harry," said the old detective. "The captain tells me we are due at Bayou La Chute at about two o'clock."

A special supper was served for the railroad passengers. After it was over Old King Brady began to walk about the deck smoking, while Harry and Alice found a snug corner for themselves alongside a life-boat, where they were quite undisturbed. The moon was shining, and the forest stood out plainly on either side.

After a while the forest line ended abruptly. Here followed a long stretch of cleared land upon which cotton appeared to be growing as nearly as they could make out in the uncertain light.

"A plantation," said Harry. "We shall come to the house pretty soon."

But the steamer had covered a mile before they saw it. It was a long, low building standing on high ground amid beautiful spreading trees, with a broad road leading down to a little wharf at the river's edge. At about eleven o'clock Alice announced her intention of going to bed. Harry escorted her to her stateroom, and returned to his former place, which was still vacant. Here after a few minutes Old King Brady joined him.

The old detective informed Harry that Mayer had been following him all around the boat.

"He bores me to death. I really believe he is waiting for me to tackle him on the subject of our mission. I can account for his persistency in no other way."

"I am sure he is a gypsy, but who can he be? Hardly a friend of Pitnec's murderer, since that individual killed his partner so as to get his chance at the treasure alone."

"Have you no suspicion who, he may be?" asked Old King Brady, gravely.

"No, I can't say I have."

"Brighten up your wits. You go to 9 Jersey Alley, Philadelphia, and what do you find? An old witch of a woman who knows all about our case, and who hurries you

out of the house after warning you against its keeper, Fumstec."

"I declare, I never thought of that! And you believe this man to be Fumstec?"

"I can't say that I believe it, but I consider it very probable that he may be."

"I shouldn't wonder a bit if you were right."

"Then you see how careful we want to be. My opinion is that the man will stick to us. I believe that he is making a strike for the treasure on his own account."

Until after one o'clock the Bradys sat there by the life-boat smoking and talking.

"Get into the boat, curl up, and go to sleep, Harry," said the old detective at last.

"Can't you get a nap somehow before we land?" asked Harry.

"Oh, I will doze off right here on this camp-stool," replied Old King Brady. "In less than an hour we ought to be at Bayou La Chute; it really makes very little difference about me."

Harry took a look around for Mr. Mayer first, but could see nothing of the man. So he climbed into the boat, which was a large, substantial affair, placing his little grip under his head for a pillow. After awhile he dozed off.

Old King Brady put his feet up on the bench, and bracing his elbow on his knee, slept with his head resting on his hand.

And such was the position of the detectives while the General Bunker steamed up the swollen river with the sparks flying from her funnels, for she burned wood, as in the olden time.

All at once the air rang with the sound of a fearful explosion, and great tongues of flame shot up amidships through clouds of hissing steam. Old King Brady, thrown on his back by the force of the shock, came to life just in time to see the stern of the Bunker drifting from him. The life-boat was gone, and if the old detective had not grabbed hold of the guards he would have been in the river.

CHAPTER VII.

THE EVENTS OF ONE TERRIBLE NIGHT.

Old King Brady was on his feet in an instant.

The cries of the frightened passengers and the general confusion which was going on around him rattled the old detective somewhat, but still he kept his head.

Harry was gone and the boat with him. The explosion had simply ripped the Bunker in half, and Old King Brady was on the bow end. The forward half of the steamer was rapidly settling, and the old detective saw that there was not an instant to lose.

Alice was his next thought. Her stateroom was in the main saloon well forward, and thither Old King Brady hurried.

We shall not attempt to describe the scenes through which he passed. It was the usual sad picture of terrified humanity on such occasions. Men fought for the remaining life-boats, brushing the women aside.

Some jumped overboard, others made for the life-preservers, others still wrenched off stateroom doors, and used them for rafts.

Old King Brady, fighting his way through the maddened crowd, beat a tattoo on Alice's door. It burst open under his blows.

To his horror he saw that it was vacant!

"Poor girl! She is caught in that mix-up outside," he thought, and he rushed upon deck again.

It had dropped half-way down to the water level now.

Old King Brady, who cannot swim a stroke, practically gave himself up for lost, and began to look for a life-preserver. At this moment one was thrust upon him, and a familiar voice said:

"Let me help you put it on, Mr. Brady. We are going to get out of this all right. You will see!"

"Alice! Thank Heaven!" gasped the old detective.

"Oh, I am here all right," replied Alice coolly. "Where is Harry?"

"Overboard. Never mind. He can swim like a duck."

Old King Brady spoke with a calmness which he was far from feeling.

Actually he believed Harry to have been blown to pieces. He had seen more than one mangled corpse sink.

Alice tied the life-preserver for the old detective. The brave girl had already donned one herself.

"We must have some support," said Old King Brady.

He caught at a large settee, and dragged it to the rail.

Almost everybody was overboard by this time, and those who remained were taking to the water on both sides.

Old King Brady lifted his settee to the top of the rail.

"You can swim, Alice," he said. "Go in after it. I'll follow you."

But before either could make a move the wreck, with a sudden lurch, went under.

It was a lucky thing for the old detective that he kept his hold upon the settee.

He went head under, and came up half strangled.

The settee had been swept clear of the wreck. For the moment he was safe. But Alice! He could see nothing of her. All around him were the drowning. A few upon improvised rafts were drifting past. A moment more and there was a woman clinging to the other end of the settee. At first Old King Brady did not know her, for her face was all covered with blood.

"Hold on tight, ma'am," he shouted. "We may be thrown against the shore. We are by no means dead yet!"

"Brace up, Mr. Brady!"

"Alice!"

"That's right."

"What on earth is the matter with you?"

"I must have hit my head. I know I am bleeding, but it won't amount to anything, I am sure."

"Do you feel faint?"

"Not in the least. It is only my skirts which bother me. But I'm not going to die this trip."

They were almost alone now. The clumsy settee floated more slowly than the doors and other improvised rafts.

Best of all, the current was sweeping them toward the wooded bank on the right, or in other words, toward the west bank of the river. Owing to the high water there were here many trees with their trunks partially submerged. Soon they were in among them, and at last the settee, catching between two trees, stuck. This was more than Old King Brady had bargained for. How far in towards shore the water extended he could not tell in the uncertain light. He could feel no bottom, although he was clinging to the lowest round of the settee. If he could have climbed the tree and pulled Alice up after him it would not have been so bad, but the branches were far beyond reach.

"We seem to be stuck here all right," he growled, and for all I can see here we are liable to remain indefinitely I don't know what in the world to do."

"Have patience," replied Alice. "Help may come."

"I don't know where it is to come from then. We appear to have run into a corner. There is nobody in sight now."

"Tell me more about Harry. Where was he when this happened?"

Old King Brady told what he knew.

"It's a wonder you were not killed!" said Alice. "Do you think Harry was right over the exploding boiler?"

"I am afraid he was pretty near it, Alice."

"Poor boy!"

"You had better prepare yourself for the worst."

"Oh, I'm prepared, all right. I don't ever expect to see him again."

They were silent for a few moments, and then Old King Brady began again.

"You must have been dressed when the explosion came," he remarked.

"I was," replied Alice. "I did not undress, as I expected to have to turn out at two o'clock. I did not think it worth while."

"You went right out of the stateroom?"

"Instantly, and I should not care to again go through with the scenes I witnessed."

"It was indeed terrible. This bench don't seem to move a bit. We appear to be stuck here for fair."

"Hark!" cried Alice. "I hear a boat coming."

"Then your ears must be sharper than mine."

"But listen! Surely I hear the sound of oars."

"You are right! I hear it myself now! I'll give a shout. But Old King Brady's shout was little more than a feeble croak.

"Try it, Alice," he said. "My voice appears to be all gone."

"Help, help!" screamed Alice. There was no answer, but the second time she called they heard a shout.

"Good!" said the old detective. "It begins to look as if we were going to get out of it all right, after all."

Nearer and nearer the boat approached.

"We are here behind the trees!" Alice called.

"Alice!"

"Oh, Harry!"

It was a big relief all around, for it was indeed Young King Brady who came rowing up to them. He was in the big life-boat alone.

"Ha, Governor! You here, too?" he cried. "Well, you are certainly in luck, seeing that you can't swim."

"Have you saved anyone with that boat?" demanded Old King Brady. "You ought to have done so if you haven't."

"But it happens I have. I have safely landed twenty-five people, and now I was cruising about in the vain hope of finding you and Alice. So you see virtue is its own reward."

Harry rounded up alongside the settee now, and Old King Brady and Alice were helped aboard.

"What's the matter with your face?" demanded Harry. "I hope you have not seriously hurt yourself."

"I have no idea that I have," replied Alice. "I'll wash the blood off, and you can look for yourself."

It proved to be a severe cut on the forehead.

Alice, who had lost her hat, now allowed Harry to tie his handkerchief around her head.

The boat was turned, and Young King Brady pulled downstream.

"Tell us about yourself," said the old detective. "Cautiously, I never expected to see you alive again."

"I had my own doubts when the explosion came. I was so sound asleep that really I don't know what happened. All I can say is that I found myself in the boat on the water, and fortunately the boat and I came down into the river right side up with care."

"You were certainly in great luck," said Old King Brady. "Of course, you got busy right away."

"I could do nothing else. They came swarming about the boat and would have sunk it if—but don't ask me to tell about it. It was too dreadful. I did all I could."

"I understand," said Old King Brady. "Some of those unfortunates had to be driven off."

"It was absolutely necessary. I came out four times, and as I say, I landed twenty-five safely, several women among them. Each time I hoped to pick up you or Alice. I had given you up for lost."

"Did you see anything of that fellow Mayer?"

"Yes; I passed him on a stateroom door. He called to me, but I felt that he was doing well enough, and that it was my duty to help those struggling in the water, so I would not stop."

By this time they had come out into the middle of the stream.

"Which side are you going to take us to?" demanded the old detective.

"I was going to take you across the river to the place below here where I landed the others," replied Harry.

"If we could only get away from them. Isn't that a building of some sort in there among the trees on our right?"

"It looks like it. Yes, it is, but I see no light."

"Let us go there, Harry, at least until we can repair damages, and if the place proves to be deserted, why, so much the better."

The building in question was rather a large one, and stood at some little distance up an arm of the river, or a bayou, as they call these branches of the parent stream in Louisiana.

Harry obediently turned the boat and pulled up the bayou. As they advanced they saw that the building was a long cotton-shed.

It stood out of water upon a bank slightly elevated.

There appeared to be nobody about the place.

"This is just what we want," said the old detective.

"I see, by the way, that you have managed to save your grip. Perhaps you will lend me a pair of dry stockings, of which I stand greatly in need."

Harry laughed.

"You can take anything I have," he replied, "but it is more than a pair of stockings that you need. We will land here and see what we can do about building a fire and drying up."

The cotton-shed appeared to be deserted.

At one end the Bradys found a little room which had formerly been the clerk's office, no doubt. The remainder was just one big room.

The whole building was in such a state of dilapidation that Harry did not hesitate to wrench off some of the weather boards, which he used to kindle a fire.

Alice was assigned to the office, and soon she passed out her saturated clothing.

Old King Brady went and got it, and it was hung to dry over a rude horse made of the boards.

Harry was not wet, so he attended to the drying process, Old King Brady soon adding his clothes to the stock on the horse.

It was slow, tedious work, but fortunately no one came near the place. Daylight found the detectives in dry clothing again, but a new trouble was upon them.

Although she said nothing about it, Alice was feeling decidedly sick, and no wonder, after what the poor girl had passed through. As soon as it was daylight Harry pulled out upon the river to see where they were at. He soon returned with the report that he could see no house anywhere, and that even the rescued ones whom he had left on the other side of the river had all disappeared.

"They have been taken off by boats, I suppose," said Old King Brady. "Help probably came from the nearest town, wherever that may be."

"I think I'll pull up the bayou a little way," said

Harry. "This cotton-shed must belong to someone. There may be a plantation house up there. Perhaps you two had better come with me, although I can find out whether it is worth while quicker alone."

"Go alone," said Alice, and Harry went.

And this was the time Old King Brady got on to the situation. He saw that poor Alice was struggling all she knew to prevent showing that she was suffering from a chill.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE BRADYS REACH THE HOUSE OF THE HUNDRED DOORS.

"You are suffering, you poor child," remarked Old King Brady, as soon as Harry was out of hearing.

"That's what I am," replied Alice, whose teeth now began to chatter. "I'm afraid I have got my death."

"Nonsense! You have probably got the swamp fever, but we will soon break that up."

"I didn't want to alarm Harry, Mr. Brady, but I really do feel very sick."

"A good stiff dose of quinine will set you right."

"It was all that was needed to cap the climax of our misfortunes to have me tumble over."

"Say no more," replied the old detective, fumbling for his little medicine case. He soon unearthed it, and the quinine was administered.

"Keep as quiet as you can," said Old King Brady. "That won't prevent the fever from coming, but it will prevent its recurrence, I hope."

It was half an hour before Harry got back. By this time Alice was in a high fever, much to his alarm.

Of course, he would talk of nothing else at first.

"There is a big plantation house up there," he then said, "but it is quite a long way up the bayou. Nearer there is a deserted negro hut with a bed and some old sticks of furniture. I didn't go on to the house. I only saw it in the distance. The hut isn't more than a quarter of a mile from here."

"Then it is the hut for ours," said Old King Brady. "The quicker Alice is put flat on her back the better. We must lose no time."

They accordingly got Alice into the boat at once, and Harry pulled on up the bayou.

By the time they reached the hut Alice was beginning to talk wildly about the explosion. The more Harry tried to quiet her the wilder she ran on.

It was quite evident that the fever had struck to her brain.

Far in the distance up the bayou the gables of a large house could be seen among the trees.

"I don't know about this place, said the old detective dubiously. "It is a pretty miserable looking affair."

"It is too full of people! There will be no room for

us!" cried Alice. "Can't you see them looking out of the window? Such a crowd! Don't take me in there!"

"I'll go and chase them away," said the old detective quietly.

"Look out for her, Harry," he whispered. "This is getting to be pretty serious."

"You don't have to tell me," replied Harry.

Old King Brady pushed on to the hut.

Harry shifted his seat, took Alice in his arms without ceremony, and pillowed her head upon his breast.

"Now rest quiet," he said. "We will take care of you all right."

"It is dreadful to make so much trouble," moaned Alice, "just dreadful. You better have left me to drown."

Old King Brady pulled open the door of the hut and looked in.

As he did so he heard a queer, rattling sound. He jumped back quick. From under the dirty old bedstead glided a rattlesnake at least four feet long. He could see others there, and answering rattles were heard. Old King Brady slammed the door, and beat a hasty retreat.

When he got back to the boat he found Alice in the position described.

The poor girl had dozed off for the moment.

"Well?" demanded Harry.

"I don't see how you could ever have thought of going there. The place is alive with rattlesnakes."

"I saw none, then."

"You can see them now, all right, if you will take the trouble to go up there."

"Cut it out. She is sleeping. We must go on to that house."

"I'll do the rowing. Don't disturb her. She was quite flighty a few moments ago. Every minute of sleep she gets is just so much to the good."

Old King Brady took the oars and pulled on up the bayou. Before they had gone a dozen yards they began to see alligators. One big fellow slipped off a log and brushed against the right oar. As they advanced they saw that they were entering a densely wooded swamp. They had now lost sight of the house, owing to the windings of the bayou.

"This place corresponds very closely to the description we had of Belle Voir, Harry," remarked the old detective.

"That's what it does. I was just thinking the same thing. Do you think Alice is likely to be very sick?"

Old King Brady shrugged his shoulders.

"It is probably a touch of the dengue, or the fever of this country," he replied. "It sometimes runs for weeks."

"Interesting."

"Very; but we must take it as it comes."

Soon they saw the house again.

It was a large, frame plantation house of the old style.

It looked old and weatherbeaten, but was not in a ruinous condition by any means.

At last they came in front of it. There were the remains of a little pier here, and a path leading up to the

door. The house itself was not under water, as it stood on a knoll, but everything all around it was afloat. The trees were not large, however, and it was easy to see that they had grown up in the last fifteen years or so.

Not a soul was to be seen anywhere. The striking feature of the house was the unusual number of doors leading into the main building and the wings.

Beyond were what was left of various outbuildings, almost all being in ruins.

Alice still remained sleeping, and this was a feature which the old detective began to fret about, for he had expected her to wake right up.

"Arouse her, Harry," he said. "We will go ashore now."

"Alice! Alice! You want to wake up, Alice!" Harry called.

"Where are we?" murmured Alice dreamily. "Let me sleep. I am so tired—oh, so tired."

Old King Brady climbed upon the pier and made the boat fast. Harry assisted Alice up, and climbed up himself.

The poor girl was so weak that she could scarcely stand.

"You will have to carry her," said Old King Brady.

"Take her in your arms, Harry, and we will go up to the house and see what we can find."

So Old King Brady picked up the little grip, and they pushed on towards the house. They had covered but half the distance when suddenly there appeared in one of the doorways a most remarkable figure. It was a negro man, dwarfed and hideously misshapen. He looked more like a baboon than a human being. As he caught sight of the procession he gave a shrill cry and vanished within the door.

"What is that? A monkey?" moaned Alice. "Oh, don't take me in there!"

"We must," said Harry. "Have no fear. I shall let nothing harm you, be very sure of that."

They ascended to the broad veranda, which ran the entire length of the house. What might be termed the main door stood open, and they passed into a circular hallway.

Here there was a winding staircase leading to the floor above.

On all sides were doors, all closed.

"It is the house of the hundred doors, all right, Governor," remarked Harry.

"Indeed, it looks so," replied the old detective, "but if we can only find a place where Alice can be properly cared for it is all I ask."

As one door was just as likely to lead to this as another, Old King Brady opened the first one he came to.

Behind it was a long room, and on one side there were several doors in a row, opening into a space which had been partitioned off from the rest of the room.

The Bradys entered, Harry carrying Alice in his arms.

Before they had advanced ten feet three doors flew open.

Behind each was a dusky figure in Oriental dress, holding a sword. They stood as motionless as statues.

Suddenly a wild yell rang out through the house.

Slam, bang, went the three doors. Whether they had seen living men or dummies the Bradys could hardly tell.

"Oh, take me away from this dreadful place! Take me away!" moaned Alice.

"We must try it on the floor above," said Old King Brady hurriedly. "All this mystery can be investigated later."

They retreated to the hall. As they approached the stairs a voice called from above:

"Who is yo'? Why yo' come hyar, white folks? Go on about yo' bizness. Dis am no place fo' yo'. Yo' see dem sword men? Yo' get dem swords in de neck if yo' doan' go 'way."

They could see no one.

Old King Brady resolved to bring matters to a head.

"Look here, friend, whoever you are," he shouted, "we are passengers who nearly lost our lives on the steamer which blew up on the river last night. The lady is sick. In the name of humanity give us shelter for a little while. You will be well paid."

There was no answer, but the detectives could hear the murmur of voices above stairs. At last an old darky with wrinkled face and snow-white hair appeared at the head of the stairs.

"Yo' come to a bad place," he said, "but if the lady am sick I will help yo'. It's more than yo' would do fer a colored woman, yo' know dat right well."

"Don't you believe it, friend," replied the old detective. "We are not that kind."

"Whar yo' frum? Up Norf?"

"Yes. We come from New York."

"Den dat's different. If yo' belonged round hyar I wouldn't trust yo'. Come upstairs, Yankeemans. I show yo' place where yo' kin put de lady down."

Old King Brady pushed on up the stairs, Harry following with Alice.

Here they found another circular hall, with many doors opening off.

Some were closed, and some open.

Through the open ones the Bradys could see deserted rooms bare of furniture.

The old darky produced a key and unlocked a door. Throwing it back he displayed a neatly furnished chamber.

"She de young man's wife?" he asked.

Alice had again dozed off, and appeared unconscious of her surroundings.

"Sister," replied the old detective.

"Yo' darter, massa?"

"Mv daughter."

"Whater mattah wiv her head?"

"It was hurt in the wreck."

"Sho! She got de swamp fever, suah. Nebber mind. Mah ole woman kin fix all dat."

"Send your wife here at once, then. What's your name?"

"Waal, I'se Uncle Jotham. I'se in charge hyar fo' de Hunter family, what owns Belle Voir."

So they had come by accident to their destination, Old King Brady said to himself.

It seemed strange enough.

Well had the letters described the place as the "house of the hundred doors."

Meanwhile Harry had placed Alice on the bed, throwing a light coverlet over her. He came out now, looking very much troubled.

"She needs the attention of some woman," he said, "and she needs it badly."

Old King Brady placed a five-dollar gold piece in Uncle Jotham's hand.

"More coming if you will look out for the lady," he said.

"I gets mah wife now," replied the old fellow, his eyes growing big at the sight of the gold. "Tank yo', massa. Yo' needn't be afraid. Dey's bad folks 'round hyar, and we hev to scare 'em off best we can. Wait whar yer be, sah! 'Twon't be long."

He opened another door, revealing a passage which appeared to lead through to other parts of the house.

"It might be worse," said Harry.

"It's bad enough," replied the old detective.

"Those were never real men, Governor."

"Wax figures, and excellent ones, I think."

"So excellent that I can hardly believe it now. But what on earth are they there for? Who would ever dream of bringing wax figures into this swamp?"

Footsteps were heard returning.

It proved to be an old negress, a typical Southern mammy. She was very stout and very black. Old King Brady at once took to her. There was a look of kindness about the woman's face, but there was a frightened look as well.

"Whar am de lady?" she asked. "Oh, he put her in dah! Didn't know de ole fool knowed 'nuff. Hit are de bes' we gotter offer. What ails de chile?"

"Go in and see, mammy," said the old detective. "Cure her up and we will pay you well."

"Ho! Dat all right. Yo' trust me, massa?"

"I trust you, mammy."

"Ho! Yo' wouldn't, den, ef yo' knowed de bad reputation dis yere house got. But have no fears. I see you troo yo' trouble, an' den let me tell you one ting. Get away from dis yere place as quick as de good Lawd will let you. Ole massa, I tole yo' dat once, an' I don't tell yer twict. Ef yo' don't take de hint den don't blame ole Sukey."

She waddled into the room, and laid her hand upon Alice's head. These warning words had been spoken in low, hurried tones, and not until a cautious glance had been thrown down through the passage.

She felt Alice's pulse next, and forcing open her mouth, examined her tongue. Then she came out into the hall.

"Hit am de dengue," she said. "Has she been in de water?"

"Yes, mammy; we were all in the water last night."

"I hear de Bunker busted her biler and a lot got drowned."

"That's right. Can you help us?"

"I kin an' I will. Yo' go 'way. Mah man will tend to yo'. Leave de lady to me, and by dis time to-morrer she'll be all right again."

Thus saying, old Sukey went back into the room and shut the door.

Harry was in a terrible stew.

"It seems running a great risk, Governor," he said. "What is to be done?"

"Just what the woman says. Doubtless she knows some homely remedy which will cure Alice all right. We have simply got to trust her, Harry."

"I know it. But it goes hard."

"Take it easy and don't fret. One thing, we have reached our destination all right."

"We certainly have."

"And we don't want these people to even dream that we were aiming for this house. But come, let us go down on the veranda, and await Uncle Jotham's next move."

CHAPTER IX.

MR. MAYER BOBS UP AGAIN.

The Bradys walked up and down the veranda for fully twenty minutes before Uncle Jotham appeared. But in the meanwhile they became aware that the place was by no means deserted. Several times they saw eyes peering through the bushes of the overgrown garden. Once the "monk y" darted out of a thicket and ran rapidly to another. At last Uncle Jotham came shuffling through the hall.

"Massa, wot yo' name?" he asked.

"Thompson," replied Old King Brady. "We were bound for Bayou La Chute on business; fate has landed us here."

"It's bad; but it mought be wuss. Youse hungry?"

"We have had nothing to eat since early last evening."

"I done t'ought so. Purty soon I'll have brekfust. Yo' like to look ober de house?"

"Why, yes. It seems an interesting old place."

"Hit are. Follow me."

"Who built it, uncle?"

"Sah, hit was built by de Furnier family, but dey'se all dead an' gone long ago. Den different ones libed hyar. Last de Hunters took Belle Voir, but de ribber busted hit's banks above hyar an' trowed de water all in on Belle Voir and it got to be lak you see it now."

"And you are the keeper?"

"An' I'se de keeper. Ho! dar hain't much to keep."

'Tain't lak it uster be in de ole days, I specs. Big plantation, hyar den, massa. Rich land—big cotton crops. All gone now, dat's right."

"I suppose you remember the Furnier family?"

"No, massa, I'se frum 'way down in de South parishes. I'se on'y been here five years. All de Furnier niggahs am dead and scattered. Dat's why I can't tell yo' much about de house."

He led them from room to room. In one only was there furniture, and that of the rudest kind. The largest room, which had evidently been the parlor, or grand salon, in former days, was the room which the Bradys had first entered. It ran the whole length of the house on one side and was capable of holding many people. Not a word did Uncle Jotham say about the strange figures the detectives had seen.

"There seem to be a great many doors here, uncle," said the old detective.

"Thar be, massa. Without counting extra ones, dar's a hundred do's in dis house. Dat's what dey uster call it in de ole times, de house of de hundred do's."

"What do you mean by the extra ones?"

"Oh, nebber yo' mind. Now look here, massa. I wanter say dis much, yo' uns come in on us sudden like. Yo's welcome, and youse hain't welcome. If youse do wot I tell yer hit will be all right, but don't yo' go snookin' about de place. Mind dat. Not dat I kear, but I speaks fer yer own good. Youse gotter stay hyar to-night. Yo' kain't help yerselves, but when night comes yo' lock yer do's an' let 'em stay locked an' keep in behind 'em, no mattah what yo' heah, ef yer wise."

Just then a bell rang.

"Dat mean brekfass ready," said Uncle Jotham. "Yo' folly me."

He led them to the room where they had seen the furniture. Here a table had been spread and the breakfast which was served to the Bradys was certainly a good one.

Uncle Jotham waited on them as long as they needed his services and then left them to themselves. When they finally went out on the veranda old Sukey came to them.

"She ar' doin' all right," she said. "I'se broke de fever an' she's restin' quiet. She says she wants to see her fader alone, but doan yer stay long, massa. Ebery'ting depends upon quiet. Yo' kean't get out of heah to-night, but I want yer to go fust t'ing ter-morrer ef yo' can."

"We shall try not to bother you any longer than absolutely necessary, mammy."

"'Tain't de bodder, massa. Hit's on yer own account I speak. But dar, I kean't say no more. Will yo' done follow me?"

So Old King Brady was taken up to Alice and the old woman left them alone together. She had undressed her patient and put her to bed. Alice looked much better already.

"Oh, Mr. Brady, I am so sorry to have brought this trouble upon you," she said. "Do you think it will interfere with your plans?"

"It may be the very thing which will help us out in our plans, Alice. Perhaps you don't know it, but we are now in the house of the hundred doors."

"I guessed as much. Well, it is strange what turns our cases do take."

"How do you feel?"

"Oh, ever so much better. The old woman gave me some fearful stuff to drink, and it relieved me immediately, but I am still very weak."

"I hope to goodness she don't poison you, then, but there was nothing for it but to leave you in her hands."

"I haven't the slightest fear. She is just as kind as she can be. She seems to be in deadly terror herself, poor soul."

"I noticed something of that. Try to draw her out, Alice. You may do more for us in a minute by getting this opportunity and working it for all it is worth than we could do in a month."

"I'll do my best, Mr. Brady. I have already made a shy at it, as Harry would say. It would seem as if we had come at a very unfortunate time, as if something was going to be done to-night in this house."

"The old man hinted as much to us. Did she say anything about those strange figures we saw downstairs?"

"Not a word. Do you know I thought I dreamed that. We really saw them, then?"

"We did, and the mystery is not solved yet. But I must talk no longer, Alice. Rest is what you want. I will see you later. What shall I say to Harry?"

"Poor boy! He is worried to death, I suppose?"

"He is certainly feeling very uneasy."

"Tell him I shall be all right by to-morrow, and if the nurse will allow me to see him I will."

Old King Brady then withdrew. The events of the remainder of the day are scarcely worth detailing. The Bradys during the afternoon pulled further up the bayou.

The only discoveries they made was that quite a negro colony lived on a stretch of land further up, which was slightly elevated above the level of the swamp. They only saw the place from a distance, not thinking it best to go close up.

Night closed in upon Belle Voir with more rain.

The Bradys were served to a good supper and both had an interview with Alice, who declared that she was rapidly regaining her strength.

Uncle Jotham took the detectives to a room in another part of the house, where there was a large bed, a table and two chairs. This was to be their sleeping-room, and at about nine o'clock they retired to it. But not to bed.

"Someone watches all night," said the old detective when they found themselves alone, "and if I am any judge there is bound to be something doing by morning. But we shall see. First to get our bearings."

He opened the window and looked out upon the night. The dreary swamp lay all around them; they were in the rear of the old mansion and the bayou could not be seen

from there. Old King Brady now produced from one of his secret pockets a round leather box.

This being opened, he took out a rope ladder made of ratline so small that one would scarce believe it would bear the weight of a man. But this selfsame ladder had been tested many times and the Bradys knew what it would do.

"I see you have no intention of stopping in here," said Harry.

"Indeed, no," was the reply. "I just want to see if this thing will reach. I suppose you know we are locked in already?"

"No."

"It's a fact. Try the door."

Harry did so and found that it had been fastened in some way on the outside.

"It seems dreadful to leave Alice at the mercy of these people, Governor."

"Nothing could be further from my intention. I don't propose to stop here a minute after the first alarm, perhaps not until then."

He shook out the ladder. It just touched the ground.

Old King Brady then put two strong screw-eyes into the window sill.

"We can go up and down freely now," he said. "Perhaps you better get down and take a look around."

Harry did so and returned after a little with the report that the old man was sitting quietly on the front veranda.

The hours passed. The Bradys continued to watch and listen at the open window. At last, at twenty minutes past eleven, they heard voices around at the front of the house. Harry slipped out for another reconnoiter. He returned after fifteen minutes quite excited.

"Alice ought to be removed from this house at once," he exclaimed.

"Ha! And why? What now?"

The niggers are collecting here to beat the band. They are coming in boats, men and women; the veranda is crowded with them now."

"Just what I thought," said Old King Brady; "but I daresay Alice will be safe enough. I have confidence in old Sukey. I'm not a bit afraid. Still, we must keep a sharp eye out."

"You say you expected it. What do you mean?"

"Simply that there is some voodoo meeting on for to-night. Nothing else could make that old man and woman act in the mysterious manner they did."

"I shouldn't wonder a bit. We want to take that in?"

"We do, and we can. The windows of that long room are almost on a level with the ground. If we are not chased away we ought to be able to see everything."

"Shall we get out now? If we watch there we shall be directly under Alice's window."

"Let us wait a bit. Midnight will be the time their heathenish ceremonies will begin."

"Do you think they mean to hold them in the long room downstairs?"

"I do."

"Perhaps those wax figures we saw are used in their voodoo ceremonies?"

"It is probably so, although I never heard of them making use of anything of the sort."

"An old darky once told me that no two voodoo doctors or priests, or whatever you call them, ever work alike."

"That's right, too. These things have increased greatly in the South of late years. On the Island of Hayti voodooism is actually the religion and the voodoo doctors are all-powerful."

"So I have heard, but——"

"Hark! Listen!"

"By jove, Governor, somebody is coming up our ladder."

"That's what's the matter," breathed Old King Brady.

He drew his revolver, Harry following his example. A few seconds later, and a man's head appeared above the window sill. He gave a sharp exclamation and would have dropped down again if Old King Brady had not thrust the revolver into his face.

"Come right on, Mr. Mayer!" he said. "We are waiting for you here!"

CHAPTER X.

THE BRADYS SEE THE KIDNAPPED BOY.

It was indeed the man Mayer who had so suddenly presented himself at the window of the Bradys' room. His face was almost white now, and it was very evident that he did not like the situation of Old King Brady's revolver.

"Don't shoot me, boss," he said in a low whisper. "I'll get out if you say so, but I think I better come in."

"Come in then; but why do you say that?"

"This place is filling up with niggers. If they see me and follow me up this rope ladder, there will be something doing for us all."

"I know. Come in."

Mayer climbed in through the window.

"You can put up your revolvers," he said. "I've got nothing against you. I shall do you no harm."

"We'll stop as we are for a few minutes," replied the old detective. "We want to come to an understanding before I make any change."

"Well?"

"Well?"

"I know you, boss."

"You do, eh? Well, who am I, then?"

"Old King Brady, the detective."

"Wonderful discovery."

"And the young feller is your partner."

"Another wonderful discovery."

"But you don't know who I am."

"Don't be too sure. Do you intend to tell me?"

"I do."

"Let me make a guess first."

"Make it."

"You are a gypsy."

"That's right."

"Your name is Peter Fumstec. You keep a boarding house at No. 9 Jersey alley, Philadelphia, where the people of the Szgamy race put up when they have occasion to desert their tents and wagons for the time being."

"That is right. But now you have told all you know."

"I'm not sure of that either. You know why we are here?"

"You are after the Daladouze boy, who was stolen?"

"Yes."

"If you will help me I will help you. I'm going to talk business to you, Mr. Brady, if you will let me."

"Go ahead, but first tell me how you escaped."

"From that steamer? Oh, I got on a door and floated about. I managed to land at a little place down the river. There I bought a boat and pulled up here."

"But what brought you up the ladder?"

"I saw it hanging down and thought I might be able to get into the house that way."

"Then you had no idea that we were in this room?"

"No. I thought you were drowned."

"Go on, Fumstec," said the old detective, pocketing his revolver. "If you think we can help you to get hold of that hidden money I'm willing to stand in with you on the divide provided you make a full statement of all you know about this case."

The gypsy's face brightened up.

"I'll go you," he said. "Boss, you seem to know a lot about this business. How did you ever find out so much?"

"Oh, it's my business to find out things. But go on. Tell your story and tell it straight. If you help me I'm willing to help you."

"And we both need help if we expect to do business here to-night," replied Fumstec emphatically. "There's a hundred niggers downstairs, if there's one, and they are still coming."

"Oh, I know. But go on."

"You want to know who stole the boy first of all, I suppose?"

"I know that. He was stolen by Karl Waltzec."

"That's right."

"He was brought to your place by Waltzec and was there stolen by Pitnec."

"Oh, I see you know everything."

"I have not been idle since I took up the case. Waltzec followed Pitnec up to New York and strangled him in his room in the Hotel Danube, on Bleecker street."

"Oh, I see you know all."

"I know a few things—yes. Waltzec then stole the child again and brought him here, where these negroes expect to find out where old Francis Furnier hid his money by the aid of the child, who is to be used in their voodoo ceremonies to-night."

Fumstec looked the picture of amazement now.

"Well, it would seem that I couldn't tell you very much," he said.

"Yes, you can. There are several things you can tell me. Are you ready to answer my questions now?"

"Sure I am, Mr. Brady. I'm mighty glad to have fallen in with you. I recognized you on the train and I would have spoken to you then if I had dared. I'll answer any question you put."

"Very good. Then, first and foremost, where did you learn to speak such good English?"

"Oh, my father had me educated. I have lived in England almost all my life."

"Next, how came you Romany people to know about this hidden treasure?"

"A band of them were down here. Waltzec and Pitnec were among them. They got in with these niggers through buying horses. They heard the story of this house. They fell in with a voodoo priest who told them that if they could only get some child who was a descendant of the Furnier family, who hid the money, that they could draw the old man's spirit back and make him tell where he hid his gold."

"And do you believe all that?"

"I certainly do, Mr. Brady. All my people believe in such things. We do just what these voodoo niggers do, only in a different way. To you I suppose it seems all nonsense, but to us——"

"I didn't say I believed it to be all nonsense. I am not going into that part of the business at all; but what I can't understand is how any of you, Waltzec, Pitnec or yourself, for instance, ever expected to get the money away from a band of blacks who are half savages."

"Ah, ha! That's what troubles you, is it? Well, remember that your people believe us Romany all to be born thieves. Is it not so?"

"That's your reputation."

"Of course it is, and I'm not saying that it isn't true. Pitnec was the cleverest thief who ever lived. Waltzec is not far behind him. As for myself——"

"You are strictly honest, of course," chuckled the old detective. "Well, my friend, I think I understand. Now, what do you know about the present business here? Anything which we do not? If so, out with it."

"I don't suppose I do. I have but just come here. I judge from the crowd that they mean to hold a voodoo meeting to-night."

"Evidently they do."

"If it is the first one which they have held since Waltzec joined them with the child there will probably be nothing doing."

"I don't believe that. He must have been here several days."

"So much the better for us. It takes time. We must watch them. Then we shall see what to do."

"Go down again, Harry," said Old King Brady. "Fumstec and I will wait here."

Harry descended the ladder and was gone some little

time. Old King Brady had some further talk with Fumstec meanwhile. He was not ill-pleased to have met the man. Help they needed, and even if the gypsy was to get a part of the treasure he did not care. The fact was Old King Brady cared nothing about the treasure one way or the other. He was out for the Daladouze boy, and everything else was incidental. He did not intend to remain one instant at Belle Voir on account of the treasure, which after all might be pure myth.

At last Harry was heard on the ladder again.

"They all seem to be hugging the veranda still," he announced. "I got to a place where I could listen to their talk. They seem to be waiting for somebody, I should say."

"You saw nothing of Waltzic and little Paul?"

"No."

"Probably it is for them they are waiting."

"That's the way it struck me."

"What about Alice?"

"She is sitting in a chair by the open window."

"Did you try to make her see you?"

"Yes, but I did not succeed, and I did not like to call to her."

"Certainly not. Perhaps we had all better be getting down now."

"I think we ought to place ourselves before they begin their operations. There is no guard stationed about the house now, but there may be later on."

"That's the talk," put in Fumstec. "I was looking for a place to hide when I came up here."

"We will go," said Old King Brady.

"And you will leave the ladder as it is?" asked Harry.

"Yes. We may find it convenient to come back again."

They descended and went back among the bushes, Harry leading the way.

In a moment they were at a point where they could not only see the window of Alice's room, which was in front, but the veranda as well. It was as Harry had stated. The veranda was covered with blacks. There were men and women, but no children. Some sat on the steps, others hung over the railing, others still were walking up and down. Some were picking at banjos, others pulling at accordeons; all were chattering and laughing. As each musical instrument was doing business on its own account, the result may be imagined.

"We might fire a cannon here and I doubt if they would hear us," breathed Old King Brady. "Evidently they are out for a hot time to-night."

Harry made no reply. He was looking at Alice's window. She was still sitting there gazing out upon the night. The rain had now ceased, and it was trying to clear. Dark clouds were scudding across the sky and the wind sighed dismally among the cypress trees. All at once Harry saw old Sukey come into the room. Alice turned with something of a start. The old woman advanced with her finger pressed to her lips. She began talking rapidly, but the watchers could not hear what was

said. In a moment Alice got up and they moved out of sight.

"What's in the wind now, do you suppose?" questioned Harry.

"Give it up," replied the old detective.

"Alice must be a lot better."

"Her recovery would be remarkable anywhere else but here where she has been, treated by an old Southern mammy. A doctor would have kept her in bed a month."

"I wish we could look into the room. It can't be that the woman has persuaded her to go downstairs."

"Take it easy, Harry. I am banking on old Sukey."

"Look," said Fumstec, who had been paying more attention to the veranda than to the window. "I think someone comes now."

Several of the negroes were hurrying down the walk towards the boat landing, which could not be seen from where the Bradys stood. In a few moments they saw a tall, thin black, dressed in the same Oriental style as the figures behind the three doors, advancing along the walk. He was barefooted and wore the same sort of turban on his head, while in one hand he carried a covered box and in the other a short pole, which the detectives subsequently learned was carved to represent two intertwined snakes. Behind him came a thin, dark man, carrying a golden-haired child in his arms.

"Waltzec and the boy," whispered the gypsy. "Now you see I was right!"

The little fellow appeared to be asleep, his head was pillowed upon the shoulder of the Szgamy man.

"At last we catch up with the child," thought Old King Brady. "Now, if we can only get him safely out of here that is all I ask."

CHAPTER XI.

THE VOODOO MEETING IN THE HOUSE WITH THE HUNDRED DOORS.

Alice's recovery had indeed been remarkable and it was all owing to the effective treatment of Sukey, as Old King Brady had said. During the day the old negress said nothing of herself, and when Alice tried to draw her out a little she held back, but just before Harry went down the ladder for the second time Sukey entered the room, and, carefully locking the door behind her, came up to Alice, who was reclining in the rocking chair.

"Missy," she said, "de Lawd hab ben mighty good to you. Doan yo' t'ink so now?"

"Indeed I do," replied Alice, "but I think you helped a lot, Sukey, for which my father will pay you well."

"I doan care so much about de pay, honey. Whatebber money I get for doctoring yo' mah ole man will take away frum me suah, but dar's somefing else what yo' fader mought do for me, which would pay me better dan any money he could gib."

"Name it, mammy," replied Alice. "If it is anything he can do I'm sure he will."

"I'se a'most afraid, chile, an' I dunno as yo' would understand ef I wuz to try."

"Try it, mammy; try it. I shall understand, I think."

Something was coming, and Alice was most anxious to improve the opportunity to draw the old woman out.

"Yo' fader am a good man, honey. I'se suah ob dat, or I wouldn't say nuffin'."

"Indeed he is. He will not only do what you want if he can, but he will give you money, too."

"Well, den hit am lak dis: Dah am a chile what was brung into dis yere swamp a week or so ago by a man who call himself white, but whose heart am blacker dan de blackest niggah ob dem all. He am a lilly yaller-haired boy, an' dey say he am de las' 'cendant ob ole Mass Francis Fournier, who uster own dis yere plantation. Dey mean bad by him, missy. Dey will kill him. Dey's heap bad niggahs hyar. Dis am a bad house. Dey do drefful t'ings here. I'se a Christian woman and wuz brung up by Christian parents. I'se ashamed ob my ole man fo' turning de heathen dat he am become. I'se ashamed ob mah 'sociations. But what can I do? Nuffin' at all 'cept to sabe dat ar chile and 'store him his rights. Dat ar I kin do an' wiv de help of de good Lawd an' yo' fader I will."

"It is just as Mr. Brady said," thought Alice. "This sickness of mine is going to turn out all for the good if I work this woman right."

"My father will certainly help you," she said. "Tell me just what you want us to do."

"To tak away de chile, missy, and lemme go, too. We tak him fust to mah ole uncle, who libs in de swamp, an' who uster be slabe to de Furnier family, aldough nobody knows dat but me. He gib de chile his rights, missy, but about dat I shan't say nuffin'. Let de ole man 'splain for himself."

"Anything you say, mammy, will be done, I am sure."

"Good 'nuff. Den listen. Did ebber yo' heah tell of de voodoo doctahs?"

"Oh, yes."

"Well, den to-night one comes hyar an' dey bring de chile. Dis am dere headquarters. Dey hole dere meeting to-night. Dey try to put de debbil in de chile to make him speak lies. Dey done do it four times now. Dey'll kill him in the end."

Old Sukey was working herself up into a great state of excitement.

"Dat ar's Doctah Sam, as dey call him," she continued. "He's a bad witch doctah, dat's what he am. Hi, missy? He work down New Orleans one time for a show man what hab wax figgers. When de ole man die Sam he steal t'ree ob dem figgers an' bring 'em up hyar. Yo' seen 'em. Mebbe yo' t'ought dey was alibe. He makes de poor, ignorant niggers t'ink dat dey was ghosts. Ho, de fools! Mah ole man keeps 'em shut up in closets. I'se helped dust 'em up many a time. I knows what dey be."

"Yes, we saw them, mammy," said Alice. "We knew what they were."

"Well, den, dat's all right. Now listen, missy, I agrees

to get dat lilly boy and gib him to yo' fader. I 'grees to hab a boat ready and we uns will go 'way when dey gets mad wiv de voodoo. We tak' de chile to Uncle Shazzer, an' he do de rest. Ez for me, all I ax is dat yo' tak' me to New Orleans wiv yo'. Dere I hab friends who will look out for me. Will yo' promise me dis?"

"Willingly," said Alice, highly pleased at the turn affairs had taken. "I promise for my father and myself."

"Good 'nuff. Den I go see yo' fader now. Mah ole man lock him an' yo' brudder in dey room, but I kin open de do'. I'll be right back, missy, an' p'raps I'll bring yo' fader wiv me. Den we can finish our talk hyar."

She was gone on the instant. Alice sat by the window waiting, little dreaming that Old King Brady and Harry were in the bushes watching her at the time.

Presently old Sukey returned, still more excited.

"Why, dey's gorn!" she exclaimed. "Dey's let a rope ladder down out ob de winder an' deys gorn! What do dis mean?"

It seemed to Alice that the time had come to show her hand.

"Sukey," she said, "I'll tell you what it means. It means that my father and my brother and I are detectives, and that we were sent to this place by the father of that little boy to rescue him and take him home. Now you see how much you have interested me, and how anxious I am to help you in your good work."

"Missy?" exclaimed old Sukey, "am dat so! Praise de Lawd for it! I'm wiv yo'. Whar do yo' tink dey am gorn?"

"You hear all those people talking? You hear the playing and the singing?"

"Yes, missy. Suah. I meant to tell yer. Dem are de niggahs come to de voodoo meeting. Dey know nuffin, po' souls, but mah ole man he knows, and I know. So does Dr. Sam an' dat black-hearted thief what done stole de chile."

"Well, then my father and brother are watching them, no doubt. Let me go down the ladder and join them, and tell them what you say."

"Not fo' de world, missy. I go."

"Let us both go. I am strong again now."

Just then a shout was heard outside.

"Wait!" said Sukey. "I must go downstair alone first. Dr. Sam am come wiv de chile."

She hurried from the room, and once more Alice had to possess her soul in patience.

But she was satisfied.

The coming of "Dr. Sam," the Voodoo priest, and those with him put an end to the loafing on the veranda.

All hands crowded into the house of the hundred doors after the arrival of this interesting outfit.

The Bradys and the man Fumstec saw the windows light up, and the dusky forms flitting back and forth behind.

There was no attempt to place a guard around the house.

This the Bradys could only account for afterward by the supposition that Uncle Jotham never told that he had visitors, and that he had sufficient control over the young negroes whom the detectives had seen flitting about the place to make them hold their tongues.

"They are getting busy, all right," said Fumstec. "We want to place ourselves where we can see and hear."

"Time," replied the old detective. "Let them get located first."

He gave them ten minutes.

The gypsy's impatience meanwhile got the better of him.

"Oh, if you won't go I will," he said, and he pulled away, went to one of the windows, and peered in.

"What do you mean to do with that man, Governor?" demanded Harry.

"Nothing," replied the old detective. I shall hold him if I can, or let him take his own head if I must. His coming must not be allowed to influence us one way or the other."

"He would put the knife to our backs in an instant if he thought it would help him to get this money."

"Of course he would. There is Alice at the window again. Let us show ourselves now."

They stepped out into the open, and she saw them.

Instantly Alice produced a little memorandum book which she carries, and writing upon a leaf tore it out and dropped it from the window.

Harry secured it, and by the aid of his flash lantern read as follows:

"Old Sukey is with us. She has a plan to rescue the child, and for us all to leave this place. I shall join you presently. Meanwhile trust her if she comes your way. I am all right again now."

Harry repeated this to Old King Brady.

"Good!" said the old detective. "We are going to get there. Now is our time. Come to the window; we will take different ones."

And so it happened that when the Voodoo meeting which we are about to describe was pulled off that night, there were three onlookers whose lives would not have been worth an instant's purchase if the darkies had known and could have got at them.

And what the Bradys saw when they first looked through the windows into the grand saloon was the crowd gathered about Dr. Sam.

This striking individual stood in the middle of the long room with his back toward the three doors, which concealed the wax figures, leaning upon his serpent staff, with the box which he had carried resting at his feet.

He rested absolutely motionless, looking as much like a bronze statue as a man.

The negroes had formed a semi-circle about him, all holding hands.

In the middle of the circle was old Aunt Sukey, holding

a beautiful little golden-haired boy, who appeared to be in a profound sleep.

The gypsy strangler Waltzec stood to one side, with his arms folded.

Evidently it was not intended that he should be anything but a looker-on at this singular seance.

For many minutes all remained as thus described, when suddenly the Voodoo doctor raised his staff and brought it down upon the floor with a bang, at the same time shouting some words which seemed mere gibberish to the detectives.

Then Uncle Jotham, whose place was at the upper end of the circle, went to the table at the other end of the room, where three grimy lamps burned, and blowing out two turned the third down to a mere glimmer.

He returned to his place, and once more the Voodoo doctor banged his staff.

Immediately the assemblage struck up a crooning chant, the doctor beating time on the floor with his staff.

They began to work themselves up into a hysterical frenzy.

They screamed, groaned, shouted, and yelled.

Some swayed back and forth, others jumped about and howled dismally, still holding hands.

At last the staff banged again, and all this ceased.

Then the Bradys saw creeping from the box, which was now open at one end, although they had not seen the Voodoo doctor open it, a big rattlesnake.

Another followed, and then another.

The eyes of the doctor were fixed upon them, he waved his staff back and forth.

As the snakes drew nearer he planted his staff upon the floor, and one, the foremost, began to wind itself up the staff, while the others followed.

When the first reached the top of the staff, and the others were as close up as they could get, the doctor raised the staff and waved it slowly in the air, shouting his gibberish again.

At the same instant the three doors flew open, and the wax figures were revealed.

Immediately all hands fell upon their faces, the man Waltzec following their example, while the Voodoo doctor turned himself and bowed before the images.

At this instant Old King Brady saw old Aunt Sukey glide noiselessly toward one of the open windows with the child.

It was the window next to him at which Harry stood, and as the old detective looked he saw Alice standing by Harry's side.

She raised her hand, and pointed in the direction of the bayou.

Old King Brady pulled away.

He saw Fumstec, who had been watching all this, do the same.

Aunt Sukey, handing the child to Alice, dropped to the ground, and pointing toward the bayou started on the run.

Not a word was spoken, nor was it necessary.

All followed as rapidly as possible.

CHAPTER XII.

CONCLUSION.

Aunt Sukey had prepared Alice for her part when the Bradys saw her draw the girl away from the window.

At the sound of the singing Alice went to the room where the detectives had been.

Sukey had left the door open for her, and Alice descended the rope ladder, to the use of which she was accustomed.

She crept up beside Harry and told him what the old negress intended to do, but Old King Brady, as it happened, did not see her until he turned.

It was a triumphant moment for the detectives, but there was still danger everywhere.

They gained the edge of the bayou, but still no alarm came from the house with the hundred doors.

But danger in the shape of the Gypsy Fumstec was right with them then.

Old King Brady was not blind to his silence and black looks.

"Governor, Alice has explained everything to me," said Harry, speaking very rapidly. "We want to turn these boats loose, and to be off with our own without an instant's delay."

"That child don't leave this place!" said the gypsy, moving toward the old detective. "You have spoiled our chance of finding the treasure. The child goes back."

He whipped out a revolver, and thrust it in the old detective's face.

Quick as lightning Young King Brady struck him down with a well-aimed blow on the back of the head.

He fell like a log, and lay where he dropped.

"The gypsy dog!" growled Old King Brady, as he stooped and seized the revolver. "You were none too soon, Harry, I do believe!"

"Not an instant is to be lost," said Alice, "if we would save little Paul."

There was no further talk.

Rapidly the Bradys cut the moorings of the various old boats and skiffs in which the voodooists had come, and pushed them off into the bayou to float downstream.

Alice, with little Paul and old Sukey, were then assisted into the stern seats of the Bradys' boat.

And now, as they turned to take a last look at Fumstec, whom Harry really believed he had done for, they found him gone.

The wily gypsy had only been playing possum.

As soon as the detectives' backs were turned he crawled away into the bushes.

And now he was on his way to the house of a hundred doors, to join forces with the men he had followed so far to defeat.

Just as Harry pushed off a fearful yelling was heard in the direction of the house.

"Dey knows now!" cried old Sukey. "Pull, young massa! Pull, fo' de good Lawd's sake, or dey kill us all!"

Harry needed no urging. He pulled for all he was worth.

Somewhat to his dismay Old King Brady saw that several of the boats had lodged against trees.

But there was no time to start them, and on they went.

"Listen, Mr. Brady," said Alice, and she ran over what old Sukey had told her.

"My dear woman, we are most everlastingly obliged to you," said the old detective. "You will lose nothing by this, believe me. I shall not only see you safely through to New Orleans, but I shall pay you a good big sum of money as well. But do you really want to desert your husband?"

"Deed, I do, massa. Him am no Christian man no mo'. I'se belong to de chillun of de Lawd."

"Well, then it is none of my business. But have you no children of your own?"

"All dead and scattered, massa."

"And those we saw about the place?"

"Don't ax me 'bout 'em. Dem dey use in dere heathen ce'monies. Dey's a bad lot, an' none ob mine. Dis way, young massa. Turn to de right. Dat ar' slew tak' us to Uncle Shazzer's home."

"Old woman," said Old King Brady, "tell me truly, is this Uncle Shazzer old Francis Furnier's servant, Bell-shazzer, who was supposed to have been shot when the Yankees came to Belle Voir?"

"Dat's jest who he am, massa. He was shot, but he got over it. He is more'n a hundred years old now, an' awaitin' de summons. Ef him tell true, an' ef him believ in dis chile, den you wait and see what happens. I done tell you dat you get a big surprise."

Before they had gone far they came in sight of a little hut among the trees.

"Dat am Uncle Shazzer's," said Sukey. "Better tie up 'longside his boat dar; but I tink one of you better stick to dis boat. Some ob dem niggahs may come after us yet. Somebody ought to watch."

"I'll stay here," said Harry.

"And I may as well do so, too," added Alice. "We shall scare the old man to death if we all go crowding into his house in the dead of night. Aunt Sukey can take the child."

Little Paul awoke when the transfer was made.

The old woman hushed him, and he dropped asleep again as they walked toward the hut.

They had reached the hut now.

It was entirely dark.

"What in the world does the man live on?" demanded Old King Brady, looking about the dismal spot.

"Fish mostly, massa," replied Sukey, "but he raise some corn back hyar."

"And he lives all alone?"

"All alone by him ownself. He has dese many years, awaitin' fo' de summons. Hit doan' seem to come. But

knock on de do', massa, an' knock right hard, fo' Uncle Shazzer don't heah none too well. When he looks out de winder I'll gib a holler, an' he'll know who hit am."

And Old King Brady banged away on the door.

After the summons had been repeated several times a shuttered dormer window in the roof was opened, and a white head appeared.

"Who dar?" called a croaking voice. "Who tries to break down mah do' dis time o' night?"

"Hit am me, Uncle Shazzer!" cried Aunt Sukey. "I'se heah wiv a gentleman, an' I done brung dat ar' child!"

"I come right down so soon ebber I can get mah close on, but can de gem'n prove dat de chile am de grandson ob old Massa Frank?"

"I can, uncle, but he is the great-grandson," Old King Brady replied.

"Dat am what I mean. I'se so old I get mixed up. I'se a hundred an' fifteen, massa, an' dat am de trufe."

"Hurry, uncle! Hurry," cried Old Sukey. "Don't stand talking dar."

The shutter was closed, and after a few minutes Uncle Shazzer opened the door.

"Come in," said Uncle Shazzer, and they passed into a little room.

The old man lighted a lamp, and he held it close to the face of little Paul, who appeared to be sleeping in a more natural way than before.

For a few moments the wrinkled old mummy studied the child's features in silence.

"He done look lak a Furnier," he said at last. "He certainly do. But whose chile's chile am he? Young Massa Frank he wor killed in de wah! Him nebbber married, not as I heard tell on. Am dis de grand-chile ob Missy Dell?"

"That's right, uncle," replied Old King Brady. "He is the grandchild of Adele Furnier, who married a Dala-douze."

"So she did, so she did; leastways I heah so, but she nebbber come to Belle Voir. Long years I waited fo' her, but she nebbber came. I couldn't write. I wouldn't trust nobody wiv mah secret, so I spec' she died an' nebbber knew dat I still lived."

"That is right," replied the old detective.

"An' who am yo', massa?" demanded Uncle Shazzer then.

"A detective employed by this boy's father to get him away from the kidnappers who stole him, and take him to his home."

"Suke," said the old man, "am dis yere straight?"

"Deed hit are, Uncle Shazzer," replied Sukey. "Hit am as straight as a string, and Mr. Brady am going to tak' me to New Orleans an' get me out of dat ar' nest of rattlesnake debbils for good an' all."

"And de chile? Why he sleep? Dey gib him de dose?"

"As I tole yo', ole man, when I come down hyar de oder day. But hit am all right. I gib him de cure. He come troo all right fo' suah."

"An' dat's mah las' question, massa," said the old man. "Now I know why I was let lib so long; hit war to gib up mah sacred trust to yo' fo' dis chile."

"That's right, Uncle Shazzer," said Sukey. "Give the gentleman the money and let us go."

"Hit ar all dey am left," said old Shazzer. "Listen to mah story. When de Yankees come up de Red ribber, a-burning cotton and destroying plantations, old Massa Furnier he get scared. He hab big lot of money in de house. How much I dunno, fo' I kean't count. He make me hide it in tree bunches, one in de cellar, one in de garret, an' one in de garden. Troo an' honest, massa, de Yankees got de bunch in de cellar and de bunch in de garret, an' den ole massa done died. Dey shoot me, but I'se hard to kill. After dey was gorn I digged up de gold in de garden, an' I'se held on to it ebber since, waitin' fo' de rightful heir to come, an' now he's come, praise de Lawd, and I gwinter gib hit up."

Thus saying, the old fellow started up the ladder leading to the loft above.

"It really looks as though he had this money," Old King Brady whispered to Sukey.

"Oh, he has," replied the woman. "I nebber seen it, but I'se suah. Ef I'd told dem niggahs, or even mah ole man, he'd have been killed fo' hit long ago. Wait, yo'll see."

And, sure enough, in due time the faithful old fellow descended the ladder and placed a heavy bag in Old King Brady's hands.

Old King Brady did not attempt to open the bag.

"It is safe with me, old man," he said. "Take this for your faithful care."

He yielded and took the ten ten-dollar bills. Old King Brady would have given him more if he could have spared it. He felt that it would be useless to offer him part of the gold. Uncle Shazzer then took the sleeping child in his arms and kissed it. There was a little further talk and then Old King Brady and Sukey said good-by to the faithful old fellow and returned to the boat.

"Well, what luck?" demanded Harry. "Anything coming?"

"This," replied Old King Brady, holding up the bag.

He tossed it into the boat and they got in. Harry pulled off down the slew.

They held back a bit when they reached the bayou and remained listening.

"I hear nothing," said Harry. "I don't believe we have been followed."

They pulled on and were almost at the deserted hut where Old King Brady had seen the rattlesnakes when they heard voices in the distance and the sound of oars.

"Dere dey am!" cried Sukey. "Dey done be'n down to de ribber looking for us an' now dey come back. Yah, yah! Dey nebber t'ink about our goin' to Uncle Shazzer's."

"We must hide and let them pass us," said Harry. "It would be a pity to have trouble now."

"Pull in among the trees," replied the old detective. "It will be safe enough, I fancy."

They were soon safely hidden. The sounds grew plainer and at length a boat came in sight. There was only one. In it was the voodoo priest, Dr. Sam; Uncle Jotham and another black.

There was no talk made as the boat passed them.

"What had become of the gypsies?" Old King Brady asked himself.

Long afterward he heard through Congressman Daladouze that the dead bodies of two men, supposed to be gypsies, were found floating in the Red River far below its junction with this bayou. Both had evidently been strangled. How it came about could, of course, never be learned, but it seemed a fitting end for the man Waltzec, who had served his partner in the kidnaping business in the same fashion at the Hotel Danube, on Bleecker street.

This danger passed safely, the Bradys encountered no other. They made Broadmain's station with little difficulty. By this time little Paul had quite recovered. He prattled about his father and seemed overjoyed that he was to see him again. And this desirable result occurred at the railroad station at Atlanta.

Old King Brady wired the Congressman from New Orleans informing him of the safety of his son, and Mr. Daladouze met them at the Gate City. The meeting between father and son was a touching scene. Mr. Daladouze was taken all by surprise when Old King Brady informed him that he had deposited \$62,000 to the credit of little Paul in a bank at New Orleans.

Such was the sum which the bag contained, and it was all in gold. The detectives were very liberally treated.

Mr. Daladouze sent orders to his banker to pay old Sukey, who had been left at New Orleans, three thousand dollars, which was enough to keep her comfortably for the remainder of her life.

Leaving the Congressman and little Paul at Washington, the detectives returned to New York.

Of course it was not considered worth while to make any report in the murder case.

Thus the appearance of this story will give such as remember it the first inkling of the true solution of "The Bradys' Bleecker Street Mystery."

THE END.

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