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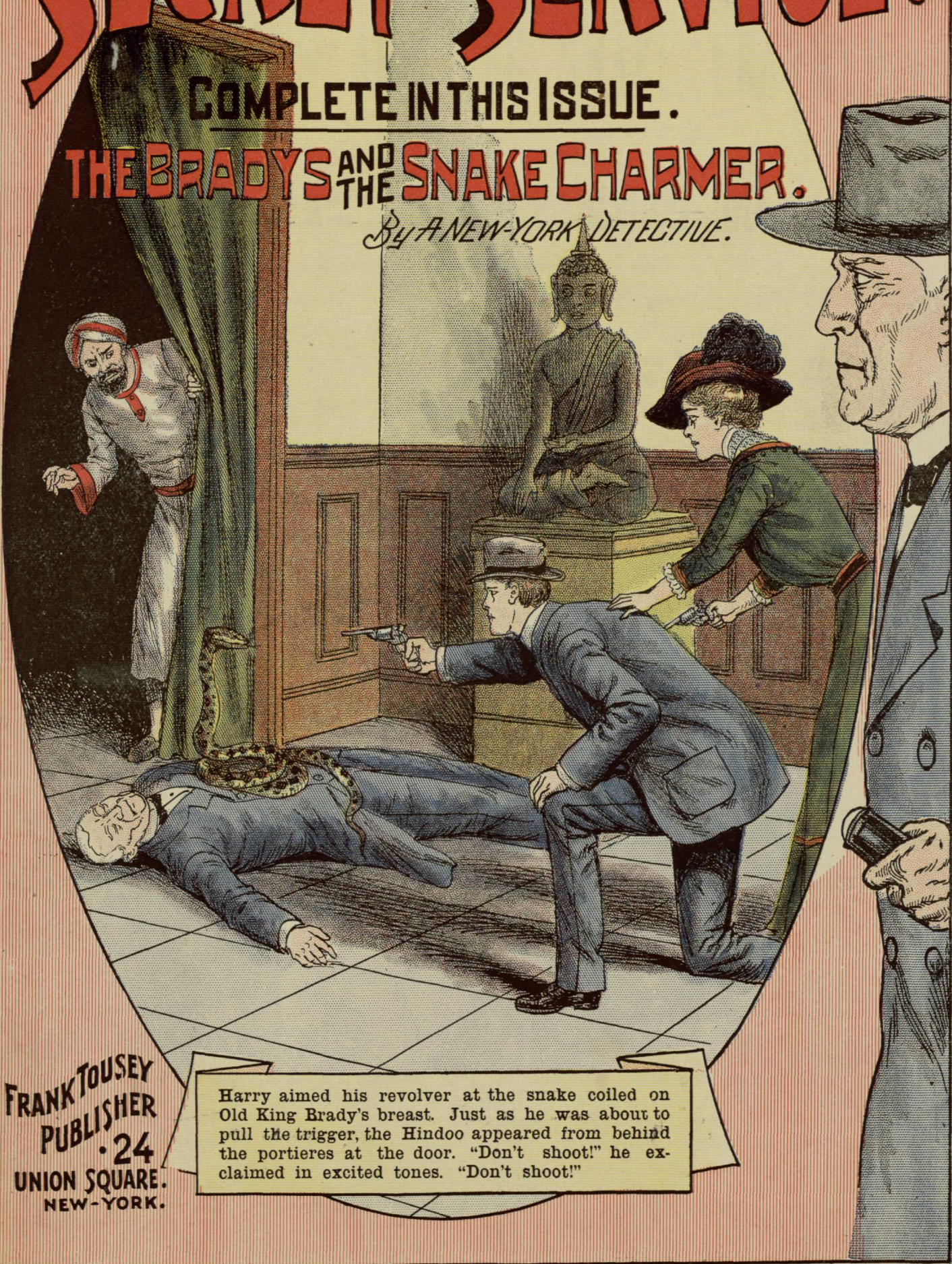
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SECRET SERVICE.

COMPLETE IN THIS ISSUE.

THE BRADYS AND THE SNAKE CHARMER.

By A NEW-YORK DETECTIVE.



FRANK TOUSEY
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Harry aimed his revolver at the snake coiled on Old King Brady's breast. Just as he was about to pull the trigger, the Hindoo appeared from behind the portieres at the door. "Don't shoot!" he exclaimed in excited tones. "Don't shoot!"

SECRET SERVICE

OLD AND YOUNG KING BRADY, DETECTIVES

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NEW YORK, FEBRUARY 17, 1911.

Price 5 Cents.

THE BRADYS AND THE SNAKE CHARMER

OR,

THE SEARCH FOR THE HINDOO IDOL

By A NEW YORK DETECTIVE.

CHAPTER I.

THE VANISHING OF THE HINDOO IDOL.

"I don't care what you do or how you do it, Mr. Brady," said Mr. J. K. Jauncey, "only recover that Hindoo idol for the museum. It has an authentic record of over two thousand years, and it has cost me first and last as many thousand dollars. Not that I care about the money, but I don't like to be balked in my purpose. Spare no expense."

"Very good, Mr. Jauncey, I shall do my best," was Old King Brady's reply.

"And Old King Brady's best usually spells success," replied the millionaire banker, who was also the president of the board of trustees of the Manhattan Museum.

This conversation took place in the elegantly furnished offices of the Brady Detective Bureau, on Union Square, New York, one morning in February, a few years since.

Old King Brady arrived later than usual that morning and found the banker waiting for him.

The man had scarcely gone when Alice Montgomery, the accomplished female partner in the Bureau, entered.

"I am late," she said, "and I promised to be on time this morning on account of you being late. I hope it hasn't made any difference to you, Mr. Brady."

"None," replied the old detective, "except that I have not yet opened the mail. When I came in I found Mr. Jauncey waiting for me. He gave me a case."

"You mean the banker?"

"Yes."

"And what is the case?"

"To recover a Hindoo idol which was stolen yesterday from the tramp steamer Belem Castle, which is lying at the foot of West One Hundred and Thirtieth street. The thing was found in a ruined temple buried in the dense jungles of the interior of the island of Ceylon. It has diamond eyes—poor affairs according to Jauncey—and it weighs over two hundred pounds, so the puzzle is how it ever came to be carried away off the steamer secretly, as seems to have been the case. Jauncey's orders are to recover it at any cost."

"I suppose you will be going right up there?"

"Yes, and I should be pleased to have you go with me if you can spare the time."

"I'll help open the mail and see how my engagements stand," said Alice, and she seated herself beside Old King Brady's desk and began opening letters, in which occupation the old detective was himself engaged.

"Harry is not coming back till to-morrow," Alice presently announced.

The allusion was to Young King Brady, who was then in Buffalo.

"Ah! So?" replied the old detective. "He is making a longer stay of it than he anticipated."

"Yes, he says, however, that he expects to be able to finish up by to-night, and will come over on the night train."

They finished with the mail, which contained nothing of any moment.

And now for Mr. Jauncey's idol," said Old King Brady. "We may as well make a start."

It would have been rather difficult for the old detective to have refused Mr. Jauncey's request, for the banker had given the Brady Bureau several cases of importance, and regarded himself in the light of an old customer.

Thus Old King Brady was particularly anxious to please him.

Taking the subway the old detective and Alice got out at One Hundred and Thirty-fifth street and walked through to the Riverside Drive.

It was a cold morning, the Palisades were covered with snow, and there was much floating ice in the river.

"Rather a bleak scene," remarked Alice as they started down the incline which leads to the water front.

"It is indeed. That must be the steamer which we can see at that wharf away down there towards Grant's Tomb. A singular place for a steamer of her class to dock, too."

"I was thinking that same thing," replied Alice, "but perhaps she could not get a berth anywhere else."

"Plenty of room; plenty of room," replied Old King Brady. "There must have been some special reason. However, we shall see."

They crossed the Hudson river tracks and walked on to the pier.

The steamer which Old King Brady had noted proved to be the Belem Castle.

She was an English tramp of the largest class.

Stevedores were busy unloading great bales, which were being loaded into a freight car standing on a switch.

"Her cargo is evidently consigned to some Western city, and that is why she docked up here," observed the old detective.

He helped Alice up the gangplank.

Their way was blocked by a gruff Scotchman who had the words "First Officer" on his cap.

"Visitors not allowed," he said.

Old King Brady showed his shield, saying:

"I am the detective sent here to consult with Captain Lucas in the matter of the Hindoo idol."

"That's different. The captain is in the cabin. I will send him word that you are here."

He called a sailor, and in a moment word came back that the detectives were to come right down.

They found Captain Jerry Lucas a much more genial person than his mate.

He was working over a big bunch of papers at a desk, but he pushed them aside and gave his visitors full attention.

"I am very glad you have come, Mr. Brady," he said. "Mr. Jauncey sent me word to expect you. This is certainly a very mysterious affair. I was opposed to receiving the idol from the first. Trouble always comes of attempting to carry such things out of India. Although the temples from which they are taken may be in ruins, and apparently abandoned in reality, it is not so. They are still secretly resorted to by natives who regard those images as sacred. They ought not to be removed."

"I quite agree with you, captain," replied the old detective, "but with that we have nothing to do. Our work is to recover this idol if possible, and in order to begin right we want to know all the particulars of its disappearance."

"Right," said Captain Lucas, "but to be frank with you, there is little to tell. We took the idol on board at Colombo; it was delivered to us by the German trading house of Weismuller & Co. For safety's sake, having a spare state-room on deck, I locked the case which contained it in there and kept the key myself. The state-room was not opened until yesterday morning. I looked in there to see if everything was all right, and found it so. Then I locked the door again and notified the museum that the idol was ready for delivery. Early this morning they sent a truck for it. I unlocked the door again and found the old thing missing. That is really all I know."

"Then it must have been taken during the night?"

"Evidently."

"Anything else missing?"

"No; unless I may mention my cabin boy. The ungrateful young rascal deserted some time during the night. But of course that has no bearing on the case."

"Anything may bear upon it."

"But, my dear sir, the boy could not have carried the idol with him. The thing weighed over two hundred pounds."

"You saw the idol before it was boxed?"

"Oh, yes; I saw it in Weismuller's office at Colombo."

"What is it like?"

"It is the typical figure of the sitting Bhudda, a man sitting cross-legged, you know."

"I understand from Mr. Jauncey that the eyes were diamonds?"

"Yes; two diamonds, each about as big as a hickory nut, but they were poor affairs, full of flaws. I don't for a moment imagine that the idol was stolen on their account."

"Of what was it made?"

"Wood. Lignum vitæ. You know how heavy the stuff is."

"What is your theory?"

"That Hindoo priests came on ahead of us for the express purpose of recovering the idol, or sent word to some of their friends here to act for them."

"Very probable."

"I am sure of it. It's lucky they didn't murder me in my sleep. There is no telling to what length those people will go."

"Have you any Hindoos aboard?"

"One, our cook, a harmless fellow. It isn't possible that he had anything to do with the job. He comes from an entirely different section of India. Besides, he is a Christian, a member of the Baptist Church."

"Was there no watch on deck?"

"Certainly, and that is the singular part of it. Two men were on duty. One from eight o'clock until midnight, the other from midnight until daybreak. I am short-handed, but in port one man is considered sufficient protection."

"And these men saw and heard nothing?"

"So they report. You can question them for yourself."

"I will do so presently. About this boy. What was his name?"

"Alonzo Hart."

"How old is he?"

"About eighteen."

"You spoke of his ingratitude. Of what did it consist?"

"Why you see I picked him up in the streets of Colombo. His father was an American engineer who came out there to superintend the placing of some sugar refining machinery. His wife was dead and he brought the boy with him. He contracted a fever and died. The sugar people would do nothing for the boy, according to his account, so he found himself in a bad way after what little money his father left was gone, which was not enough to secure him a passage home. He appealed to me, and I agreed to let him work his passage."

"And did he serve you faithfully?"

"Oh, he did well enough, but he has a fiery temper."

"And that made trouble?"

"More or less, yes. He was useful to me, though. We go from here to Honduras and back after a cargo of log wood. He agreed to remain until our return, and I was then to pay his fare out to some place in Ohio, where he has friends."

"Did he steal anything?"

"I can't find that he did. I suppose he did not want to go to Honduras, so he took French leave."

"Let us have a look at that state-room," said Old King Brady, rising.

Captain Lucas led them on deck and opened a door.

The state-room was small and unfurnished. Nearly the whole interior had been occupied by the bulky case in which the Hindoo idol was packed, the captain informed them.

Old King Brady bestowed particular attention upon the lock.

"A very ordinary affair. Easily opened," he said. "Did you find it locked or unlocked, captain?"

"Locked."

"Did you have trouble unlocking it?"

"No."

"And the key was in its usual place?"

"It was."

"Where was it kept?"

"In my trousers pocket."

"Was your door locked?"

"No. Since we struck these latitudes I have been sleeping in the cabin. I never felt it necessary to lock my door."

"And the Hart boy, where did he sleep?"

"On the cabin lounge."

"So he could easily have taken the key from your pocket?"

"I suppose so."

"He knew it was there?"

"I don't know whether he did or not. I never gave the matter a thought."

"Are you a sound sleeper?"

"Not usually, but I did sleep very sound last night. I never woke up once. Usually I awake a dozen times during the night."

"Where are these watchmen? Can I see them?"

The captain summoned the men separately by Old King Brady's request.

The man first on duty was a Swede—Gustave Olsen by name.

Old King Brady questioned him closely.

His replies were frank and direct.

He declared that he had been awake and alert during his entire watch. That nobody came aboard he was positive. He scouted the idea that any one could have taken the case containing the idol from the state-room unknown to him.

The second man was then summoned.

He was an Englishman—Jack Cowell by name.

He was cross-eyed and peculiar looking.

"Now then, Cowell, we are trying to get at the bottom of this mystery," said Old King Brady. "What can you do to help us out?"

"Nothing," was the reply. "I watched from midnight till morning. I saw nobody on deck after I relieved Olsen."

"Nobody?"

"No."

"Cowell, at what time did you wake up and find you had fallen asleep?" demanded Old King Brady abruptly.

"I didn't fall asleep," stammered the man. "Who says I did?"

"I say so, and you know I am telling the truth. Be honest. I don't think Captain Lucas will be hard on you."

The captain looked doubtful.

"You want to give it to us straight, Jack, that's a sure thing," he said.

"The man looked troubled and stood silent.

"Come, come!" cried the captain, "although I ought not to do it, I'll forget that you lied to me if you tell the truth now, Jack. I see by your face that Old King Brady is right and that you were asleep on your watch."

"Well, I own up to it," blurted Cowell. "I don't know what came over me. I was all right up to one o'clock. I was pacing the deck the last thing I remember. Next I knew I found myself lying on the deck half frozen. I looked at the clock in the gallery. It was half-past four. It's something what never happened me before, and I can't account for it nohow."

"Had you been eating or drinking anything unusual?" asked Old King Brady mildly.

"I hadn't drank a drop, boss. I cut out the booze two years ago, and Cap knows it."

"That's right," said the captain. "Jack is a sober man."

"But I did eat something," continued Cowell. "Just before one I looked into the galley to warm my hands. There was a mess of curried chicken in a pot on the stove, and I ate some of it. Mebbe it was drugged by cookee, I don't know."

"Why bless my soul, that's what I had for my supper!" cried the captain.

"And it made you sleep all right, sounder than you are accustomed to according to your own account," said the old detective.

"Yes, and when I woke up I was ready to drink the river dry, I was was so thirsty."

"Same with me, Cap!" cried Cowell.

"Did the boy eat any of it?" asked Old King Brady.

"I don't know whether he did or not," replied the captain.

"Did he eat with you?"

"No, he waited on me, then he would sit down at the cabin table and eat his own meal. I didn't stay there last night. I had business on deck. I don't know what he ate."

"It's up to the cook," declared Old King Brady.

"It begins to look like it," said Captain Lucas. "After all, he is a Hindoo."

"What's his name?"

"Jam Punda."

"I think we better interview Mr. Jam Punda. Is he in the galley now?"

"He ought to be."

But he wasn't.

When they came to look in the galley the dinner was cooking on the stove and everything was in perfect order, but it was a case of no cook either there or elsewhere on the Belem Castle.

Mr. Jam Punda had disappeared.

CHAPTER II.

LON, THE CABIN BOY.

What happened while the watchman slept?

This we must now investigate on our own account, for while this story concerns those world-famous detectives, the Bradys, it also concerns the personal adventures of the cabin boy, Alonzo, or, as he was usually called for short, "Lon" Hart.

Old King Brady was of the notion that Lon had had more trouble with Captain Lucas during the voyage from Ceylon than the captain was willing to admit.

But it was not so.

In fact, there had been very little.

Captain Lucas was a kindly man, and he made every allowance for the fiery temper of his red-headed cabin boy. Also Lon was not vindictive.

He knew his failing.

He had nothing laid up against Captain Lucas.

It was his full intention to go to Homdurra on the Belem Castle when he wrapped himself in an old blanket and lay down on the cabin lounge that night.

Lon ate none of the curried chicken. He had a particular objection to curry, so his sleep was normal.

The captain, feeling sleepy, went to bed at a quarter to nine, about an hour after eating, for his supper had been late that night.

It was half-past ten before Lon finished his work and turned in on the lounge. The cabin clock said quarter-past two when he was suddenly awakened by a cold, clammy hand being laid on his forehead.

Lon sprang up in the dark.

But the next instant an electric flashlight was turned upon him and he found himself facing two men.

Both were Hindoos, one was tall, light colored for one of his race, while the other was evidently a Lascar sailor, small and very black.

The tall man, who had a heavy black beard, held a long knife with a curiously carved wooden handle with the point directed towards Lon's heart.

"See you, boy!" he hissed, "do you want me to open your heart with this knife and let the blood run out?"

Lon was terribly frightened.

Not that he was a coward, nor was he particularly courageous, but he knew enough of Hindoos to be thoroughly scared.

"Wha—what is it?" he stammered. "What do you want with me?"

"We want the key to the state-room where Captain Lucas keeps the Hindoo idol," replied the man with the knife.

"Where does he keep it?"

"The key?"

"Yes, yes! Don't you understand what I say?"

"I don't know where he keeps it."

"Don't lie! You know very well that he keeps it in his pocket. Go and get it and bring it to me."

Lon did know and he was silent.

"Obey!" hissed the Hindoo. "Be quick!"

Lon got up off the lounge.

He knew how troubled Captain Lucas had been over the presence of the idol on the Belem Castle, for the captain had expressed himself strongly on the subject several times.

"He said there would be trouble before we got rid of the thing," thought Lon, "and now here it comes. I'll wake him up if I get the chance."

"He is in there," he breathed, pointing to the state-room.

"Yes, I know," replied the Hindoo. "You go on in and get the key."

Lon opened the state-room door and started to close it on himself.

The Hindoo caught the knob and jerked the door wide open.

"None of that!" he hissed. "If you wake that man up you both get the knife. The key, the key!"

Lon concluded to get it and say no more, so he felt in Captain Lucas' pockets and handed over the key.

"Perhaps they will go and leave me. Then I'll wake him," he thought.

And this was just what they did.

The instant he got the key in his possession the tall man walked out of the cabin, the other following him.

Lon flew back into the state-room and began shaking Captain Lucas.

He might as well have shaken a dead man.

The captain never stirred.

Lon got scared again then.

"They have been drugging him," he thought. "How sound he sleeps! What on earth shall I do?"

Curiosity prevailed, of course.

Lon crept up on deck.

The first thing he saw was Jack Cowell stretched at full length as sound asleep as Captain Lucas was.

He stole forward to a place where he could get a view of the state-room.

The door stood open; he could hear considerable noise inside, and as he watched the pair come out tottering under the weight of the heavy case.

It looked as if they would not have been able to lift it at all but for the fact that it was provided with handles.

They worked it over to the davits and set it down.

Then the tall man leaned over the rail and called to some one below.

Two men quickly came up over the side.

They were not Hindoos, but rough looking longshoremen, as Lon thought.

All four now lifted the idol into the boat and lowered it.

Down the ladder the Lascar and the two longshoremen went, the tall Hindoo remaining behind.

All this Lon saw from behind the chart-house, where he stood watching.

He now slipped back into the cabin, resolved to arouse Captain Lucas at any cost.

But his efforts were all in vain.

The drugged officer could not be awakened, and while he was still at it the Hindoo descended into the cabin again.

Lon jumped out of the state-room.

The man still held the knife and looked fierce enough for any evil deed.

"Come!" he exclaimed; "haven't you given up yet? You can't wake that man. He has been drugged by my order. Here is the key, restore it to his pocket, and then come with me."

"With—with you?" gasped Lon.

"Yes. Don't you understand English?"

"But, sir—"

The Hindoo gave the knife a flourish.

"Either that or this!" he exclaimed. "Aboose!"

Lon was in despair.

"What on earth does he want of me?" he asked himself.

He took the key and put it back into the captain's pocket. Then he faced the Hindoo and asked, falteringly:

"Do you mean that I am to go away from the steamer?"

"Of course. Do you suppose I mean to stay on board?"

"But, sir—"

The Hindoo made one jump for Lon and pressed the point of the knife against his windpipe as Lon backed against a state-room door.

"Red-headed boy, you obey me or it is death!" he hissed.

"I am a man who is accustomed to be obeyed. Now go ahead on deck and remember if you try to run or dodge I drive this knife into your back.

Threatened men live long they say, but Lon was not tying to the old proverb then. He made no attempt to avoid his fate.

He found that the life-boat hung in its accustomed place.

Directed by the Hindoo, he walked to the gangway and looked down.

A large boat lay below.

The box containing the idol was in it amidships.

The two longshoremen were at the oars, the Lascar sat in the bow.

"Go aboard," ordered the Hindoo. Careful, now, or you may upset the boat, loaded down as she is."

Lon got aboard all right and was ordered astern.

The Hindoo followed, crowding into the broad stern seat beside him.

The boat was then pulled away.

And such was the simple explanation of the disappearance of the Hindoo idol which had seemed so mysterious to Captain Lucas when he came to investigate next day.

The Hindoo had done a clean job.

Lon was in despair.

No one spoke.

The longshoreman seemed to know just what was expected of them.

They pulled up the river for a considerable distance, though not so far as Spuyten Duyvil creek.

Lon, who knew nothing of New York, could not have told where they were when they finally pulled up at a new pier which projected well out into the stream.

Here stood a large covered wagon drawn by two horses. The case containing the idol was hoisted up by ropes, one of the longshoremen bossing the job, and loaded into the wagon.

The spot was a lonely one, under the bluffs of the Inwood section.

Not a soul was in sight that Lon could see.

The cabin boy would have taken chances and run if he had dared, but the Hindoo kept a sharp eye on him, and the attempt was not made.

"In with you," said the Hindoo after he had given the longshoreman money.

Lon climbed in and was told to stand by the case.

The Lascar then followed and took up his place on the other side.

The Hindoo sat down with the driver, who was a big, powerful fellow.

The start was now made, and Lon got a standing ride of some distance.

He could see little, and, of course, had not the most remote idea where he was going.

At last they turned in through a gateway and drove up an avenue lined with trees, stopping in front of an old-fashioned frame mansion.

All got out here.

The Hindoo opened the door with a latch-key, turned and said something to the Lascar, who then seized Lon by the arm.

"You come with me," he said, and he led him into the house.

It was entirely dark.

Lon was hurried through a long hall and down a flight of stairs.

He, the Lascar, opened a door and thrust the frightened boy into a large closet, locking the door upon him.

"What on earth do they mean to do with me?" thought Lon. "What can be their object in kidnaping a boy like me and bringing me to this place?"

And indeed it was a problem hard to understand.

He could hear them bringing in the case; then he heard the wagon drive away.

A short time after that the closet was unlocked by the Lascar, who held a lighted lantern in one hand and a cocked revolver in the other.

The Hindoo was with him. In his hand he held a small vial and a graduated glass.

Pouring a reddish liquid into the glass from the vial which he seemed to take the greatest care to measure, he extended it to Lon.

"Drink red one!" he said, solemnly. "Drink and enter the land of dreams."

"I won't!" cried Lon, putting his hands behind him. "You want to poison me! Why did you bring me here? What do you want to do this for? I never did you any harm."

"Obey me!" cried the Hindoo, stamping his foot angrily. "Obey me or I shall order him to shoot you."

"I might as well be shot as poisoned," protested poor Lon.

"It is not poison. It will not harm you."

"It will put me in your power."

"You are there now. Listen! In this lonely spot your cries would not be heard were I to tear you to pieces, limb from limb. You had best obey. Do it and no harm shall come to you. Refuse and you surely die."

"I won't drink the stuff! I won't! I won't!" shouted Lon, half beside himself with fear.

The Hindoo jumped forward and clutched him by the throat, saying something in his own language to the Lascar.

The man took the graduated glass, while the Hindoo, forcing Lon back against the wall, so choked him that he had to open his mouth, into which the Lascar tossed the contents of the glass.

The dose nearly choked poor Lon, but he had to swallow it.

"That's all right," said the Hindoo. "Now you will soon be happy. Next time you will obey me without all this fuss."

Both then withdrew and the door was locked on Lon.

"And now what is going to happen to me?" the puzzled boy asked himself. "And all this comes out of carrying that wretched wooden god away from Ceylon. Captain Lucas said that trouble was bound to come."

CHAPTER III.

HARRY AND THE HINDOO.

Old King Brady had some further talk with Captain Lucas, but as it developed nothing, it is not worth recording here.

At length he and Alice left the steamer and started back for Broadway.

"Upon my word, this seems a puzzling case, Mr. Brady," remarked Alice. "I don't see how you are going to begin it."

"It is a plain case," replied the old detective. "The idol was simply carried away by some one who attaches religious value to it, and the cook worked with them. Whether the boy did or not is an open question. My personal belief is that he woke up, tried to interfere, was despatched and thrown overboard."

"And what do you propose to do?"

"The only thing to do at the start is to try to locate Jam Punda. I'll get down into the Syrian quarter where most of the low caste Hindoos in New York hang out, and see what information I can pick up, but I must confess the outlook is not particularly promising."

And the result justified Old King Brady's opinion.

Nothing came of his efforts.

The following day Young King Brady returned and was informed as to the case.

"Don't you think," he said, "that it would be a good idea to get down to that pier to-night and hang around between midnight and daylight? I may run into some watchman or somebody else along the railroad whose business keeps them out at that hour and who saw what actually happened there night before last."

"I have thought of that," replied the old detective. "Suppose you try it. I would go with you, but I am not feeling well to-night, so I think I will go to bed."

"All right. It's my job."

"By the way, this Jam Punda left a lot of clothes and some other things behind him."

"And you think there is a possibility that he may return after them secretly?"

"The idea occurred to me."

"It's a good one. I shall be on the alert."

Accordingly, midnight found Young King Brady walking along the railroad tracks towards the pier.

Captain Lucas had been informed of his intention, and Harry had been told to come directly aboard the Belem Castle if he needed help.

As he approached the pier Harry spotted a little house where a light burned.

It was a watchman's shanty.

Freight engines were going and coming. A freight train was evidently being made up.

Harry approached the shanty and peeped in through the window.

A good-natured looking Irishman sat by a little stove. Harry ventured to open the door.

"Good-evening, boss," he said. "Any objection to a fellow coming in and warming his hands by your fire?"

"It's agin the rules, but if you don't stop but a minute it's all right," replied the man, eyeing Young King Brady with some suspicion.

"I'll pull right out," replied Harry. "It's an awful cold night."

"It is that."

"Watching for tramps?"

"And thieves. I just came in a minute to warm up. What brings you here?"

Harry displayed his shield.

"Oh, a detective."

"Yes. Were you on duty night before last?"

"Yes, I was."

"Then you are just the man I want to talk to. Did you know there was a robbery on board that tramp steamer lying at the next wharf that night?"

"Now looker here, young feller, it's the railrad company what pays me. Outside of that I don't know nothing."

"I'm paying for information. A few extra dollars come in handy sometimes."

"Dat's what dey do, but I don't want to be lugged into nothin' and get in de house of detention."

"Not the slightest danger. I came down here to-night because I thought I might happen upon some one who could post me. It's worth a five if you know anything."

Thus saying, Harry produced a bill.

"Are youse working on de case?" asked the watchman.

"I am."

"I don't know as what I can tell yer will do yer much good, but such as it is you are welcome to it. What was lifted?"

"A large packing case containing a Hindoo idol belonging to the Manhattan Museum."

"Look at dat now! What would dey be wantin' wit de likes of dat? I t'ought it was sometin' really valuable what was took."

"It is valuable. But what do you know?"

"Only dat I seen dem lowering de case in a boat. Dey put it into another boat and rowed off wit it. I seen it all, but it wasn't my place to interfere."

"I suppose you are right from your standpoint. How many were there of them?"

"Four when dey came. Two was white men, one was a coon. As for de other, I couldn't make out what he was. Big, tall feller. He went aboard wit de coon and seemed to be bossin' de job. When dey went away dey had a boy wit dem."

"White?"

"Yair."

"Did he appear to be going willingly or were they forcing him?"

"You ask me too much. From de distance where I watched 'em I couldn't tell."

"Which way did they go?"

"Up de river. It was a terrible big boat dey had. Dat I noticed."

"You have helped me a lot, and here's your five. Do you happen to know where a boat such as you describe could be obtained around here?"

"I don't, for sure. Dere's a man up by One Hundred and Fifty-fifth street what has boats to let. He does a big business and keeps all kinds. Perhaps he could tell. But say, I must get outside now."

"I am ready and much obliged."

Harry now went down on the wharf where the Belem Castle lay.

The Swede, Gustave Olsen, was pacing the deck.

Harry recognized him from the description Old King Brady had given him.

He eyed Young King Brady suspiciously.

At first Harry thought of going aboard and interviewing Captain Lucas, but it seemed too late to disturb a man to whom he really had nothing particular to say, so he walked down to the end of the wharf and stood looking off on the river for some little time.

What to do he did not know, and just then it seemed to him as if he had got as far as he was likely to go with his night's work.

After a while he walked back to the railroad with his mind about made up to go home.

But when he reached the railroad he suddenly found cause to change it.

Looking back he saw a dark object coming up over the end of the pier.

At first he thought it was a man, but as he watched it he came to the conclusion that it must be some animal, probably a big dog, for it came along the pier on all fours and vanished in the shadows thrown by the steamer.

It seemed a bit odd that a dog should be wandering about at that hour.

Harry continued to watch.

The moments passed and the object did not reappear.

Olsen was now walking towards the bow, and when he reached it he stopped and stood looking off on the river.

It was just then that Harry saw the supposed dog rapidly climb the ladder which hung from the gangway of the Belem Castle.

It was a man dressed all in black.

Crouching low, he glided across the deck and vanished.

"The cook as sure as fate," thought Young King Brady. "This is luck! If I could only get him."

But he had some distance to cover before he could reach the steamer.

Harry made all haste, but the man was quicker than he was, and before he could reach the ladder there he was coming down.

He had a big bundle under his arm.

Harry saw that he was quite black.

Olsen was still looking off on the water. It was clear that he had not seen the intruder.

That the man was Jam Punda, who had returned to get some of his belongings, Young King Brady could not doubt.

The Hindoo did not appear to see him, his eyes were fixed upon Olsen.

That he could not return to the end of the pier without

being seen was evident, nor did he attempt it, but crouched behind a hawser post and waited.

Just what to do Harry could not for the instant determine, so he stood irresolute for a moment and then walked boldly down the pier looking neither right nor left.

He was satisfied that the man had come in a boat and was trying to get back to it unseen.

He half expected trouble before he reached the end of the pier, but none came.

Looking down then he saw a small rowboat tied to a standing ladder.

"That's his outfit," he muttered. "I'll be here when he comes at all events and take my chances."

"Should he arrest the man or try to work in with him?" he asked himself.

The latter plan appealed to him most.

Just then Olsen turned away and began returning along the deck on the side furthest from the pier.

"And now for Jam Punda," thought Harry, "or perhaps he will wait till I come away."

He half turned and shot a keen glance behind him.

The Hindoo was coming.

He had straightened up and was walking very rapidly.

He had rubbers on and his footfalls were noiseless.

Harry kept his back turned until he was almost upon him, and then wheeled around.

It was about time.

The Hindoo had his bundle under the left arm, his right hand was concealed behind his unbuttoned overcoat.

"He's got a knife, surest thing," thought Harry. "This is a shade too risky."

The Hindoo came on to the end of the pier, his eyes fixed upon the young detective.

"Good-evening," he said with a strong foreign accent.

"Good-evening," replied Harry.

"Cold night?"

"Yes, it is a cold night."

The Hindoo drew his hand from under his overcoat.

It was just as Harry supposed. He held a long, glittering knife.

"Bad place around here. A feller has to be on the lookout," he said with a smile which displayed a double row of glittering, white teeth.

"That's right," replied Harry, coolly.

"It's too risky," he thought again. "The old idol isn't worth it. I'm not going to take the chance of having my throat cut, nor do I want to shoot the man, as I should have to do to get him."

"Waiting for some one?" asked the Hindoo, still smiling.

"No. I was just walking about. Is that your boat down there?"

"Yes. It is my boat."

"Are you going off in it?"

"Yes. I am going off in it."

"Then why don't you go?"

"I think I will. Good-night."

"Good-night," replied Harry.

It is not often that Young King Brady balks, and he felt rather ashamed of himself for doing it on this occasion, but he could not bring himself to act otherwise.

And it was well that he did not as matters turned out, for the very end he most desired was to be accomplished by the course he took.

The Hindoo now put the knife between his teeth, and, holding it thus, started to descend the ladder with one hand, the other caring for the bundle.

Harry did not attempt to follow his movements, but

stood where he was, when suddenly there came a splash and a sharp cry.

"By Jove, he has managed to get into the water!" thought Young King Brady, and he jumped to the end of the pier and looked down.

Just what had happened was not apparent, but there was the boat bottom upward and the Hindoo had vanished. The bundle and one oar were afloat.

"How on earth did he contrive to do it?" thought Harry.

He began the descent of the ladder.

As he did so the Hindoo's head came bobbing up.

He clutched frantically at the slippery bottom of the boat.

"Help! Save me! I no can swim!" he cried.

Clinging to the ladder with his left hand, Harry reached out and got the fellow by the collar just as he was going down again.

"Quit struggling! Get hold of the ladder!" he cried.

It was an easy rescue.

Harry did not even get his feet wet.

The next instant the Hindoo clutched the lower round of the ladder.

"There, now you are all right," said Harry, "and I'll help you turn your boat over."

"Ah," gasped the Hindoo, "you are too good to poor man! I owe my life to you."

"Well, I get there, it seems," thought Harry. "What looked to be a hard one turns out to be dead easy after all."

CHAPTER IV.

LON IN THE LAND OF DREAMS.

The prophecy of the tall Hindoo that Lon upon taking his dose would visit the land of dreams was amply fulfilled.

Never had the cabin boy had such dreams!

But were they really all dreams?

It is exceedingly doubtful.

That part were real happenings taking place while his senses were benumbed by the drug Lon afterwards came to believe.

When he thought that he was back in India in the depths of the jungle wandering through vast rooms and long corridors in a ruined temple it was fancy, of course, and there was a lot more of the same sort of thing.

But when he "dreamed" that the tall Hindoo came to him dressed in a fanciful black robe all embroidered with golden stars and crescent moons, with a white turban on his head, and told him to arise and follow him, that was probably real.

This "dream" we propose to tell in detail.

It seemed to the cabin boy simply impossible for him to disobey the Hindoo's command, so he arose and followed him out of the room.

They ascended stairs and passed into a large room.

It was bare of furniture and the ceiling was painted with the golden stars, moons and comets.

At one end resting upon a pedestal was what Lon seemed to know instinctively was the Hindoo idol, now unpacked.

It was a figure of the sitting Buddha.

The diamond eyes caught the light of a large hanging lamp and shown like glittering stars.

The Hindoo bowed low before it three times and beckoned to Lon to come on.

Opening a door they went into a bath-room.

The tub was filled with water.

Lying upon a chair was a pair of linen bathing tights and a red silk sash, also embroidered with golden stars.

"Red one," said the Hindoo, "remove your clothes. Wash and be clean that you may enter upon your work."

It seemed to Lon that he was as incapable of answering as he was of disobeying.

He did not want to strip before this strange man, but he did it without a moment's hesitation, and got into the tub.

The room was stifling hot, and the cool water was most refreshing.

The Hindoo picked up Lon's clothes and carried them away.

He was back again in a moment, with towels, and when Lon dried himself he was told to put on the tights and tie the red sash about his waist.

This done, the order was to follow the Hindoo back into the room where the idol was.

"Kneel," ordered the Hindoo; "put your head against the floor, fold your arms. Remain thus until told to rise."

He assumed the same position himself, and as they knelt before the idol the Hindoo made the following invocation; it can scarcely be termed a prayer:

"Oh, mighty Bhudda, at last the prophecy is fulfilled. From thy house in the jungle depths thou hast traveled to a strange land without the aid of the hands of thy faithful followers, who could not without sacrilege remove thee from thy home of many centuries.

"At last thou hast come to the house of one who knows thy power, and as prophesied a thousand years ago, a youth with snow white skin and red hair has been provided to attend to thy wants. Bestow the light of thy intelligence upon him, oh, mighty one, and make him faithful to his duties; instil into him the spirit of prophecy that he may interpret to the faithful believers the wishes of Nagya, the sacred serpent, and may good fortune rest upon thy servant for evermore."

Now Lon dreamed that all this was spoken in a foreign language, and yet he understood every word.

As he remembered these things later, now came a break, and the next he recollected he was polishing up the old idol with a rag saturated with some sweet smelling oil.

He was alone and felt quite comfortable.

All the perplexity and horror of his singular situation appeared to have left him, but there was horror yet to come.

There was another break.

The next the cabin boy remembered he was lying on the floor below before the idol.

The room seemed hotter than ever.

Somewhere in the distance he could hear a person playing on what seemed to be a flageolet; soft, weird, monotonous music it was, too. The same strains repeated over and over again.

The sound drew nearer and nearer, and presently the heavy portieres which concealed the door parted and the bearded Hindoo appeared walking backward very slowly.

He was playing on a little flageolet. It was the music Lon had heard.

And now a sense of terror seemed to grow upon the boy, and he was unable to explain why.

The Hindoo walked backward three times around the idol still playing.

He did not look at the idol nor at the cabin boy, his eyes remained fixed upon the curtains.

And now the cabin boy's dream, if dream it was, took another and most peculiar turn.

The sense of horror kept increasing. It seemed to Lon that some fearful thing was being attracted by the music and was coming through that door.

But what?

He could not tell.

The music lost its soothing effect. It drove him almost wild.

He felt that it was up to him to awake, to get off the floor, to run for his life.

Then suddenly Lon found himself standing in a remote corner of the room, and yet apparently he had not changed his position.

There were now two Lons.

One was lying before the idol asleep, the other, wide awake, was standing in the corner listening to that droning flageolet, alternately watching the parting of the curtains and the sleeping Lon on the floor.

Here was a mystery past explaining.

But it did not seem to worry the waking Lon.

He felt as if he had escaped the danger which threatened him.

He felt sorry for the sleeping Lon. He wished he might help him, but he saw no way.

And then it came!

There was a slight rustle of the curtain folds, and between them a snake came gliding.

Lon had never seen such a snake.

It was about as big around as a man's arm, but its length appeared to be enormous.

More and more and more of it issued from between the portieres.

Its head was small, and every now and then it was raised and the forked tongue would dart out with a venomous hiss.

The skin of this singular reptile seemed to be of all the colors of the rainbow. Its glittering eyes rived in brilliancy the diamond eyes of the Hindoo idol.

And the snake charmer, for such the bearded Hindoo was, continued to play as the snake glided towards the sleeping boy.

The waking Lon had no sense of horror now.

He watched the advance of the snake with curiosity—nothing more.

As it reached the sleeping Lon it glided upon his body and began to coil itself upon his breast.

Its tail did not come through the curtains until it was partly coiled. The waking Lon judged that the snake must be about thirty feet in length.

Once fully coiled it raised its head and seemed to watch the snake charmer as he played.

The waking Lon waited to see the snake strike at the sleeper, but it made no such move.

At last the music ceased and the snake dropped its head and seemed to sleep.

Concealing the flageolet in the folds of his gown, the Hindoo knelt before the sleeper and the snake.

Reaching out he picked the creature up and unwound it, then coiling it about his neck.

The snake showed no sign of life. It never made a move.

The Hindoo swung around on his knees and faced the idol.

"Beloved Nagya, the all wise!" he cried. "Oh, mighty Bhudda, order Nagya to impart her wisdom to thy servant of the fair skin and red hair!"

He bowed three times to the idol and then arose and left the room.

Instantly the waking Lon vanished.

The cabin boy had ceased to dream.

Now how much of this was dream and how much real Lon never knew.

At last he awoke to real consciousness to find himself lying on the floor before the idol in his bathing tights and red sash just as he had dreamed.

He sprang up and looked around.

The hanging lamp burned dimly, he was alone.

There were three windows to the room all heavily draped with black curtains.

Lon pulled these aside and saw that the windows were guarded by iron bars and had had heavy closed shutters on the outside.

He hurried to the portieres and parted them.

Beyond was a small room, unfurnished, save for a peculiar cage which stood on the floor.

And in this cage lay the snake.

The creature saw Lon and raised its head, darting its tongue between the bars and against the glass.

Something of his dreams was real then.

Lon pulled away sick with horror.

Was he destined to be held a slave by this fearful man, to be drugged and made to serve his purposes, a companion of a filthy reptile?

It seemed too terrible.

Some way must be found to escape.

Lon made for a door over at the other side of the room. It was locked, but as he rattled it footsteps were heard outside.

In a moment the key turned and the Hindoo entered.

He was dressed as Lon had seen him in his dreams.

"Ha, boy, so you are awake?" he exclaimed. "How do you feel?"

"Oh, I feel well enough, sir, but please let me go away out of this," cried Lon.

"Not so," replied the Hindoo, calmly. "Your work lies here, as was prophesied long ages before you were born. Tell me what is your name?"

"Alonzo Hart."

"Are you an American or are you English?"

"I am an American, sir."

"And yet you came from India on the Belem Castle, evidently?"

"Yes, sir. My father took me out there. He died in Colombo. Captain Lucas was kind enough to give me a chance to work my way back."

"What part of America do you belong in?"

"Ohio, the town of Akron."

"Are you acquainted in New York?"

"No, sir. Not at all. I was never here before."

"And have no friends here?"

"No, sir."

"So much the better. Then no one will interest themselves to look you up. For the present, Alonzo, you will remain with me. You may call me Mr. Bomba, it is part of my Hindoo name unpronounceable to your tongue. Are you hungry?"

"Very."

"Then follow me and you shall eat, but understand, now, I am an easy man to get along with if I am obeyed. If you make no trouble, none will be made for you. If, on the contrary, you attempt to escape, you will be shut in this room and the serpent in yonder cage turned loose upon you. Come."

He opened the door and led Lon downstairs into a

kitchen where the Lascar, dressed all in white with a spotless white turban on his head, was cooking at a range.

"Feed him," said Mr. Bomba. "Give him all he wants to eat and drink, and then show him where he is to sleep. He has stood the test well, and there is no doubt that he is the boy we expected to meet. He is not to be disturbed until he awakens. He knows what he has to expect if he tries to escape."

With that Mr. Bomba left the room.

"Lucky boy," said the Lascar, looking hard at Lon.

"Who says so?" retorted the cabin boy.

"I say so."

"I don't see it then."

"That is because you don't understand. If you do what the professor orders, nothing will be too good for you, and he will fill your pockets with gold."

"Am I to be kept a prisoner here?"

"No longer than is necessary to tame you."

"Am I to go around half naked all the time?"

"Aren't you warm enough?"

"Just now I am. The house is too hot."

"He comes from a hot country. He would go around that way himself if he dared."

"Dared?"

"Yes. It wouldn't do. There are five ladies coming and going all the time."

"For what?"

"Oh, didn't he tell you?"

"He has told me nothing."

"Then I must not, or he will go for me. What will you have to eat?"

"What have you got?"

"There's some fine chicken stew in this pot here."

"With curry?"

"There'll be curry in it when he gits it, but yours don't have to have it in."

"Chicken stew will suit me all right."

"Good. I'll fix you up," said the Lascar, and he proceeded to set a place for Lon at the kitchen table.

The cabin boy never had a better meal.

After it was over the Lascar took him to a comfortably furnished room at the top of the house.

"You sleep here," he said. "He opened a drawer and took out an undershirt."

"You can wear that if you are cold," he said, and just as he was going out he pointed to a long, red cord which hung from the wall.

"That pulls a bell in the kitchen," he added. "I shall have to lock you in. When you want to get up, ring and I will come to you. You needn't hurry yourself in the morning. To-morrow is Sunday, and he never gets up before noon."

"Sunday!" cried Lon. "Why I thought this was Friday."

"Sunday is right," said the Lascar, and he went away and locked the door.

It was on Friday night that Lon was captured.

So if the Lascar told the truth the cabin boy had been all day Saturday in the land of dreams.

CHAPTER V.

TRYING TO STRIKE THE TRAIL.

Young King Brady got the boat righted, and he did more.

One oar was stuck under the seat and did not drop out.

The other was floating near, as was the bundle.

Using the single oar for a scull, Harry succeeded in capturing both, and he then pulled back to the ladder.

They were safe from observation here, for the Belem Castle lay at the other end of the long pier.

"There's your boat," said Harry. "What are you going to do now?"

"I'm sure I don't know. I am almost frozen," chattered the Hindoo. "I am not used to this sort of thing. I shall get my death."

"What's in the bundle?"

"Clothes."

"They seem to be tightly wrapped and the paper is thick. I don't believe they are wet through. Shall I see?"

"I wish you would. I suppose I could change here. I shall die if I don't, that's sure."

The wretched man was shivering from head to foot.

He got into the boat and Harry began opening the bundle.

"How did you manage to get in?" he asked.

"My foot slipped. I lost my grip on the ladder and fell, upsetting the boat."

"Can't you swim at all?"

"Not a stroke."

"It is a wonder you were not drowned."

"I surely would have been only for you."

The clothes in the bundle proved to be comparatively dry.

There was a complete outfit, even to a pair of old shoes.

"Strip and get these on unless you want to die of pneumonia," said Harry.

It was all the man could do to get out of his clothes, which were freezing on him.

Indeed, Harry had to lend him a hand when it came to his shoes and stockings.

At last he was dressed, however, and declared that he left all right, although he still continued to shiver.

"I don't know what I ever can do to repay you," he said.

"Where do you want to go?" asked Harry.

"Oh, just a little way down the river to where I hired this boat. Then I will go downtown."

"Albany street?" pressed Harry, mentioning the street in the Syrian quarter where most Hindoo sailors put up when in New York.

"Yes."

"Pull down to your boat-house and I'll go part way downtown with you. The exercise will warm you up."

The Hindoo threw out the oars and they started.

He now became silent and eyed Harry curiously.

Evidently he did not know what to make of him.

It looked as if the Hindoo must have helped himself to the boat, for there was nobody around at the landing.

Now they started to walk to the subway.

"If I am going to make anything out of this adventure now is my time," thought Young King Brady, "and I may as well go about it boldly."

He turned on the man suddenly and said:

"A little while ago you were full of gratitude and ready to do anything in the world for me. Do you feel the same way now?"

"Indeed I do," protested the man.

Harry suddenly flashed his shield.

"A—a detective!" gasped the Hindoo.

"Yes, and you are Jam Punda, the runaway cook of the Belem Castle. Stop! Don't try to run away from me. I am not going to arrest you. Now is your chance to make good."

"Well!"

"I know a lot about it, my friend. You drugged the curried chicken, you helped those who stole the big idol in the case—you know! The owners of that idol have hired me to search for it. Will you help me in my search or won't you? That's what I want to know."

"And what happens to me if I don't?"

"Then I shall have to arrest you."

"If you can."

"Perhaps I can. I have arrested a good many tough subjects in my time. Besides, you haven't got your knife now. That went to the bottom of the river."

"I may have another."

"Would you use it on the man who saved your life?"

"I should not want to. But what happens to me if I aid you in your search?"

"Nothing, except that you get money."

"How much?"

"As much as a hundred dollars after I recover the idol. Not one cent before."

"I'll go you."

"Good! Where is the idol?"

"That I don't know. All I can do is to tell you just what I do know."

"Yes, that is all, and I hope you will tell it straight."

"I certainly shall. What's your name?"

"Harry Brady."

The name of Brady seemed to convey no intelligence to the Hindoo.

"All I know is this," he began. "I was hired at Colombo to take another man's place. Before we sailed a man came to me and told me about the idol. He informed me that I would be asked to put the captain and the watch to sleep when we reached New York, so that certain parties who were after the idol could get it, and he gave me the stuff to do it with, assuring me at the same time that it would not harm them. I was to be instructed when to do it on our arrival at New York."

"Of course you were well paid in advance?"

The cook grinned.

"Why sure, I don't work for nothing," he said.

"And you got your instructions?"

"Yes."

"How?"

"A longshoreman who was helping unload gave me a letter."

"In English?"

"No, in Hindoostani."

"Have you got it with you?"

"Sure. You can have it if you want it, but it isn't signed."

"Then it is no use to me."

"I suppose not. Well, that's all there is to it. I used the drug and put them to sleep, but I kept out of the way when they took the idol. Next day I hooked it. To-night I sneaked back after my clothes. That's all."

"And you don't know who stole the idol or why?"

"No, I don't. There were two of them."

"Oh, you saw them then?"

"Sure, I took a peep at them. There were two Hindoos and a couple of longshoremen. One was a Lascar, the other was probably a Bengoli. Tall man with a black beard. I suppose you know they carried off the cabin boy?"

"Yes. How did they get the idol off the steamer?"

"Lowered it in a boat and then hauled the boat up again."

"And that is all you know?"

"It's all I know, Mr. Brady, and that's the truth."

Harry believed him.

Taking the address of the sailor's boarding-house where the cook was staying, he left him at Fourteenth street and went to the old house on Washington Square where the Bradys kept bachelors' hall.

It was not until the next morning, Sunday, that he made his report to his chief.

Old King Brady listened with close attention.

"You certainly have made a good job of it, Harry," he said.

"It was more by luck than any good wit, governor."

"It was by knowing how to take advantage of circumstances. If you had attempted to arrest the Hindoo there at the end of the wharf, the chances are you would have got the knife and no good would have come of it. You acted just right, and anyway we have got a good description of the thief.

"What shall you do?"

"Try to find out who he is, of course."

"That goes without saying; but how?"

"Give me time to think. I can't answer that question now."

"It would seem as if he might be the boss of some one of the many bunches of new religious cranks which have sprung up in New York of late."

The same idea occurs to me.

"Suppose we look over the list of religious meetings in the morning paper."

They did it, but nothing came of it.

Usually there is a Hindoo or two holding forth on his peculiar views in New York, but there was none in this instance.

"We can't do anything to-day," said Old King Brady, and after breakfast he went out leaving Harry to call on Alice, to whom he is practically engaged, at her rooms on Waverly Place.

But Old King Brady was not wasting the morning if he knew it.

Sunday seemed as good a day to continue his search for the Hindoo idol as any other.

Old King Brady went up on Fifty-eighth street and rang the bell of a brownstone house, one of a swell row.

"Is Professor Thompkins in?" he inquired of the servant who appeared in answer.

The professor was in, and being on intimate terms with him, Old King Brady was shown to his room.

It was a sight.

Talk about Hindoo idols!

The professor's room was filled with idols of every sort. In fact, the man was a collector of idols from all parts of the world.

After the first greetings had been exchanged, Old King Brady spoke his little piece.

"Knowing your hobby, professor," he went on to say, "I thought I might pick up some points from you. My idea is this: If the thief is at the head of some religious cult here in New York, to whom this idol would be valuable enough to steal, he must have been some time established. Consequently it is safe to conclude that his followers must have been buying images like the stolen one. Who in New York sells such things?"

"There are several," replied the professor. "Of course, I know of no such man as you describe this Hindoo to be, or I should instantly tell you, yet I have seen a person traveling on the subway expresses who might answer the description. A tall Hindoo with a very black beard."

"A gentleman in appearance?"

"Very much so."

"Does he dress in native costume or otherwise?"

Otherwise. But this is not helping you. There is a man named Elfers, a German, who deals in such antiques. His place is No. — West Thirtieth street. As it is a private house, with his store in the front parlor, I take it that he lives there, although I don't know this to be so. You might give him a call. I bought some of my best idols of him. You can use my name."

And this is as far as Old King Brady got with Professor Thompkins.

His next call was at the West Thirtieth street house.

Mr. Elfers did live there, and he received Old King Brady in his store.

"I have sold several images of the sitting Bhudda lately," he said when he heard the old detective's story. "In fact, there has been quite a little run on them."

"Mostly to women, I suppose," said Old King Brady.

"All to women, and fashionable ones at that. Come here in carriages and automobiles. I had already made up my mind that some new set had been started by a Hindoo."

"How long has this been going on?"

"About a year."

"You have no idea where they meet?"

"No."

"Have any of these idols been delivered by you?"

"Two, if I remember rightly. I will look in my delivery book and see where they went."

Mr. Elfers did this and was able to announce that one went to a Mrs. McIntyre, on East Sixtieth street, while the other was delivered to a Mrs. Solomon, on One Hundred and Fiftieth street, near Broadway.

"Of course, I can't call on either of these people on a Sunday," said the old detective, "but I shall look into the matter to-morrow. I am exceedingly obliged."

"Don't mention it," replied Mr. Elfers, and the old detective started to leave when the dealer called him back.

"By the way," he said, "now that I come to think of it, I sold a Hindoo much like the man you describe a peculiar staff with two intertwined serpents carved upon it. That was about a year ago. The man was tall and very gentlemanly in appearance, but he wore no beard. About a week later I saw him on a Broadway subway train. He left it at Dykeman street. Possibly he may be your man, and has grown a beard since."

The suggestion did not particularly appeal to Old King Brady at the time, but when he got outside and came to think it over he concluded that having nothing else to do, he might as well investigate along these lines a bit.

It was a lovely winter's day, and for a wonder the old detective had nothing to demand his attention but this particular case, so having come to this conclusion, he went up to Dykeman street on the subway and walked towards the river.

He had not gone far before he met a policeman with whom he had a talk.

"I've been on this beat for the last six months, Mr. Brady, but I never saw any such man as you speak about," the officer said; "all the same I heard a roundsman at our station telling something that he saw on Friday night which may have some bearing on the case."

"And what is that?" Old King Brady asked.

"It was a big double truck which passed him at two o'clock in the morning with some sort of coon on the front seat. He noticed the man particularly, because he had a black beard. It isn't often you see a coon with a beard, you know. He thought afterward that maybe it was false, and that he ought to have tried to hold up the truck and see what they had aboard."

"Was it a covered truck?" inquired the old detective.

"Yes, and that's what made him suspect."

"What night was this?"

"Friday."

Old King Brady had not told the policeman just what he was driving at, but he did now, and asked which way the truck went.

"Last seen of it, it was going up Bolton Road," said the policeman. "I wouldn't wonder a bit if it was what you wanted, Mr. Brady. You might look up that way. Meantime if I can catch on to this fellow I'll let you know."

So Old King Brady went up on the heights of Inwood along the Bolton Road.

He walked to its end without meeting anyone of whom he could inquire, passing several old mansions whose isolated situation rendered them well adapted for any one who wished to carry on peculiar meetings in privacy.

"I am certainly getting at least warm on the trail," he assured himself. "I must not leave the neighborhood without inquiring of some of these people. I believe I'll ring the bell of one of these houses and try my hand at pumping information out of whoever comes to the door."

He turned back, and selecting the first house he came to, entered the spacious grounds upon which it stood.

It was an old colonial mansion with projecting roof and tall, wooden pillars.

The grounds wore a deserted look and although the house was in good repair, it presented a gloomy aspect, as all the blinds were closed.

Indeed, it seemed rather doubtful if it was inhabited, as a "For Sale" sign had been nailed to the gate.

Ascending the steps of the broad piazza, Old King Brady pulled the bell.

CHAPTER VI.

TRAPPED.

Harry and Alice attended church together that Sunday morning, something which the peculiar nature of their calling seldom allows them time to do.

After church they went to the Waldorf for dinner, and that over, Harry proposed that they visit the Bronx Park Zoo.

"It is a lovely day," he said, and it is so seldom that we have a chance to be together for any length of time that we may as well make the most of it."

Alice was willing enough, so to the Zoo they went, putting in a pleasant hour.

They had begun to think of returning when Harry proposed that they take in the snakes as the wind-up.

It was getting rather late, and there were but few people in the snake-house, but one among them attracted the full attention of the detective the moment they set eyes on him.

"Our man!" whispered Alice.

"Can it be possible?" breathed Young King Brady in return. "He certainly fills the bill."

The man was evidently a Hindoo.

He was tall and stately in appearance, and he wore a heavy black beard, which was evidently natural.

This in itself was peculiar, for the beards of Hindoos are almost always thin and straggling.

He wore a long overcoat of expensive make; his hands were gloved, and upon his head was the latest style of derby.

The only marked peculiarity was his straight black hair, which he wore rather long.

This proclaimed him as a Hindoo, and, indeed, his whole appearance bore it out.

He stood before a cage containing a large python.

The snake was coiled on a shelf, but not asleep.

Its head was stretched forward and its eyes were seemingly fixed upon the Hindoo.

Alice and Harry watched the man from a little distance. Naturally he interested them more than the snake.

His eyes, which were small and glittering, were partially closed.

After ten minutes observation they had not seen him alter his gaze from the reptile, which, uneasy at first, had now stopped swinging its head, although it was still thrust forward in the most peculiar fashion.

Nobody else in the snake-house seemed particularly attracted by what was going on.

"I do believe he is trying to charm that python," whispered Alice in Spanish, which tongue she and Harry speak fluently.

"Looks like it," was the reply. "I think we ought to shadow that man."

"The same thing has occurred to me."

Just then the Hindoo raised his hand and began moving it slowly right and left.

The python's head perfectly followed the movement.

Faster and faster the hand moved.

The rapidity of the movement of the python's head increased in proportion.

Suddenly the Hindoo threw up the hand and thrust it forward as a snake would strike.

The result was startling.

The python reared its head to the full height of the cage and struck it violently against the bars.

This attracted the attention of almost everybody in the snake-house.

The Hindoo, with a low laugh, turned away to find Harry and Alice looking more intently at him than they would have done had they known he was going to suddenly face about.

They were about to turn away when he addressed them.

"You were watching me," he said.

"Why, naturally we were interested," replied Harry, devoutly wishing that they had not attracted the man's attention.

Shadowing was not likely to prove so easy now.

"It is but the power of the human mind over animal intelligence," said the Hindoo, lightly.

"You made the snake strike," answered Harry.

"As you saw. I first fixed its attention. Then it was an easy matter to influence its movements. Anyone can do the same thing if he only possesses the power of mental concentration."

"Which not everyone does."

"True; but it is a power easily acquired. In my country there are men who could make that big python dance a jig on the tip of its tail."

"You refer to India?"

"Yes. I am a Hindoo. Good-day."

Raising his hat, the Hindoo turned away and left the snake-house.

"Alice, upon my word, I believe that fellow is the man we are looking for," said Harry, eagerly.

"And even so, what are you going to do?"

"It will not be very easy to do the shadowing act now that he has spotted us, especially as I have nothing with me to help me out in a disguise, but we may as well keep an eye on him. Come."

They left the snake-house, and seeing the Hindoo ahead

of them, quickened their steps until they had almost overtaken him.

Suddenly he stopped and turned.

Again Harry and Alice had been caught with their eyes fixed full upon him.

"Well, young man, what is it?" he asked.

"What is what?" demanded Harry in a strangely confused fashion for him.

"You are concentrating your thoughts on me. Don't stop. Let me walk with you and the lady, whom I perceive expects one day to become your wife."

Alice reddened.

It was unlike her, but she, too, seemed affected by the Hindoo's steady gaze.

"Excuse my personal remark, miss," said the Hindoo, raising his hat. "I should not have said that. Let us return to our subject. You were thinking of me, were you not, young man?"

"It would be useless to deny it, since you seem to be a mind reader," replied Harry.

"Not altogether that, but I do possess the power of reading the thoughts of others when they are deeply concentrated on me, so to speak. It is the same with me as it was with the snake, with a difference. My will being the strongest, I was able to make the snake temporarily lose its identity, but you could not concentrate your thoughts sufficiently to make me lose mine."

They walked on out of the park, the Hindoo still continuing to enlarge on the subject.

"You are bound downtown?" he asked as they turned in the direction of the subway.

"We are," replied Harry; "and you?"

"I am going down part way. I live on the line of the Broadway branch. If my company is distasteful to you or the lady, let us part here."

"Not at all," replied Alice, hastily. "I am deeply interested in what you are saying."

"I am flattered. But I have enlarged sufficiently on the subject."

"Might I ask your name?" said Harry, determined to bring the matter to a head.

"I give you my card with pleasure, and except yours in return," replied the Hindoo.

The card he handed read:

"Mr. Swami Bomba-Mun."

It bore no address.

"I have no card with me," replied Harry. "My name is Bagley—Harry Bagley. Permit me to introduce Miss Allison."

Again the Hindoo raised his hat.

By this time they were ready to ascend the steps of the subway station.

Harry was puzzled to know what to do.

He felt as if he ought to be able to make something out of this unexpected encounter, which appeared so likely to have a bearing on the case of the missing idol, but at the same time it did not seem the best thing to do to ask the Hindoo for his address.

He got it, without the asking.

As they rode downtown, Mr. Swami Bomba-Mun again began to talk of thought concentration, and as they neared Ninety-sixth street he suddenly said:

"By the way, Mr. Bagley, I am delivering a course of lectures on this subject to a few friends at the present time. There will be one to-night at my house, No. — Bolton Road. If you care to attend with Miss Allison, I shall be pleased to have you do so. Eight o'clock is the hour. Good-day. I leave the train here."

He arose, raised his hat and passed to the front.

"Well!" exclaimed Alice, "we seem to get there."

Harry looked doubtful.

"Can it be that we have been recognized?" he questioned.

"The thing is possible, of course. Still, I hardly believe it."

"If it was the governor it would be different, with his big white hat, with its broad brim, that sweeping blue coat with brass buttons, the old-fashioned stock and stand-up collar, every one knows him at a glance."

"Many do, of course."

"I wish I could persuade him to dress like other people."

"You never will, Harry, and as it bothers him to have you keep talking about it, I advise you to cut it out."

"Oh, I have, practically. But in my case it is different, and I can't believe this man guessed my identity. I think I shall attend his meeting."

"Take me along?"

"Certainly, if you wish it. We may be introduced to our Hindoo idol. It will be all plain sailing then."

The more Harry thought of the matter the better satisfied he became that he had stumbled upon a wonderful piece of good luck, and he felt eager to tell Old King Brady about it.

But the old detective was not in evidence when he reached home, nor did he turn up by the time Harry and Alice were ready to make a start for Bolton Road.

The run up to Dykeman street accomplished, they walked on to their street and number, finding just such a house as Old King Brady had picked out to make his inquiries at earlier in the day.

"This must be the place," said Harry. "Yes, here is the number on the gate."

"They keep it pretty well shut up then. The blinds seem to be all closed, but I see lights burning behind them."

"Probably our Hindoo friend has his reasons. Shall we tackle the job?"

"Why certainly. That is what we came for."

Harry opened the gate and they passed on to the piazza, where he rang the bell.

The summons was answered by an old woman as black as any negress, but evidently a Hindoo.

She was gaudily dressed in a strange costume of red, green and yellow.

Her head was bare and her jet black hair, which contrasted strangely with her wrinkled face, was stuck full of curious hairpins, the heads being of glass of every color.

She made a low curtesy and held the door wide open, but did not speak.

"We are here by the invitation of Mr. Bomba-Mun," said Harry. "We came to attend the meeting."

The woman pointed to a door on the right of the broad hall in silence.

"Probably she don't speak English," said Harry.

"Or possibly she is dumb," added Alice. "Evidently we are invited to enter that room."

"I'd like to see the man," muttered Harry. "There is something about this place which I don't altogether like."

The woman again motioned to the inner door.

Harry and Alice stepped into the hall.

Immediately the old woman shut the outer door, and bolting it, hobbled off through the hall.

"We are left to find our own way, it seems," observed Harry. "Here goes."

He opened the inner door.

Instead of the large, square room he had expected to see, there was a round one behind the door.

The walls were hung with black cloth, the ceiling was

similarly draped, the cloth being shirred into a point, in the center from which hung a curious brass lantern, apparently very old.

It was lighted, but the flame was so feeble that it did little to lighten up the gloom.

There was a table standing on a raised platform at one end and a large chair behind it.

There were about twenty camp chairs ranged in semi-circular rows in the body of the room.

"This is evidently the meeting-room," said Harry, "and we seem to be the first to arrive. I suppose Mr. Bomba-Mun will show himself when he gets good and ready. We will go in and sit down."

They passed in.

Alice had been holding the knob of the door.

As soon as she let go the door swung shut of its own accord, and there was a slight click.

"What was that?" cried Alice, facing around, and then it was:

"Why, where's the door?"

Sure enough, the door had vanished.

Every part of the circular wall was now shrouded in black.

"Trapped, surest thing," muttered Harry. "Oh, what a fool!"

He sprang to the place where the door should have been as he figured it, and started to pull aside the hanging.

But the cloth was securely fastened top and bottom, and appeared to be one solid piece.

"The door must be here!" he muttered. "I don't understand—ha! What's this?"

"The floor is moving, Harry!" Alice cried.

"Sure! Swinging around! That accounts for it. We must get out of this."

"Easier said than done. We are going faster and faster. It makes me quite dizzy."

She clung to Harry's arm.

The revolving movement increased every instant.

The camp chairs began to tumble about.

Harry and Alice could scarcely keep their feet they grew so dizzy.

Then all at once a fiendish laugh was heard above them.

They looked up, but could see nothing.

"Lost! Lost! Lost!" cried a man's voice.

"You are welcome to my house, Mr. Young King Brady, but you will never find that Hindoo idol. Prepare to meet your fate!"

CHAPTER VII.

LON AND THE SNAKE TAKE A JOURNEY.

Sleeping and dreaming seemed to be Lon Hart's principal occupation in the house of the Hindoo.

The cabin boy had no such quiet night as Mr. Bomba predicted.

Quite the reverse.

This time we are not prepared to hazard any guess as to whether Lon's dreams really were all dreams or whether, in part, they were real.

Lon went right to sleep, and it seemed to him afterward that he must have slept some hours before he began to dream.

The first of it was that a little dried-up old man came through the door without opening it and stood by his bedside.

He was as black as the stove, and his face was a mass of wrinkles. His hair was snow white and hung in thin bunches down over his naked shoulders, for all he had on was a breach cloth and a white turban on his head.

"Child of the sacred serpent, arouse yourself and go to my master," he said, "he needs you now. I will be thy guide."

It seemed to Lon that this was said in a language which he had never learned, and yet he understood.

He tried to obey and to get out of bed, but found he could not move.

"I cannot go," he said.

"Cannot go!" cried the little old man, "why you are there already! Behold!"

Then suddenly the scene changed.

Lon found himself standing in the room where the idol was.

On the floor before the image lay Mr. Bomba, dressed now in a curious white robe, belted in at the waist.

He had a turban on and his head rested upon a black silk cushion. He appeared to be in a deep sleep.

"He sleeps," said the little old man. "The master sleeps. I will tickle his ear and he will awake."

He knelt down beside the sleeper and blew in his ear.

The Hindoo put his hand to it and turned over.

The little old man blew in the other ear and then suddenly vanished, but even after he was gone Lon dreamed that he could hear him laughing somewhere up in the air.

Then there was a break, and it seemed a long one.

The next Lon could remember when he came to think this dream over he was standing before a table which had been placed before the idol, gazing at a big crystal ball which rested upon it.

Mr. Bomba stood between the table and the idol, with his back to the image.

He held in his hand a curiously-carved staff, which represented two serpents intertwined.

He waved this above the crystal ball and said:

"Do you see anything in the crystal now?"

And Lon's answer rested distinctly in his mind, yet he was sure that this scene was only a dream.

"Yes, I see a dark cloud," he replied.

"Watch for the cloud to open and tell me what you see," the Hindoo cried.

"It is opening now."

"Yes? What do you see?"

"A man's face."

"Describe it."

"He is an old man. He wears a big, wide-brimmed hat."

"Anything more?"

"No; the cloud has closed again."

"Watch! Watch till it opens."

"It is opening now."

"Well?"

"I see the words 'your enemy.' Now the cloud has closed."

"Watch! Watch for it to open again."

"It is opening now."

"Good! And what do you see?"

"You."

"Me?"

"Yes, but you are differently dressed."

"How?"

"Same as other people."

"What am I doing?"

"Standing in front of a cage in which there is a big snake."

"Our snake? Our Nagya?"

"No; it is another. It is ever so much bigger."

"See anybody with me?"

"There is a young man behind you and a young woman."

"Well? What else?"

"Nothing. The cloud has closed again."

"Watch! Watch for the cloud to open."

"It is opening now."

"Well?"

"I see words."

"What are they?"

"I can't make them out."

Mr. Bomba waved his staff over the crystal.

"Can you make them out now?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Well?"

"Your enemies'—those are the words."

"Good. Anything more?"

"No."

"Is the black cloud still there?"

"Yes."

"Then there will be more. Wait and watch."

"It is opening now."

"Good! And what—more words?"

"Yes, several."

"What are they?"

"Now I can make them out. They read: 'Don't wait. Move to the new house at once.'"

"Ha!" cried the Hindoo. "Is it so. Is that all?"

"Yes."

"And the cloud?"

"It is gone."

"Sleep! Sleep!"

After that Lon ceased to dream for awhile, and when he began again he dreamed that he was in bed.

Mr. Bomba stood beside the bed with the vial and the graduated glass in his hand.

Lon now dreamed that he got another dose.

He dreamed harder than ever after that, but these visions were fantastic enough.

For instance, that he was flying in the air holding the snake's cage in his arms; that he was in a boat with the Lascar, who was pulling him across a broad river on the other side of which was a high mountain.

The snake's cage was in the bottom of the boat, and he was sitting on it.

All at once the snake's head came up between his legs and the horrid creature glided up his breast and began coiling about his neck.

Lon dreamed that he shouted for help, but the Lascar only laughed and pulled on towards the mountain, telling him that he would have to get used to it, for the snake would be coiling about his neck right along.

Next they were climbing the mountain, he and the Lascar, carrying the snake's cage between them. The climb seemed endless, the load seemed to grow heavier and heavier. All at once Lon's foot slipped and down he went.

He seemed to fall quite a distance, and then to be able to clutch a projecting rock and hold on. He could hear the Lascar calling to him, and then—why then the boy woke up to find his dream real, in a way.

Instead of being in bed, he was hanging suspended in the air clutching a wooden step.

"Hold on! Hold on, boy! I'm coming! Don't let go!" a voice above him cried.

Poor Lon!

Even now he could scarcely tell whether this was part of his dream or whether he was actually awake, but needless to say he held on for dear life.

Someone was coming down the steps; it was night and the stars were shining above him.

It proved to be the Lascar.

He bent down and seized Lon by the collar, dragging him up on the steps.

"Quick! Let us get up higher!" he cried. "These steps are rotten. More of them will be breaking next. You have had a mighty narrow escape."

As Lon climbed the steps the Lascar looked at him sharply.

"Why, I believe you have come out of it," he said.

"Come out of what?" mumbled Lon, who was almost asleep again.

"Your sleep."

"Yes, I am awake; at least I suppose I am."

"You are. When did you awake?"

"When I was holding on there."

"Were you dreaming?"

"Sure."

"What?"

"That I was tumbling down a mountain."

"It was partly true; you slipped and rolled down a dozen steps. I thought you were gone on account of the break. Did you know when the steps broke? We both had a narrow escape then."

"No, I didn't dream that."

"Have you been dreaming much?"

"About all the time since you put me to bed."

"Well, you are not dreaming now; understand that. But here we are, and all safe, thank goodness."

They had reached a landing on which rested a large box with handles.

It was not as big as the box which had contained the Hindoo idol, however, and was of a different shape.

The steps continued on above this landing. Looking back Lon could see a broad river far below him with the lights of a city on the other side.

"Let us rest for a moment," said the Hindoo, "the steps seem secure enough here. How do you feel?"

"Muddled."

"And no wonder. He'll have you crazy if he keeps you dosed with the drug as he has done."

"Did he drug me again? I dreamed he did."

"Yes. It's a strange thing about that drug. When you are under the influence of it you can't tell real happenings from dreams. Some of the things you have been dreaming about are no doubt true."

"I wish I was out of it altogether. I am sick of this sort of thing."

"Oh, it will be all right in the end."

"Where are we now?"

"Why, this is Jersey. We are climbing up what they call the Palisades."

"Why are we here?"

"Moving."

"Moving?"

"Yes, he got a scare; he is leaving that place where you were and going to a new one. He meant to go there in a few days anyway. You will see him again to-morrow."

"I don't care if I never see him again. I am afraid of that man."

"And you do well to fear him. His power is great. Why he could kill you by just looking straight in your face. I know. But come, let us get on the move. Here, take hold."

Lon drew back with a shudder.

He had caught a peculiar rustling inside the box.

"Is the snake in that box?" he asked.

"Sure it is," replied the Lascar.

"And you are taking it to this new place?"

"Of course."

"What about the idol?"

"That's coming. We couldn't very well carry the idol, as you call it, up the face of the Palisades. As it was, those rotten steps broke under us and we almost lost our lives."

Lon gave a sigh.

He was far from being clear-headed yet.

It seemed to him that he simply had to obey the Lascar, but he made up his mind to take to his heels if he got the chance.

They took up the box between them and soon gained the top of the steps.

The place was wild; they were right in the woods, through which a road led.

"Come along," said the Lascar, "we will soon be there now."

But Lon dropped his end of the case and started to run.

Next moment he wished he hadn't.

The Lascar could have given him a long start and then caught him, so swiftly did he run.

Lon tried to dodge into the woods, but it was no use. The Lascar got him by the throat.

Holding him with a strangling grip, he kicked the poor boy savagely.

"You will, will you!" he hissed. "Want some more? Want some more?" emphasizing every word by a kick.

"Oh, let up! Let up!" gasped Lon. "I won't do it again. Don't kill me! I'll go with you."

The Lascar gave the unfortunate boy one final kick and pushed him back.

"Now if you try that again I'll kill you and throw your body over the Palisades," he hissed.

Thoroughly cowed, Lon sneaked back to the snake's cage, and they lifted the box between them.

It was clumsy, but not very heavy.

They followed the road about half a mile, and then turning into another, kept on until they came to an old stone house standing among tall pines.

It was perfectly dark and looked neglected and as if it might have been deserted for a long time.

"This is the place," said the Lascar.

"He produced a key, ascended a flight of iron steps and unlocked the door, revealing a large hall in which were many packing cases and some loose pieces of furniture.

"This is where we tie up, boy," he said, "and now to introduce Nagya to her new home."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE MYSTERIES OF THE ROUND ROOM REVEALED.

Do not for a moment imagine that we believe that the crystal gazing Lon Hart did in his dreams had really anything to do with sending Mr. Bomba-Mun to Bronx Park to look for Young King Brady and Alice.

The encounter must have been purely accidental, of course.

The singular part of it is that Lon should have had such a dream which, in part, at least, came out true.

As for Old King Brady, his face is so widely known that there is nothing strange in his being instantly recognized by the Hindoo.

The old detective could not have chosen a worse place to make inquiry about the bearded Hindoo if he desired to

avoid trouble, for it was Mr. Bomba-Mun himself who opened the door.

Instantly perceiving that he was up against his man, Old King Brady was put to it to know just what to say, for he had not given the chance of such an encounter a thought.

The Hindoo looked sharply at him, but he exhibited no surprise.

"Well, sir?" he said, holding the door.

"Pardon me," replied Old King Brady, "but I called here to inquire the price of this property. I see it is for sale."

"Ha!" said the Hindoo. "I believe they want a hundred thousand for the whole tract."

"Yes? How many lots does it contain?"

"Really, I don't know. I am only a tenant here. Are you interested in the house or is it only the lots?"

"Why, the house interests me, too. It is a grand old place. Should I purchase it, I probably should take up my residence here, for a time at least."

"In that case, perhaps you would like to look the house over. You are at liberty to do so if you wish. I am about moving out. Some of my furniture has already gone. You will find everything in disorder, which you will kindly excuse."

Old King Brady hesitated.

He did want to look the house over, hoping to catch a glimpse of the Hindoo idol, yet there was the risk of falling into the clutches of this singular looking man.

Still, so far as he could see, the Hindoo betrayed no sign of recognition.

It is one of the peculiar things about the old detective that he never appears to realize what a give-away his odd style of dress really is.

"I'll risk it," he thought. "It is hardly probable that he has the idol on view or he would not invite me in."

He stepped inside, Mr. Bomba-Mun closing the door.

He showed the old detective through all the rooms on the first floor, but the one behind the first door on the right.

Then they went upstairs, where all rooms were exhibited. Everything was, indeed, in disorder.

Mr. Bomba-Mun did not offer to take Old King Brady into the basement.

It was suggested, but the Hindoo turned him off, saying that the disorder there was too great.

He saw no one during their tour of inspection.

Reaching the lower hall again the Hindoo turned suddenly on Old King Brady, saying:

"I suppose now you are wondering what sort of a man I am who looks so different from you New Yorkers, and why I am living alone in this place."

"Pardon me, sir, but that is none of my business," Old King Brady replied.

"But curiosity comes natural to all of us. I suppose you have your share?"

"Probably I do."

"I am a Hindoo."

"So I supposed."

"I am the founder in America of a new religious sect. We call ourselves the Brotherhood of Light."

Old King Brady bowed.

The conversation seemed to be taking a turn which might lead up to the idol, he thought.

"Yes," said the Hindoo. "My name is Bomba-Mun. I am what they call a swami in India; that is a teacher."

"Hindoo teachings are largely aided by the use of representative images, I understand?"

(Continued on page 20)

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ITEMS WORTH READING.

According to Pratorious, the man in the moon is the patriarch Isaac, carrying the bundle of sticks which were to be lighted to sacrifice his own body on the mountaintop. Dante believes him to be Cain, carrying a bundle of sticks, the meanest offering his lands afforded, as a present to God. In Iceland the people claim that they can see the face of Adam in the moon, and that of Eve in the sun. Among the Frieburgers there is a superstition which says that the marks and spots on the moon's face are the outlines of the traitor, Judas Iscariot, holding his hand over his face while sneezing just prior to hanging himself. This last belief accords with the old Frankish legend which says that there was no spot on Luna's bright face until after the time of the crucifixion of Christ. Still another story tells us that in the time of the creation God threw an offending angel against the face of the moon, while another is to the effect that the moon witnessed the creation of Adam and Eve, and took an impress of their features on her surface, intending to people her own land with similar beings. When she essayed to imitate God's works, she made nothing but a slimy serpent, which since that day has continued to fold and unfold its mighty coil in full view of the descendants of the God-created beings.

If a ham weighing thirty pounds were taken up to the moon and weighed there, the "pull"—the attractive force of the moon upon the ham—would amount to only five pounds. There would be another weight on the ham for the planet Mars, and yet another on the sun. A ham weighing thirty pounds at New York ought to weigh eight hundred pounds on the sun's surface. Hence the astronomer does not speak of the weight of a planet, because that would depend upon the place where it means how much planet there is, no matter where it might be weighed. At the same time we might, without an inexactness, agree that the weight of a heavenly body should be fixed by the weight it would have in New York. As we could not imagine a planet in New York, because it may be larger than the earth itself, what we are to imagine is this: Suppose that the planet could be divided into a million million million equal parts and one of those parts brought to New York and weighed. We could easily find its weight in pounds or tons. Then multiply this by a million million million, and we shall have the weight of a planet. This would be equivalent to what astronomers might take as the mass of the planet.

"Oh, punctuation marks are not of much account. They're just put in for looks. I don't want to bother about them." Such are the sentiments of a good many schoolboys with re-

gard to this branch of letter and composition writing. Others, again, appear to think that all that is necessary is to put in a comma here and there at haphazard, to set off the "look of the thing." How risky this way of doing things is may be learned from the following incident: It seems that some twenty years ago, when the United States, by its Congress, was making a tariff bill, one of the sections enumerated what articles should be admitted free of duty. Among the articles specified were "all foreign fruit-plants," etc., meaning plants imported for transplanting, propagation, or experiment. The enrolling clerk, in copying the bill, accidentally changed the hyphen in the compound word "fruit plants" to a comma, making it read, "all foreign fruit, plants," etc. As a result of this simple mistake, for a year, or until Congress could remedy the blunder—all the oranges, lemons, bananas, grapes, and other foreign fruits were admitted free of duty. This little mistake, which any one would be liable to make, yet could have avoided by carefulness, cost the government not less than two million dollars. A pretty costly comma that!

WITH THE FUNNY FELLOWS.

Mabel (full of poetry)—Why should I not love Jack? He is one of the salt of the earth. Ethel (full of facts)—Possibly, my dear, but one can't live on salt.

Ethel—You say he was wounded before Santiago? Jack—Yes; two months before. The president refused him a commission as major-general, you know.

"Beg pardon, are you McOrbit, the prize fighter?" "Young feller, I am a pugilist, not a prize fighter. Are you one of them reporters?" "No, sir; I'm a journalist."

"Isn't it difficult, Mrs. Jones, to get along with a girl that uses such broken English?" "Oh, I don't mind that so much. It's her broken china that sets me wild."

Jack—Imitation is the sincerest flattery. Tom—I don't believe it. I saw Bob kiss Mabel the other night, and when he saw me doing the same thing a little later, he didn't seem at all flattered, I assure you.

"What did Newrich say when you told him you wanted his daughter?" "He didn't absolutely refuse, but he imposed a very serious condition. He said he would see me hanged first."

The Lady—You here again? The Tramp—Yes, kind lady. "Well, I won't help you again. I don't believe you've done a thing all winter." "Indeed I have, mum; I just done thirty days."

Farmer Hayrick—I'm goin' ter give Abe as good an eddication as money kin buy. Farmer Cortassel—What college be yer got in mind? Farmer Hayrick—Well, Mandy an' me hev pitched on Eton, 'cuz the name sounds like he'd git plenty of grub.

Sunday-School Teacher—Children, there is a Being above us who has charge over us. He superintends and assists in all our battles for the right. Wicked people sometimes profane His name, but He is our friend and gives us all His protection. How we should worship Him! Children, who is He? Class in chorus—McKinley.

"ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL."

By Kit Clyde

The sun had almost disappeared behind the cotton-wood forest and the shadows of evening had begun to creep forth from their hiding-place, and lie upon the river that wound its way along the rice fields and through the paw-paw trees that fringed its banks.

Two men stood under the trees, only a short distance from each other. Neither knew that the other was so near, or that he was occupied in the same business as himself. That business was watching a fair young girl gliding over the water in a tiny birchbark canoe.

One was a tall, dark man, apparently from twenty-five to thirty, but his dress (which principally consisted of a wide straw hat and heavy riding coat, with boots and spurs) gave him the look of one much older.

The other was evidently a student. He had the pale, thin face and nervous manner of one devoted to his books, and unused to out-door exercise.

The boat containing the girl at last was paddled under one of the paw-paw trees, and standing up she reached for the golden fruit above her head. She gathered first one, then two, but at the third effort she bent too far over the side, and losing her balance, fell into the water.

The treacherous canoe righted itself the moment it was rid of its fair burden, and sailed away as peacefully as if no lovely figure were trying in vain to reach it, as it glided so silently from her grasp.

It was but a moment ere a stalwart arm supported her, and a voice whispered:

"Be calm, my darling, I am with thee; there is no danger."

"Oh, Carlos, I am so frightened I shall die—I shall die!"

The last words were uttered with a shriek as he loosened his arm to get a firmer hold, and missing the support, she sank beneath the water.

It was scarcely a second ere he had caught her again, and found that she had lost consciousness; so turning her upon her back, he took her long golden hair between his teeth, and with steady strokes swam to the shore.

As he reached it the student came forward to help him with his burden.

"Is she living? Does she breathe?" he cried, as he looked at the white face.

"Don't distress yourself, Mr. Sheldon; she is not dead," answered the man who had saved her life. "She has only fainted. It is nothing; she will be all over it in a few moments."

"I fear you are mistaken. She is so white, so still. Carlos, if you had ever loved as I love, you would know how to feel for me."

A curious light shone in the eyes of the man addressed as Carlos as he looked down at the face of the woman lying so still and pale in his arms, and answered:

"Of course it would be impossible for me to love as you love. I am only Carlos Monterey, while you are Vincent Sheldon, the son of the rich planter. I could not have the same hopes, the same passions, that fall to the lot of a richer man."

"Carlos!"

"But enough of myself. It is necessary that Miss Alston should be taken to the house immediately, where she can have care and attention. If you will help me we can easily carry her. Ah! here come some of the darkeys at last! Jim, you run on to the house, and tell Aunt Hettie something has happened to her young mistress. Be lively now and don't frighten her."

"All right, sir," said the boy, darting away.

The men took up their apparently lifeless burden and in a few moments had reached the house. As they stepped upon the flagging the door was opened by a tall mulatto woman in a state of great excitement

"Oh, Lord! what's de matter? What's dis dat Jim tells me? She's dead, my putty little darlin', my baby that I nussed. My——"

"Hush, you fool!" hissed Carlos, in a low voice. "Stop your noise, and get ready a warm bed, with plenty of blankets. Don't arouse the whole house with your nonsense; she is not dead."

"Ain't dead?" said the old woman. "Lord, how Jim does lie! Said she was deader dan a door-nail. How I'd like to lick dat nigger ef I had my way," and she hurried off to get ready her young mistress' room.

Good old Aunt Hettie had worked over her young lady an hour or more before she showed any signs of life. At last she grew frightened, and resolved to call her mistress.

"It ain't no matter ef she be skeered. I didn't do it, so I won't fetch it. Ef she don't keep no watch over missie, it sarves her right to lose her," she soliloquized, as she descended the stairs.

When the mother reached her daughter's room she found the latter was beginning to recover, but seemed in a high fever and quite delirious, so she immediately dispatched a servant for the doctor. When he arrived he was quickly shown to the sick girl's room, and he did not leave it until the following day.

Early the next morning Colonel Alston came rapidly down the stairs, and going into his study jerked the bell violently. It was answered by one of the servants, who looked with amazement at his master's white, set face, in which his eyes glowed like two balls of fire.

"I'm here, sir."

"Do you know where the overseer is?"

"Yes, sir. Down in de field, I reckon."

"Well, send him to me at once," said the irate man."

"Yes, sir," and the boy darted away.

Some fifteen minutes passed before Carlos Monterey obeyed the summons, and then he entered the room with haughty step and quiet, questioning eye.

"I am here, Colonel Alston; I am informed you sent for me."

"You wretch!" cried the man, turning fiercely around. "I could kill you."

"And why, pray?"

"You dare to ask me why, you wretch, when you have disgraced me—when you have ruined my only child?"

"You are mistaken, Colonel Alston; I have not ruined your daughter; she is my wife."

"Your wife? A negro overseer—a man in whose veins runs the taint of the negro itself?"

"It's a lie!"

"It is not a lie. I know you; I have heard your history. I know you to be the natural son of Carlos Monterey, the Cuban millionaire, who kindly educated you, and set you free to make a name for yourself, so that you might forget your father's sin and your mother's shame."

"Again I say, it is a lie. My father and mother were lawfully man and wife."

"Prove it, then."

"That, at present, I am unable to do."

"Of course you are. As you know it is not the truth."

"It is the truth, as some day you will know. At present I am unable to say anything to vindicate myself. At any rate I am your daughter's husband. The man of her choice."

"You devil! It is not true; you are no husband of hers! I would sooner end her life myself, than have her call you husband."

"As you like, Colonel Alston. But I tell you that I am her husband, and the father of her child."

"Her husband! Have I not proved to you that no marriage is legal between one of her race and yours? Can you not understand that such a union is null and void?"

"And she curses me?"

"Yes, as her ruin—as the bar to her future happiness."

"Heavens! and I loved her so! Oh, Inez, my darling;" and the man covered his face with his hands, and for a few moments the silence was broken by his sobs. At last he looked up, and, in a calm, cold voice, said:

"If I am a cause of unhappiness to your daughter I will try never to cross her path again. I am her husband, that I can prove. I have one request to make: Will you give me our child?"

"No, I will not!"

"Colonel Alston, you know what it is to be a father. Give it to me. Let it cheer me on my lonely way. It can only be a disgrace to you and yours. If your daughter did not love the father, she surely could not love the child. Let me have it; it is my own flesh and blood. Give it to me."

"I will not, I tell you! I wish no tie to bind you to my child. The baby will be well taken care of. All I wish of you is to go, and remember my innocent child will curse you as her father does!" and the old man pointed to the door. "Go, and let me never see your face again!"

"Is this the wish of your daughter? Does she never care to see me again?"

"Yes. Go! It is her wish."

"I obey her request," and the young man slowly left the room.

"I have rid myself of him. Now to do the same with the child," muttered the old man.

At that moment his wife entered, and stepping to his side, unfolded the shawl that covered her, and disclosed a sleeping infant.

"We must keep our disgrace from the servants, so I myself will carry the baby to Maum Emeline's cabin, tell her the story, and let her care for the child until she is old enough to be sent to school."

"A good idea, my love, and when I tell you I have disposed effectually of its father, that he has gone, and will never trouble her any more, I know you will be very grateful to think we are getting out of trouble so easily."

"I am; and now if we can compel her to keep silent, she may yet be the bride of Vincent Sheldon, and a true wife and happy mother."

"Grant she may be," said her husband, as he helped to wrap the shawl around the sleeping child, and opened the private door of his study, to allow his wife to depart.

For weeks Inez Alston hovered between life and death, but at last she began to recover. She did not ask for Carlos or her child but once, then she was told the former had deserted her as soon as his treachery became known, and that her child had died.

She accepted what was told to her without a protest, and only once did she refer to the past, and that was when a year had elapsed, and her father informed her that Vincent Sheldon had asked her to be his wife and she would greatly please him if she accepted him for a husband.

"That is an impossibility, father," she answered. "I am already married."

"Where is your marriage certificate?"

"With my husband. He took charge of it."

"My poor child. Don't you see that you have been the dupe of a villain? That scoundrel did not make you his wife. He deceived and betrayed you."

"I do not believe it. I am his wife, and no other shall ever claim me. I will be true to the man I love, and who, I am confident, loves me."

"As you please, my dear; but here comes Sheldon himself, let him plead his own cause; but mind, not a word of your disgraceful story, or henceforth you are no child of mine!" and with this parting injunction her father left her as she was joined by Vincent Sheldon.

She had resolved what to do, and when he asked her to be his wife, she told him her history; of her love for Carlos, and how he had deserted her in her hour of trial; of the birth of her child, and of her conviction that he still loved her and did not leave her of his own accord.

"How strange that you should have told me this to-day, for it was only this morning that I read something that will interest you," and he handed her a paper and pointed to the column of personals, and she read:

"If Carlos Monterey (who disappeared from Havana, after almost killing a friend in a duel) will apply to Marathan & Garnez, Solicitors, he will hear of something to his advantage."

Five years have crept away since the birth of Inez Alston's daughter, and in that time many changes have taken place in the Alston homestead. The war of the rebellion had broken out, and for some time had been raging in all its fury. One of the first to fall was Colonel Alston. He was dangerously wounded, but before he died he wrote to his daughter, telling her of his interview with Carlos, and also where she could find the child that she had so long mourned as dead.

The servants, one by one, had run away until there was no one left but Maum Emeline and Aunt Hettie.

The din of war had been growing closer and closer, until at last one day Aunt Hettie came in and told them that:

"De whole ob Sherman's army am camped down in de field where de old coon tree am."

It was too true; the horrors of invasion were upon them.

She was aroused by the child's voice, crying:

"Sojer, mamma, sojer!"

And looking down the carriage driveway, she saw Vincent Sheldon approaching with a stranger.

As they ascended the steps of the piazza, she stood before them with her child in her arms.

"I have brought you your husband, Inez," said Vincent.

And Carlos held out his arms, and mother and child were clasped close to the wanderer's heart.

"Where did you find him?" asked Inez of Vincent, after a little time.

"He came to call upon me. He is colonel of the regiment quartered upon your land."

"Did you come here purposely?" asked his wife.

"No, my darling, I was ordered here, or I suppose I should have never seen your dear face again; for until Vincent told me how much you still loved me, I had no idea but that it was by your wish your father sent me from you."

"Oh, Carlos, how could you? You knew I loved you even as the poor overseer."

"But I am not the poor overseer any more. My father died in Havana, and has left me all of his wealth. Will you love me as well now that I am rich, and have no need to oversee any one?"

"You still have some one to oversee," she said, with a smile.

"Who is it, darling?"

"Baby and I; and I expect we will give you a great deal of trouble yet."

"I trust that it will not compare with that you have given me in the past," he said, gravely, as he put his arms around them both.

(Continued from page 16)

"Yes, it is so. For instance, we make great use of the image of our master Bhudda sitting cross-legged in an attitude of contemplation."

"I have frequently seen the images of the sitting Bhudda."

"I have in my possession one of the finest specimens in America. Would you like to look at it? I imported it from India at a great cost."

"I should, indeed," replied the old detective, but without any display of eagerness.

He had watched the man's face narrowly, but could read nothing therein to in the least show that his real character was suspected.

"It is in this room," said Mr. Bomba-Mun, laying his hand on the knob of the right-hand door.

"Indeed," said Old King Brady. "I observed that you did not exhibit that room."

"It is quite dark," was the reply. "It is our meeting-room. We hold our final meeting, so far as this house is concerned, in there to-night."

He flung open the door.

The room was indeed dark, but the old detective could make out the chairs, the tables and the black hangings.

Mr. Bomba-Mun struck a match, and, entering, lighted the hanging lamp.

Old King Brady followed him in.

He saw no idol.

The Hindoo seemed to read his thoughts.

"We keep it concealed behind these curtains," he said, closing the door as he spoke.

Instantly a black curtain dropped in front of it.

Old King Brady began to feel nervous.

"The idol," he suggested.

"Just one second," said the Hindoo. "I will draw the curtain behind which it is concealed."

He ascended the platform and slightly parted the hangings behind it.

Then quick as thought he vanished.

The light was so dim and the vanishing took place so rapidly that the old detective could not tell what happened.

The Hindoo was there and then he wasn't.

"This spells trouble," thought Old King Brady. "I ought not to have come in here."

He started for the platform, intending to investigate, when all at once the room began to whirl.

The sensation was not altogether unpleasant at first, but in a moment it became sickening.

As was the case with Harry and Alice afterward, when passing through the same experience, there came a fiendish laugh overhead.

Suddenly the spinning floor slowed down and the voice of the Hindoo spoke, although the old detective could see nothing of him.

"Know, man," it said, "that you have been delivered into my hands by the mighty master Bhudda. The idol, as you call it, you will never find. This day will be your last on earth. Escape is impossible; but if you have your curiosity, I also have mine. I want to ask you how it happened that you came here and rang the bell of my house?"

"Am I still speaking with Mr. Bomba-Mun?" asked Old King Brady, striving to appear calm.

"You are."

"Then let me warn you to have a care what you do."

"I intend to. I am the most careful man living when it concerns my own safety and interests. Will you answer my question?"

"It was mere accident."

"Stay! Don't attempt to deceive me. You were searching for me, were you not?"

"I admit that I have been charged with the search for a certain Hindoo idol——"

"Taken secretly from the steamer Belem Castle."

"Yes, but I did not know who took it. I don't know now. I heard that a man of your description lived somewhere on the Bolton Road. I was trying to locate him when I rang your bell, but I did not even know your name."

"Strange, very strange. And yet it is not strange. Our master Bhudda ever aids his own. Know, old man, that it was I who took the idol. It is in safe hands and will there remain. It was your destiny to be guided to this place. We will now begin our revolving exercises again."

"Wait!" cried the old detective. "I have gratified your curiosity, do you gratify mine. What do you intend to do with me?"

"Old man, listen," returned the voice. "I bear you no malice. It is only that you are in my way. You will die. But what is death? Nothing. You Westerners make too much of it. We in the East know for how little it really counts. I did not make this spinning cage in which you have been caught. I found the round room when I hired this house, but I only learned its meaning by accident. I understand that a gang of counterfeiters once lived here. Perhaps they built the thing. I cannot tell, but this I do know, it has already served my purpose twice. Beneath the floor lies a well into which you will drop when a certain number of revolutions has been made. I don't know its depth. I never went down into it, but a policeman who attempted to interfere with me did. So did another one of my own countrymen, and so will you. Prepare, then, to meet your fate, for I am about to put the machinery in motion again."

"Hold!" cried Old King Brady. "One moment!"

But it was no use.

Already the floor had begun to spin again; the camp chairs were flying around.

Old King Brady tried to clutch the hangings and so check the progress of the thing.

It did no good.

The cloth was singularly strong. He was dragged off his feet.

Hastily he scrambled up again and went reeling about over the moving floor.

And then suddenly relief appeared to be in sight.

The old detective noticed that the black hangings had parted at a certain point.

There was an open door and a light beyond.

He worked over towards it wondering if this was some further trap.

Apparently not.

Again and again Old King Brady was whirled past the opening.

He could see that the door connected with a narrow passage; he could see the floor.

"I'll take another risk and go for that hole," he said to himself. "Anything is better than staying here."

So next time he came abreast of the opening the old detective was ready and made a spring.

It seemed a fatal move!

The floor instantly gave way beneath him and Old King Brady found himself falling into darkness most profound.

Now up to this point just such an experience came to Harry and Alice when they found themselves up against the spinning floor on the evening of that same day.

They saw the open door appear, and it gave Harry hope, for Alice was almost in a fainting condition then.

"You see!" cried Harry, "that is probably a new trap, but we can't stay here. We must make a dash through there, Alice."

"It may be a dash to death!" moaned Alice, whom Harry now had to support. "Let me go first. I will call back to you and tell you what I find."

"As though I would consider such a proposition! I go. You stay here!"

He gently disengaged himself from Alice, waited his opportunity and made the rush.

And as in the case of Old King Brady, the floor board, which was no thicker than that used to back pictures with, gave way beneath his feet.

He heard Alice scream as he fell.

And with that scream came unconsciousness. Alice had given out at last.

When she came to herself the floor had ceased to move, the light was out and the door with its light beyond had vanished.

Weak and giddy, Alice picked up one of the overturned camp chairs and sat down in it trying to think.

She arose after she had recovered herself a bit and started to make a systematic examination of the walls of her prison.

However, the hangings were secured. She could not pull them aside.

But there were other ways.

Alice had a pair of scissors about her, and with these she proceeded to cut the hangings, stripping off great pieces of the somber stuff.

This was the road to success, and she soon found a door. But it was securely fastened, and that without any lock that she could find.

Just then there was a noise outside.

A heavy wagon came up in front of the house.

Alice heard the Hindoo's voice calling:

"Yes, this is the place. Come right in. The case is all ready for you."

Then followed the tramp of feet. A few minutes later they were tramping again.

The noise continued for three-quarters of an hour.

At last the van went rumbling away, and a little later Alice heard the front door close.

She now got busy with her work of stripping off the hangings again.

This time she started in a new place, behind the raised platform at the end of the room.

It was a change well made, for Alice had no more than pulled off the second strip of cloth than she perceived a very apparent secret panel.

She sought the spring which controlled its movements, and found it, but just as she was about to put it to use, her attention was attracted by a noise outside.

Evidently somebody was opening the secret panel.

Alice drew her revolver and stood ready for business.

CHAPTER IX.

OLD KING BRADY TAKES A TRIP INTO DREAMLAND.

Old King Brady did not fall over twenty feet, and when he landed it was on a heap of straw.

And yet it was a wonder that he did not break his neck, considering the way he went down.

The jar was terrible, and the shock of it all might well have put a man of Old King Brady's age out of business.

As it was he sprained his right ankle, and when he sought to rise he fell back groaning with pain.

It was entirely dark, and the place had a foul, musty odor which was sickening to a degree.

Raising himself to a sitting position the old detective got out his flashlight.

He was not surprised to find himself in a cave, for he knew that such openings existed in the heights of Inwood.

Indeed, once before while working up a detective case he had stumbled upon a cave beneath an old colonial mansion in this immediate vicinity.

This one, however, though low-roofed, seemed to be larger and to consist of two chambers.

It was certainly an admirable place for a counterfeiter's hold-out, for which purpose it had been employed if the Hindoo could be believed.

Again the old detective tried to stand on his feet, but the pain proved to be intolerable.

Apparently his injury was not confined to the ankle.

It seemed to Old King Brady that he must have strained one of the tendons of his leg, for it refused to support his weight.

Again he sank down upon the straw wondering what was going to become of him if he could not muster up strength to make a move.

But he thanked his lucky stars for the straw, without which he would surely have been killed.

"This is at once one of the most unfortunate and the most singular things which ever happened to me," he said to himself. "Singular that I should run right into this murderous Hindoo, unfortunate that I did not have better sense than to suppose he would exhibit the stolen idol to a stranger. Chances are he spoke the truth when he said he had never been down here, and that I am doomed to die of starvation unless I can do something to help myself."

But he was all wrong in his conclusions, for within a very few minutes the old detective caught the sound of soft footfalls within the inner cave and saw the glimmer of a light.

He expected a Hindoo, and he got one, but it was not Mr. Bomba-Mun.

Instead, from the inner room emerged the fantastically dressed old crone who later in the day admitted Harry and Alice to that singular house.

She was dressed just as they had seen her, and held a lighted lantern in her hand.

She raised her lantern and threw its light on the old detective.

"So, sahib, you live," she cackled in a thin, squeaky voice. "Know, then, that you owe your life to me."

"For which I thank you kindly, marm," replied Old King Brady. "Have you come to finish your good work and get me out of this?"

"Not now. Not until he leaves the house will it be safe, but it will not be long to wait. Why don't you get on your feet?"

"I have sprained my ankle and injured my leg. I cannot stand."

"That is bad, very bad, for I cannot carry you. The straw then failed to do its work."

"You put the straw here?"

"Yes, long ago, after that black-hearted monster threw my only son down here. His neck was broken. I found him dead. I found another dead, too, a police officer. I buried them both with my own hands."

"But why do you remain in the house with such a monster? Is he your husband?"

"No! Oh, no! He is my master, as his father was before him."

"Tell me, is there in this house a statue of the Hindoo Buddha which was brought here secretly a few nights ago?"

"They brought something here on Friday night, but I do not know what it is."

"And where is it?"

"In the basement. I have not seen it. I am not allowed to go there. No woman is."

"Is the basement immediately overhead?"

"No, sahib, there is a cellar between. Listen! He knows not the way into this cave. I alone know that. I found it when I searched for my son, who he claimed had run away and deserted his old mother. I knew he lied, and I never rested till I had learned the truth."

"Hag, you lie!" cried a deep voice from the inner cave, and Mr. Bomba-Mun stepped into view.

With every exhibition of abject terror the old woman fell on her knees and kissed his feet.

Much was said on both sides, but as it was in one of the languages of India, Old King Brady could not understand.

It ended in the old woman crawling into the inner cave on her hands and knees, taking the lantern with her, for Mr. Bomba-Mun had one of his own.

Meanwhile the Hindoo folded his arms and stood looking down on Old King Brady, who had almost a mind to draw his revolver and shoot this black fiend on the spot.

It was just then that the old crone came crawling back again.

It was evident that she was completely under the thumb of Mr. Bomba-Mun.

She held a revolver, and crawling upon the straw in front of Old King Brady, she leveled it at him in silence, causing the old detective to wish that he had used his own weapon when he had the chance.

But it was all too late now, and he coolly asked:

"What is this for?"

"To give me a chance to work my will with you," was the reply. "At my command that woman whom a few moments ago you thought your friend will shoot you dead. It therefore behooves you to obey me if you desire to live."

"I thought you had decreed that I was to die, anyway?"

"Throw your revolvers at my feet; you have two of them, you know."

Old King Brady thought it best to obey.

"Now your knife," ordered the Hindoo.

The knife came, too. Old King Brady was disarmed.

"Stand up!" ordered Mr. Bomba-Mun then.

Old King Brady tried it, and fell back groaning.

"Enough," said Mr. Bomba-Mun: "I am satisfied now that you told her the truth. I will attend to the rest."

Out came the vial and the graduated glass of Lon's dreams, and the old detective started on a trip through dreamland, too.

He thought he was done for when, the Hindoo threw him down on the straw, and, planting his knee upon his chest, forced him to swallow the dose.

The dose swallowed, the Hindoo arose and backed away.

"I suppose you think I have poisoned you?" he said.

Old King Brady did not attempt to reply.

He closed his eyes and lay silent on the straw waiting for what was to come. He was still in that position when he fell asleep.

And now in his dreams Old King Brady, forgetting the pain of his wounded limb, fancied himself standing in the cave looking at his sleeping double lying on the straw.

It was dark, but that made no difference. He could see himself just the same.

It seemed as if he had been standing there a long time when the Hindoo and the old woman entered.

They picked up the sleeping form between them and carried it into the inner cave, up a flight of very narrow steps, where they had difficulty in handling it, through a panel, through a lighted hall, up wider stairs, and then into a room where many packing cases stood around.

Old King Brady recognized the room as one of those which he had visited in company with Mr. Bomba-Mun.

There was one long packing case which was empty, and into this they laid the sleeping detective.

There were old blankets in the cave and a pillow was put under his head.

He saw Mr. Bomba-Mun nail down the lid and then leave the room.

He started to follow as he dreamed it, but this proved to be impossible.

He could not get away from the packing case, but what he could do, strangely enough, was to look right through the boards and see himself lying within.

And the old detective dreamed that he stood there for hours.

At last two men came into the room with Mr. Bomba-Mun.

"That's the case," he said; "it contains a valuable statue of the Holy Virgin. You want to handle it with the utmost care. You must not end it up. You must carry it out in its present position and put it in the van that way."

The men obeyed, and now that the big box got on the move, Old King Brady was able to do the same.

He saw them load his slumbering double into the van and then he seemed to be in the van himself.

There was already a big packing case in there, and others were put in—the van was filled.

And such was Old King Brady's singular situation when the van drove away.

CHAPTER X.

STILL UP AGAINST TROUBLE.

Lon made no further attempt to get away that night.

The house into which the Lascar took him was much finer than the outside would seem to indicate.

There were many packing cases and some loose furniture lying around.

The Lascar lighted a lamp and a lantern.

He then led the way to the back of the house, where he unlocked a door, admitting them into a large, square room with a smaller one opening from it.

In the smaller room stood a new gilded cage with glass sides and top.

"Nagya's new house," he chuckled. "The old one will be left behind us. Isn't it fine?"

They deposited the box in the little room and locked the door.

After that the Lascar took Lon to a room upstairs and gave him a mattress on the floor to sleep on, he himself occupying the bed.

And Lon did sleep naturally for the first time since his capture, probably, for when he turned in before he was partly under the influence of the drug.

It was broad daylight when he awoke, and the Lascar was gone.

Relieved to find that his own clothes, which he had on when he came to himself the night before, were still in evidence, Lon hurried to dress himself, resolving to take advantage of the first opportunity to escape.

But he was doomed to disappointment, for scarce had he finished dressing when the door opened and in came the

Lascar bringing a ridiculous suit of fantastic clothes, which he made him put on.

Lon protested. The Lascar threatened.

"I'll kick you till every bone in your body is broken if you don't strip and put these on," he said.

Poor Lon!

His troubles seemed to be never ending.

When he left that room he had on baggy breeches, which came only to his knees, one leg red and the other yellow, with green stockings gartered in above the knee and a pair of red Turkish slippers with turned-up toes.

Add to this a blue jacket embroidered with moons and stars in gold and a red fez for a hat, and you have the completed picture.

To appear out of doors in such a costume would be fatal, Lon thought, but when night came he resolved to try his luck just the same.

There was plenty of work to do that Sunday, and Lon helped the Lascar at it from morning until night.

They put down elegant carpets, they put up expensive shades and curtains, they swept rooms and polished wood-work, unpacked cases containing articles of furniture, and so on.

There was plenty to eat and drink, and that of the best. No one came near them.

The house stood alone in the woods. Lon could see no other house from the windows but he could hear the whistle of trains coming and going.

They seemed to be a good way off, but Lon carefully noted their direction. He was determined that if he was not drugged the night should not pass without an attempt on his part to escape.

Night came at last.

Both Lon and the Lascar were tired out, as well they might be, and the former was for going to bed early.

He was in very good humor.

"You have worked well," he said. "We have got a lot done, and he will be pleased when he comes."

"Aren't you going to feed the snake?" asked Lon.

"Not at all. That only goes to show how little you know about snakes," was the reply. "That kind don't eat for days together sometimes. Then they gorge themselves and sleep for days. He attends to all that himself."

It was always "he" and "himself" when he alluded to Mr. Bomba-Mun.

As for the Lascar's own name, Lon never learned it.

He asked him during the day what it was, but it was only to be told to mind his own business, so he gave it up.

Lon meant to feign sleep and watch his chance.

The Lascar did not undress, but just threw himself down on the bed in his clothes.

He was soon asleep, and so was Lon, for while he waited for the sleep of the Hindoo to grow sounder he lost himself.

But he awoke some time between midnight and morning; what the hour was he could not tell, for there was no clock in the room—none in the house, in fact—and the Lascar had to watch.

Lon got up and looked out of the window.

It was a bright, starlight night, but there was no moon.

The Lascar had locked the door and put the key in his pocket when he lay down, and the question now was whether Lon was going to be able to get it without disturbing him.

It was a new business for the cabin boy to play the pick-pocket, and he attempted it with fear and trembling.

But success crowned his efforts. He was able to extract

the precious key from the Lascar's pocket; the man never stirred.

Softly unlocking the door, Lon slipped out, taking the precaution to lock it behind him.

"He can get out the best way he can," he muttered. "The thing is now to find my clothes."

But in this he failed.

After hunting the house over he was obliged to give it up, and he came to the conclusion that the Lascar must have burned them.

Thus there was nothing to do but to take to the road in his ridiculous costume and run his chances.

He resolved to make his way to the railroad and follow it south until daybreak.

There was no other way but to walk, since he had not a cent, but Lon was just as well satisfied to do it, dressed as he was. Trouble he fully expected, but as he argued, it could not be any worse than the trouble he was leaving behind.

So he unbolts the side door and let himself out.

It seemed good to breathe the fresh air once more.

The grounds extending down to the road where there was an iron fence were thickly covered with shrubs and trees.

Lon took to the main walk, and gaining the road which ran north and south, chose the latter direction, intending to take the first westerly cross-road he came to, for such was the direction from which the whistles of the passing trains had come.

Lon certainly seemed doomed to trouble.

He had gone but a short distance from the house when suddenly a man stepped out from among the trees ahead of him and stood in the middle of the road with arms outstretched.

He was bareheaded and wore a dressing gown.

Flapping his arms, he crowed like a rooster, and then broke into a wild laugh.

Frightened, Lon halted.

He would have taken to the woods, but he was afraid of getting lost.

"That fellow must be nutty," he said to himself. "If I can only slip past him it will be all right. I don't want to get lost in the woods."

But now the man addressed him.

"Hoo! Hoo!" he cried. "Who are you? An angel came down from heaven to deliver a message to me. A red angel, a green angel, a blue angel, a yellow angel, a partly-colored angel? Hoo, hoo! Hoo, hoo, hoo! Come here, boy, and give an account of yourself."

"Oh, that's all right, boss," said Lon. "I'm in a big hurry. Let me pass, please."

"Not on your life!" cried the lunatic, for such he evidently was. "Nobody passes here without a pass, and it must be a written one signed by the king of the world—that's me. I am sure I have never written you a pass. Oh, say, he's red-headed! Luck! Luck! Good luck always comes of meeting a redney buck. Hoo, hoo! Hoo, hoo! Whee, he!"

This last was fairly yelled.

Poor Lon was in despair.

The lunatic was a big, powerful fellow.

To tackle him seemed madness.

How to dodge him Lon did not know unless he took to the woods, and this he finally resolved to do.

Meanwhile the lunatic was going on in much the same fashion.

From what he said Lon judged that he had just made his escape from some private asylum in the neighborhood.

The cabin boy did not attempt to answer him, he just let him talk, and then seeing no other way, he dodged into the woods and ran.

Now up to this time the lunatic had not changed his position other than to jump about.

But the instant Lon took to his heels the crazy man started after him.

"Hoo Hoo! Hoo Hoo! I'll get you, boy!" he yelled. "You will run away from me, will you! All right for you! I've got a big knife. I'll cut your heart out! Wait for me, son! I want your heart! Hoo Hoo! Hoo Hoo!"

Poor Lon had never been more scared.

He even wished himself back with the Lascar.

Dodge the lunatic he could not, it seemed.

Whichever way he turned there the wretched man was right behind him.

And all these twistings and turnings had just the result Lon had feared in the first place.

He soon lost his bearings completely.

Nor was there any time to look about to right himself.

That dreadful "hoo hoo" kept sounding behind him.

This lasted an hour.

But he had lost sight of the lunatic now, although he could hear him crashing through the underbrush at times.

Lon pushed on, hoping against hope that he might regain the road again, and at last he actually did regain it, but it was only to hear the cry behind him once again.

Looking back Lon saw the man in the dressing gown emerge from among the trees within a few feet of him.

"I'll get you!" he shouted. "I'll get you! Hoo hoo! Hoo hoo!"

He had a knife all right.

Lon caught the glint of it and it turned his heart sick.

Whatever might be the matter, with his brain, the man certainly seemed to be all right in his legs.

He ran like a deer, and if Lon had not been a pretty good sprinter, too, he certainly would have been caught long before this.

But now his strength was failing him, and he had about given up hope, when suddenly he tripped and fell.

In an instant the lunatic was upon him.

With a wild yell he closed in on the unfortunate boy and had him by the throat before he could rise.

"Now I've got you!" he cried, squeezing Lon's neck until he was all black in the face. "Now I'll cut your heart out!"

He raised the knife and seemed about to strike.

A sickening sense of fear overpowered the cabin boy then.

It seemed to him that his last hour had come.

CHAPTER XI.

YOUNG KING BRADY AND ALICE ON THE TRAIL.

Harry had the same experience as Old King Brady when he went down into that man-trap, but with a different result.

He landed on the straw feet foremost.

It was a shock, but he found himself unharmed.

The cave was totally dark, of course, and the first thing Young King Brady did was to feel for his flashlight.

He pressed the button, but only to meet with disappointment.

After the manner of these electric flashlights when most

wanted, the thing gave one feeble glimmer and then went out of business.

Thus Harry found himself thrown back on his match-box.

He felt for that, but to his added disgust found that there was only one match in it.

"Was there ever such wretched luck!" he muttered. "It does seem as if I should never learn to prepare myself for these emergencies. What on earth am I to do?"

He did not want to use up his last match, for there might come a time when his life would be dependent upon it.

He never doubted that the Hindoo would follow him up to see if he was really dead.

But this did not happen.

Mr. Bomba-Mun, it would seem, must have supposed that both Harry and Alice had fallen into the cave.

But be this as it may, he certainly failed to put in an appearance, nor did he look into the meeting-room again.

Chances are that having determined to abandon the premises, and hearing nothing from the round room, he felt indifferent as to how matters really stood.

Meanwhile Harry was trying to do the best he could for himself under the circumstances.

He groped his way about and came to the conclusion that he must be in a cave.

By carefully feeling along the walls he came at last to the entrance to the inner cave and passed through.

Here he continued his operations, and in due time discovered the steps which led up to the cellar above.

He thought then that he had reached a point where escape was right ahead of him.

But it was disappointment instead.

For, ascending the steps, he came to the trap-door only to find it securely bolted down.

He tried every possible scheme to raise it, but the thing would not yield.

"It's the way out," he assured himself, "and probably the only way, but what in the world am I to do if I can't get it up?"

There seemed no way.

Young King Brady sat down on the top step in despair.

At last he concluded to try to find his way back to the shaft down which he had dropped, and to call to Alice to see how it fared with her.

He had little hope.

It seemed to him altogether probable that the Hindoo had got her before this.

Descending, he took the back track and finally found himself standing on the straw.

Again and again he shouted, but there was no response. Alice did not hear him.

Although we neglected to mention it, the secret door through which Harry had passed closed within a minute.

Alice tried to open it so as call down to Harry, but failed.

Thus the two were completely cut off from each other.

Receiving no response to his shouts, Harry could do no better than to sit down on the straw and wait.

He still felt that the Hindoo would probably come to him, so when at last he saw a light in the inner cave he prepared for business.

Springing up, he drew his revolver and faced the opening.

But it was not Mr. Bomba-Mun who appeared.

The old woman who had admitted himself and Alice to the house now stood before him.

"What!" she exclaimed. "You are here unharmed and alone! How is this?"

"I am here, as you see," replied Harry. "Do you come as a friend or an enemy?"

"As a friend," replied the old woman. "Where is your lady, then?"

"She is not here."

"Not here! Did she not walk into the trap, then?"

"No."

"Can he have taken her away with him, then? It must be so."

"You refer to Mr. Bomba-Mum?"

"As he calls himself. His name is very different from that."

"And you—who are you?"

"I have been his slave, but no more! I ran away to-night. He has gone. This house is now deserted, save for ourselves and possibly your lady friend, if he has not taken her with him. I saw him go and then come back to see how it was with you, for I knew you had fallen into the trap. You are the second to-day."

"The second? Who was the other?"

"An old man, a detective, he said he was. That happened hours ago. He also escaped death but he hurt his leg and fell into the clutches of the man you call Bomba-Mum. He drugged him then and has taken him away with him to his new home."

"Describe this detective?" cried Harry, eagerly. "What sort of looking man was he?"

And the description given left no doubt in his mind that the woman referred to Old King Brady.

Here was a discovery altogether unexpected.

"The governor must have caught the trail easier than he anticipated," thought Harry. "Strange that we should both have made the same blunder."

"Come," he added, appealing to the old woman, "help me out of this, and I will reward you well."

"I came for no other purpose," was the reply. "He threw my only son down into this cave. The poor boy broke his neck and was dead when I found him. See, I buried him here. Near him, right here where I am standing now, I buried a police officer, who also became his victim. You were very fortunate to escape. But who are you? A detective, too?"

"That is what I am," reflected Young King Brady, "but if you are going to help me, now is the time. You will be well paid for it."

"I want no pay," replied the old woman. "All I want is revenge. Do you know the other detective?"

"Indeed, I do. He is my partner."

"Then you must act quickly if you expect to save him. He drugged him and sent him away in a box to his new home."

"Where is this new home?"

"I do not know, but you are wise. You ought to be able to find out. Come, we talk too long. It is time to be on the move."

Harry was decidedly of the same opinion and he followed the old woman into the inner cave, up the stairs and through the trap door into the cellar, after which they passed up into the house.

So quietly had his rescue been effected that Harry could hardly realize his good fortune.

"Let us look for the lady at once," he said, and he asked the old woman her name.

"They call me Ayerba," was the reply. "Follow me and we will see if the lady is still in the meeting-room, but I do not expect to find her there. I have no doubt he took her away with him when he went."

They pushed on to the main hall and Harry tried the door of the ground room.

"Alice! Are you in there?" he cried, finding it locked.

"Oh, Harry, is it you?" came the answer.

The relief was immense!

Without difficulty, Young King Brady got the door open by means of his skeleton keys, and Alice walked out.

Harry caught her in his arms and kissed her.

"That's right, that's right," cackled Ayerba. "Make love while you may, for the time will soon come when you will be old like me, and all that sort of thing will be forgotten, and you will only have the dead to think of, as is my case."

Harry gave her money after he and Alice had compared notes.

Ayerba accepted it without thanks.

"What shall we do?" demanded Alice. "Do you suppose Old King Brady is actually in the clutches of Mr. Bomba-Mum, then?"

"I see no reason to doubt it," replied Harry. "Ayerba tells me that he has moved away, as I said, and that he has shipped the governor off in a box."

"And the Hindoo idol?"

"She only knows that a big case was brought into this house on Friday night. Probably it was the idol. Likely it has gone to this new place."

"Search the house," said Ayerba. "Everything has been taken away, but look everywhere and perhaps you will find something to tell you where this new house is. If not I can't help you. I know nothing of the country about here, and I never heard him say where he was going."

They acted upon this suggestion now, and went from room to room.

At first it seemed as if everything had been removed, but at last they lit upon a room in which there were six large packing cases, all marked, "I. Bomba, Highland Hall."

An address in New Jersey was added.

We do not care to particularly locate the place, for certain reasons.

Enough to say that Harry knew where it was.

"Why, that must be almost opposite here, on top of the Palisades!" he exclaimed.

"I think you are right," added Ayerba. "I once heard him say that the new house was on the other side of the big river, and that if it were not for the trees you could see it from this shore."

"We must follow this clew up at once," declared Harry. "There is no time to be lost."

"If we could hire an automobile now," suggested Alice.

"That will be the idea," replied Young King Brady. "There is a garage on Dyckman street. Suppose we go there and see if we can rout somebody up. Where shall you go, Ayerba?"

"I do not know," replied the old woman, "but you have given me money and I shall find a way."

They left her standing at the door calling after them and wishing them success.

"What a singular adventure!" observed Alice, as they hurried down the road.

"Indeed, yes," replied Harry, "and may the end be as fortunate for the governor as it has proved for us."

They now hurried on to the garage.

There were living rooms upstairs, and Harry pulled the bell at the side door.

Repeated ringing brought a man to the window.

He was rather surly at first, but Harry finally made him understand the urgency of the case, and he agreed to let

them have the automobile, providing they would make a heavy deposit, which, fortunately, Harry had sufficient money to do.

Ten minutes later they were on their way to the Fort Lee ferry in the automobile.

Here they crossed into Jersey and took to the boulevard, which was along the top of the Palisades.

"We are certainly put to it to find the house," observed Harry. "This happens to be a section in which I never was before."

"We must be careful not to pass it," answered Alice. "If there was only someone of whom we could inquire."

The tide seemed to have turned, and luck to have blown their way, for before they had gone a great way they saw the lights of an automobile coming in the opposite direction.

Harry at once stopped and prepared to hail the auto.

He succeeded in this, and the machine stopped.

There were two men in it, and one of them addressed Harry before he could speak.

"We are looking for a dangerous lunatic who has escaped from a private asylum back here," he said. "Have you passed any man upon the road?"

"We haven't seen a soul since we left the Fort Lee ferry," Harry replied. "Can you direct us to Highland Hall?"

"Why, I don't know any such place as that," replied the man. "What's the name of the people living there?"

"The house has recently been hired by a Hindoo, who poses as a religious healer," Harry replied.

"Why, that must be the old Van Ness house," said the other man. "Joe Allaire told me the other day that a Hindoo doctor had hired it."

Harry got the address then, and it was given with such detail that it scarcely seemed likely that he could miss it. They ran on, coming into a still milder section.

And it was then that they were suddenly startled by hearing a cry ahead of them.

It was an appeal for help.

"Murder! Help! Save me!" a shrill voice shouted.

Looking ahead Harry saw two dark forms struggling in the middle of the road.

CHAPTER XII.

CONCLUSION.

Old King Brady did not continue to dream during all the long ride which he took, boxed up in the big moving van.

Perhaps it was because there was nothing for imagination to rest on that consciousness soon left him.

It must have been about nine o'clock when the van started.

It was long after midnight before Harry and Alice got away in their automobile.

The next the old detective knew, that is, when he began to dream again, he was still separated from his body, so to speak.

He now found himself standing on the piazza of an old-fashioned brownstone house of the Colonial style, such a house as is only to be found in the State of New Jersey.

The big packing case lay on the piazza, and he seemed to be able to see right through the board and to see himself inside.

But all this was extremely hazy. It was not at all as it had been before he ceased to dream.

The Hindoo was there, and so was another. They were having a violent quarrel.

Mr. Bomba-Mum struck the other Hindoo.

The man, instead of resisting the blow, crouched at his feet, whining like a whipped cur.

The van men were there, too.

They were bringing in furniture and other packing cases, large and small.

Old King Brady dreamed that he tried to look into them, but was not able to do so, which seemed strange, since he could see inside the one in which he lay so plainly.

At last a large one was carried in, and Old King Brady seemed to know that it contained the Hindoo idol, yet he could not see inside.

This was the last and when the van men returned, they picked up the case containing the sleeping detective, and carried it through a long hall into a large room where another opened off from it, the entrance being concealed by portieres.

Old King Brady—the dreaming Old King Brady—followed and saw that the other case had been unpacked.

He could now see the idol, which stood on a crude altar. It was the sitting Buddha duly established in its new home.

The room was lighted by a large hanging lamp. The diamond eyes of the idol caught the light and glittered like stars.

Mr. Bomba-Mun now paid the van men money, and they went away.

He left the room with them, but soon returned, accompanied by the other Hindoo, who had a hammer and a cold chisel.

The box was opened, and Old King Brady lifted out and laid on the floor before the idol.

The dreaming Old King Brady surveyed his unconscious self without curiosity. It seemed quite natural that it should all be so.

The Lascar now gathered up the cover of the packing case and carried the boards from the room; returning, he carried off the box and Old King Brady did not see him after that.

Meanwhile, Mr. Bomba-Mun had retreated behind the curtains.

Again the old detective ceased to dream. It would seem that his dreams only lasted while there was something going on.

Suddenly, he found himself at it again, and this time the dream was sufficiently horrible.

He was standing as before, beside his sleeping-self.

It seemed as if something was about to happen. His attention was fixed upon the portieres.

He felt that there was something behind them which was soon going to show itself, and he shuddered at the thought.

And well he might.

Presently he heard a strain of low music. Somebody was playing on the flageolet.

This continued for a long time it seemed to him, and then a snake glided between the curtains, heading directly for the sleeping detective.

The dreaming Old King Brady was now filled with horror.

He wanted to rush forward and grind the snake's head beneath his heel, but he was quite powerless to move.

On it glided, creeping upon the sleeper and coiling itself upon his breast.

The dreaming Old King Brady could have yelled in his terror.

Just then the music ceased, and as it did so the snake raised its head.

It seemed preparing to inflict its deadly sting.

* * * * *

Harry ran the automobile up alongside the struggling forms, stopped, and sprang out.

One was a red-headed boy, strangely dressed, the other a large man, who was bareheaded and wore a dressing-gown.

It was Lon and his lunatic, of course.

The cabin boy was fighting for his life.

He managed to snatch the knife away, and he flung it far from him; springing to his feet then he engaged in a hand-to-hand struggle with the crazy man, who barked and crowed, spit at Lon and tried to bite.

But the boy managed to get hold of his hands, and he clung to them desperately.

The lunatic was trying to trip Lon up when Harry came along with his revolver.

"Shoot him! He's crazy!" cried Lon. "Shoot him, or he'll kill me!"

But the madman did not wait to be shot. The mere sight of the revolver was enough.

Wrenching himself free, he took to his heels, plunged into the woods, and disappeared.

"Oh," gasped Lon. "I've had the time of my life! I thought I was a goner. He's just as crazy as he can be."

"Upon my word you look as if you might be in the same boat," said Harry. "Why do you dress in that ridiculous fashion?"

"Had to," replied Lon. "I hope you won't think I am lying when I tell you that I was kidnapped by Hindoos who—"

"Hold on!" broke in Harry. "Are you Lon Hart, the cabin boy of the Belim Castle?"

"Sure!" cried Lon. "Who are you?"

A detective. I am out searching for the Hindoo idol which was stolen."

"Then you are on the right track," said Lon, and he went on to tell his story.

As Harry figured it out afterward, the moving van, which took another road, must have reached the house but a few minutes after Lon left.

At all events there had been time for the men to unload, for it was gone when Young King Brady got there, but there could have been no such long lapse of time, as the old detective imagined in his dream.

Lon's story was now told, and Young King Brady saw that he was on the right track.

But as Lon had seen nothing of the van, he thought that he must be ahead of it, which was not the case.

"We will go on and take possession of the house, carrying this boy with us," he said to Alice. "We will be ready for them when they arrive."

Aided by Lon, they readily found the house.

The automobile was run into a field which adjoined the premises, and they advanced to the house on foot.

It was dark in front, but they could see the reflection of a light in the rear. The door was locked, but Harry easily opened it with his skeleton keys, and they entered. They could now see the light shining under the door at the end of the hall.

"That's where the snake is," whispered Lon. "He must be there."

"If he is we'll get him," breathed Harry, adding:

"Here, boy, you take my spare revolver and be ready,

but don't shoot unless I give the word." He and Alice then crept to the door and listened, but they could not hear a sound.

It would have been a relief to the dreamer could he have dreamed that his partners were outside.

But the relief came in another fashion, for just as the snake reared its head, Old King Brady dreamed that he saw Harry and Alice come through the door.

Harry aimed his revolver at the snake coiled on Old King Brady's breast. Just as he was about to pull the trigger, the Hindoo appeared from behind the portieres at the door.

"Don't shoot!" he exclaimed, in excited tones. "Don't shoot!"

But Harry did shoot, and missed.

He thought then that Old King Brady was done for, but the result was far different.

The Hindoo, with a fierce imprecation, rushed forward and seized the snake.

"You shall pay dear for this!" he cried.

He paid dearly for it himself, for the charm had been broken by the revolver shot and the snake, as he seized it, wriggled through his hand, and erecting itself, buried its fangs in the Hindoo's cheek.

The man gave one yell and dropped it. Harry jumped in and sent a bullet through its head as it wiggled away.

And all this Old King Brady saw in his dream.

It was hours before he awoke, but he dreamed no more after he saw Mr. Bomba-Mun fall writhing to the floor.

When he finally awoke he was still in that house, out in bed, with Alice seated beside him. The drug had relinquished its hold at last and Old King Brady awoke to learn that Mr. Bomba-Mun was dead and lay below, a terribly swollen corpse.

The Lascar could not be found on the premises.

He was never found, nor was the woman, Ayerba, ever heard of again.

The Bradys took the Hindoo idol in the automobile to the Manhattan Museum and later received a liberal reward for their work from Mr. Jauncey. Lon returned to the Belim Castle and sailed away to Honduras a week later.

Nobody came forward to claim Mr. Bomba-Mun's remains, or his effects.

The wretched man was buried by the authorities.

Later, the police, steered by the Bradys, dug in the cave under the old house on the Bolton road, and sure enough found the remains of two men.

Thus, the story told by Ayerba was proven.

That these were the victims of the snake-charmer there could be no doubt, and very near did the Bradys come to being his victims, too, in their search for the Hindoo idol.

Next week's issue will contain "THE BRADYS AFTER THE BRONX BURGLARS; OR, NABBING THE GAS-HOUSE GANG."

SPECIAL NOTICE:—All back numbers of this weekly, except the following, are in print: 1 to 6, 9, 13, 42, 46, 47, 53 to 56, 63, 81. If you cannot obtain the ones you want from any newsdealer, send the price in money or postage stamps by mail to FRANK TOUSEY, Publisher, 24 Union Square, New York City, and you will receive the copies you order by return mail.

A SECRET OF THE SEWERS

OR,

A DARK MYSTERY OF NEW YORK

By COL. RALPH FENTON.

(CHAPTER XVII—Continued)

An hour later Damond, the detective, was alone in his office. He had sent Luke to his house, and his assistant had gone away from the place for the night.

It was after two o'clock.

But Damond meant not to leave the office until Mark came there in person to report or send him some message.

The detective knew that instant and daring work to protect the secret treasure from Bradford might be necessary as soon as Mark made his report.

The detective had performed a hard day's work, and he was sleepy. Despite all his resolution to keep awake, he found himself nodding over his paper.

Even the strong cigars he smoked steadily that evening seemed not to favor insomnia.

All was silent in the great building in which the office of the detective was situated.

No sound broke the silence save the ticking of a clock on the mantel.

And yet, despite the reassuring silence, there was a great peril drawing near the detective.

Three men, who had come up through the door of an adjoining building, which was temporarily empty, were stealing over the roof of the structure in which Damond's office was located.

Those men were the Spaniard, Darwin, and Miles. But before setting out on this night expedition, they had searched Kadjer's Alley thoroughly for the body of Bolton, the Boston crook; but they had failed to find a trace of his remains. So they concluded that after his escape from the house in the alley, the detective must have carried away the remains of the dead man.

But as the reader has seen this was not the fact.

There certainly was a mystery about the disappearance of Bolton's body.

The detective had left the body secreted in Kadjer's Alley, where a superficial search must have revealed it to the villains.

But though they had inspected the precise spot where Damond had left Bolton's body, it was not there when they came in search of it.

The Spaniard and his comrades, who were now on the roof over the detective's office, proceeded stealthily until they arrived at the skylight in the private prison-room.

Noiselessly they set to work, and in a short time they had removed the frame of the skylight.

Then a lantern was lowered at the end of a rope, and on the handle of the lantern was tied a note for Bragg.

The villain, who was the detective's prisoner, had been asleep; but he awoke when the light was lowered and, recog-

nizing the faces of his pals as they looked down at him through the skylight, he sprang to his feet.

In a moment more he had secured the note and read its contents, which was as follows:

"We are coming down to you to work a plan to down the detective."

"Good!" replied Bragg, loudly. "No one can hear anything through these padded walls! Leap down; the floor is soft; it won't hurt you."

"All right; but first to lower the kit," replied the Spaniard, and when Bragg had removed the ladder the rope was drawn up and a bag of burglar's implements was lowered. Then a rope ladder was secured on the roof and dropped down into the padded room.

One after another the three criminals descended into the room.

"We know that Damond is alone in the front office. Darwin made a scout to the door and saw the detective by looking through the large keyhole," said the Spaniard, when he and his comrades were in Bragg's prison-room.

"Now what? How are you goin' fer Damond?" asked Bragg.

"The outer door of the main office Damond has carefully bolted and locked. He does not deem it possible for any one to reach him, save by that door. But we mean to open the interior doors, between this room and the front office, and surprise the detective while he sleeps. If all goes well, Darwin saw through the keyhole that Damond slept," explained the Spaniard.

"Bravo!" exclaimed Bragg.

"We mean to leave the detective dead on the floor of the office," said Darwin.

"Then we will escape with you, replace the skylight, obliterate every trace of our trail, and when the detective's office is broken open, he will be found with his pistol beside him, as though he had committed suicide," explained the Spaniard.

"Ha! A grand plot," said Bragg.

"And with the man who is bent on defeating us out of the way, we can go on to certain success. The Secret of the Sewers, and the great treasure it tells of will then soon be ours," added the Spaniard.

"I think so," assented Bragg.

And now unconscious of his peril Damond slept soundly.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE MYSTERIOUS SHADOW—AN UNKNOWN FRIEND.

When Darwin and Miles, accompanied by the Spaniard, searched Kadjer's Alley, in quest of the body of Bolton, the Boston "crook," who had fallen under the detective's bullet, they conversed among themselves in low tones.

Finally, when their search seemed destined to prove a fruitless one, and they failed to discover the remains, and therefore concluded, as we have previously stated, that Damond had removed the body, the Spaniard said:

"Well, Bolton's life would have been 'put out' anyhow, when we had decoyed him into our retreat."

"Yes," replied Darwin. "Then we would have told him we had 'dropped' to the secret that he was in the service of the police, and that he had been sent to 'pipe' and betray us."

"We 'played' him neatly, when he came to us this afternoon with his invented story, that Boston had become too hot to hold him, and that he was obliged to get out in order to elude the police, who were after him for a robbery," continued the Spaniard.

"And Bolton never suspected we were 'onto' his game, and meant to deal him a traitor's doom of death!" hissed Darwin.

"No. He was evidently entirely unsuspecting of our real intentions, and readily agreed to work in with us," said Miles.

"Well our search here is concluded, and we may as well return to the rendezvous and make our preparations to go to Damond's office and rescue Bragg, if he proves, as we suspected, to be a prisoner there," suggested the Spaniard.

"Yes," assented Darwin.

Then the trio left the alley to get ready for the daring venture at Damond's office.

And when they were gone a human form crawled out of an empty barrel, among the brick heaps near the excavation for a cellar.

The hiding-place of this man had been entirely overlooked by the villains.

But he had been near enough to distinctly hear the conversation we have recorded. Indeed he had not missed a single word of it.

The man crept stealthily after the villainous trio, and once or twice he shook his clenched fist at them menacingly, and muttered threatening words under his breath.

That he was no friend of the Spaniard and his fellow conspirators thus became evident.

When the trio set out to accomplish daring, desperate work at the detective's office, the man who had overheard their conversation in the alley, followed them.

He pursued the trio with stealthy steps, and the suspicion never once entered their minds that they were followed.

The mysterious shadow evinced great skill in the art of silent pursuit.

One observing his movements would assuredly have been led to the conclusion that this was by no means his initiatory experience as a mantracker.

As he went along he carefully examined a pair of revolvers which he carried, and loosened a long keen-bladed dirk in its sheath at his belt under his coat.

In case he came to close quarters with the Spaniard and his comrades, the shadow was well prepared to defend himself, it appeared.

There were bloodstains on the face of the silent trailer, and this was certain evidence that he had recently received a wound.

But the injury could scarcely have been a serious one, since he walked swiftly with no trace of weakness or suffering in his manner.

In stature the man on the conspirators' trail was about five feet eight, and he was very strongly built, being exceedingly thick-set and muscular.

In a hand-to-hand encounter it would be conjectured he would give a good account of himself, and prove a formidable adversary.

The mysterious trailer shadowed the Spaniard and his two comrades all the way to the building, in which the office of Damond the detective was situated.

When the villains descended into the padded room, in which Bragg was a prisoner, the shadow was on the roof behind them.

He had even ventured to follow them up through the roof of the adjoining empty building.

But when the villains were in Bragg's prison room and, listening at the skylight above them, he had overheard their cunning plot to murder Damond and make it seem that his demise was the result of suicide the shadow crept away.

Swiftly he retraced his way across the roof to the adjoining building and descended through it to the street.

Meantime, the men who meant to accomplish the murder of the detective set to work on the padded door of Bragg's prison-room.

Darwin and Miles were both expert burglars, and they drew from the "kit" of house-breaking implements several tools which in their hands were an assurance of success in opening the door.

Falling to, they began to cut away the padding over the woodwork of the door, and when that was removed they brought their burglar's implements to bear upon it effectually.

But what were the further movements of the "shadow." If, as might be inferred, he was intent upon frustrating the designs of the villains, would he not now seek to awaken and alarm the detective?

After he gained the street the shadow paused for a moment and drew from his pocket a lump of some black substance.

This he rubbed over his face, and then quickly worked it in with his hands until his entire face was as black as that of the darkest negro.

Then he ascended the stairs to the detective's office noiselessly, encountering no obstacle because the public entrance was always open.

Reaching the door of the office the shadow knelt at the keyhole and pronounced the detective's name in an intense whisper.

But there was no response.

The shadow repeated the name again and yet no answer was returned.

Then the shadow seemed to remember that there was no danger of his voice being heard by the men in the rear room, and he spoke louder.

At last the detective was awakened.

He heard the voice at the door, and instantly became alert and suspicious. The voice was a strange one. Damond advanced, drew a revolver and opened the door, while he kept his person shielded behind it.

As the door opened the shadow glided into the office, and the detective thought at the first glance that he was a negro.

"I am a friend!" said the stranger.

"Who are you? A friend should give his name?" said the officer.

"The name matters not. I'll prove my friendship."

"In what manner?"

"By warning you of danger."

"Does danger threaten me?" asked Damond, incredulously.

"Yes. And it is near. Listen!"

At this juncture a faint peculiar sound came from the rear of the front office.

Damond turned to the rear door. Instantly it occurred to him that Bragg might be attempting an escape.

"Hold! Do not open that door!" cried the shadow.

Impressed by his manner Damond paused.

"Three men, a Spaniard, called Mazona, and two desper-

does, who are his pals, are in the rear room. They descended through the skylight, and they come to liberate your prisoner Bragg, and murder you," the stranger went on to say rapidly.

"Ha! They shall find me ready for them. Thanks to you."

"They will be here presently."

"Then they expect to find me here alone?"

"Yes, and asleep. One of the villains spied upon you through the keyhole a short time since."

"I'll foil them."

"And I will help you."

"Good. I accept your friendly offer."

"Would you like to capture the villains?"

"Nothing would please me better."

"Then we'll try it. With Bragg they are four."

"And that makes the odds two to one."

"Yes. But the advantage of a surprise will be on our side."

"That's true. We'll trap them. I'll feign sleep again. You conceal yourself in yonder closet, close by the door through which the villains must come."

"Yes."

"Leave the door of the closet ajar, and when you see me show my hand, step out and get the drop on the crooks. You understand?" said Damond.

"Perfectly. It's desperate play."

"The circumstances demand it."

"They do, assuredly. Reply on me to do my part," answered the stranger.

Then he passed into the closet and almost closed the door behind him.

Damond sat down as before the arrival of the mysterious messenger with a warning, and seemed to sleep.

Silence again reigned in the detective's office.

The moments passed swiftly.

Scarcely five minutes had elapsed, however, when the profound stillness was broken.

Stealthy footsteps were heard by the detective as they came along the passage.

He knew then that his enemies were coming, and he braced himself for the surprise he had in store for them.

A moment more of most intense and thrilling suspense ensued for Damond and his mysterious friend in the closet.

Then the door leading to the passage that communicated with the padded room was stealthily opened.

The Spaniard glided into the office.

Behind him came his three comrades, for Bragg was now with his liberators.

Bragg came last.

As he entered the office he closed the door of the closet in which the shadow crouched, and before that mysterious personage could comprehend his purpose he drew the bolt on the door noiselessly, thus fastening the stranger in his hiding place.

The other three villains stood so that Damond, who was watching them from under his almost closed eyelids, could not see Bragg.

So the detective was now ignorant of the fact that the man upon whom he counted for assistance, when the critical moment arrived, was rendered powerless to come to his help.

It was evident that the villains had some knowledge of the presence of the man in the closet, and that they had planned, in advance, to shut him up therein.

This was quite true. We have seen how quickly the detective opened a locked door by means of a combination giant-wedge and jimmy.

The villains had one of those remarkable burglar's implements with them.

They had employed it on the door of the padded room, and so succeeded in getting it open very quickly.

While the mysterious stranger and the detective arranged their plans to outwit the rascals, Darwin stole to the door opening from the passage and listened.

He heard every word.

Then he retraced his steps and told his pals, who at once arranged a coup. They felt sure of the detective now.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE DETECTIVE'S GREAT FIGHT—MARK MANVILLE AT THE OFFICE DOOR.

Damond, the detective, had his hands carelessly in his pockets—the side pockets of a rather short sack coat.

In his hands he grasped a pair of cocked revolvers. It was his plan to suddenly leap up and knock down the foremost of his enemies, and then "cover" two of the others with his revolvers, depending upon the man in the closet to look out for the fourth member of the villainous quartette.

Darwin and Miles came toward Damond.

Suddenly the detective bounded to his feet.

But before he could draw either of his weapons, just as he made the first movement to arise—he was covered by four deadly tubes.

Every one of the villains, as if at some secret signal, leveled a revolver at the detective, and the voice of the Spaniard rang out fiercely, exultantly, as he commanded:

"Hands up, Damond, or you're a dead man!"

The detective was amazed. He heard a crash against the closet door, but it did not open, his mysterious friend did not appear, and at one glance Damond saw that the bolt was drawn.

It flashed through the mind of the great detective that he was lost.

He raised his empty hands. He could not do otherwise.

"Scoundrels!" he uttered through his fiercely clinched teeth.

"What is your purpose?"

"Disarm him," said the Spaniard, ignoring Damond's question.

Darwin sprang forward, and drew one of the detective's revolvers from his pocket.

The villain was about to possess himself of Damond's other weapon.

But he did not secure it. The hero of a hundred battles for life saw his chance.

He did not neglect it, for this was a matter of life or death for him.

Quick as thought itself, he caught the villain in his arms, struck the one pistol out of his hands, and held him before him as a shield against the bullets of the Spaniard and the others.

This surprising movement was accomplished, and the enemy had not got a shot at Damond yet.

Now they could not shoot him without hitting Darwin.

The detective had scored a point against his enemies when all seemed lost.

Instantly he disengaged one hand—his right—and drew his revolver.

Leveling the weapon close beside Darwin's head, and over the villain's shoulder Damond hissed:

"If you try to get away from me, Darwin, I'll blow your rascally brains out on the spot!"

"Shoot him!" cried the terror-stricken Darwin, who now experienced deadly fear.

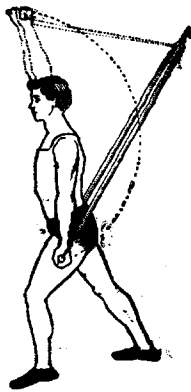
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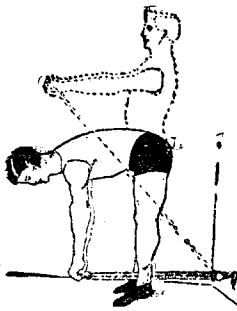
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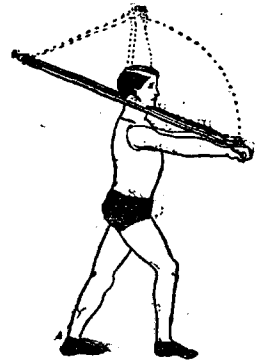
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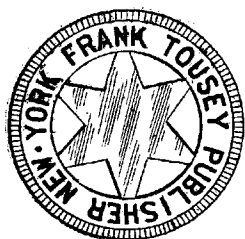
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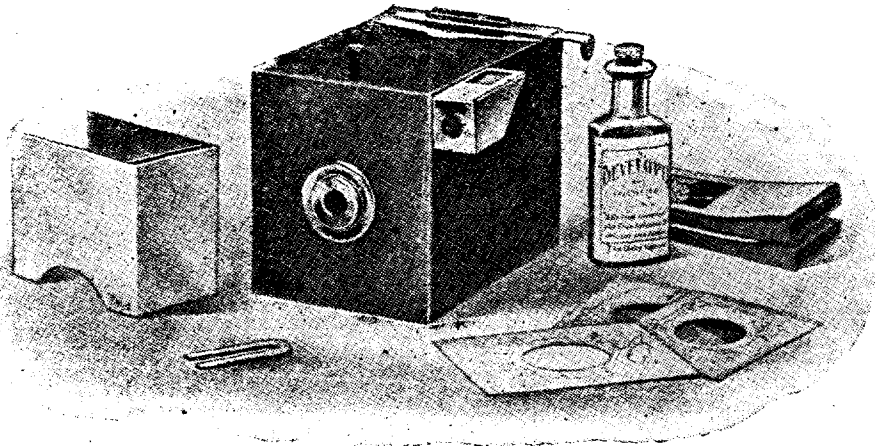
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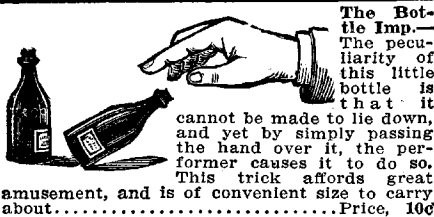


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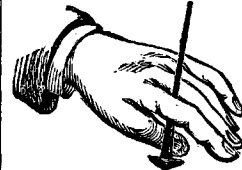
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