

SECRET SERVICE

OLD AND YOUNG KING BRADY, DETECTIVES.

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

No. 23.

NEW YORK, JUNE 30, 1899.

Price 5 Cents.

THE OPIUM KING; OR THE BRADY'S GREAT CHINATOWN CASE.



“Don't you do it!” cried a voice from the bunk. “One move of your hand and you are a dead man!” “Young King Brady!” gasped Munn.

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THE OPIUM KING:

OR,

THE BRADYS' GREAT CHINATOWN CASE

BY A NEW YORK DETECTIVE.

CHAPTER I.

ABOUT THE WOMAN IN BLACK WHO BUNCOED BEN BARCLAY.

Mr. Benjamin Barclay, jewelry drummer and head salesman on the road for the great jewelry manufacturing house, Darlington & Darlington, Jr., started on his spring trip West on the 19th day of May, a year or two ago, and instead of making Poughkeepsie his first stop, as he usually did, left the Hudson River train at Summerville, a smaller town than he was accustomed to make and one which was not down on the list furnished him by the house.

It was about four o'clock in the afternoon when the drummer saw his three valuable sample trunks safe in the Dutchess House and then he started out on Main street to attend to the one call which had brought him to the place.

His errand was with one Simon Sneller, who kept a book and stationery store two doors from the post office and carried a small line of jewelry and silverware as well.

The moment he saw the establishment Ben Barclay felt that there was something wrong with his errand.

"Can this be a bait?" he muttered. "I must keep my eye peeled. If I lose my trunks I'm a ruined man."

He had good reason to be worried.

Three heavy jewelry robberies had taken place during the fall before.

Drummers' trunks in each case, and in each case a mysterious lady in black mixed up with it.

Ben Barclay had read the newspaper accounts of these robberies over until he knew them by heart.

He also knew one of the victims, a traveler named Sam Magowan, and had been with him several times when, with detectives, the slums of New York had been fruitlessly searched for the thieves.

"I don't like the looks of that place," muttered Ben. "Guess I'll go back and ask the landlord to have an extra watch on my trunks."

He did so and then started out again with his satchel and catalogues and walked boldly into Mr. Sneller's store.

"Good morning, sir. My name is Barclay. I represent Darlington & Darlington, Jr., of New York. I called in response to your letter of last week," said Ben, blandly.

Old Simon Sneller, who sat at the bench repairing a watch, looked up over his spectacles, taking in Ben's spruce get-up with his twinkling gray eyes.

"Wrong," he said briefly. "You're all wrong."

Then he stuck a single glass in his eye and, tweezers in hand, went on examining the watch.

"How do you mean, sir?" asked Ben, after waiting a moment.

"Never wrote you a letter. Haven't written a letter in ten years."

"Here it is, sir."

Ben took the document in question out of his pocket and extended it toward the jeweler, who seemed to be afraid to take it and made no move to do so.

"This letter is signed with your name, sir," he said, with rising temper. "It won't bite you—have a look."

"Read it," said Sneller, who was a man of few words.

Ben read as follows:

"Messrs. Darlington & Darlington, Jr., Maiden Lane, New York:

"Gentlemen—I have an opportunity of placing a good line of rings and chains with a friend who is about to open a jewelry store in a good town. This will be cash business. Please let a representative of your firm call on me at your earliest convenience with full line of samples. I've been twenty-five years established here and ask no credit, but prices must be low or it will be a case of no sale. Yours truly,

"SIMON SNELLER, Summerville, N. Y.

"That's the letter, Mr. Sneller," said Ben, as he folded it up. "I don't like to be made a fool of. If you can explain now's about the time."

"Fraud!" snapped Sneller. "Never wrote it. Don't want to buy anything. Want to sell what I've got."

"Have you any idea who could have played such a trick?"

The old man shrugged his shoulders impatiently.

"How should I know?" he growled. "Hain't got no more time to talk. I want to fix this watch."

And this was all that was to be got out of Simon Sneller.

Ben was furious when he left the place.

He soon cooled down and, as he hurried back toward the hotel, resolved to leave town at once and make Poughkeepsie his next stop.

There would be a train in half an hour, which would allow him easy time to get the trunks down to the station.

Such was the drummer's plan when he returned to the Dutchess House.

He had determined on the way to keep his mouth shut, but being a great talker naturally he did what many another foolish person has done under similar circumstances.

In other words, he opened his mouth the first chance he got.

He told the whole story to the landlord, who burst out into a hearty laugh.

"Some one has been playing a trick on you, sure, my friend," he said. "Old Si Sneller hasn't a dollar in the world outside of his rubbishy stock. He never wrote you any letter. Blamed if I believe the old fellow can sign his own name."

Ben called an express wagon and rode on his trunks to the station.

The one he sat on contained diamonds, watches and jewelry valued at upward of sixty thousand dollars.

No wonder the drummer sat on the trunk. He determined not to let it out of his sight until it was safely on the train.

Checking the trunks for Poughkeepsie, Ben walked up and down the platform, where they lay awaiting the arrival of the train.

No one paid any particular attention to him, for, of course, no one guessed the value of the three trunks which, all told, footed up to over a hundred thousand dollars.

Ben's was a risky business.

Dozens of jewelry houses risk their goods this way every season. It is a wonder that losses are not more common than they are.

Ben Barclay had been nine years on the road and had not made a loss yet.

But his time was close at hand.

There was a down train due in two minutes when a close carriage drawn by a spanking team of greys rattled up to the station, the wheels well splashed with mud.

"Say! Hey!" called the driver, shaking his hand at Ben. "Mr. Barclay, a moment, if you please!"

The calling of his name threw the drummer off his guard and he stepped to the carriage.

The door was open now and a stylish lady in black, who sat alone inside, looked out.

"Don't you remember me, Mr. Barclay?" she asked in a low, thrilling voice.

"Indeed I do not," replied Ben, raising his hat, politely.

"I am Mrs. Girard, of Utica. You have sold my husband

and you have seen me in the store, or rather I have seen you and on one occasion we were introduced."

The down train came thundering into the station before Ben could reply.

He turned to look at his trunks. They were in sight and all safe.

Then he turned again to Mrs. Girard.

He knew her husband, of course; old customer of his; couldn't remember meeting her, though; very happy to do so, however; was she stopping here? Yes, she was; on a visit to her sister in an adjoining town; couldn't resist the temptation to make herself known when she saw Mr. Barclay on the platform; hoped he would not think her over bold, etc., etc.

It was small talk all of it and Ben suddenly remembered the mysterious lady in black who had figured in the jewelry robberies the previous fall.

"Excuse me!" he exclaimed, turning toward the platform.

Instantly the door of the carriage was shut and the driver, whipping up his horses, sent the carriage dashing away.

"Stop that carriage! Stop it!" yelled the drummer, "I've been robbed!"

There were but two trunks on the platform instead of three.

The \$60,000 trunk was missing.

It was Ben Barclay's turn now.

He had been nipped by the jewelry thieves.

"Great heavens, I'm in for it!" he gasped. "Unless I can get back that trunk I'm a ruined man."

CHAPTER II.

IS IT A CLUE?

Reimer's Hotel, on Fourth avenue, New York city, is most certainly not a first-class house.

Nor is it second-class, nor even third, but, nevertheless, it is a good house as far as it goes, and one much favored by a certain class of drummers which are to be found in all lines of trade.

We refer to those gentlemen who, while supposed to be on the road, have actually sneaked back to New York for purposes of their own, and choose to remain in hiding lest their employers discover what they are about.

Reimer understands his business and knows how to look out for his peculiar customers.

It is said that no guest ever signs his true name on Reimer's register, and this may be set down as the truth.

On a certain evening—it was the one following the events detailed in the previous chapter—an elderly gentleman, wearing a long blue coat of peculiar pattern and a broad-brimmed white slouch hat, walked into the office of Reimer's Hotel and, stepping up to the desk, proceeded to consult the register.

"I want to see Mr. Clay," he said, putting his finger on the name.

"Card, sir," replied the clerk, briefly.

The old gentleman produced a card reading Mr. James Brady, New York.

The clerk eyed him curiously as he touched the call bell and sent the card upstairs.

"See that man?" he whispered to a bystander, after the old gentleman, by request, started to follow the card upstairs.

"Yes. What about him?" asked the person addressed.

"That's Old King Brady," said the clerk. "Greatest detective in the United States."

Evidently Mr. Clay thought so, for he received the old gentleman in his little four by nine room upstairs with the most profound respect.

"So you've come," he exclaimed, locking the door and beating himself on the bed. "You have decided to undertake the case?"

"Yes," replied Old King Brady, appropriating the solitary chair which the room contained. "Yes, Mr. Barclay, I could not resist the appeal you made me this morning. When I see an honest man in trouble if it is in my power to do so I like to help him out."

"Thank you. You fully understand the situation?"

"About the pay?"

"Yes."

"I think so."

"I am a poor man, depending only on my salary."

"And you propose to pay me in installments in case I succeed."

"Yes. That isn't the worst of it, though."

"Nothing at all if I fail?"

"It will have to be so."

"Young man," said Old King Brady, with a careless wave of his hand, "dismiss all that from your mind."

"You are very good, sir."

"Not at all. You don't understand."

"What?"

"That I am already in the pay of two of the largest jewelry houses in New York, whose drummers have been robbed in a similar manner to yourself."

"Bently & Archer—Lambert & Brown?"

"No matter who they are. You did well to consult me privately before reporting the loss to your house."

"But, my dear sir, if you could only realize how short a time we have to work in."

Ben spoke with extreme nervousness.

He knew perfectly well that if his letters from the different stops he should have made if this calamity had not overtaken him were delayed too long he was a ruined man.

"That's all right," replied the detective, quietly. "I understand the situation fully. By the way, is there anybody in the next room?"

There was a door connecting Ben Barclay's room with the one next beyond and Old King Brady glanced at it as he spoke.

"I don't know, I'm sure. I think not," was the reply. "We can talk low. We won't be heard."

Old King Brady got up and examined the door.

Ben saw him try the bolt, but he did not see him when he shot it back, and he considered himself a pretty shrewd observer, too.

"You did perfectly right to call on me this morning," continued Old King Brady, returning to the chair.

"It was the only thing I could think of," said Ben. "I was half wild. Something had to be done, and, knowing your reputation——"

"You thought of me."

"Yes. I was quite in despair when you seemed doubtful about undertaking my case."

"I needed time for reflection. I have now decided. I think your case may assist me in the others I spoke of."

"I hope so."

"But you must remember they have been hanging fire a long time."

"And I want you to solve my mystery and recover the stolen trunk within forty-eight hours."

"That's what you said."

"Yes, I know it is a difficult task, Mr. Brady—almost an impossible one—yet if you fail nothing remains but for me to see my principal and make a full confession."

"And that means ruin?"

"Yes, and perhaps arrest."

Let us hope for the best. We are losing time. Describe that woman again."

Ben did so.

"I would know her anywhere," he added.

"I doubt it."

"But I am positive."

"You may be right, but more than likely she was disguised. Now, let me ask you a question."

"A thousand if you wish."

"When the baggage man told you that one trunk—the missing one—was checked for New York, while the others were checked for Poughkeepsie, how did it strike you, that he believed he was telling the truth or not?"

"That he fully believed it."

"Did you question him closely?"

"Why, no; I'm ashamed to say I lost my temper."

"And called him a liar?"

"Yes."

"Then you did not question him at all?"

"There was no opportunity. I wanted to telegraph to have the trunk stopped."

"And you did so?"

"Yes."

"What was the result?"

"I didn't learn the result until I got back to New York."

"Then you were told at the baggage office of the Grand Central Depot that no such trunk was put on the train?"

"Yes; as I told you this morning."

"What about the baggage man at Summerville after that?"

"He had gone home. I could see no use in calling him up. You see I was only too anxious to keep the matter quiet."

"I see. Now, if I understand you right he claimed——"

"He claimed that I returned and asked him to change the checks on that trunk. I never did anything of the sort."

"Ah!"

"He's in it—there's not a doubt that he's in it."

"I don't think so."
 "And why?"
 "Because he believed that you actually did make such a request."
 "How do you know?"
 "That's my affair. Now, about this grip that he offered you?"
 "It wasn't mine."
 "You refused to take it?"
 "Yes, of course. I never saw it before in my life."
 "And yet the baggage man positively asserted that you gave it to him to take care of?"
 "When I came back and ordered him to change checks on the missing trunk, which I never did."
 "And, therefore, you called him a liar?"
 "Yes."
 "Would it not have been better to have kept your temper?"
 "I suppose it would."
 "And taken the grip or at least have opened it?"
 "I was half wild at the time."
 "And being half wild, young man, you neglected to appropriate the only clue to your missing trunk."
 "Do you think so?"
 "Decidedly I do."
 "And your theory?"
 "That somebody personated you and actually ordered the trunk changed."
 "During the few moments I spent talking with the woman in black?"
 "Yes."
 "Then I was buncoed?"
 "You please to call it so."
 "But where did this person come from and where did he go?"
 "I can't answer the first question. I am positive about the last."
 "That he went on the train?"
 "Yes."
 "He could not have acted alone?"
 "No, certainly not. He had a confederate."
 "In the baggage car?"
 "Yes."
 "Would it not be well to follow up that clue?"
 "Perhaps. Still, I have a better one."
 "What is it?"
 "It was contained in that grip, young man."
 "You surmise this."
 "On the contrary, I know it."
 "Know it?"
 "Yes."
 "With the grip still in Summerville?"
 "Pardon me, the grip is not still in Summerville. It is in the next room."
 Ben Barclay jumped out of his chair.
 It was not wholly from the amazement caused by Old King Brady's reply either.
 Even as the detective spoke the inner door opened and a young man dressed in a fashion somewhat similar to the detective, but with a greater pretence to style, walked into

the room carrying in his hand a small grip of alligator leather.

He nodded slightly to Ben as he tossed the grip on the bed, saying:

"Is that what you wanted, governor? I think you are right. It probably contains the clue."

CHAPTER III.

THE TWO BRADYS BUCKLE DOWN TO BUSINESS.

"My assistant, Young King Brady, otherwise known as Harry," said the old detective, waving his hand.

"Glad to meet you, Mr. Barclay," replied the young man.

Ben responded, looking so mystified that both Bradys burst into a hearty laugh.

"Look here," said Old King Brady, "there is no great mystery about this."

"None at all," added Harry. "The governor asked me to meet him here, so I did. Naturally, I took the next room to yours, finding it vacant, and when I heard him come in I gave the signal, to which he responded—that's all."

"Simple enough to you, no doubt," replied Ben, "but I heard no signals either on one side of the door or the other."

"Of course not. We do not make our signals so that any chance person can understand them."

"Yes, but——"

"Well?" said Old King Brady, as Ben paused.

"The grip."

"You are wondering how I got it?"

"I am."

"My dear sir, I don't let grass grow under my feet. You gave me forty-eight hours to work up this case, ten of which have already passed."

"But the grip?"

"You mentioned it and I sent Harry up to Summerville after it—he has just returned."

"Back since an hour," said Harry, lighting a cigar, first passing the weeds around.

"Learn anything more than your dispatch stated, Harry?" asked Old King Brady, supplying the lighted match.

"Not much."

"What?"

"Woman in black took down train at Poughkeepsie."

"Ah, that's important. Where did she come from?"

"Give it up."

"And the team?"

"I couldn't trace it."

"You ought to have done so."

"Confound it, I didn't have time, governor. I was under orders to get back."

"Young blood, young blood," mused Old King Brady. "Never mind, Harry, you'll learn in time."

"What would you have done?" demanded Harry, hotly.

"Started a local after the team."

"Well, so I did."

"Good boy!"

"Satisfied?"

"Perfectly. Where's the report to come?"

"Here, care of Mr. Barclay, with duplicate to the office."

"Good! Couldn't have done better myself."

Rat—tat—tat!

Just then some one knocked at the door.

It was a bell boy, who handed in a dispatch.

Old King Brady tore it open and read as follows:

"Team was shipped to New York on midnight train from Fishkill Landing, driver going with it. The address was Peter O'Brien, — Carmine street. P. MANNING."

"O'Brien's livery stable, by gracious!" cried Harry. "Here's a clue."

"Don't amount to shucks!" cried Old King Brady, snapping his fingers. "You'll see."

Harry subsided.

He determined to visit O'Brien's livery stable, however. Meanwhile Old King Brady took up the grip.

"Manning did all he could and you did all you could," he said.

"I think so," replied Young King Brady, "and I have faith in the clue."

"Go then."

"I intend to."

"And you'll find that the team was engaged by a stranger, who left a deposit equal to its full value."

"You are sure?"

"Yes."

"Might I ask why?"

"Because the same trick was played in both cases in which this woman in black figured."

"Oh!"

"You give in?"

"Suppose I've got to."

"Go there all the same; be sure. Now for the grip. Confound this lock! I can't make it work."

"It's not locked; I've had it open," said Harry, taking the grip.

He had it open again in an instant, and Ben, who was reduced to amazed silence by all these strange developments, watched him eagerly as he proceeded to empty the bag.

There were only three articles in the grip.

An oblong package done up in newspaper, a bottle of whiskey, and a letter unsealed.

"What have we here?" demanded Old King Brady.

"Clues," replied Harry, "all but the whiskey. Of course that is no clue."

"Hardly! Hum! An opium layout! Well!"

Harry had opened the package.

It contained a handsome silver-mounted opium pipe, a "flute"—as the opium fiends call it—a lamp, a bottle of alcohol, a tin box containing a small supply of opium, and that was all.

"Any name in this?" asked Old King Brady, taking the pipe.

"No," replied Harry, "but there's one here."

He opened the envelope and handed his preceptor a scrap of paper contained inside.

It was scribbled over with a lot of unmeaning letters arranged in three lines without stops.

Below was the name, LA VINE.

Old King Brady studied the paper attentively for a moment and then handed it over to Ben.

"Make anything out of it?" he asked Harry.

"No; I can't make head nor tail of it. I'm not up on cipher, as you know."

"Hum! And you, Mr. Barclay?"

"Of course to me it is all Greek," replied Ben, studying the letters, which we reproduce below:

"augognea

"tosnhisr

"qntitnhp.

"LA VINE."

"Well," said Old King Brady, "I don't wonder. These ciphers are very complicated things."

"Can you read it, Mr. B.?" demanded Young King Brady abruptly.

"Certainly," replied the old detective. "Plain as print."

"Don't assent to that. Is it a clue?"

"Decidedly. You ought to understand part of it."

"I do."

"La Vine?"

"Yes."

"I thought you could not be so dead slow as to miss that. He'd better go with you."

"Oh, I'm to go, am I?"

"Yes, I've other fish to fry."

"I'll go anywhere or do anything!" cried Ben hurriedly.

"Oh, it's only a case of identification," said Old King Brady. "You may see your woman in black to-night and you may not."

"If I see her, heaven help her."

"He'd better not go," said Young King Brady emphatically, "if he's going to talk that way."

"I'm in your hands, gentlemen," said Ben. "Do with me as you will."

"Can you keep your mouth shut and restrain yourself in case you should suddenly be brought face to face with your woman in black?" the old detective asked.

Ben thought he could.

Old King Brady rose to depart.

"You two had better go at once," he said. "Probably you won't see her, but you may learn something."

"Hadn't we better all act together?" asked Ben.

He had pinned his faith to the old detective, and did not altogether like being turned over to the younger man.

"Not at all," replied Old King Brady. "Where I go to-night you are not wanted. There's no use in us both chasing the same dog."

"Oh, I'll take care of you," said Harry. "You needn't be afraid of me; besides, our errand is quite a necessary one."

"Decidedly necessary," added Old King Brady, buttoning up his coat.

"Keep up your courage, Mr. Barclay," he added. "We have made decided headway. Do you want to speak to me, Harry, before we go?"

"Yes," replied Young King Brady, "if Mr. Barclay will excuse us."

"Oh, I'll step outside," said Ben.

He did so and when the two detectives found themselves alone Young King Brady said, with an injured air:

"What about that cipher? You have only begun to teach me how to work with those things, you know."

"Of course I know, my boy. I'm finding no fault with you."

"Yet you spoke as though you expected me to read that cipher offhand.

"Which you could easily have done if you had paid closer attention to my instructions."

"Explain."

"Look at it again. Here it is."

"Yes, and it is the same mystery."

"Let me copy it—let me separate the letters."

"It would be no use. I did that."

"Did you read them down the column instead of across?"

"Thunder, no! What a fool I am!"

"Not at all. You have made wonderful headway in this business. You can read it now."

Anybody could read the cipher after the hint Old King Brady had given. By the simple transposition of the letters indicated, it read as follows:

"At Quong's to-night nine sharp. LA VINE."

CHAPTER IV.

IN THE OPIUM DEN.

There was a cold wind blowing when Old King Brady came down the steps of the elevated railroad station at Chatham Square.

He crossed the far-famed Bowery and turned into Pell Street, walking along the right-hand side.

This took him all in a moment into the heart of Chinatown, but no one would have guessed that it was the world-renowned detective, for Old King Brady was fully disguised.

He wore a pair of cheap, ill-fitting trousers and a coat which, from its fit and pattern, looked as though it might have been Noah's Sunday best before the flood overtook him and he was forced to take refuge with his family in the ark.

A pair of spectacles partly concealed his eyes and his hat was several decades behind the fashion.

Altogether the old detective was made up to represent a very tolerable specimen of the genus "hayseed."

He would have been very unreasonable to have found fault if a "hand-shaker" had instantly tackled him, asking "When did you come to town?"

Now, the fact of the matter was, Old King Brady, in spite of his clever hit in the cipher, was by no means sure of his ground.

Of course there was the opium lay-out to guide him.

This, taken in connection with the letter, indicated that the jewelry thief was an "opium fiend," but then there are

hundreds of fiends in New York, and at least four proprietors of joints who pass by the name of "Quong."

"And it may mean any one of them," mused the detective. To make a blunder would be fatal.

His reasoning was quite correct.

He knew that the instant he showed his face in the first joint his arrival in Chinatown would be telegraphed to every other joint.

He might make the rounds without being disturbed, but to hope to gather the least information was to hope for the impossible.

And Old King Brady did not hope to do it by any ordinary methods.

No, his was quite a different plan.

He walked slowly down Pell Street, elbowing Chinamen and half-drunken white women, and turned into Mott Street, staring up at the houses and peering into the faces of the passers-by.

If his object were to draw the attention of everybody in Chinatown to him he had hit it exactly.

All eyes were upon him.

The white toughs of Chinatown were whispering to each other: "Get onto de guy!"

The only question in their minds was whether this aged rural bird was worth plucking or not.

There was not one among them who would not have robbed the old detective of his last nickel.

Yes, and put a knife into him, too, if the stake was only large enough.

But as no one knew this better than Old King Brady, there was but little cause for alarm.

Pretty soon the "hand-shakers" began to move on their victim.

A well-dressed young man jostled against the detective and begged his pardon.

"That's all right, young man; that's all right," replied Old King Brady blandly.

"Bless my soul, why if this isn't my old friend, Mr. Raymond, from Schenectady!" the hand-shaker cried.

"Waal, neow you're wrong. My name hain't Raymond," the detective drawled.

"That so? Well, I must have made a mistake," said the hand-shaker, pulling away.

"That's what you have, sonny. My name is McGiffert. I hail from Callicoon, away up the State."

The hand-shaker apologized and slid off.

Old King Brady wandered on down Mott Street, looking up at the shabby houses and staring at the curious letters on the red handbills posted on the telegraph poles.

He was waiting for the next man to tackle him.

"If I have any luck," he thought, "I may get what I want first time. I ought to. There are mighty few of the old hands I don't know."

"Hello! How are you! By jove, I thought I knew you!" exclaimed a young man, suddenly clapping the detective on the shoulder.

One quick glance told Old King Brady that this one wouldn't suit.

"I don't know you at all," he retorted. "Go on, now, and leave me alone."

There was something so commanding in his voice that the fellow slunk away without finishing his job.

He drew back into an alley, where two others of his kind received him with a laugh.

"Ah, g'wan! Yer not on ter der biz yet, Petey," said one. "Watch me nip de old guy."

He slid out of the alley and was at the detective's side in a moment.

"How do you do, Mr. McGiffert. Don't you remember me?" he said, dropping his Chinatown patter and speaking good "United States."

"Why, yes, seems to me I do," replied Old King Brady, shaking hands with great warmth.

"I know you, all right. I shall never forget my father's old friend. When did you come down from Callicoon?"

"This afternoon. Say, you've got the best of me."

"Oh, my name is Fraser. I'm the son of William Fraser, the storekeeper."

"You don't say! He did have a son what went off to York."

"I'm the one. How is my father? You seen him lately?"

"Seen him this morning at the station. How are you making out here?"

"First rate. I'm making money hand over fist."

"That's right; that's right. I just dropped down here to have a look at Chinatown. Heard so much about it, you know."

"Same with me. It's the first time I was ever here. Say, Mr. McGiffert, you want to look out for the bunco-steerers. They'll be sure to go for you."

"Will, hey! Waal, I want to know! I must be careful. I've got more'n a thousand dollars about me. I come deown to buy goods."

"Well, then it's lucky you met me. I'll take care of you."

"Wish you would. Could we see the inside of one of them opium joints now?"

"Sure we can."

"That's what I want more than anything else."

"You shall have that pleasure. Suppose we step down to the corner and have a glass of ale?"

"Waal, neow, I don't drink no ale, but I wouldn't mind a drop of whiskey."

"You shall take whatever you want. Fact is, I'm expecting to meet a detective there, a friend of mine. He'll pilot us through all the opium joints in Chinatown and it shan't cost you a cent."

They started down Mott Street, arm in arm.

Things were working splendidly, the hand-shaker thought.

So did his pals, who were watching him from the alley.

So did Old King Brady, or he never would have taken up with this man.

They walked on down to Chatham Square, where in the back room of a certain notorious saloon the hand-shaker expected to get in his fine work.

Old King Brady had been there before.

Not only once, but several times.

He knew the proprietor perfectly well, and he entered by the side door as fearlessly as if he had been going into his own office.

Had he been what he seemed to be no power on earth could have prevented him from being robbed of all he had about him.

The hand-shaker led him into a little room in which there was a dirty table and a few chairs.

He was about to ring the bell, ostensibly to call the bartender, but really to let his pals know that the bird was caged, when Old King Brady caught his hand and pulled it back.

"Not now, Georgey!" he said familiarly; "not now."

"What do you mean? Who the blazes are you?" demanded the hand-shaker, turning pale.

"One who knows Curly George, alias George the Sport, pretty well," chuckled the detective. "Look at my face."

"Hully Gee! Haven't I been looking at it for the last ten minutes?" growled the man.

"Look again! Look closer!" said the detective, removing his hat.

"Old King Brady!"

"Well, yes! You're still wanted, you know, Georgey. I rather think there won't be any trouble in my taking you out of here, if I give the word at the bar."

"That's enough, Mr. Brady. You've pulled me off my perch."

"I was waiting for you, George."

"Must I go, boss? I've been dead straight ever since—you know when."

"You don't have to go, if you'll help me out of a hole," said Old King Brady. "What are you drinking, George?"

"Water when I'm talking with you, Mr. Brady."

"I won't order it. Might make you sick. Smoke?"

George took the cigar and leaned back in his chair, looking very dismal.

"If de boys git on to this dey'll guy me fer a year to come," he growled.

"There's no need of their getting on to it," said the detective.

"Let me go and steer 'em off. They are waiting for de bell."

"No, you stay right here. They won't come in on us till you give them the bell."

"I'd like to see 'em."

"Good. Now, George, I want your help."

"You shall have it."

"I've got a man round here somewhere to-night."

"Who?"

"Never mind. He smokes at Quong's."

"Which Quong's? There's three or four of them."

"Exactly. One at—Pell Street, upstairs, one across the street in the cellar, one on Mott Street, and another on the Square."

"Oh, you know them all. What's the point you're driving at?"

"Well, George, the fact is I don't know my man's name. All I know is that he is in the habit of meeting a woman named La Vine at one of these places. That's my clue?"

"And you want me to help you work it out?"

"Yes."

"Trouble is I don't know La Vine."

"Let me describe her to you," said the detective.

The description given tallied pretty closely with the woman who had called Ben Barclay to the carriage at the Summerville station.

"Wait!" cried George. "I ought to know that dame. Is she married to a Chink?"

"No."

"You are sure?"

"No, I'm not sure. I don't think so, though."

"Bite it off den right dere. If you don't know, don't say no."

"You're right."

"I t'ink I know her. I t'ink she's married to a Chink, but she don't live in Chinatown. She keeps a swell joint up town."

"That's more like it."

"There's a game in front an' a joint in de back room."

"The place?"

George named it.

For various reasons we do not care to give the address here.

"That fits!" cried Old King Brady.

"T'ought so. Now, I can go on, Mr. Brady."

"Do it."

"La Vine hain't her name; at least dat hain't her handle down here."

"What is it?"

"Black Annie."

"She's no negro."

"You don't ketch on. She always does de widder act. Comes down here in a carriage, dressed in black."

"That fits, too."

"T'ought so. Well, it's Quong's upstairs in Pell Street. Dat's the place."

"You are sure?"

"Wouldn't give it to you 'less I was. I've seen her many a night."

"Whom does she meet there?"

"Give it up. I don't never smoke in Quong's."

"What kind do?"

"Oh, mostly all kinds. Der's actors and actresses, but not so much as dey uster be afore de town was wide open and de swell joints uptown got to running again."

"Crooks?"

"Lots of 'em."

"Anybody special?"

George named a long list.

Most of the names were known to Old King Brady.

He knew very well that any one of them would be perfectly willing to play the game that had been worked on Ben Barclay.

The only trouble was the game was not in the line of any of them.

"I've got the woman all right," thought Old King Brady, "but how about the man?"

"Anybody else?" he asked.

"Well, dere's de Opium King. He goes dere sometimes."

"Hello! I'm not on to him."

"No?"

George spoke pityingly.

"No," said Old King Brady. "He must be a new comer in New York."

"He's from 'Frisco. Dey say he's cornered de opium market. I hear dat he about runs the joint-keepers now."

"What's his name?"

"Don't know."

"You'd better tell me if you do, George."

"Dat's all right, but I don't. Nobody knows but de Chinks, and dey won't tell."

"Very well," said Old King Brady. "Now I'm going."

"And I'm solid?"

"Oh, yes, as long as you stand by me. Keep an eye open on Quong's in Pell Street. I may call on you again."

"I'll do that."

"Now there's going to be a little transformation scene," said the detective.

Right before the crook he made the change.

It was done like lightning, but how Old King Brady did it we are not at liberty to state.

All we can say is that inside of three minutes the old "hayseed" disappeared and an elderly gentleman, dressed in the height of fashion, took his place.

"Wonderful!" gasped Curly George, in admiration.

"Easy as rolling off a log," laughed Old King Brady.

"That is when you know how to do it. Good night, Georgey. I'm going round to Quong's."

The detective now looked like some elderly actor.

Still, perfect as his disguise was, he anticipated trouble in getting into the opium joint.

No one can be shrewder than the Chinese keepers of these dens.

They can tell at a glance whether a man is accustomed to smoking the deadly drug or not.

Old King Brady knew many of them personally.

Among others, he knew this same Quong.

He did not anticipate being detected by Quong.

What he did fear was that Quong would discover that he was not a "fiend" and refuse him admission to the joint.

"I suppose I've got to smoke to-night," thought the detective, "though it is something I don't like to do."

Quong's was upstairs on the second floor of an old building on the left-hand side of Pell Street going in from the Bowery.

This was something unusual.

Most of the Chinese opium joints are underground.

There was an ugly-looking gang hanging about the door, but Old King Brady pushed right by them, and ascending the stairs knocked on the door above.

It was opened by an ugly, pock-marked Chinaman, who took the detective in at a single glance.

"What wantee?" he demanded.

"How are you, Quong," said Old King Brady familiarly. "Don't you remember me?"

"Me no, no! Can't come in here!"

"Oh, that's all right. I want to smoke."

"No smokee here."

"Hold up! I haven't smoked here before, that is true, but I have smoked with you when you kept the joint in Pacific Street, in San Francisco. Charley Karr sent me to-night."

This was a random shot.

The name was one of those mentioned by Curly George. It told.

Quong became all smiles.

He led the way into the joint.

It was a dirty place with the usual bunks, the dim, smoky, foul-smelling atmosphere and all the rest.

Several men and two women lay in the bunks, some asleep, some smoking.

Quong provided Old King Brady with a pipe and a "cook."

The latter is the Chinaman who prepares the opium pill over the lamp.

Old King Brady removed his coat and lay down in the bunk, resting his head on a hard wooden stool.

The cook crawled up beside him and proceeded to prepare the pill.

Old King Brady took a few whiffs and then fell back and pretended to sleep.

"I'll let you know when I want another pipe, John," he said drowsily. "I was up all last night and feel tired. I think I'll take my sleep now."

The cook, who got a silver dollar between his yellow fingers, did not care.

He slipped down from the bunk and for the next two hours Old King Brady lay there to all appearances peacefully slumbering.

People came and went.

There were noisy ones and quiet ones—usually it was the latter.

There is never much noise in an opium den.

It was all the same to Old King Brady.

He was simply taking in the joint.

Not a man or a woman entered whom he did not see. Many of them he knew very well, others were strangers.

But the woman in black did not come, and no one appeared answering the description of the Opium King.

CHAPTER V.

BEN BARCLAY BREAKS THE BANK.

Old King Brady's clue taken from the cipher letter was of more value than might appear on its face.

Young King Brady fully appreciated this.

There was a person in New York answering to the name of La Vine.

It was a woman known to the entire fraternity of crooks.

A woman whose record was as black as the clothes she always wore.

For years Madame La Vine had been the associate of confidence men and thieves, and yet never once had fallen into the meshes of the law.

Why was this?

Nobody could tell.

"If I can connect Madame La Vine with this business it will send my name to the top notch," thought Harry, as he left the hotel in company with Ben Barclay.

He had little hope of accomplishing this desirable re-

sult, however, and he made no confidant of the drummer as they hurried across town.

The first place Young King Brady made was Carmine Street, where he called at O'Brien's livery stable.

It was just as Old King Brady had predicted.

O'Brien could not help one bit.

The carriage had been hired by a gentleman who deposited its full value, saying that he wanted to use it for several days, and that it would come back by rail.

The name given was Smith, and there had been no address.

O'Brien admitted that the price paid for the use of the team was exorbitant, but denied that he suspected crooked business.

This, of course, was not true, but seeing that there was nothing further to be learned, Harry cut the interview short.

"Where do we go now?" asked Ben Barclay when they boarded a Sixth Avenue car.

"Up town to Madame La Vine's gambling house," replied Harry. "Ever been there?"

"No," said Ben, turning red.

"It won't do," said Young King Brady quietly.

"What won't do?"

"You must give it to me straight."

"What do you mean?"

"Oh, pshaw! We are losing time. The governor would call me off the case if he knew this."

"Knew what?"

"That you were deceiving me. Make a clean breast of it, man. You've played in La Vine's, of course."

Ben acknowledged the corn.

"I've only played two or three times," he said.

"That's enough," replied Harry.

He knew now that he had the most important end of the case.

"The job against you was put up in La Vine's place," he said. "When were you there last?"

"Three nights before I started out—that's Monday."

"Then you were there last Friday night?"

"Yes."

"Win or lose?"

"I dropped three hundred."

"All the money you had given you for expenses on your trip?"

"About all," said the drummer sleepily. "Who told you?"

"No matter. Do you know Madame La Vine?"

"No."

"Ever see her?"

"No."

"Whom do you know there?"

"Only the leader at the faro bank."

"Know him personally?"

"No; only from playing."

"You got full in that house that night?"

"By thunder, you know everything! Who's been giving me away?"

Now, the fact was this happened to be all the purest guess work.

Ben Barclay was a man who carried his thoughts written on his face.

The shrewd little detective could not have read them easier if they had been printed in a book.

"Well, I did get loaded," said Ben, "but they took good care of me. I never lost a thing."

"What did they do with you?"

"Took me upstairs and put me to bed."

"And you slept there till morning?"

"Yes."

"Clothes hadn't been disturbed? Be accurate now. Only speak of what you know."

"I couldn't say positively. Nothing was taken, though."

"Have anything to take?"

"Well, I only had ten dollars and my watch and diamond."

"That's enough. Your friends at La Vine's were playing for higher stakes than a hundred dollar diamond or an oreide watch."

"Mine happens to be gold."

"The one you pawned to get money for expenses was, you mean. The one you are wearing now is oreide, I'll swear."

"You're a wizard," growled Ben.

"Same with the diamond," continued Harry. "You let that go, too, and took a paste one out of your samples to take its place."

"I give up! Don't say any more. I'm a blasted fool and you——"

"Well, what am I?"

"Give that up, too. If you were to set up as a fortune teller——"

"I wouldn't make my salt. But I'll tell you what I am to-night."

"What?"

"A jewelry drummer."

"Hello!"

"Yes, that's me. I work for Bendall, Radmore & Stillings, down in Maiden Lane."

"The deuce you do. I don't catch on."

"You will later. I'm going to get full to-night."

"Then I'm not. I've had enough of it."

"I'm going to sleep in that same room. I'm a friend of yours. I'm carrying a lot of diamonds about me."

"I begin to see."

"About time. Now, mind you, play your part well. Don't hesitate about speaking freely of your loss; you can go into just as many details as you want to, but of course you won't mention that you have engaged the Bradys to work up your case."

Ben had formed a pretty high opinion of Young King Brady's ability when they ascended the steps of Madame La Vine's fashionable gambling den in West Forty——th Street.

Harry had played Old King Brady's game and altered his appearance right before him as they walked west from Sixth Avenue.

He now looked at least five years older and his face was made up with a light moustache, which was a good match to his tow-colored hair.

They rang the bell and were admitted by a colored man.

Ben called him Sam and seemed to be perfectly familiar with him, and they were ushered into a brilliantly lighted room, furnished with an unusual degree of elegance.

This was the famous La Vine's.

It was at this time one of the most noted gambling houses in America.

Rumor had it that there was an opium joint in connection.

If this was so—and Old King Brady believed it—the joint was run very close.

Certainly, no detective had ever penetrated to it.

Curly George's assertion that it was located in the back room was mere rubbish.

"Hello, young feller! By Jove, I thought you were on the road," exclaimed the dealer, giving Ben a hearty handshake.

"Not to-night," replied Ben. "Mac, let me introduce my friend, Mr. Broadwell."

"Pleased to know you, Mr. Broadwell," replied Mac. "Same line as yourself, Ben?"

"No; he's in diamonds. He represents Bendall, Radmore & Stillings."

"The deuce, you say!" Big house that, I'm told."

"Yes, they do a very heavy business," replied Harry.

"Come, Ben, if you mean to get back on your bad luck we'd better start right in."

There were but few people in the room and they were all gathered around the roulette table.

Faro and rouge et noir seemed to be in the background that night.

Acting under Harry's instructions, Ben held back.

He thought he would wait until there were more in the game. Meanwhile, they would have a bottle of champagne.

The champagne was served and Ben and Mac continued to talk.

Harry took a hand in and helped matters along.

It required but little diplomacy to bring out the story of the stolen trunk in a natural way.

Mac appeared to be much surprised and was very sympathetic.

"There's only one thing for you to do, young fellow," he said, "and that's to break the bank and win enough to pay your loss, for you'll never see that trunk again."

"That's what I tell him," said Harry, pouring out another glass of champagne and tossing it off to all appearances.

Actually, it went down his neck into a rubber receiver of his own invention, lodging finally in a bag of the same material which the detective carried under his shirt.

By this simple cautiousness—and it was not only simple, but effective—Young King Brady was able to drink with any one and always keep his head.

"That's what I say," he repeated. "The fellow who was shrewd enough to steal that trunk is shrewd enough to keep it."

"Bet your life," growled Mac. "How do you manage your samples now?"

"Always carry them with me this way," replied Harry, taking out two blue papers and half opening one.

It was filled with glittering objects.

"Diamonds," thought Mac.

If Young King Brady had not been quick to close the paper he would have known that they were only glass.

Harry managed that part of it all right, though.

The dealer grew more familiar—almost confidential, in fact.

Pretty soon he ordered wine himself.

When the waiter brought it in he turned upon him fiercely and asked what he meant by bringing the worst in the house.

"I'll go for it myself," he said. "I'll give you a champagne, boys, that will make your teeth curl."

As he hurried from the room Ben whispered:

"Good heavens! Do you think that the job against me was really put up in this house?"

"Hush!" breathed Young King Brady.

He was looking at a half-length portrait of a very good looking woman in evening dress which hung against the wall.

There was something about the picture which struck him peculiarly.

Harry was wondering if this could be a portrait of Madame La Vine.

As he continued to study it he suddenly became aware of a change which had come over the face.

There was a difference in the color of the eyes.

Before they had been blue.

Now they were black.

Here was a mystery.

Furtively Harry watched the portrait.

No one would have imagined he was doing so, however.

He seemed to be entirely engaged in talking with Ben.

But Harry never lost sight of that face for an instant—as he thought.

Suddenly, to his amazement, he perceived that the eyes were actually blue.

Was he going crazy?

Young King Brady rubbed his own eyes and stared up at the picture, taking no pains to conceal the fact now.

"What's the matter?" asked Ben.

Before Young King Brady could answer, Mac was back again with the wine.

"I suppose it's drugged, but I've got to let him drink it," thought Young King Brady, uneasily.

He saw no way of helping this.

To his immense relief the wine seemed to have no particular effect on Ben.

"Whose picture is that?" asked the detective.

"That's the madame when she was younger than she is now," replied the dealer. "A stunner, isn't she?"

"You're right. See much of her here?"

"Not much."

"Does she live in the house?"

"Oh, no. Not at all. Sometimes she doesn't come here for a week."

The entrance of several flashy young sports put a stop to the conversation.

They were for playing faro, and Mac had to get down to business.

All the new comers appeared to be pretty flush and soon a heavy game was in progress.

Before coming in Harry had slipped fifty dollars into Ben's hand, and with this he entered the game.

Madame La Vine's bore the reputation of being a "square" game.

Before it had proceeded far Young King Brady saw that such was indeed the case, although he was somewhat surprised to find it so.

Ben seemed to strike luck from the start.

It was really very remarkable.

Every card he covered seemed to turn up in the box.

Before long Ben's winnings were heavy.

Young King Brady, on the contrary, lost, and after a bit pulled out and strolled over to have a closer look at the portrait, now that he was able to do so unobserved.

As he looked up at the eyes he suddenly saw them move downward and look into his own.

They were black!

He saw this distinctly.

Then all at once they were blue and fixed on the canvas.

"Ah, ha! A peep-hole!" thought Young King Brady. "Some one is behind that picture taking us all in."

Here was a discovery.

It looked as if other business besides gambling and opium smoking might be carried out at Madame La Vine's.

Young King Brady now returned to the table.

Ben was still betting heavily and almost always winning.

It was one of those marvelous runs of luck which will sometimes occur at the faro bank.

"Great Scott! I've scooped in over four thousand dollars," he whispered to Harry. "Hadn't I better cash in?"

The detective shook his head.

This winning business had disarranged his plans.

He had counted upon Ben's losing.

Naturally he hated to disturb him while his luck was on.

But the evening was advancing and Young King Brady felt that something must be done.

It was soon almost midnight.

Ben's pile had increased to over eight thousand dollars.

A great crowd had gathered about the faro bank.

Harry's plan of seeming to get drunk would not work.

This was no time to order up wine.

Ben, indeed, had left his last glass untouched.

While such luck as this was on he felt that he wanted a clear head.

Another hour passed.

It was a wonderful one for Ben Barclay.

A great crowd had gathered around him.

All the other tables were deserted.

Ben's winnings were now between eight and nine thousand dollars.

Young King Brady was not in it.

He drew away and watched the picture.

His sharp eye was on the dealer, also.

At times he thought he could detect him making signals.

They were ever so slight—scarcely noticeable.

They consisted of movements of the straw hat which he

wore to protect his eyes from the glaring light which a huge reflector threw down from the gas jets overhead.

Each time he put his hand to his head and moved the hat Harry shot a glance at the picture.

Sometimes the eyes were black and at others they were blue.

At last there was a variation of the monotony.

Suddenly the eyes disappeared altogether and Harry saw something red drawn across the empty holes where they should have been.

Instantly he turned his attention to the faro table.

He felt that something was about to happen.

Nor was he mistaken.

"Gentlemen, the game is over for to-night!" exclaimed the dealer, leaning back in his chair.

There was an excited murmur.

"Can't help it," said the dealer. "The bank is broken. You will cash in, sir, please. We can't go any further with this game."

CHAPTER VI.

MR. MUNN.

Old King Brady lay still so long in the opium bunk that he actually fell asleep at last.

'This was something unusual with the old detective.

For him to go to sleep on his post was entirely out of the common order, but then he slept with one eye open.

The slightest noise was sure to awaken him when he dropped off like this.

For nearly two hours the interior of the opium den was as still as death.

The only person who moved was old Quong, who occasionally changed his position to listen at the door, but so silently did he glide about in his felt slippers that Old King Brady was not disturbed.

At last, shortly before two'clock, a carriage drove rapidly up to the door.

Old King Brady heard the sound and was awake and on the alert in an instant.

The other smokers in the bunks did not awaken, however. They were deep in the opium sleep.

Quong was on his feet before you could count two, and hurried to the door.

Footsteps were heard on the stairs and a cautious knock came.

Quong responded. Signals were given and returned, and a young man, flashily dressed, entered the room.

Old King Brady surveyed him through his half-closed lids.

He made up his mind that he was just an ordinary habitue of the place and ceased to pay attention to him almost as he looked.

But Quong evidently did not agree with him.

"Who you?" he demanded. "I no know you."

"Oh, I'm all right," whispered the new comer.

He spoke like a man suffering from a bad cold.

"How you know dat word?" demanded Quong. "Dat private word!"

The young man whispered something in his ear which seemed to quiet the suspicions of the joint keeper, who immediately pointed out a bunk further down the room from where Old King Brady lay.

He then rang a bell and the cook appeared.

Presently the cook was cooking and the young man pulling away at the opium pipe.

This was slow business, Old King Brady thought.

He had just about come to the conclusion that the best thing he could do was to get out, when footsteps were again heard on the stairs, and there came another knock at the door.

This time Quong let in a man whose peculiar appearance attracted the attention of Old King Brady at once.

He was flashily dressed and showed unmistakable signs of having hit the pipe many times.

He was as thin as a living skeleton in a dime museum. His face was yellow and sunken, which made his long hooked nose look more like a parrot's beak than it otherwise would have done, while his black eyes stood out from their sockets in a most unpleasant fashion.

Altogether, he was a most peculiar looking person, and the detective knew at first glance that he must be some one of importance in the eyes of the Chinaman, for he bowed his head almost to the floor, making a profound salaam.

"Well, well, Quong! What's the news to-night?" demanded the man, in a thin, rasping voice.

He spoke in Spanish, which fortunately Old King Brady understood.

"No news, senor," replied Quong, in the same language.

"How's business?"

"Very bad."

"And that is bad for business—our business! Ha! Ha! Ha!"

"So it is, senor. So it is."

"Has madame been here?"

"Not to-night."

"You are sure?"

The Chinaman waved his hands about the place.

"You see all?" he replied.

"Who's that old fellow in the bunk there?"

"A stranger. He smoked one pipe and he's been asleep ever since."

"That's bad for business."

"Very bad for business, senor."

"And for our business. Ha! Ha! Ha!"

"Will the senor smoke?" asked Quong.

"Not now," was the reply. "I will wait for madame."

"As you will, Senor Munn. All that you see here is yours."

Old King Brady caught the name.

"Mr. Munn! Mr. Munn! Where have I seen your face before?" he thought. "Your name is familiar, too."

He pondered and pondered.

Suddenly it all came back to him, and the following was the current of the detective's thoughts:

"San Francisco—Rogue's gallery—picture 878. Opium smuggler, confidence man, gambler, check raiser, all around

crook—real name said to be Carrol St. Regis; among the Chinks known as the Opium King.”

Was this the man? Had Old King Brady hit it right? He was not left long in doubt.

Quong and his visitor sat down at a table near where Old King Brady lay and began to talk Spanish in whispers.

Every word reached the old detective's ears.

The conversation related to smuggled opium.

Evidently “Mr. Munn” had a quantity to sell which he expected soon to arrive.

It seemed to be coming from China, via Cuba.

Quong was to act as distributing agent among the joint keepers of Chinatown.

Every now and then Munn would break off and look at his watch, exclaiming:

“Why don't she come? Why don't she come?”

At last the opium talk was finished and Mr. Munn dropped his voice still lower.

Old King Brady could no longer hear what was being said.

Suddenly Quong struck the table with his clenched fist, exclaiming in Spanish:

“No, no! I will not do it! Help you to kill Black Annie! No! No!”

“Hush, you fool! Some one may hear—some one may understand!” hissed Munn, clapping his hand over the Chinaman's mouth.

He glanced in a half-scared way at the bunks.

The cook had gone now and apparently all were asleep, but Old King Brady.

He had intended to keep up the same appearance, but so interested was he in Quong's sudden exclamation that the man Munn caught him with his eyes open.

He sprang from his chair, kicking it over in his excitement and before Old King Brady could make a move to defend himself, had him by the throat.

“A spy! A spy!” he hissed. “I know by his eyes that he has been taking us all in.”

Now, sudden and violent as this move on the part of Mr. Munn had been, he still did it all so quietly that beyond the noise made by the fall of the chair scarce a sound was heard in the joint.

The young man glanced out of his bunk.

Quong was picking up the chair and did not see him. Munn's back was turned.

Tighter and tighter those terrible fingers closed about Old King Brady's throat.

So tight was his grip that the old detective was unable to utter a sound.

He was in the hands of a professional strangler, he thought.

In a few seconds his eyes were bulging out and he was quite black in the face.

What few struggles he was able to make went for nothing, for the grip of those terrible hands was made more effective by the fearful pressure of Munn's right knee upon the detective's breast.

A moment and it was apparently all over.

Old King Brady lay unconscious in the bunk.

Munn stood over him, deftly tying his hands with a stout cord.

Old Quong was shuffling about the room, keeping an eye on the sleepers in the bunks.

Apparently no one was stirring.

The young man seemed to sleep sounder than all the rest.

Now, if it had been anybody else but Old King Brady, probably this would have been a finish, so far as life was concerned.

Not so with the old detective, however.

He was too tough by far to be knocked out by one choking.

In a few moments his senses came back to him.

As far as this was any help to him they might as well have stayed away.

There was a handkerchief thrust into his mouth.

He could not move hand or foot.

Suddenly Munn threw his long, sinewy arms about him.

Although Old King Brady was no light weight, he lifted him bodily out of the bunk and stood him on his feet.

“I know him now?” he whispered in Spanish to Quong.

“Who he?” replied Quong, trembling with excitement.

“Old King Brady, the detective.”

“Old King Brady! What do, senor? Bletter let Old King go.”

“Too late now; either he must die or the game is up. The spring Quong—the spring!”

The Chinaman ran his fingers over the wall.

Instantly a trap door in the floor glided noiselessly back.

A dark, foul-smelling hole opened at Old King Brady's feet.

“Say your prayers, old man. I'm going to push you down that trap!” hissed Munn, speaking in English for the first time.

“Don't you do it!” cried a voice from the bunk.

“One move of your hand and you are a dead man!”

“Young King Brady!” gasped Munn.

He looked over his shoulder and saw the young man covering him with a revolver.

But this did not deter him from his evil purpose.

Striking his hand upon Old King Brady's back he gave the detective a violent push.

Crack! went the revolver.

Munn dodged the bullet.

The trap door closed.

Quong threw the connection with the stairs open at the same instant.

Both sprang through it and disappeared before Young King Brady—if, indeed, it was the detective—could get out of the bunk.

CHAPTER VII.

BEHIND THE SCENES.

The announcement that the bank was broken caused the greatest excitement in Mme. La Vine's elegantly furnished salon.

There was a hum of voices, everybody having something to say.

Many of the gamblers pressed about Ben Barclay, congratulating him upon his great good luck.

Young King Brady watched the dealer and he knew that the dealer was watching them both.

"Now will be the time for the knockout drops if ever," thought Harry. "I had better get him out of here."

Just then he felt decidedly sorry that the thing had occurred.

Of course there could be no doubt that it would interfere with his case.

It could not be helped, however, and Harry had to make the best of it.

Ben worked his way out of the crowd and came over to where Harry stood.

"I suppose I ought to order up the wine," he said in a whisper.

"Don't you do it unless you want to get knocked out."

"Pshaw! I am not afraid."

"You have every reason to be, then. Better get out of here if you want to keep that money."

"But the case?"

"Is spoiled for the present. Say, we want to light out."

"That's what you do," said an elegantly dressed gentleman, who had come up behind them.

He was a man of most peculiar appearance and a total stranger to both Harry and Ben.

No need for us to describe him.

We have done that already.

In short, it was Mr. Munn, better known as the Opium King.

"Beg your pardon, but we don't want any help to manage our business," said Harry, curtly.

"Ha! ha! Beg yours, young fellow! I was only offering good advice."

"Offer your advice when it is asked for," said Harry, turning away.

"Mac, order up wine for the whole crowd!" cried Ben. "Lively, now! We are in a hurry to get away."

The order was given and filled by three colored waiters.

"Don't you drink a drop," Harry whispered to Ben.

"How can I help it?"

"You must help it."

"I tell you I'm not afraid."

It was impossible to make Ben Barclay understand his danger.

Young King Brady was wild with anxiety.

He saw, however, that there was nothing to do but to be patient.

Soon Ben was drinking with any one who asked him.

His head was completely turned by his good luck.

He seemed determined to fill up on champagne.

Mac, the dealer, sat behind the table watching grimly.

The Opium King moved about among the crowd laughing and joking.

He had two drinks with Ben and then ordered wine himself.

"There are no knockout drops needed here," thought Harry. "They know just what a fool he is."

He drank when the rest did and chatted and laughed with the rest.

Not a drop of champagne did he swallow, however—the breast bag took it all.

Half an hour passed.

Many slipped away, but Ben was not among them.

He began to get uproarious.

"Go on and leave me alone!" he said to Harry at last, when the detective tried to get him toward the door. "Don't keep bothering me. I'll go when I get ready and not before."

"I've a great mind to take him at his word," thought Harry.

He would have done so and thrown up the case if it had not been for the fact that he knew Old King Brady would not approve of any such a course.

Among those who did not leave was Munn, the Opium King.

After Ben's rebuff Harry drew off and stood studying the portrait.

He could hear the talk behind him.

At first it was all cards.

Then suddenly Harry heard Munn's voice say in a whisper:

"Do you ever hit the pipe?"

Harry wheeled about.

The Opium King stood right behind him.

Ben he saw moving toward a door in the rear of the room, accompanied by several of the gamblers.

"Out of my way!" cried Harry, pushing Munn aside and making a rush for Ben.

The next he knew he was spinning around like a top.

To Young King Brady it seemed as though a cyclone had struck him.

But it was only Munn who caught him by the collar and gave him a twist which nearly threw him off his feet.

"No, you don't, young man!" he hissed. "Ha! Ha! Ha!"

Harry cooled down instantly.

"It is the worst kind of bad business to lose your temper," Old King Brady had always said.

But Munn was apparently in a furious rage as he put himself between Young King Brady and the door.

"You're no gentleman, sir!" he cried. "Can't you answer a civil question when it is put to you?"

"I want to keep by my friend," replied Harry, controlling himself as well as he could.

"And so you shall, if you behave yourself. I ask you again, do you ever hit the pipe?"

"I'd like to know who you are before I answer."

"I'm the manager of this house."

"Oh, that alters the case—sometimes I do."

"Exactly. Well, your friend does, too, and I have no objection to letting you join him."

"You seemed to have just now."

"I only want to be treated with proper respect."

"I beg your pardon if I have failed to do so."

"That's enough. Ha! Ha! Ha! Fine painting that. I see you have been studying it."

"Very fine. Whom does it represent?"

"Madame La Vine, the proprietress."

"I thought so, but about that pipe?"

"Come with me, young man. I suppose you know we run a quiet joint here?"

"I've been told so."

"Never was in it?"

"No."

"Your friend has been, often."

"So."

"Yes."

"Suppose we join him now."

"Such is my intention. This way, if you please."

He led the way toward the door, Harry following.

It opened into a small passage out of which opened two other doors, one to the right and the other to the left.

The Opium King opened the left hand door.

"Right ahead!" he exclaimed.

The moment Harry started forward the door was slammed behind him and he found himself in total darkness.

"Hello! What does this mean?" he called out.

No answer.

Young King Brady began to feel cold chills running down his back.

He felt that he had managed the whole business in a very bungling fashion.

It was the unexpected that had happened.

From the moment Ben Barclay began to win all his plans were disarranged.

"This is a trap. They mean to separate us," thought the detective.

He listened.

All was silence.

"And they mean to do me up," he thought. "I shouldn't wonder if they were on to my disguise. Which way shall I go?"

He hesitated a moment about showing a light and then took out a small dark lantern and flashed it upon the gloom.

It showed him nothing but a long, narrow passage, which began at the door and ended in darkness.

Harry crept back to the door and tried it.

He might as well have attempted to move the rock of Gibraltar.

"Nothing for it but to push on," he muttered. "If I ever get out of this alive I shall do well. As for Barclay——"

Suddenly the lantern was dashed out of his hands and extinguished.

In the darkness a man sprang upon him and struck him in the breast with a knife.

Young King Brady fell to the floor and lay perfectly still.

"Is he dead?" whispered a voice out of the gloom.

"First crack, boss," was the whispered answer.

"Good enough! I suppose you wonder who it is?"

"That's not my business."

"I'll tell you, just the same, though. It's Young King Brady, the detective."

"The deuce you say!"

"Yes. I was on to him from the first."

"Don't want him sneaking round hyar, boss."

"I guess not. As soon as I saw him I made up my mind he should never leave the house alive."

"Seen him through de eye holes, boss?"

"Of course! How else?"

"Yah! Yah! Yah! Dat so! What's to be did, now?"

"Sure he's dead?"

"Why de blood is all running out of him onto de flo'; course he's dead. Yah! Yah! Yah!"

"Leave him where he is, then. We'll take care of the body after we've settled with the other one."

That was all.

A secret panel closed then.

The dark corridor became as silent as though death were actually present in it, which was not the case.

No; Young King Brady was not dead.

He was not even wounded.

No blood had run out upon the floor.

What the darky who did the stabbing took for blood was actually champagne.

His knife had penetrated the detective's breast bag and good Veuve Cliquot had gone to waste.

Beyond the rubber bag, next to the detective's breast, lay a thick pad of felt.

This had turned the knife, just as it had been intended to do.

What might have been the result if Young King Brady had not dropped as he did is easy to say.

Nothing but the precaution taken by the shrewd detective had saved his life.

As soon as all was quiet Young King Brady sprang to his feet and hurried along the corridor to its end.

He did not dare to use his lantern again.

This time he had to do it all by feeling.

He ran his hands along the end wall, but could discover no opening nor anything which seemed like a door.

"I suppose there is a way out," thought the detective, "but I can't find it. I must get back to where those scoundrels came in."

Back along the corridor he felt his way until he came to the place where the attack had been made.

He had no difficulty in locating it, for there was the champagne on the floor.

Young King Brady felt for the secret panel, which he knew must be here.

The search was a much simpler matter than one might suppose.

There was nothing in the way of a hidden spring that Old King Brady was not entirely familiar with.

His knowledge, acquired by long experience, he had communicated to his pupil.

Young King Brady solved the mystery in a moment.

The panel shot to one side and the detective stepped into another passage similar to the one he had just left, with the exception that it was winding, whereas the other ran straight.

Carefully closing the panel behind him he stood and listened to the hum of voices which could be distinctly heard.

A faint glimmer of light could be seen at the other end of the passage, and it was from that direction that the voices seemed to come.

Young King Brady crept toward the light.

He found that it was only a spot on the wall.

The light was merely the reflection from some other point further along the passage, which took almost the form of a semicircle here.

Young King Brady crept on till he came opposite the light.

It shone through the wall high up.

There was a short ladder leading up to the place.

The detective mounted it and then discovered that he was behind the scenes in the fullest sense of the word.

The light shone through the cracks of a little slide.

When Young King Brady pulled on the slide, which he immediately did, two round holes appeared.

The light shone brightly now.

"The eyeholes of the portrait," thought Harry, and he was quite right.

Putting his own eyes to the openings he found himself looking down into the gambling salon.

The Opium King was lounging upon a sofa, smoking a cigarette.

A tall, handsome woman, dressed in the deepest black, was pacing the room in an excited way.

"I tell you it is no use, Munn," she exclaimed. "We've got to close out here. The police are dead sour on us. It's only a question of a few days before we shall be pulled."

"Don't agree with you," replied Munn, flicking the ashes from his cigarette with his little finger. "The thing can be fixed."

"I say no."

"You know nothing about it."

"I know that the ward man was here to-day with a message from the captain."

"Well?"

"He demanded \$1,000 cold cash."

"Why didn't you give up?"

"I did. What else could I do?"

"Then what's the matter with you? That will fix things for a while."

"Wait and see," said the woman, snapping her fingers excitedly. "You just wait and see."

"No objection," replied Munn. "I don't mean to be put out of this nest in a hurry. If we have as good luck for the next month as we have had for the last week I shall be only too glad to drop off my perch and fly away, but I have got to see the Sultan first."

"When do you expect her?"

"Any time, now."

"How about this fellow, Barclay?"

"He's plucked already. He's sound asleep in the joint."

"Don't I know that? What's to be done with him, I mean?"

"Don't bother."

"We can kill him as we did the detective."

"Certainly not. We need him too bad for that."

"It was curious that he should have stumbled in here to-night and broken the bank?"

"Never saw the beat of it! Never saw such a run of luck since the day I was born."

"And never will again; but I'm off."

"To Quong's?"

"Yes."

"I wouldn't go to-night, Annie."

"I must. I can't smoke in my own place. It won't do and a smoke I must have."

"I'll join you later, then."

"After you have disposed of Barclay?"

"Yes. I shan't move him until everybody is asleep."

"And then?"

"Well? Then what?"

"Where to?"

"Leave that to me."

"It had better be Quong's. Let him be found there rather than here when he wakes."

"Rubbish! I tell you I have use for the fellow. He'll be taken to the hold-out."

"But what use can you have for him?"

"Don't bother your head about that. Get along to Quong's."

The woman hastily left the room.

Young King Brady continued to watch.

He was curious to see what Munn would do next.

Of course his anxiety on Ben Barclay's account was great.

Still he did not see how he could very well interfere to save the drummer from the consequences of his folly without endangering his own life.

One dose of that sort of business was enough.

Harry just kept on watching at the peep holes.

What happened next was certainly not very startling.

Munn produced a handsome silver mounted opium pipe and a black lacquered box containing a small quantity of the deadly drug.

He lighted his lamp, stretched out at full length on the sofa and proceeded to "cook" for himself.

Deftly he rolled the pill about in the tiny flame and twirled it into the silver pipe bowl, drawing long whiffs with evident satisfaction.

"He's an old hand at the bellows," thought Young King Brady.

He was sure of this when he saw Munn, after the pipe had been smoked out, lay it down, fold his hands across his breast and drop off to sleep.

"Now is my chance to find out about that man's secrets," Young King Brady muttered.

He determined to get into the gambling room at any cost.

But how to do it?

This was more than Young King Brady could determine for the next ten minutes.

He searched everywhere for some secret panel leading into the gambling room, but could find nothing of the sort.

Yet he was satisfied that some such outlet to the secret passage must exist right there, where quick work had to be done, in case the gamblers wanted to rob a man or worse.

All at once Harry thought of the picture.

"Great Scott! How stupid I am!" he exclaimed, half aloud.

He hurried up the ladder and, pushing the slide so as to

close the eyeholes, took out his dark lantern and went to work.

In a moment he had discovered what he wanted.

There were two brass buttons on the right side of the picture.

Harry pressed one and the picture itself began to move in toward him.

Pushing it back into place he pressed the other button.

This did the business.

A narrow panel below the portrait shot aside.

In less time than it takes to tell it Harry was beside the sleeping man.

Then the detective did the pickpocket act.

It was dangerous business going through the pockets of a man like Munn.

Harry had enjoyed one experience with his marvelous strength.

But he took his chances on another without fear.

Every article in Munn's pockets passed under the detective's eyes.

All were restored to their places except a packet of papers. These Harry coolly pocketed, thinking that they might be useful later on.

While working he made up his mind that the only way to save Ben Barclay was to call upon the police to help.

He boldly threw open the front door and stepped out into the main hall of the house.

The darky sat half asleep in the hall chair.

The instant he saw Harry he gave a yell.

"A ghost! A ghost!"

Quick as lightning Young King Brady jumped upon the man, caught him by the throat and clapped his hand over his mouth.

"You open that door and come with me or I'll turn you into a ghost mighty sudden," he whispered fiercely in the darky's ear.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE ESCAPE FROM THE OPIUM JOINT.

Quick action and a cool head did the business.

Harry got the darky out into the street inside of a few seconds.

The fellow was too much scared at first to resist, but when he got to the foot of the front steps he began to show fight.

"You want to hold your curses, Charley!" said Young King Brady, "if you don't you'll find yourself in the stone jug."

The words were spoken in a low, meaning tone and as he uttered them Harry managed to display his shield.

This fixed the darky.

He began to beg for mercy as Harry hustled him along toward the corner with a pair of handcuffs about his wrists.

Once around on the avenue Harry paused.

"What's your name?" he demanded.

"Sam Johnson, sah. Turn me loose, sah, and I'll do anything you ax."

"You've done enough for me to-night, Sam. You tried to stick a knife into me."

"Golly, masser, I had ter! You orter be dead. I dunno why yo' hain't."

"Ah, Sam, I've got a magic charm. You can't kill me."

"Golly, masser! Dat so? Wisht I'd know'd it."

"That's what. Who told you to stab me—Mr. Munn?"

"Yes, masser."

"Want me to turn you loose right now, Sam?"

"Golly! Guess I do! I'll nebber go to dat house no mo' if yo' will."

"Wait. You'll have to answer a few questions first."

"I'll answer any you ax."

"That gentleman who broke the bank. What about him?"

"Why he done got drunk an' dey toted him away."

"He's not in the house now?"

"No more."

"Sure?"

"I won't deceibe you. He's done gone."

"Where to?"

"Gib it up. Deyse hab anoder place somewheres over in Brooklyn."

"Have they taken him there?"

"Reckon dey hab. I helped put him in de ca'age myself."

"Where is this place?"

"Oh, say, now youse got me. I dunno."

"Sam!"

"Yessah!"

"Madame Le Vine did a little talking to Munn just now and I was listening. He told her that my friend had not been taken away."

"Den he lied to her. He's all de time lying to her, boss."

"She told him that she was going to Quong's opium joint to smoke."

"Guess dat's true enough. She goes dere right along."

"Yet she keeps one herself."

"Madam neber smoke in her own joint, masser."

"Where is this Quong's?"

"Down in Pell street, just off the Bowery, upstairs."

"What's the word at the door?"

"Dey hab seberal words, sah. Yo' wouldn't want de one Mass' Munn and de madam gibs?"

"No."

"Den try moonlight."

"What does that go for?"

"It's a word Quong gib me hisself."

"So you smoke there sometimes?"

"No, sah. Hittin' de pipe makes me sick. I've been dere for madam and de mass', dough."

"You're not lying to me, Sam?"

"May de Lawd strike me down dead if I am, sah!"

"That's enough. I'm going to trust you, Sam. You can go."

Young King Brady removed the handcuffs.

Sam vanished around the corner like a flash.

"Of course he'll go right back and give me away," he thought. "I must see the ward man. If Ben Barclay is still there he must be saved."

It was all Harry could do.

He felt the necessity of connecting with Old King Brady as soon as possible.

He hurried to the police station of the precinct, where he was fortunate enough to find the ward man, whom he knew.

Without going into details in the least, Harry told the ward man that he had a friend in La Vine's opium joint whom he wanted to get out.

"He won a lot of money and I suppose he has been robbed of it all by this time," he added. "I don't care anything about that. I don't want to make any complaint or have trouble, but I want to get him out. Can you help me?"

The ward man could and would. He told Harry to wait where he was and he would be back in a little while, bringing Ben with him if he was still in the house.

Harry advised him to take a carriage, and he did so, but when he came back he was alone.

"It's no go, Brady," he said. "The fellow had gone home when I got there. Say, you've been kicking up a deuce of a row in there to-night."

"Perhaps I have," replied Harry. "Business is business. I'm working on a case and I've got to do the best I can for myself."

"I'll pull the house if you say so?" said the ward man. "We are going to do it, anyhow, in a few days."

"Don't do it on my account," replied Harry. "I'm not in it. I'm only interested in my own affairs."

He hastily left the station, satisfied that Sam Johnson had told the truth.

Still, to make sure, he went to Reimer's Hotel.

Ben Barclay had not returned.

"He'll have to take his chances," muttered Harry. "I mean to recover those trunks and return them to their owner. The governor and I have undertaken the case and it won't do to fail."

After a few moments' reflection Harry hailed a passing hack and was driven to Pell street.

So well was he disguised that Old King Brady did not recognize him, as we know.

It was the same with the old detective.

So complete was his disguise that Harry never guessed the identity of the old man in the bunk until the eventful moment when he saw him lifted out into the room by the Opium King.

It was a terrible shock to Harry.

The moment he realized what was going on he turned on Munn and fired, as we have seen.

But he was too late to save Old King Brady, who went down through the trap door.

Quong and the Opium King then fled from the room, as has been mentioned.

This was only a ruse to finish their work and bag two detectives instead of one.

As he ran out of the room the wily Chinaman half shot the bolt which held up the trap.

He knew perfectly well that Harry's weight upon it would do the rest, and it did.

There was nothing to indicate the exact location of the trap door when Young King Brady sprang out of the bunk and rushed across the room.

He had made up his mind to arrest Munn if he could get him and he thought he could.

Never was any one more mistaken.

The trap sank beneath Young King Brady's weight and down he went into the darkness.

It was a horrible sensation.

Harry thought his last hour had come.

He fell through a shaft the height of five stories, landing in the cellar of the old house.

Somehow he managed to turn in falling and struck his head a stunning blow.

The next Young King Brady knew some one was bending over him trying to lift him up.

It was dark then, but in an instant a light flashed and Harry saw Old King Brady's face close to his.

"Hello! Hello!" said the old detective, kindly. "I thought it must be you. Hurt?"

"I don't know. I guess not," gasped Harry. "How is it with you?"

"Oh, I came down as easy as you please, landed on my feet and was just in time to see you follow me. You want to hold yourself perfectly rigid when you are falling, my boy."

"Great, Scott, Mr. B.! Do you expect a fellow to remember rules and regulations in a case like this?"

"You ought to do it. It will save trouble."

"It's too much for me. Say, you were tied up when I last saw you. How is it that you are free now?"

"Simple. I managed to slip the cords around my wrists and a knife did the rest."

"Quick as usual. This is a bad job!"

"Not as bad as you think for. Do anything?"

"Yes—a lot. And you?"

"Can't say I've accomplished nothing, but I'm not at all satisfied with my work."

"What are we to do now? How are we to get out of here?"

"Oh, that can be managed all right."

"You speak very confidently."

"Why not? I've been here before."

"You have?"

"Certainly."

"When—how?"

"The how of it was the same as it was done this time. I was dropped through that infernal trap door. The when was years and years ago, before you were born."

"Strange!"

"Rather."

"It's like lightning striking twice in the same place?"

"Yes."

"What was it all about?"

"Oh, it was long before the days of the Chinamen in New York. There was a gang of counterfeiters working in that room then."

"Did you get them?"

"In the end, yes; but they got me first and dropped me through that self same trap."

"Didn't you know the place when you came in to-night?"

"Never once thought of its being the same until I found myself falling through the trap, then I remembered."

"Hark! What's that?"

"Old Quong and the Opium King coming down to finish us up, I suppose."

"By Jove, you take it coolly, governor—what are we to do? Shoot them or let them shoot us?"

"Neither one nor the other, my boy. Slide in here."

There was a niche in the cellar wall close to where they were standing.

It looked as though some old coal vault had been stoned up there long before.

Perhaps this was the case, but Old King Brady happened to know that this apparently solid wall of stone was nothing but a door.

He pressed a hidden spring and it opened as noiselessly as if the hinges had been freshly oiled.

There was a vault leading out under the sidewalk behind it.

"If they know the secret of that door, Harry, we've got to fight," whispered Old King Brady. "If they do not we are safe."

He had barely time to close the door when a light flashed into the cellar.

The two detectives could see it well enough, for there was a narrow slit between two of the stones of the door.

Perhaps it had been arranged as a peep hole—perhaps the mortar had fallen out, but at all events it served its purpose now.

Old King Brady and Harry could look right into the cellar.

They did not see either Quong or the Opium King, as they expected.

Instead a woman dressed entirely in black, with a light black silk wrap thrown about her, appeared.

"So this is the place! This is the place where he meant to follow me up?" she said. "Oh, the villain! This is his return for all the money I have showered upon him! Blessings on old Quong for giving me the steer which has saved my life!"

She began to pace the floor in an agitated way, swinging her lantern as she walked.

"Know her, gov'nor?" Harry whispered in the detective's ear.

"No."

"Madame La Vine!"

"The deuce you say! Did you expect her here?"

"In the joint—yes. Not in this hole, though."

"You didn't expect to be here yourself, I fancy; but we mustn't talk any more. There's danger for this woman, my boy."

"How?"

"Hush! It is my opinion that——"

What Old King Brady was about to say never transpired, for at the same instant footsteps were heard outside the main door of the cellar.

This door, which had been securely locked when Old King Brady tried it, was opened by the woman when she entered, and it was opened again now by the Opium King.

He also carried a lantern and came stealing into the cellar with a cocked revolver in his hand.

Then Madame La Vine sprang out in front of him.

"Ha, you dog! You dirty dog! You ungrateful wretch! You would bargain with Quong to do me up!" she screamed. "See, I am ready for you! Shoot me, if you dare!"

"Annie!" gasped Munn, falling back in amazement. "Are you crazy? What brought you here?"

"Knowledge of treachery!" she fairly yelled. "Advance one step, Carrol Munn, and I fire!"

"Stop!" cried the Opium King. "There is some mistake here. Don't make a fool of yourself. Where are those two detectives?"

"Don't talk to me about detectives. Don't try to pull the wool over my eyes, for you can't do it. This is a day of reckoning for you, Carrol Munn."

"Oh, botheration, Annie. Reckon all you please, only just keep quiet for a minute. Quong must be crazy to let you into this place. What have you done with the detectives, I say?"

Instead of answering, "Black Annie" fired.

The shot missed the Opium King's head by about an inch.

In a moment the villain sprang upon her, dashed the revolver out of her hand and caught her by the throat.

Old King Brady knew by the flash of his eyes he meant to kill her.

"Don't try to take him, Harry," he whispered. "Stand by the door and push it shut the moment we pass through."

Then followed one of those bold dashes for which Old King Brady was so famous.

He flung open the secret door and thrusting himself forward, thrust his revolver close to Munn's face.

"Drop her! Drop her, or you're a dead man!" he cried.

"*Nombre de Dios!* The detective!" gasped the Opium King, half in Spanish.

Then he showed himself the coward that he actually was.

Letting go his hold he dashed the lantern to the ground and in the darkness made his escape through the door.

Five minutes later he was back again with six Chinamen, all armed with revolvers.

The power of this man over the Celestials of Mott Street was enormous.

We may as well mention right here that nearly two-thirds of all the smuggled opium entering the United States passed directly or indirectly through his hands.

Hence his name the "Opium King."

From Maine to California he was known to the Chinamen.

The ones who followed him now had come into the cellar to do murder if he said the word.

They found the place deserted.

To the Opium King it was a mystery.

So it was old Quong, the joint keeper.

Both were ignorant of the secrets of the place, but Old King Brady knew them well.

With Madame La Vine leaning on his arm and weeping convulsively, the old detective led the way out of the vault into the cellar of a Chinese tenement across the street.

From here to the sidewalk above there was no difficulty in getting.

When they reached it Black Annie drew herself up proudly and made a halt.

"Where are you taking me, gentlemen?" she whispered. "I don't want to go with you."

"You must," answered Old King Brady, hurrying her toward the Bowery.

"You are detectives?"

"Yes."

"I won't go! For what you have done for me to-night I thank you, but——"

"Well?"

"Let me free. I'll give you anything you ask."

"You can't bribe me, Madame La Vine."

"I'll give you ten thousand dollars."

"No; it can't be done."

They were now in the Bowery.

All danger of pursuit was over.

Young King Brady, who had been following in silence, now came up alongside his preceptor.

"You'd better make a bargain with her," he whispered.

"She knows where the trunk is."

"Yes, and I'll tell," said the woman quickly. "I'll tell all if you will only let me go."

"You've got sharp ears, madame," replied Old King Brady.

"I need to have when I work against the two King Bradys.

"We are not working against you, and you need not be against us. Walk along quietly. Don't think to escape by making any sudden dash—that will be no use."

"Am I under arrest?"

"That depends entirely upon yourself."

"In other words, if I will inform, I can go free."

"You have said it, madame," replied the old detective, bowing politely.

"Give me three minutes to think in," was the reply.

And Madame La Vine and the two detectives walked up the Bowery side by side.

CHAPTER IX.

THE OLD HOUSE ON THE BLUFF.

Young King Brady, as they continued on up the Bowery, looked upon the case as being as good as finished.

"She'll tell all she knows," he determined. "Wonder if the governor really means to let her go."

Old King Brady looked at his watch.

"Time's up," he said. "Is it a confession or is it the police station—which?"

"What are you after?" asked the woman. "Is it the man who was robbed in my place to-night?"

"I know nothing of that," replied Old King Brady.

"I do, though," said Harry. "Yes, we want to know all about that business among other things."

"He broke my bank. If the boys tried to get the money back again afterward, it's not my fault."

"What was done with him?" asked Harry.

"I can't tell you. I left him in my opium joint—that is all I know."

"He was taken from there."

"Then you will have to look him up."

"Stop," said Old King Brady. "We must begin at the beginning."

"Well?"

"This is a matter of jewelry trunks."

"I know. I'll tell," said Madame La Vine quickly.

"You are the woman in black?"

"Yes."

"You were at Summerville, New York, yesterday?"

"Yes."

"Well?"

"You want to know who stole the trunk?"

"Certainly."

"It was the man you saved me from just now."

"Carrol Munn, alias St. Regis, alias the Opium King?"

"That's him."

"He is your husband?"

"No, no!"

"About the trunk?"

"Well, he took it. He had the station agent in his pay. The check was changed while I talked with the drummer. The trunk was put in the down train. Are you satisfied now?"

"Hardly."

"What more do you want?"

"The trunk."

"Or its contents?"

"Both. Also those other trunks you helped to steal."

"They were taken to my other joint."

"Yes?"

"It is in Mott Haven, No. 212 West End Avenue. You will find everything there. Now may I go?"

"No."

"And why?"

"Because you are lying to me."

"Sir!"

"Oh, don't do the tragedy queen!" broke in Harry. "Your other joint is at Bay Ridge. It is on the Shore road, at the foot of —— Street. You know that very well."

Old King Brady was silent.

So was Madame La Vine.

By the appearance of her face the old detective knew that Harry had spoken the truth.

Suddenly she tore herself free and ran along the Bowery like a deer, shooting around the corner into Hester Street, passing out of sight.

Harry would have followed her, but Old King Brady caught his arm and held him back.

"What's the matter? Do you want to let her get away from us?" cried Harry, trying to shake himself free.

"Yes," replied Old King Brady.

"You are surely mad to let her slip out of our hands in that way."

"Not by any means."

"But——"

"Hold on, Harry. Keep cool. Step inside here. We are attracting attention. I want to talk."

Old King Brady led the way into a little all-night restaurant.

Here they seated themselves at a table and the elder detective gave an order for two.

"Now, Harry," he whispered, "just look here. We don't want that woman. What we want is the trunk. We also want to catch Carrol Munn, the Opium King, red-handed, for the very excellent reason that there is a reward of \$5,000 on his head for swindling a San Francisco bank."

"Well! Will it help matters to let the woman go? I could have easily caught her."

"I let her go on purpose. When she felt my grip on her arm relax she pulled away just as I intended she should do."

"But why did you do it?"

"Because she will go right back to Munn and warn him of his danger."

"I'll admit that; and then?"

"Then we shall be able to wind the case up in proper shape, which we can't do otherwise."

"I don't understand."

"Bless you, boy, if we went to that Bay Ridge house on a venture, chances are we could not do anything without calling in the police to help us."

"We don't want to do that. She had the police well in hand, as I happen to know."

"Of course. Begin to see?"

"Not altogether."

"Why, as soon as she warns him there will be an attempt made to remove that trunk from the Bay Ridge house—that's the time we want to be on hand."

"You are right," said Harry, after a moment's reflection. "I give in."

"I thought you would when you came to think the matter over. Now then, young man, you've got a lot to tell me. First of all, where is our old friend Barclay?"

"I don't know, and I almost feel like saying I don't care."

"Hello! Quarreled?"

"Not at all. I don't do that. The fool got drunk and fell into the hands of the Opium King. If he has been done up it is not my fault."

"I should feel ashamed of you if it was. Let's have the whole story."

"And so you shall, but somehow I can't help feeling that the case has been spoiled."

"Spoiled? What's the matter with you? We've located the thief and we've partly located the trunk. Go on now and say your say, and don't worry a bit. Remember this: it never pays to arrest your man—or woman—until the right time comes."

It did not take Harry long to tell Old King Brady all he had learned in the gambling den.

"You've done well!" exclaimed the old detective when he had finished. "Don't worry about Barclay. They are desperate, but the Opium King evidently has a use for him. For the present he is safe."

"I'm sure I hope so."

"You may be sure it is so. Now, for those papers. I want to look them over. Then we'll act."

Harry produced the papers and for the next ten minutes Old King Brady remained quietly studying them.

"Why will men write that which is sure to hang them some day or another," he mused as he handed them back.

"Just what I was thinking," replied Harry. "I suppose in view of that \$5,000 reward you want to go into this?"

"Most decidedly."

"What do you think of it all?"

"What I did not think before; that it is perfectly safe for us to go home and have a sleep."

"No, no!"

"Yes. There'll be no move made before to-morrow, except to watch for us. It is better that we should not show up."

"You are running a big risk."

"Allow me to be the judge of that."

"But Barclay?"

"Must take his chances. He should not have got drunk after your repeated warning."

"Isn't that rather unfeeling?"

"No. I am sure he is safe, and even if he is not we could scarcely help him by going there to-night."

This was final.

Harry knew the old detective well enough to understand that it was useless to argue further.

Nothing now remained but to go home and to bed.

They parted at Eighth Street, as Harry was not living in Old King Brady's house at that time.

The understanding was that they should meet at a certain corner in the lower part of Third Avenue, Brooklyn, the next evening just after dusk, and sooner if word came to Harry at a certain place.

No word came.

Young King Brady waited in vain. The only thing he did on the case was to go down town to the Maritime Exchange and consult the list of arrivals.

This brought him no satisfaction and about an hour before dusk he crossed the ferry and took the Bay Ridge trolley.

The corner in question was almost as far down as Fort Hamilton.

When he reached it Old King Brady was not there.

Harry, who was dressed as a flashy young fellow about town, grew very uneasy.

Considerable attention had been attracted as he walked up and down.

Every now and then a passing car would stop at the corner of the cross street, which was a mere lawn, to let out some loud couple.

Almost all of these people glanced suspiciously at Harry as they hurried down toward the Shore Road.

The young detective took them in without appearing to look at them.

For the most part they were actors and actresses.

A few were crooks, evidently.

One or two Harry personally knew to be such, and he took particular care that these should not see his face.

He counted nine men and six women altogether

All seemed to have business down the lane, but as there was a public bathing place at its foot this was not at all strange.

"What can keep him?" Young King Brady muttered to himself for the hundredth time. "I do wish he would come."

But Old King Brady did not come, and as it was now entirely dark and long after the appointed time, Harry determined to "go it alone."

In a general way he knew the old detective's plans, for they had some further conversation before parting the previous night.

Hurrying down the lane, Harry soon found himself in the Shore Road.

Here the bluffs overhang New York Bay and there are many fine old residences, several of which have been turned into club houses of late years.

There was a couple right ahead of Young King Brady.

He kept an eye on them as he went down the lane and saw them cross the road and go through a gate into a garden overgrown with trees and shrubbery.

Back in the grounds stood an old house on the very edge of the bluff.

At the foot of the bluff, which was about thirty feet high, was New York Bay.

A flight of wide steps led down from the rear of the house to the beach.

Here there were bath houses. It was a place well patronized on summer evenings.

Over the gate was a sign reading: "Paradise Villa."

Young King Brady knew the place, but until he looked over the papers taken from the pocket of the Opium King he had never imagined what its true character was.

There was no difficulty in obtaining admission.

Paradise Villa was open to the public at all times during the season.

There was a belvedere overlooking the bay to the left, in the garden.

Here a band was playing and drinks were being served to the people at the tables which were scattered about under the trees.

The barroom, which Young King Brady entered, opened out upon this belvedere.

There quite a number of men lounging at the bar, but Harry could see nothing of the Opium King.

He drank a glass of beer to avoid attracting attention and strolled out into the garden, seating himself at one of the tables.

Never had he felt more dissatisfied.

What steps to take he did not know.

Had he been working alone he would not have hesitated.

The trouble was he felt afraid of disarranging Old King Brady's plans.

"I wonder where they do it?" thought Harry as he sat there smoking and watching the lights of the passing steamers on the bay.

He felt morally certain that the place was both on opium joint and a gambling den.

But expecting every moment to have Old King Brady show himself, he hesitated for the best part of another hour.

It was now growing late. Still the old detective did not come.

"I must tackle the joint," thought Harry. "There is no use waiting any longer. Something has detained the Governor. So seeing that he doesn't come, I must go it alone."

He took out a dollar bill, crumpled it up in his hand and beckoned to the waiter.

"Charley," he whispered, slipping the bill into the waiter's hand, "they tell me there's a chance to smoke here."

"You'll have to see the boss about that, sir," replied the waiter in a low voice. "That is, sir, unless you are one of the gang."

"I don't belong to any gang. I drop in at Madame La Vine's sometimes. I was told it was just the same here."

"I don't know anything about it, sir. I hear them say, though, that there is only one password for madame's friends."

"Moonlight?"

The waiter nodded.

"You were never here before?" he whispered.

"Never."

"Mebbe you don't belong about here."

"No; I belong West."

"I guess it will be all right. You can try it on with the doorkeeper."

"That would be all right, too, if I only knew where the door was."

"First door to the left of the bar, sir. Can't miss it."

"Thank you," said Harry, and he strolled into the barroom.

There was the same crowd of drinkers.

People were constantly arriving in carriages and on foot.

Harry spotted a man leaning against the bar whom he at once sized up as a private detective.

"He's got his eye right on me," he thought. "His business is to watch the door."

He opened the door and passed through, but the man at the bar made no movement to interfere.

The reason for this was plain in a moment.

Beyond the door was a long, narrow passage lighted by a hanging lamp.

At the end of the passage was another door, and when Harry opened that a man six feet high stepped in front of him, barring the way.

"Good evening, sir," said Harry, bowing politely.

"Evening," growled the man. "What's the word?"

"The word up town is Moonlight," replied Harry. "I suppose it's the same over here."

"There," said the man, pointing to another door across the corridor.

So far it had been all plain sailing.

Passing through that door Young King Brady found himself in a brilliantly lighted gambling room, where *faro*, *roulette* and *rouge et noir* were in full swing.

Harry paused only long enough to scan the faces of the players and then passed down a flight of steps into the opium joint.

There was no trouble in finding it.

The colored attendant in the gambling room showed him the way.

As he entered the sickening odor of burning opium told him that he had made no mistake.

An old Chinaman came up to him and asked him if he would have a pipe.

Harry paid the fee and was shown to a bunk.

"Me bring cook in a minute," said the Chinaman.

"All right, John, no hurry," replied Harry, glancing at the other bunks.

There were two men and a woman in the bunks.

All seemed to be sound asleep.

As the Chinaman passed out of sight behind a curtain Harry glanced hurriedly at the faces of the sleepers.

One was an elderly man; in the next bunk lay a young and handsome woman, in the next beyond a young man whose face was turned outward toward the room.

"Ben Barclay!" breathed Harry. "By gracious, he looks as if he was dead!"

CHAPTER X.

YOUNG KING BRADY SEES THE TRUNK AND TUMBLES INTO TROUBLE THEREBY.

The first thought of Young King Brady was to wake up Ben Barclay.

Naturally, he wanted to know what had occurred since they parted.

One glance at the sleeper's face, however, was sufficient to decide him not to do anything of the kind.

Ben was badly bloated, and showed every sign of having been continuously drunk since the night before.

No doubt he had been continuously under the influence of opium also.

"What a pig he is," thought Harry. "By jove, if it was only for his sake I would not waste another moment on the case."

He had just time to pull away from the bunk when a young Chinaman came in and announced himself as the cook.

Harry took his place with the Celestial in the bunk and proceeded to smoke.

It was merely a pretense.

To get the full effect of opium one must inhale the smoke.

Harry did nothing of the sort.

He knew how to hold it in his mouth and then blow it out again.

Thus managed, the pipe had but little effect upon him.

But, of course, this is dangerous business.

There is not one person in five hundred who could safely indulge in such a practice.

He or she would be almost certain to wind up by becoming a full-fledged fiend.

The cook did not seem to understand what Young King Brady was about.

As soon as the pill had been smoked the detective fell

back on the head rest and announced that he had had enough for the present.

"No smokee muchee," said the cook.

He slipped down from the bunk and appeared to be well satisfied to get away so easily.

For the best part of an hour Harry lay there with one eye open, taking in all that went on.

An opium joint is not a lively place.

As a rule the fiends do little talking among themselves.

There was next to none here that night.

Several came and went, having their little smoke and going out.

Evidently this was not a joint for long stayers. It was altogether too pleasant out on the belvedere.

Ben Barclay, the woman and the other young man remained, however.

They seemed to be completely sodden with the drug and did not wake.

Such was the situation when the door suddenly opened and in walked the Opium King.

He was stylishly dressed, but good clothes could not do much to better his ugly features or hide the outlines of his attenuated frame.

His clothes hung upon him in bags and he looked more like a living skeleton than ever.

Starting one hasty glance around the joint, he said a few words to the Chinaman in Spanish.

Harry did not understand Spanish.

He thought the Opium King was speaking Chinese.

The Chinaman pointed to Ben Barclay and rattled off a lot of gibberish.

Then they went over to the bunk, pulled Ben out roughly and stood him on his feet.

The drummer half woke and eyed them stupidly.

"Come, come, Mr. Barclay!" exclaimed Munn. "You must brace up. If you want to get back your money and get out of here with your trunk, you must get a move on you right away."

"All right, all right!" growled Ben thickly. "Where's Young King Brady? I want to see him."

"We don't keep detectives in this shop," retorted Munn. "You come along with me. Don't you know I'm the best friend you've got in the world?"

"Oh, you don't keep detectives here, eh?" thought Harry. "Well, we'll see about that. By gracious, I've got to follow you fellows, at any risk."

The Chinaman left the joint with Munn and the drummer.

In fact his help was needed to drag Ben Barclay along.

Young King Brady, who had removed his shoes before lying down in the bunk, as most opium smokers do, stole after them in his stocking feet.

They passed through an inner door and through a dark corridor, thence turning into a room on the left.

Harry stole after them, well knowing that he was doing so at the risk of his life.

Still, it was business, and had to be done.

He saw them go through the door, but of course he made no attempt to follow.

This would have been mere folly.

Besides, Harry had another plan.

Out of his pocket came a well-oiled gimlet.

Noiselessly he bored a small hole in the panel of the door.

Clapping his eye to the hole he was easily able to see all that was going on inside the room.

He could hear all that was being said, too.

The room was fitted up like an office.

In one corner stood a large sample trunk.

"B. B." was painted in white letters on one end.

"By gracious, I've located the trunk," thought Young King Brady. "This case is certainly closing in."

Ben had dropped into a chair beside the table and sat there with his head leaning in his hand.

The Chinaman had disappeared.

Probably he had gone out by another door which opened from the room.

This worried the detective a little, but he stuck to his fort and continued to watch the Opium King, who was bending over the trunk.

He lifted out a tray of watches and pins and set it aside.

Then he took out another tray containing bracelets and long neck chains and vest chains and other expensive goods.

"Come, brace up now," he exclaimed, as he took out a third tray, which contained numerous odds and ends, little fancy images in gold and silver.

This he set down on the table before Ben.

"What do you want?" demanded the drummer thickly. "Why can't you leave me alone?"

"You know very well what I want."

"Go on now, and don't bother. You are always bothering me about those diamonds."

"Well, I want them. They are here somewhere, are they not?"

"So they are, but you won't find 'em."

"What value in stones did you have?"

"There's twenty thousand dollars," muttered Ben, half asleep.

"Come now, come now, show me where they are. I don't want to rob you. I only want to have a look at them. I'm a great lover of diamonds, as I told you before."

So it went on for fully ten minutes.

Harry had tried the door, finding it fastened.

He did not see what he could do.

"By gracious, I wish the governor was here!" he thought.

"Perhaps he could suggest something; but all I can think of is to keep on watching and see how this ends.

It ended in Munn losing all patience.

Suddenly he drew a revolver and clapped it to Ben's head.

"Show me where those diamonds are, or I'll blow your brains out!" he hissed.

Young King Brady was all ready to burst in the door when Ben's yielding made it unnecessary.

"Oh, I'll do it! I'll do it!" cried the drummer, aroused out of his lethargy at last.

He took from the tray a little silver image of a cat and touching a spring the head flew back.

Then he shook out several fair sized diamonds upon the table.

Munn seized one eagerly and held it up to the light.

This was all Young King Brady saw.

At the same instant a low whistle sounded along the corridor.

"They are on to me!" gasped Harry.

He flew back to the joint like lightning.

His stockinged feet gave back no sound.

The Chinaman was not in the joint.

Everything seemed to be safe enough.

Harry sat down upon a stool and began to put his shoes on.

"If I can only get out I'll go direct to the Fort Hamilton police station," he determined. "This place must be pulled."

But there was to be no such good luck as getting out without further trouble.

Suddenly Harry became aware of the fact that the Chinaman was watching him from behind the curtain.

Hurried footsteps were heard coming along the corridor.

"He saw me come back. I must cheek it out," thought Harry.

He remembered Old King Brady's experience in Chinatown, and clapped his hand behind him for his revolver.

Had the Chinaman crept up behind him while he was listening at the door and taken it out of his pocket?

Harry thought so then.

Still, he was mistaken.

Actually the revolver had worked out of his pocket and was lying in the bunk.

There was no time for investigation.

As Harry sprang to his feet the Opium King rushed into the joint from the corridor.

"Young King Brady or his ghost!" he shouted, drawing a long, glittering knife.

The Chinaman sprang in, too, and, seizing the stool, raised it to strike the detective on the head.

"Down with him! It's Young King Brady!" cried Munn.

At the same instant the window was thrown up and to his dismay Munn saw Old King Brady covering him with a cocked revolver.

"Well," said the old detective, who was in his ordinary dress. "Well, Mr. Munn, why don't you stick the knife in the boy? I would, if I were you!"

Instead of answering, Munn backed out of the door, his yellow face turned as pale as death.

The Chinaman had disappeared behind the curtain.

Save for the sleepers, who never stirred, the Bradys had the joint to themselves.

"Quick, Governor! Quick!" breathed Harry. "The trunk is here; so is Ben Barclay, if he is still alive."

Old King Brady came through the window.

"You should have waited for me," he breathed. "Those were the orders. If you had obeyed them all would have been well. Come!"

As he spoke, Old King Brady made a gesture which Harry knew meant that he must keep silent.

He was accustomed to these arbitrary methods.

The one thing above all others which made Young King

Brady a good assistant for the old detective was the fact that he never "kicked."

Now he followed his preceptor along the corridor.

Old King Brady seemed to know just where to go.

"Inside of two minutes he'll be back here with help," he whispered. "Harry, you were never closer to death than you are now."

They broke open the door without ceremony.

Ben Barclay sat there with his head on the table, sound asleep.

But when Harry looked around for the trunk he found that it had disappeared.

"Out with him!" whispered the old detective. "Don't lose an instant, my boy."

"Which way do we go?"

"By the window, as I came."

"And that will take us where?"

"Wait and see. No time to talk now. Help me get him up."

They seized Ben Barclay, pulled him out of the chair and literally dragged him along the corridor between them.

Too much time had been lost already.

Harry thought of the big six-foot guardian at the outer door.

Would the Opium King allow them to escape alive?

It indeed seemed very doubtful.

They could look into the joint through the door which had been left open, but could see no one there as yet.

"Leave him to me, Governor. I've lost my revolver," whispered Harry.

"Be ready to defend yourself in case you are attacked."

CHAPTER XI.

THE CAPTURE OF THE TRUNK.

If the two Bradys, with their wretched captive, had been one moment later the chances are that they never would have got out of the joint alive.

If the Opium King had not felt sure that they would promptly make their escape through the window they would have had to deal with him there in the joint.

Such was his instant conclusion, and he took other means to head them off, as will be presently seen.

Into the joint they dragged Ben Barclay, finding it as they had left it.

"Put him through the window, Harry," the old detective breathed.

He lent a hand and Ben was dropped upon a little platform outside the window.

Harry sprang after him and Old King Brady was bringing up the rear when the sharp crack of a revolver was twice heard and two shots came whizzing out from behind the curtain.

Both narrowly missed the old detective.

A third and a fourth followed, but Old King Brady was not in evidence then.

"Four steps and crawl under!" he called to Harry.

It was not necessary to tell Young King Brady a thing twice.

He descended four steps, supporting Ben, whose wits had sufficiently returned to enable him to help himself a little, and to realize who had him in charge.

The steps ran down the bank to the bath houses.

Harry and Ben got behind them on the bank, where there was just room enough for them to crouch, and Old King Brady instantly followed their example.

"To the right!" he whispered. "Crawl along the bank. Don't stand upright as you value your lives."

"But my trunk! Can nothing be done to get it?" groaned the drummer.

He was rapidly coming to his senses in the excitement of this rapid action.

Old King Brady's reply was not encouraging.

"You would have had it safe long ago if you had behaved yourself," he said. "I don't know that you will ever get it now."

"I was robbed. I was robbed of eight thousand dollars," muttered Ben, just as if that was any defense for his conduct.

"Pity it had not been twice as much," replied the detective. "Stop here now."

They had reached a huge boulder which lay embedded in the bank.

Crawling into the deep shadows which it cast they crouched down and waited for an order from Old King Brady for the next move.

"Look down there," whispered the detective. "See what we would have run up against if we had gone down the steps.

He pointed to the bath houses at the foot of the steps.

Standing on the platform before the houses were four men.

"I see the Opium King," breathed Harry.

"Well, take it out in looking at him as much as you please, for in a few moments you won't be able to see anything at all," the detective replied.

"What do you mean?"

"Look there."

"Hello! Fog coming up the bay."

"Exactly."

"Still, it may not come; the wind may take a turn and blow it all out to sea."

"I hope it may be so. Our plans are foiled if it doesn't."

"Your plans, you mean, Governor. I have none."

"I suppose not. Still, you have done well, and although you have broken orders, I take back what I said. I am willing to admit that you have saved time."

"I acted for the best. I waited a long time there on the corner, Mr. B."

"No doubt. I was very late."

"Did you come, finally?"

"Oh, yes."

"I began to think you never would, so I came along. Do we stop here?"

"Till those fellows make a move—yes."

"Are we safe?"

"Safe as we can be anywhere just now. Keep quiet; I'm watching."

"Wouldn't it be better to crawl up upon the road? We would be perfectly safe there."

"Quiet for a moment, Harry. I want to see what the Opium King does when he finds we don't come down."

"Then while we are waiting suppose you tell me what you have been about, Governor? I'm anxious to know."

"I presume you are. I—how is that fellow?"

"Asleep."

"Opium?"

"Yes, and whisky."

"A bad mix and one which has killed many. As I was about to say, I haven't lost a minute since this morning."

"I'm surprised to hear you put it that way. I supposed you had been working all night."

"No; I went home and had my sleep all right."

"Well?"

"By the way, Harry, did you see anything of the woman?"

"Madame La Vine?"

"Yes, of course."

"No, nothing."

"Still, I think she warned him."

"Can't tell. About yourself?"

"Oh, I've little to tell. I found that the steamer Sultan had arrived from Havana and I went to have a look at her. That delayed me—that's why I am late."

"But I understood she had not arrived."

"Who told you so?"

"Heard it at the Maritime Exchange."

"You didn't suppose she was going to come up to the city, did you?"

"I labored under that delusion—yes"

"It was a delusion. Nothing of the sort was ever intended."

"Where is she now?"

"Anchored off Romer Shoals."

"The deuce you say."

"That's what."

"You are sure?"

"I ought to know. I was down there and saw her with my own eyes."

"Find out anything?"

"Not there."

"Where else, then?"

"Why, we pulled the house!"

"Hello!"

"Oh, yes; I insisted upon it. They arrested all hands found on the premises. There were three Chinamen, the cook—I don't mean the opium cook, but the chef in the kitchen—Mac, the dealer, Sam Johnson, the doorkeeper, two other darkies, and one white man, whose position in the house I don't quite understand."

"What was done with them?"

"Oh, they were all locked up. I insisted upon it. The captain kicked, but fortunately I was able to reach over him. The thing was done so slick that I don't believe the Opium King knows even now that it has been done."

"They are going up the steps," whispered Harry.

"I see. Let them go in through the window before we make a move."

"Strange they didn't see us when we came out."

"Why, they couldn't on account of the platform."

"Then you don't think they have any idea we are here?"

"I'm very sure they haven't. There they go. It's a good time to get to the boat."

"You have a boat here?"

"Certainly. I came by boat. Left it around the point there and hurried up to Third Avenue, only to find you gone."

"I am very sorry, Governor."

"Oh, it's just as well the way things turned out. Shake him up now. We must be on the move."

There was but little trouble in arousing Ben then, for the effect of the stimulants was rapidly passing away.

Still, he could not remember how he came to be there in the bunk at first.

He seemed surprised at finding himself with the detectives and wanted to talk about it.

Old King Brady ordered him to be silent, however, and they all climbed down the bank and followed the stone beach around the projecting point of the bluff.

Here a small catboat had been drawn up among the rocks.

"That's mine," said the detective. "Now then, young man, is your head clear enough for me to trust you to stay here and watch this boat until we return?"

"I think it is," replied Ben. "I'm beginning to feel better now."

"It's more than you deserve."

"Don't be hard on me, Mr. Brady. 'I've been a very sick man."

"You've been a very drunken man—that's what you mean—call things by their proper names."

"Can you get the trunk? I suppose the diamonds can never be recovered, but I would like to save the rest of the stuff, if I can."

"I'm going to do my best. Stay quiet here now. We may be gone for some time or it may only be a few minutes. I can't tell."

Ben promised and Old King Brady told Harry to follow him back along the beach.

They stole on under the shadow of the bluff until they reached the bathhouses.

There was no one in sight.

The night was raw and chilly, which accounted for the fact that there were no bathers.

The tide was out and the two detectives were able to walk in under the bathhouses, which they did.

"Now, Harry," said Old King Brady, "what do you suppose the Opium King's programme is?"

"Give it up."

"Then let me tell you. He means to leave New York and sail for Cuba this very night."

"On the Sultan?"

"Yes."

"You are sure?"

"I am positive of it."

"But how do you know?"

"Mac, the dealer, has confessed. It was his intention to have gone with him, but we have put a stop to that."

"Where were they going?"

"To Havana. New York has grown too hot to hold the Opium King; a fact that he fully realizes—he means to jump the town."

"And take the trunk with him?"

"Of course. Remember, it is not only this trunk, but several others taken from the different jewelry drummers he and that woman have robbed."

"Then we must capture the whole business."

"Such is my intention. I think we can do it, too."

"Any plan?"

"Oh, yes."

"What?"

"Harry, I have been here before to-day."

"I suppose, of course, you would come to have a look at the place."

"I did, and I think I know just how he will try to move those trunks."

"That's half the battle; but what about Madame La Vine?"

"Madame La Vine is now on board the Sultan."

"You know that?"

"I do. I sailed out to the shoals."

"And saw her?"

"Yes, she was pacing the deck."

"You were quite right, Mr. B."

"About the madame?"

"Yes."

"Of course. She has been associated with the Opium King in his criminal work too long to leave him."

"It was only a quarrel, yet one would think that when he tried to kill her she would be willing to give him the shake."

"You would think so, but it never is so. Now, Harry, we've got to get down to business."

"I'm ready."

"I'll explain my plan."

"Wish you would."

"See these boats tied to the piles here?"

"I should have to be pretty blind if I didn't."

"I assume that they belong to the Opium King. You perceive that they can all be worked with oars or catrigged in a moment."

"I see."

"In one of them he will try to convey the trunk to the Sultan. Perhaps the other trunks are already on board. Perhaps they are all to go to-night."

"Hark! I hear somebody coming down the steps now."

"Right! Lay low!"

"Is it a case of capture, Governor?"

"Most decidedly. Don't make a sound, don't even breathe—just lay low."

By this time the man had reached the bottom of the steps.

It was the big doorkeeper.

Harry, hiding behind the piles, recognized him at a glance.

He came in under the bathhouse and began fussing about with the boats.

Old King Brady crept up behind him so noiselessly that his footsteps were not heard.

Harry was ready in front.

Both had their revolvers cocked for action.

"Good evening, friend," said Old King Brady in a deep, impressive voice.

With a fierce imprecation the man straightened up and looked behind him.

There was Old King Brady and a revolver under his nose.

When he looked the other way there was Young King Brady and another revolver.

"Pinched!" gasped the fellow in dismay. "Who are you and what do you want?"

"Your help!" said Old King Brady impressively. "Now we have it, Mr. Big Bill Bendall?"

The man turned deathly pale.

"So you know me, boss?" he said.

"Well, rather. Do you know me?"

"Old King Brady, of course."

"Need we go any further? You are wanted, you know?"

"I know. I'd like to make terms."

"You can do it in just one way and no other—no use talking outside of that."

"Name it?"

"Good, honest work for me until this job is over."

"And then?"

"Why, then, you go free, Bill, and everything remains just the same until I nip you again."

"I'll do it."

"Well?"

"You want to know his game?"

"Yes; first where does he think we went?"

"He has given up trying to find you. He thinks you must have gone up on the avenue with that man."

"He expects us to return?"

"Sure. He expects the house to be pulled, but he is prepared for that; he doesn't care whether it is or not, providing he can get away first."

"With the trunks?"

"Yes."

"I see his game. I'm here to head it off."

"You can do it, boss."

"Hope so."

"With my help, that is."

"Don't exaggerate your services. Our bargain stands as it is."

"All right. I'm not kicking. You'll have to take me away with you, though."

"I suppose."

"He'll kill me otherwise."

"It's a go. Now for his plan?"

"There's trunks, Mr. Brady, but I suppose you know?"

"Which are to be taken out to the steamer Sultan, where Madam La Vine now is; yes, I know all."

"They are to be let down there in a moment."

"Through that trap door in the platform?"

"Yes."

"I thought as much. Who does the letting down?"

"He does; the bartender will help."

"And you?"

"Remain here to receive them."

"Good enough. We'll be ready for those trunks."

"How about the Opium King?" asked Young King Brady. "Do we let him go?"

"Can't take him now," said the old detective. "The trunks must be looked after first and I am not disposed to run any risks."

"He's coming," breathed Bill Bendall.

"I hear," replied Old King Brady. "I'm all ready for him and for you, too, if you try to play me foul."

Harry peeped out from under the bath house and could see Munn and the bartender coming down the steps carrying Ben Barclay's trunk between them.

They walked out upon the platform and the trap door was raised.

"Hello! down there!" called the Opium King. "Hello, Bill!"

"Hello!"

"Everything all right?"

"Right as the mail."

The revolvers of the two Bradys still covered him. It would have been a dangerous thing if he had answered otherwise than he did.

There was some shuffling about on the platform and then the trunk was let down through the trap door.

Bill Bendall received it and the trunk was lowered into one of the boats.

"All right, Bill?" called Munn.

"All right."

"We'll go for another, now."

"Let's see; how many more did you say there were to come?"

"Four."

"Two in a boat?"

"Yes. Better hitch one boat to the other. I've decided to let Jim stay behind. Only you and I will go."

"All right. I'll attend to it," replied Bill Bendall.

Then the pair retreated and could be heard going back up the steps.

"Wasn't that done pretty slick?" demanded Bill Bendall.

"I tell you, my friends, I'm not stuck on this man Munn; if I could only see a little in it for myself I'd a blame sight sooner side with you."

"There's freedom in it for you, and there may be a little cash, too," replied Old King Brady.

And he added: "We'll see how we get along."

While they were waiting Harry looked off down the bay. The fog was rolling in fast.

It was very evident that it was coming to stay.

"Bids fair to be a nasty night," said Bendall. "I tell you, boss, it's only the fear of you that makes him willing to take his chances in this fog."

"Is he good for it?" asked Old King Brady.

"If he isn't nobody else is. He was once a sailor. He knows the bay like a book."

"Further conversation was cut short by sounds on the steps.

Another trunk was let down in a few moments.

It was larger than Ben Barclay's and considerably heavier.

A little later there came another and so on to four.

"Ask him if he is coming down?" Old King Brady breathed.

The reply was: "In a moment."

"Get your boats all ready for a start," added Munn. "I must get a few odds and ends into my grip. I'll be with you in two shakes."

Old King Brady thrust his revolver into his pocket and, taking out a knife, cut the other boats loose.

"We are ready, now," he whispered. "In with you, Bendall."

The scheme had been completely successful.

The Bradys had captured the trunks.

Harry got in the hind boat and Old King Brady went with Bendall in the other.

"Pull around the point and we'll rip up our sails," said the old detective, as they moved off into the fog.

CHAPTER XII.

LOST IN THE FOG.

Old King Brady was not much of a sailor. Still he knew New York Bay about as well as a man could.

Harry was not much better.

Of course he had joined in many a fishing party on the bay in his time and also had a good deal to do with it in the course of his business.

Still neither detective could be called competent to navigate the bay on a foggy night, and they knew it perfectly well.

"What's the programme, governor?" asked Harry, nervously. "I don't like the looks of things out at sea at all."

"I like them so little that I'm not going to take any chances," was the reply.

"You'd better not," growled Bill Bendall, "unless you know more about sailing a boat than I do."

"How much do you know?" asked Harry.

"About as much as a sick cat."

"I can beat you, then," said the old detective.

"Shouldn't wonder. It's a big risk, though."

"On a pinch I could navigate these boats across the bay."

"I'd trust you for most anything else, Mr. Brady, but I wouldn't like to trust you in this. I say again, it's a big risk."

"And I'm not going to take it."

"What then?"

"We'll land at the foot of Bay Ridge avenue. We can hug the shore all the way."

"That's better. Hark! By gosh, Munn has found out the trick that's been played on him."

"Bill! Bill! Where in thunder are you, Bill?" called a voice out of the gloom.

"Don't answer," breathed Old King Brady.

"I can see him. He's on the bath house platform!" cried Harry.

"He sees us, too," he added a moment later. "Look out! He's going to shoot!"

They were not a great way from shore, but the fog had come in so thick that they hoped to escape observation.

It was not to be.

The Opium King had already spied them.

He drew a revolver and fired several shots in quick succession.

One flew within an inch of Old King Brady's head. Another went through Harry's hat.

The language used by the Opium King as he shouted after them was awful to listen to.

Then the fog closed down between them and he was seen no more.

"Think he will follow us?" called Harry.

"He certainly will," Bill Bendall replied.

"But where will he get the boat?"

"Oh, there are others along the shore. Still, we have made a good start.

Old King Brady and Harry, who were doing the rowing, now pulled around the point.

Here the old detective's boat was found all right.

Ben Barclay proved himself a very poor watchman, however.

The drunken drummer lay sound asleep in the stern.

Old King Brady hastily aroused him.

Ben woke up, dazed, but he went half wild with joy and became quite clear headed when he found that they had recovered the trunk.

"What are you going to do with it?" he demanded. "These others are all jewelry travelers' trunks, too."

"Get into the hind boat and watch your property, young man," replied Old King Brady, curtly. "I've no time to answer questions, so you needn't ask."

"But I have a right to know. I don't want to go off in a boat in all this fog!" sputtered Ben.

"You have forfeited all your rights. It is as we want, not as you want," the detective replied.

Ben began to argue.

"Shut up!" said Harry. "Do as the boss says or light out, one of the two."

"If you don't get into that boat, young man, your trunk will be delivered to Darlington & Darlington, Jr.," said Old King Brady. "Quick! Make your choice. I'm not going to stay here and listen to your talk."

Grumblingly Ben got into the boat.

"Want me?" asked Bendall.

"Most certainly you are not going to leave us," replied Old King Brady. "Your place is in the forward boat."

Bendall took it and they pulled away.

Thicker and thicker grew the fog.

The string of boats was not a long one, but Old King Brady, who was in his own catboat ahead, could scarcely see Harry and Ben Barclay in the stern.

Trimming his sail, the detective stood well out from the rocks. He was afraid of the Bay Ridge shore, as well he might be.

He thought he would have no difficulty in locating the foot of Bay Ridge avenue in spite of the fog.

He had proceeded but a short distance when a sound heard off in the gloom caught his ear.

"Hist! Hist!" breathed Bendall. "We are being followed already, boss."

Old King Brady knew it. He had heard the flapping of the sail.

"Keep cool," he said. "He may pass us."

Then he gave Harry the danger signal.

The low whistle told Young King Brady just where to watch.

Suddenly a large catboat loomed up before them.

There was a lantern in the bow.

The Opium King was managing the sail.

The instant Bendall caught sight of him he gave a despairing yell.

"Look out! He's got dynamite! He's going to throw!" he cried.

Then, without an instant's hesitation, he sprang overboard and struck out for the shore.

The Opium King was equally speedy in his movements.

Raising his hand he tossed what looked like a round ball in the direction of the boats.

It struck the boat behind Old King Brady's.

A blinding explosion followed.

The boats rocked like a ship in a storm.

"Die, every one of you!" screamed the Opium King in a voice like a maniac. "If I can't get back my property at least I can be revenged."

Just what happened next neither of the Bradys fully understood.

Stunned by the shock, Old King Brady fell back senseless.

When he again came to himself he was lying half across the slats with water up to his ankles.

He started up and looked around.

Profound silence prevailed.

It was nothing but darkness and fog in whichever direction he turned his eyes.

"I'm lost in the fog," murmured Old King Brady.

"Lost in the fog and the boat is sinking," he added, after a moment. "This is a bad job."

Bad it certainly was, but not one thought of fear entered Old King Brady's mind.

He had been placed in far too many dangerous situations for that.

Like a sensible man he immediately started in to see how he could better his situation.

One glance astern showed him what the dynamiter had done.

It was not as bad as might have been expected.

Evidently the bomb had struck between the two boats cutting the rope which held them together and tearing the stern timbers slightly.

Through the break the water was trickling in, but it was not coming with any rush at all.

"I can fix that all right," muttered Old King Brady. "The shock must have stunned me; but what about the other boats? Perhaps after all they are not so far away."

He pulled off his hat, tore away a piece of the broad brim and began stuffing it into the break.

As he worked he shouted to Young King Brady.

No answer came back, however.

The atmosphere grew denser and denser.

I must have been stunned and I remained unconscious longer than I thought for," mused Old King Brady.

This was true.

So was another very important fact.

Old King Brady found it out after he had rowed around for nearly half an hour.

He might be traveling in a circle; he might be moving further and further out into the bay.

One thing was certain, he was lost in the fog.

CHAPTER XIII.

CONCLUSION.

Old King Brady might have shouted to Harry until he was hoarse, for at that moment Young King Brady and Ben Barclay were far away.

Just what happened to them will be explained later.

For the present it is sufficient to state that the middle boat was badly shattered and Harry, in his excitement, dropped his oars and found himself helpless to control the movements of the rear boat a moment after the explosion came.

Then the Opium King raised his hand again and another bomb was in it.

This dropped harmlessly in the water, however, for Harry whipped out a revolver and, firing, took Munn in the fingers.

Then the fog settled down between the boats and they were lost to each other in the gloom.

It would have been of some comfort for Old King Brady to have known all this, but, of course, it was not to be.

As soon as he discovered that he could not make Harry hear, the old detective set to work bailing out.

The thick felt from his hat stopped the inflow of the water perfectly, and Old King Brady was soon able to get the boat clear.

Then he sat still and listened.

Far in the distance he could hear a bell buoy ringing.

Old King Brady thought over the list of the bell buoys in the bay and came to the conclusion that he could not be so very far from shore.

"And, of course, it lies over on that side," he reflected, moving his head to the right. "I suppose the best thing I can do is to pull ashore. Certainly there is nothing to be gained by remaining out here."

He took up the oars and went to work again.

The sound of the bell buoy grew fainter and fainter.

Other sounds were heard. Hoarse whistles broke the silence every now and then and once a tug went whizzing past in the fog.

It gave the old detective a terrible fright, too, for it came within an ace of running him down.

A moment more and it was the same old silence again. Old King Brady pulled and pulled until he was tired.

It was now at least half an hour since he had recovered consciousness and he seemed to be no nearer the shore than he had been at the start.

Just then Old King Brady saw something dark low down on the water—it was a boat!

He pulled toward it. As he drew nearer he saw that she had been cat-rigged, but her sail was now in ribbons and the mast lay half over the side, attached by a single rope.

"That's the Opium King's boat. I'm certain of it," muttered Old King Brady. "I'd know it anywhere among a thousand!"

What had happened to it? Where was the man Munn?

Old King Brady found no difficulty in answering these questions to his own satisfaction as he pulled toward the boat.

Munn had overreached himself. One of his bombs had exploded and he had fallen overboard," he thought.

The detective believed it until he was close alongside, when his eyes rested upon the Opium King stretched out at full length in the boat.

"Dead, by thunder!" exclaimed the detective, for the man never moved.

It was not strange that he thought so.

The Opium King's face was covered with blood.

There was blood on his clothes also, and more blood in the boat.

When Old King Brady called to him he made no answer, but just lay there silent and motionless.

"Well, I've lost the trunks, but I've captured my man, or what there is left of him," thought the detective.

And he added:

"What will Chinatown do with the Opium King gone?"

The gunwale of the boat seemed to be badly shattered, but Old King Brady was able to make his boat fast to the ring.

He stepped across into the other boat and bent over the supposed corpse.

Then the old detective knew the truth in an instant.

The Opium King was not dead, but mad.

"You fiend! You devil!" he screamed suddenly, throwing up those terrible hands and clutching the old detective by the throat.

Once before Old King Brady had been given the chance to find out the strength of those hands.

He got it again now!

The fingers gripped like so many steel claws.

The iron sinews of those arms had lost none of their strength, terribly wounded though the man was.

"Kill! Kill! Kill!" he shrieked. "I'll kill you, Brady! I'll kill you! Only for you that fiend of a woman who has wrecked my life would be dead now!"

"Only for you those trunks would be safe on board of the Sultan instead of where they are at the bottom of the bay!"

"Only for you I should not have let that bomb slip which did the business for me. It tore my head, it crushed my skull, it laid my brain open and made me mad, and because it did it you must die!"

Tighter and tighter the fingers clasped themselves about the detective's throat.

His head was drawn down close to the Opium King's blood-stained countenance.

Human strength could scarcely endure this much longer.

So great was the strain on the old detective's mind that he did not hear the swash of a propeller nor see the dark outline of a tug which was now coming toward them out of the gloom.

Close to the boat it came before the detective realized its presence and uttered one gasping cry for help.

It was a despairing cry, but it was scarcely necessary.

Young King Brady stood at the tug's rail.

He saw and realized what was happening.

One quick spring and he was in the boat shouting to the captain of the tug to stand by.

It was a brave act, but after all it was not needed, for Harry had scarcely time to touch the old detective when he straightened up, gasping out:

"Thank you, Harry; you are always on hand when needed most, but there is nothing for you to do here, my boy, but to help me dispose of the dead!"

It was so. These stirring scenes had ended in tragedy.

Suddenly the madman's grip relaxed and his head fell back.

Dead he certainly was, and no wonder, for his skull was terribly crushed.

"Small loss to the community, though," remarked Old King Brady, looking down at him. "I feel a great deal worse about the loss of those trunks, for I make no doubt they went to the bottom before you were rescued by the tug."

"Indeed they didn't!" exclaimed Harry. "The tug came along and rescued Ben Barclay and myself just as the boats were sinking. The trunks are safe on board of her now."

* * * * *

It was a sudden but on the whole a very satisfactory termination to a highly important case.

Almost all the stolen jewelry was found in the trunks undisturbed, and the diamonds which Ben Barclay would have claimed turned up in the pockets of the Opium King.

They took him to the morgue and the trunks went to Old King Brady's office, where they were later claimed by their several owners.

Ben Barclay would have received his next morning, but in spite of the promise he made the Bradys he did not turn up.

The fact was, Ben continued his spree for a week.

When at last his money was all gone and he had to sober up he called on the detectives only to learn that his trunks had been turned over to his firm.

When, a little later, he called at the office of Darlington & Darlington, Jr., Ben got what he richly deserved—his discharge.

The Sultan sailed next day, taking Madam La Vine with her.

"Black Annie," the mysterious smoker at Quong's Pell street opium joint, never appeared in Chinatown again.

The Bradys were liberally rewarded by the different jewelry houses whose sample trunks were recovered.

One afternoon a day or two later a small funeral left the morgue, just a hearse and one carriage.

In the carriage rode Old and Young King Brady.

They were the only persons to attend the funeral of the once notorious Carrol Munn, alias the Opium King.

THE END.

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