

# SECRET SERVICE

OLD AND YOUNG KING BRADY, DETECTIVES.

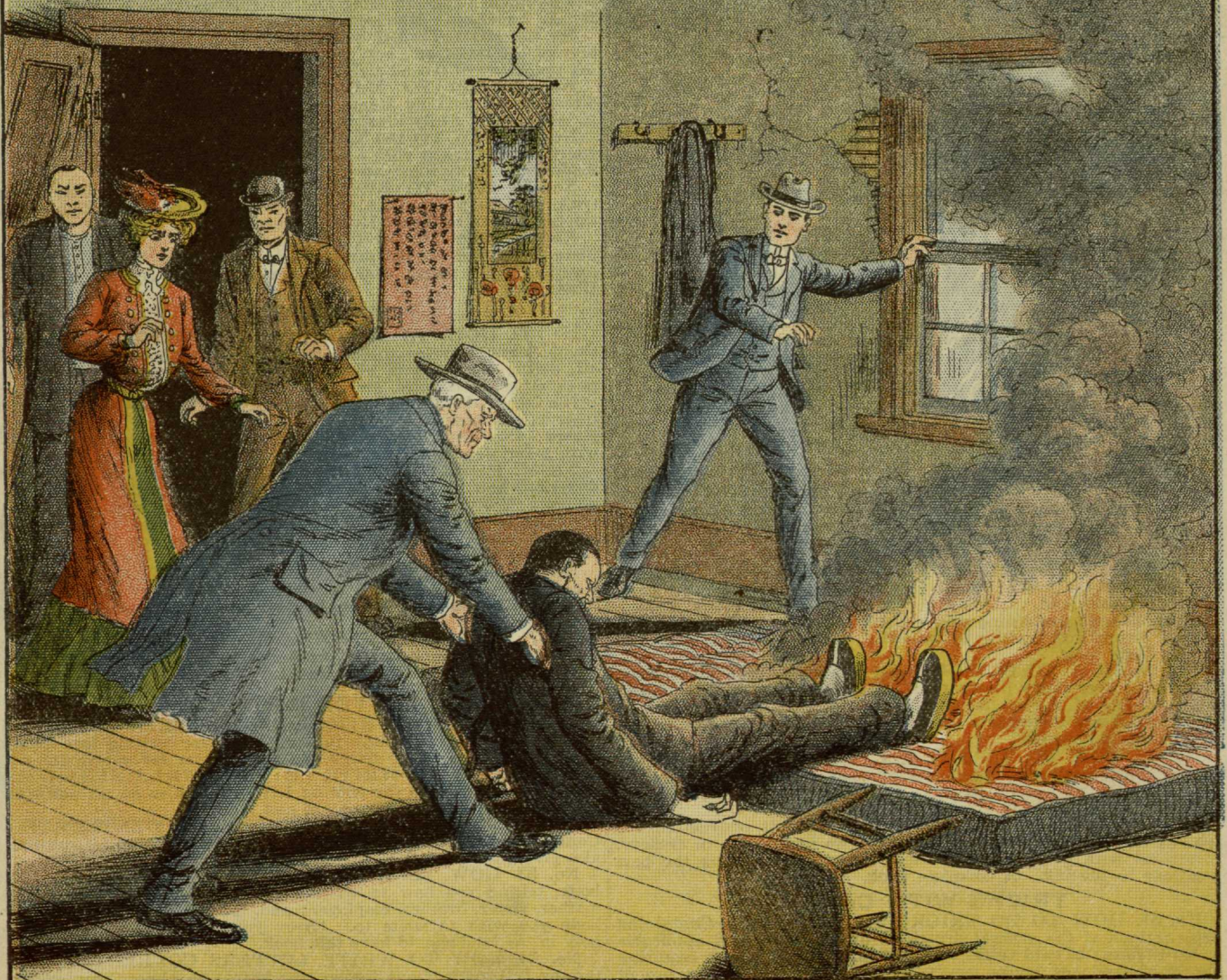
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## THE BRADYS AT MADMAN'S ROOST; OR, A CLEW FROM THE GOLDEN GATE. *By A NEW YORK DETECTIVE.*



"We must save that man!" cried Old King Brady, rushing for the mattress, while Harry threw up the window to let out the smoke. Seizing the wretched Chinaman, Old King Brady dragged him away.



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(Continued on page 3 of cover.)

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## OLD AND YOUNG KING BRADY, DETECTIVES

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# The Bradys at Madman's Roost

OR,

## A Clew from the Golden Gate.

BY A NEW YORK DETECTIVE.

### CHAPTER I.

#### A BOX FROM THE GOLDEN GATE.

It was raining.

We make this as a decided statement, and taken as a statement relating to Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore or any other eastern city it is a statement of little account.

But our statement applied to none of these cities. San Francisco is the place referred to, and when it rains in San Francisco it rains for fair, as everybody knows.

It was coming down in torrents.

As it rains during a heavy thunder shower on the Atlantic coast, so it had been raining out here on the Pacific coast for three days, and yet nobody gave the matter any special thought, for this was the rainy season, and everybody expected it to rain just this way.

Away down at the foot of Clay street by the wharves, tucked in between wholesale fruit stores, is the little beanery run by the celebrated Sinkers Sam.

Coffee and cakes, ham, corned beef and beans, stale doughnuts and sour bread constitutes Sinkers Sam's stock in trade.

It was late in the afternoon, too late for dinner and too early for supper, and business was slack at Sinkers'; there were but two customers in the place.

They sat at the third table from the door talking together in low tones, while Sam in his shirtsleeves and dirty apron sat by the coffee urn watching them out of the corner of his eye, with Wing Wang, the Chinese cook, occasionally peeping out at them through the slide at the end of the room, through which came the "ham and"

and the "beef and" when business was doing in the place.

One was a tall, elderly man dressed in peculiar style, the other a good looking, stylish young fellow who appeared decidedly out of place at Sinkers Sam's.

They came in at one o'clock and had been there ever since, and as they showed no sign to make a move we may take time to describe the dress of the elderly man.

A blue frock coat cut in ancient style, and big white felt hat with a broad brim and decidedly the worse for wear, a high, old fashioned stand-up collar, a stock and low shoes with white spats all went to make this individual a marked character.

Add to that the fact that he had tipped Sinkers to the extent of fifty cents for the privilege of sitting there, and it is no wonder that the boss of the beanery was rather curious to know who these men were and why they lingered so long in his place.

He would have been still further interested had he known that they were the Bradys, the most celebrated detectives in the United States.

"I must say, Governor, that of all the strange clews we ever started to follow up this is the strangest," remarked Harry, as Young King Brady is named. "How much longer do you propose to wait here? I am beginning to be decidedly of the opinion that it is all nothing but a fake."

"Don't be in such a hurry to decide," replied Old King Brady. "We have undertaken this job, and we may as well see it through. I propose to stop here until the place closes up for the night before giving it up. If nothing comes of it, then I suppose we may as well put it down as a fact that we have been fooled."

"And that's the way I look at it. Here, let me read the letter again."

Young King Brady took a dirty envelope from his pocket and drew from it a letter badly written and worse spelled, which, in an undertone, he proceeded to read as follows:

"To the Bradys, Detectives,

Lick House, San Francisco.

"Gents: You have now been three weeks in this town trying to get a clew which will lead to the discovery of John H. Marling, who mysteriously disappeared on the 8th instant, and you are no wiser than you were when you started in to work. And you never will be without my help. I am a man who likes to see industry rewarded, therefore I propose to send you a clew. Go to Sinkers Sam's bean and coffee joint on Clay street to-morrow. Be there no later than one o'clock and wait till the clew comes. After you get it make the most of it. Let us see if the boasted skill of the Bradys is equal to the solving of the mystery of the disappearance of this young man, whom I tell you right now is dead and was killed by me. If you can get me through this clew you are welcome. I am curious to see the result. I am the murderer—I am the man you want. I did the job for reasons you will never learn.

Yours truly,

"John Doe."

We have not attempted to reproduce the bad spelling of this letter; it would in that case be almost impossible to make it out.

Harry had read it over several times, and even he was doubtful about some portions of it.

Old King Brady took it from him now and studied it long and earnestly.

"It is certainly a very remarkable letter," he said.

"You are still inclined to think it means something?" Harry asked.

"I am."

"And I am not. I firmly believe that it is nothing more than a bluff. We have been watched, and this fellow is laughing at us, that is all."

"I don't believe it is that way, and yet it may be. I am more inclined to think that it may be just the work of some crank. You know it so often occurs that people accuse themselves of murders with which they have no connection whatever. Why there should be such people in the world I never could understand; but there are and always will be. Here comes some one now."

A young man entered the beanery out of the rain.

For perhaps the hundredth time the Bradys' attention was attracted, but it was only to be disappointed again.

A cup of coffee and a plate of sinkers was this man's errand.

He sat down at a table, ate them and departed, leaving the detectives to watch and wonder again.

"There's nothing in it," said Harry, "and that being the case, nothing can come of it."

"Time," replied Old King Brady. "Let us review the situation a bit. Here we have this man, John H. Marling, a New York banker who formerly lived in San Francisco, walking out of his Wall Street business office, and without having said a word about it to any one, starting off for the Pacific coast.

"In due time he arrived at San Francisco and appeared on the floor of the Stock Exchange, of which body he was formerly a member. He told several persons that he had come to California on special business, and that he intended to return to New York next day.

"An hour later he was seen dining at the 'Poodle Dog' with a very peculiar looking old man, who had a wild, uncertain way of talking, and whose clothing was shabby and dirty.

"With this man Mr. Marling remained in close conversation for more than an hour, their talk being in some foreign language.

"Several times the banker appeared to grow very angry and struck his fist on the table. At last the old man departed, leaving Mr. Marling smoking a cigar.

"Later he left the place, and going up Montgomery street changed a thousand dollar bill at a money broker's office. He then called a cab and was driven out to the Cliff House.

"Here he went to the Sutro baths and had a swim in the ocean, remaining in the water about an hour.

"Dressing himself then, he went to the Cliff House bar, called for Cutter whisky, took a huge drink, and was last seen walking up the rocks and looking at the sea lions.

"From that moment all trace of the man appears to have vanished.

"It is now nearly a month, and nothing has been heard from him. The assumption is that he tumbled over the rocks and was drowned in the Golden Gate."

"That is the way I understand the case," said Harry. "You have stated it several times and have got it down fine; but let me be sure that I understand the man's character fully. I'll ask you a question or two."

"Do so. One can't be too well posted, and going over the points serves to fix them in one's mind."

"Exactly. This man Marling is supposed to be a bachelor?"

"He is."

"And very rich?"

"He is worth thirty or forty millions."

"No will has been found among his effects, and in case his death is proved his legal heirs can claim his estate?"

"That's it."

"There seems to be no known motive for his journey to San Francisco."

"None which I am able to discover. We, as you know, have been employed by a New York lawyer who represents the son of one of Marling's brothers. What seems to be expected of us is to prove his death rather than to find him alive."

"Exactly. You think our lawyer would be rather disappointed if we did discover that Marling still lives?"

"It struck me so. I did not altogether like his way of talking about the case. If it had not been that I had done work for him before I think I should have declined to come out here now, in spite of the fact of our money being sure, whether we make a hit or miss of it."

Harry said no more for a few minutes, but remained idly drumming on the table.

Just then there was a great rush of wind off the bay which sent the rain swishing against the glass.

From the skylight above where the Bradys sat a stream of water came pouring on the table, which caused them both to spring to their feet.

"Hello! Something has broken loose!" exclaimed Harry.

"It's that blarsted deadlight!" cried Sinkers Sam, who in earlier life had been an English sailor. "Them sky-tops bees a bloomin' bother. Never tight; but then what could keep tight with sich bloomin' rains as they have in this 'ere bloomin' tarn?"

"I saw a man go by just now taking up the whole sidewalk who seemed to be tight enough," chuckled Harry.

"That there's hinted for a joke, I dare say," replied Sinkers Sam, grimly; "but hall the same, what I sye is the truth. When it rynes in Frisco it rynes, an' don't you make no bloomin' horror. You cawn't keep those top lights tight no way in the world."

"Are you doing a good business here?" asked Old King Brady, leaning his elbow on the counter.

"Well, it's so so, and that's about all you can sye," replied Sinkers. "Some dyes we take in a good bit; but when there comes a dye like to-dye, why they all goes fer the lush and we get left high and dry, hexcept what comes in on the stray like yourselves now; and if it hain't being too curious, was you still hexpecting somebody or something?"

"We don't know just what we are expecting," replied Old King Brady. "The fact is, we have had an appointment with——"

The door opened and an elderly Chinaman with a bulky package wrapped up in a piece of table cloth came shuffling in, dripping with the rain.

"Well, John?" demanded Sinkers.

"Want man what makee dough cakee," said the Chinaman, thickly. He seemed to have some impediment in his speech.

"Well, I think I'm the man," replied Sinkers. "What was the name?"

"Sinkee."

"That's me."

"Sure, boss?"

"Sure, John! What do you want?"

"I gottee box. Man gimme at Golden Gate. He say takee box man makee dough cakee down by Clay street wharf and givee five dollar. See!"

He removed the oilcloth and produced a square wooden box of some size, plainly directed: "Sinkers Sam."

"That's me," said Sinkers, "but I shall give you no five dollars, John. Not till I know what's in the bloomin' box!"

"You no givee—man givee," said the Chink. "Dat's allee light?"

"That's all right."

"Allee light, den. Good-by, dough cakes."

"Don't you call me dough cakes, you yellow rascal!" cried Sinkers, examining the label on the box.

The Chinaman gave a queer chuckle and vanished in the rain.

"Now it's bloomin' strange this here is," mused Sinkers. "Blarst my bloomin' heyes, wot's in the box?"

"Were you expecting anything?" asked Old King Brady.

"No, I was not," replied Sinkers, "and that's the queer part of it. I don't know any one who would send me a thing like this."

"Wouldn't it be a good idea to open it and find out what's inside?" remarked Harry.

"I suppose you mean that for a bloomin' joke again," replied Sinkers, grimly. "All the same, I don't just see where it comes in. Just what I mean to do, my boy. Give a fellow time."

Sinkers procured a box opener and pried up the cover of the box.

It proved that it merely concealed a second box inside.

"Well, blarst my bloomin' heyes, this is strange!" cried the butter cake founder. "If here ain't another box addressed to some bloomin' duck what I never heard tell of!"

"What's the name?" demanded the old detective.

"Why, it's Old King Grady—no, Brady."

"Hello! That's me! It strikes me, Sam, that what we have been waiting for has come at last."

"'Old on! How do I know you are the man meant?"

"My name is Brady. I am generally known as Old King Brady."

"I never 'eard tell of but one man that went by that name, and he was a New York detective wot's done some clever work in this bloomin' tarn."

"I am Old King Brady the detective."

"Is that a fact now?"

"It is. This is Young King Brady, my partner and pupil."

"And were you expecting a box from the Golden Gate?"

"We were expecting something. We didn't know whether it would be a box or a man."

"I'd like to be sure it's all strypte before I give up the box."

"Suppose you open it and see what there is in it? Wouldn't that be the best way?"

"Do you hauthorize me to do that?"

"Yes; as far as my authority is recognized by you I do."

"Well, I'll do it, then. Can you give me any idea what you are expecting in the box?"

"Well, no. I can't do that. I am Old King Brady, though. I can prove it by referring you to police headquarters."

"I couldn't leave the place very well just as supper time is coming on; but I'll open the box."

Once more the opener was brought into requisition and the lid of the mysterious box pried off.

A startled exclamation from all three followed.

Inside the box, reposing upon several newspapers, was a human head.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE MYSTERY OF THE HUMAN HEAD.

"Well, well, well! And what is all this about?" cried Sinkers Sam, recoiling from the ghastly thing in the box.

Harry, when he first saw it, indulged in a slight exclamation.

Old King Brady alone gave no sign of surprise.

"What's all this? What's all this?" pattered Sam, when no answer came to his former exclamation.

"Looks very much like a head, I should say," was Old King Brady's reply.

"But where did it come from? Whose head is it? What does it all mean?"

Sinkers Sam was getting excited.

Wing Wang, the cook, thrust his own head so far out through the dish slide that he almost lost his balance and fell into the beanery.

Something had to be done quick.

A customer might enter at any moment.

Before Old King Brady could speak Sinkers called out:

"Take it away! Take it away! Great heavens, man, this will ruin my trade!"

"This thing has got to be looked into!" said Old King Brady, picking up the box and starting into the kitchen.

"Not there! Not there!" shouted Sinkers. "Suppose some one sees it out of the windows behind us! Man, I'll be arrested for murder next!"

"Take it away! No comme in here!" cried Wing Wang, barring the door with his weazened form. "Dey say me cookee rats. Dey see dat, den dey say me cookee heads! Go away! Go away!"

"Out of my way, you pig-tailed misfit!" cried Old King Brady, pushing the chink aside. "We have got to stand this thing somewhere until I can see where we are at."

But Sinkers solved the problem.

Curiosity got the better of business policy, and Sinkers locked the front door and pulled down the shade.

"They will think I've gone to some bloomin' funeral," he said. "Come, bring the thing out before them fellers in the Eytalian's kitchen on Drum street get sight of it out their back windows. We are done up if they do!"

Again Old King Brady picked up the box and returned to the beanery, followed by Harry and Wing Wang.

"Now do we get a chance to look?" demanded Young King Brady, impatiently.

Without answering Old King Brady lifted the ghastly thing out by the hair.

It was the head of a man of about sixty.

The hair was gray and the features were strongly marked.

Apparently the dead man was a German.

For a few moments no one spoke.

"What do you think?" asked Young King Brady then.

"Did you know him?" demanded Sinkers, in the same breath.

"Who killee him? Melican highbinders?" demanded Wing Wang.

"Get out the photograph, Harry!" ordered the old detective.

And then when it was produced all exclaimed in the same breath:

"That is the man!"

Sinkers began to ply the detective with questions.

"My friend," said Old King Brady, "I can answer none of these questions that you ask, for I know nothing of this business. In a minute I will give such explanation as I can. Have patience until then. Harry, get out and find a cab."

Young King Brady immediately left the beanery.

The old detective then took Sinkers Sam into his confidence as far as was desirable.

He showed him the letter among other things.

The beanery keeper showed himself a man of intelligence.

It is not necessary to reproduce his peculiar dialect any further.

He had read of the Marling disappearance case in the newspapers, and was much interested when Old King Brady informed him that the photograph was that of the missing man.

"Do you know any reason why your place should have been selected to carry out this bold scheme?" Old King Brady asked.

"Indeed I don't," was the reply. "I never knew John H. Marling. The papers stated that he used to do business here in San Francisco, but it was before my time."

Old King Brady was examining the papers in the bottom of the box.

They consisted of a part of a copy of the "Morning Call" of the day before, and a part of the "Examiner," a week old.

As Old King Brady shook them a card dropped out.

There was a piece of string to it, and it appeared to

have slipped from the head, to which it had probably been fastened.

Upon the card was written:

"Here is your clew from the Golden Gate."

"Sam," said Old King Brady, "do you know anybody living down by the Golden Gate who would have been likely to pick out your place for the purpose of throwing this bluff at us?"

"No," was the reply. "I don't know anybody living down that way. But there are so many come to my place. So many know me, whom I do not know. Is it strange that my place should have been picked out for the job?"

"Perhaps not. It is all strange enough, though."

"How long do you think that man has been dead, boss?"

"Not more than twenty-four hours, I should say. That is the first thing to ascertain."

"What do you propose to do?"

"To take this thing to police headquarters. I cannot keep it. They must decide."

"Will the matter get into the papers. It will be sure to hurt my business if it does."

"I don't think it will; and I shall make it my business to try and keep it out. Ah, here comes the cab. Now, Sam, you have had some trouble on my account, and I am willing to pay."

Sinkers Sam accepted a ten dollar note handed over by the detective, and probably considered himself the gainer by the transaction when the Bradys with their box rolled away in the cab.

Ten minutes later the detectives were closeted with the chief of the San Francisco police.

Upon the table before them rested the clew from the Golden Gate, while the chief was studying the photograph which Harry had again produced.

"It looks like him. It certainly looks like him," the chief remarked.

"The resemblance is very strong," replied Old King Brady; "but still there are points of difference. It is not easy to be sure in a case like this."

"It should be proved first of all."

"First, it is necessary to ascertain how long this person has been dead."

"Yes."

"Next to find some person who knew John H. Marling in life."

"That is easily done."

"But before anything is done, we must know how we stand in this matter in reference to the police."

"That point can be decided right now. Here in San Francisco we have known Old King Brady too long and too well to have the least desire to interfere with him. The case is entirely in your hands, for the present at least."

"Thank you very much. And the matter can be left out of the papers?"

"Yes; if you desire."

"Again thanks. One word more. Is there any suspicious person who holds out in the neighborhood of the Golden Gate?"

"None that I personally know of. There may be without my knowledge, however, and I shall make it my business to ascertain."

"Very good. Now we will begin. First, we want a surgeon to decide the time of this man's death."

"Dr. Bartlett acts for the police. I have already sent for him."

"Good! That point decided, I shall try to find some member of the Stock Exchange who knew Marling."

"It is late in the day for that. The Exchange has already closed."

"I presume any one of the older members would answer. Can't you give me a letter to one, and I will send my partner out to look him up at once?"

"Yes. There is old man Barton, the stock broker."

The chief went to his desk and wrote a few hasty lines to the broker.

"If he is not in his office he can probably be found at his house," he remarked. "He lives in Sutter street, near Leavenworth. His name is in the directory, of course."

Harry was despatched with the letter.

"Of course," remarked the chief, "the thing to do would be to find out the Chink who brought the box; but how?"

"That's the trouble," replied Old King Brady. "It would be like looking for a needle in a haystack."

"That's what! It was such a shrewd move, addressing the box to Sinkers Sam. Not dreaming it was for you, I suppose you did not particularly observe the fellow."

"On the contrary, I particularly observed every person who came into the beanery during my long wait there."

"And would you know this Chink again? They all look so much alike."

"I should know him."

"May I ask how?"

"In this instance identification will be easy. The man had a small piece gone from the upper lobe of his left ear. It looked as if it might have been bitten off."

"I see you are the same old sixpence, Brady. Nothing escapes you."

"My dear sir, when you have been in the business as many years as I have you—oh, here comes the doctor, I judge."

A gentleman had opened the door of the outer office and was hurrying through unannounced.

"Yes," replied the chief, rising.

"Dr. Bartlett, let me introduce you to Old King Brady," he said, and then closed the door.

"Well, gentlemen, what on earth have you got here?" demanded Dr. Bartlett, surveying the ghastly object on the table.

"That is what you have been sent for to help us decide," replied the chief. "We want your opinion on two points. First, how long has this man been dead, and incidentally, if you can tell us what was the cause of his death? Next,

is this the head of the man here photographed? Now, doctor, pitch in. It is up to you to help us out in this matter if you can."

Dr. Bartlett was evidently a man who understood his business.

The ghastly clew from the Golden Gate had no terrors for him. He turned it over and over and examined it in every part.

Then he carefully examined the photograph and seemed to be studying each feature.

"Well, gentlemen, I am ready with my answers," he said, at last.

"Good! Let's have them," replied Old King Brady.

"In the first place, although it may seem otherwise to you, that man has been dead for weeks."

"Impossible!" cried the chief.

"A fact," said the doctor, firmly. "In the second place, I do not think that this is the head of the man of the photograph, although the resemblance is very strong."

"My opinion now," said Old King Brady. "The clew from the Golden Gate is no clew at all, but simply a mere bluff."

### CHAPTER III.

#### THE BRADYS LOCATE MADMAN'S ROOST.

While Old King Brady was thus discussing the situation with Dr. Bartlett and the chief of police Harry and Broker Barton were suddenly announced.

Young King Brady had been fortunate enough to find the broker in his office.

The old man informed him that he had known John H. Marling very well, and that he was one of those who had talked with him on the floor of the Exchange the day he disappeared.

Of course he was the very man the Bradys wanted in the present emergency.

Harry hurried him to Washington street, and here he was now.

The chief went out into the other office to meet him, and having sworn the broker to secrecy, brought him in.

Broker Barton was most decided in his statements.

"That is not John H. Marling's head," he announced.

"Do you recognize it as the head of any one you know?" inquired Old King Brady.

The broker at first said he did not, but then he seemed to hesitate.

"It looks like Marling. There is no denying it," he suddenly said.

"We want to be sure of our ground here," remarked Old King Brady. "Take your time, Mr. Barton. There is no haste."

"Let me see the photograph," said the broker.

Old King Brady handed it over, and the broker studied it long and earnestly.

"I can't be sure," he said, at last. "This is certainly Marling's picture, as I knew him. It looks like the head."

"Wait a minute," interposed Old King Brady. "Dr. Bartlett, you were very certain that this head differed from the head in the picture. On what did you base your opinion?"

"Look!" said Dr. Bartlett, quietly, and he laid his finger upon a peculiar scar upon the upper part of the forehead of the clew from the Golden Gate.

"A scar," said Old King Brady. "Nothing recent, though."

"No; that wound was made years ago. There is no trace of it on the picture."

"That is true. Still, it may have been removed from the negative by the photographer."

"It is possible. I hardly think it, though."

"Nor do I. Anything else?"

"No; I judged by that alone."

"Now, Mr. Barton, tell us what is in your mind," said Old King Brady, turning suddenly upon the broker.

"I see you read my thoughts," replied Mr. Barton. "It is only this: Marling had a brother who used to be in business with him. They looked very much alike. A strange thing about it, too. He mysteriously disappeared many years ago."

"Under what circumstances?"

"If I remember right, they were very similar to those of John H. Marling's disappearance. He walked out of the office, was seen around town for an hour or so at one place and another, and then vanished."

"This is interesting. Did John H. Marling make no effort to find him?"

"I believe there were some people who thought that he did not exert himself as much as he might have done. I really can't remember the details. You see it happened over twenty years ago."

"Was this brother married?"

"I believe not."

"Then he cannot be the father of the young man who has put in a claim to the Marling estate?"

"I suppose not, under the circumstances."

"What was the given name of this man?"

"I don't know. It can easily be ascertained."

"You have no further information to give us?"

"None whatever."

Broker Barton withdrew soon after this.

When he had departed Old King Brady turned to Dr. Bartlett again.

"Doctor, what makes you so sure that this is the head of a man dead many days?" he asked.

Dr. Bartlett gave his reasons.

They were based upon various surgical points, which need not be dealt upon here.

The doctor was very emphatic about it, though.

"I will stake my professional reputation upon it," he declared.

"It is now over a month since John H. Marling dis-



appeared," said Old King Brady. "Do you think this man can be dead as long as that?"

"I do," replied the doctor.

"But how has this head been preserved?"

"That is what puzzles me. It has not been embalmed. I should like to study into the case a bit. What do you say to my taking charge of this clew of yours and reporting later on?"

"I agree to that if the chief does," replied Old King Brady.

The chief agreed and so the matter was settled.

Shortly afterward the Bradys withdrew.

It was still raining in torrents, but the detectives stood together on the sidewalk under an umbrella for a few minutes before entering the cab.

"You are not going to lose to-night, are you, Governor?" Harry asked.

"Certainly not," replied Old King Brady. "I propose to go to work at once."

"I supposed you would. What is to be our first move?"

"There are just two things to do, Harry. One is to find the Chinaman who brought the box to Sinkers Sam's, the other to ascertain whereabouts in the neighborhood of the Golden Gate it came from, if it actually came from there at all?"

"Which comes first?"

"Well, we still have an hour or so before dark. I think we had better start in with the Golden Gate investigation. Night is the time to do Chinatown. We can take that end later on."

"You don't despair of finding the Chink who brought the box, then?"

"Not by any means. On the contrary, I regard that as our most promising hold."

"Suppose we divide forces? I can run down to the Gate and you can begin on Chinatown right now."

"No; we will keep together. Come, in with you. I am only going a little way in this cab. We may be watched. It is necessary in that case to throw the watchers off the scent."

The Bradys left the cab at the corner of Pine and Polk streets and proceeded to the Cliff House in the rain.

They were now at the entrance to the bay of San Francisco, the far famed Golden Gate.

But in spite of the fame of this noted spot there are many who may read these lines who have never seen it, and very likely never will.

For this reason we are going to describe it. Those who know all about the Gate may cut this part of our story out.

San Francisco is a city of many hills. Starting at the edge of the bay, it rises to the top of a rocky ridge which originally, at most points, was covered with a vast accumulation of sand.

These sand hills extended south toward the Presidio, as the fort which guarded the entrance to the harbor was called in Spanish times, and which is now a government

military station; and then these hills, growing lower, reach on to the mouth of the harbor, where the cliffs crop out again.

Beyond this lies the Pacific ocean, for here the land takes a turn. By following the above line thus far one comes to the Golden Gate, the narrowest point of the bay.

Here on the bluff stands the famous Cliff House, and here are located the Sutro baths, a gift to the city by one of Frisco's many millionaires.

They are the finest sea baths in the world, and are frequented by everybody at all seasons, for it is never too cold to bathe in the ocean here.

Near the baths are the Seal Rocks.

These are a number of rocky islets rising out of the ocean where myriads of seals and sea lions are always to be seen sunning themselves on the rocks, diving and squirting water at each other, while the air resounds with their wild cries.

The Seal Rocks are one of the sights of San Francisco. The seals and sea lions are protected by law. To kill one is unlawful.

On the opposite side of the Gate rise high green hills, dotted with villas and towns, while among them rises Mount Tamalpais to a height of several thousand feet; and beyond that again, far in the distance, the rocky peak of Monte Diablo—the Devil's mountain.

All these things go to make up one of the most grandly picturesque bits of scenery in the world.

The Bradys wound up at the Cliff House, and the first thing they did was to sit down to one of the excellent dinners served there.

"We can just as well investigate while we are eating as any other way," Old King Brady remarked.

His intention was to tackle the waiter.

This man proved to be a young Italian, and a very intelligent fellow.

Old King Brady waited until near the end of the dinner, and then inquired if he had been long at the hotel.

"About a year," the waiter said.

"Do you live here all the time?" asked Old King Brady.

"Yes," was the reply.

"And know every one hereabouts?"

The waiter knew but few persons. He had but little time for himself.

"I was looking for a cousin of mine who lives somewhere down this way," said Old King Brady.

"What is the name?"

"Casey—James Casey. He is a peculiar old fellow and lives by himself. The chances are he is not much liked by his neighbors. I thought you might know of him."

"I never heard of any one of that name; but there is a man like what you say who lives on Eagle street. Everybody is afraid of him. They say he is crazy. I don't think any one knows his name."

Now here was one of Old King Brady's happy hits.

His description of his mythical cousin was the merest bluff.

Assuming that the mysterious clew actually came from the vicinity of the Golden Gate, Old King Brady assumed that it must have come from a mysterious man, or at least such was liable to have been the case.

Old King Brady inquired particularly about the location of Eagle street and found that it lay back from the water's edge at some little distance from the Cliff House, as you go toward Lone Mountain cemetery.

After dinner, spreading his umbrella, he and Harry walked in that direction.

They soon found it, and discovered that it was a street not fully built up.

One prominent object rose before them as they turned into Eagle street.

This was a small, octagonal frame house standing by itself on top of a sand hill.

The grade of Eagle street appeared to have been lowered, and this house occupied the old grade.

A flight of wooden steps went up in the front about half way.

For the other half one had to climb a ladder which rested on the top of the steps.

Either the steps had never been completed, or they had rotted away. It was difficult to tell which.

"That's a queer looking joint," remarked Harry. "It must be the place the waiter meant."

"It's a wonder he wouldn't describe it more particularly," replied Old King Brady; "but then some people are very unobserving. We will inquire into that queer old roost."

There was a corner saloon further along which looked singularly out of place in this neighborhood.

The Bradys pushed on to it and found that its principal feature was a large bowling alley in the rear.

It seemed to be a very respectable sort of a place, and the young man at the bar was bright and intelligent.

Old King Brady ordered soft drinks and cigars, and as there were but very few people in the place that rainy night he had no trouble in getting the bartender to talk.

"That place?" said the young fellow; "why, you must be a stranger in the neighborhood if you don't know it. That's Madman's Roost."

"It looks the roost part of it all right," replied the detective; "but where does the madman come in?"

"It used to be occupied by a man named Appleby, who was crazy," was the reply. "They say he built it and lived there alone for many years. I don't know much about it myself. I haven't been around here very long."

"Doesn't this Appleby live there now?"

"I guess not. I understand he is dead."

"Who does live there?"

"An old fellow named—blest if I don't forget his name. It's a long German name—a regular jawbreaker. He's a humpback and ugly enough to scare the crows."

"Peculiar sort of a person probably."

"I should say he was. He pulled away the top steps and put a ladder in place of them. Sometimes he pulls the ladder up, and then no one sees him for weeks at a time. They say he is a chemist. Some say he doesn't live there all the time. At all events, he never lets anybody in and never spends a cent in the neighborhood. The children are all afraid of him. They say the house is haunted. I don't know much about it myself."

"I wish you would find out the name of this man," said Old King Brady. "That's a well located lot. I would like to buy it."

"Then I think the people around here would be very glad if you would and pull the old roost down," said the bartender, "for it's a blot on the neighborhood. There's a young fellow bowling out in the alley who will know his name. I'll go and ask him. Just you wait here."

The bartender went out into the bowling alley and soon returned with the information that the name of the hunchback who at present occupied Madman's Roost was Brichelhoff, and that he was very seldom there.

Having gained this much information, the Bradys left the saloon.

"Well, and what do you think of all that, Governor?" asked Harry. "Have we gained a point on our clew or not?"

"Hard to say," was the reply. "We started out to locate some peculiar person in the neighborhood of the Golden Gate and we have done it. That's about all."

"What do you propose?"

"To investigate this Madman's Roost. As the ladder is down, it looks as though Mr. Brichel-what's-his-name was probably at home. As for ghosts, I've tackled lots of them in my time and always had them turn out to be quite natural productions. If such a thing as a real ghost exists and we should happen to strike it at Madman's Roost I, for one, would be very much pleased."

They walked on to the steps and ascended the ladder.

As there was not room for both to go up alone, Old King Brady took the lead, and climbing to the doorstep, where there was just room to stand, boldly pulled the bell.

"Hello!" called Harry. "Any ghosts up there?"

"Don't see any yet," replied Old King Brady, as a deep-toned gong echoed through the peculiar house.

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE BRADYS AT THE BELIA UNION.

For some minutes there was no answer to the deep-toned bell.

Old King Brady pulled it again, and was just about to pull it a third time, when a savage voice called out:

"Vot you vant?"

The detective looked all around.

He was puzzled to know where the voice came from.

The door had not opened. The shutters which concealed the windows in the octagonal roost remained as tightly closed as before.

"Hello! Who are you? Where are you?" called Old King Brady. "I can't talk to an unseen person. I want to see the man."

"Vat you vant? Vat you vant?" repeated the voice. "Vy you pull mein pell? Vy you not speak by de tube?"

Now for the first time Old King Brady perceived a little round hole in the woodwork alongside the door, which looked as if the mouth of a speaking tube had once been fitted into it.

"I want to see Mr. Brichelhoft!" he shouted, putting his mouth to the hole.

"Vat you vant mit Brichelhoft?" was the reply.

No better excuse than the one he had made the bartender entered Old King Brady's head for the moment, and he realized that whatever move he made in the matter would have to be done on the fly.

"I want to see about buying the lot," he called through the tube. "I understand it is for sale."

"Who told you dot?" was the answer.

"Mr. McIntosh, the real estate dealer, on Montgomery street."

"Don't know him."

"Is it true?"

"It might be if dere vas price enough."

"A liberal price will be offered. I should like to talk to Mr. Brichelhoft about it."

"He vas not here. He lives not here; but vonce in a while he comes."

"Where and when can he be seen?"

"He has an office on Second street. He vas a chemist. No. 92. Vy you not go dere to-morrow and see him?"

"All right; he owns the property, I suppose?"

"I know not. I vas only de caretaker."

"Can I see the house now?"

"Very well, I'll call on Mr. Brichelbrack," he said, getting the name twisted.

"Nein! Nein! De name vas Brichelhoft!" screamed the voice through the tube.

The detective did not reply, but hurried down the ladder.

"Who were you talking to?" demanded Young King Brady. "I could hear a voice which seemed to come from a distance, but I could not make out what was being said."

"I can't tell who I was talking to," replied the old detective. "It was through a speaking tube."

"Indeed!"

"Yes."

"And what was it all about?"

"Real estate. This man Bricklebrand is a chemist in the city, it seems. I've got his address."

"Brichelhoft."

"It's all the same."

"No, it isn't all the same either, Governor. You ought to learn to get these names straight."

"Confound the Dutch jawbreakers. I'll get you to write it down later."

"Are we through here for to-night?"

"I think so. It would be mere folly for us to try to force an entrance into this Madman's Roost until we know more about it. We will cut it out for to-night."

"You think we have struck something?"

"Don't know. We will make a few further inquiries about the neighborhood and see if we can strike any other place at all suspicious."

This was done.

The Bradys put in a good hour poking about the neighborhood of the Golden Gate in the rain.

Nothing came of it, however.

At last they boarded the cars and returned downtown, bringing up on Kearney street at about ten o'clock.

Harry was feeling very much dissatisfied.

"It seems to me that we have done the average detective act," he said, fretfully. "We have just been snoop-ing around and making a show of ourselves and accomplished nothing at all."

"Well, we haven't accomplished very much, and that's the truth," replied Old King Brady. "Patience, though. It will come our way in the end."

"I am bound to admit that it usually does. Still, the prospect looks rather dubious this time."

"Not so bad. Not so bad. This clew from the Golden Gate sent to us as a mere bluff may bare fruit yet. Just wait and see. I've got an idea at the present moment which may lead to something."

"What's that?"

"Follow me."

"Pshaw! You speak like a blessed old oracle, with your 'wait and see' and 'follow me.'"

Old King Brady made no reply.

Once in awhile his partner gets into this frame of mind. The rainy night was sufficient excuse.

The old detective led the way along Kearney street until they came to the famous Bella Union theatre.

Here he stopped and began studying the bill.

"Going to take in the show?" asked Harry. "We have had a fine supper down at the Cliff House, and now it would be just the move to take in the varieties. I'd just as soon go to sleep in the Bella Union as anywhere else."

"I haven't the slightest intention of going in to see the Bella Union show," replied Old King Brady. "Will you be patient for a few minutes, my boy?"

Harry subsided and meekly followed his chief to the stage door.

"I want to see Miss Lottie Williams," said Old King Brady to the doorkeeper. "Here is my card."

"She's doing her turn now," was the reply. "She can't see you."

"I must see her. It is a matter of the highest im-



portance. We will go inside and wait till she comes off the stage."

The detectives then bought tickets and went into the theatre.

Miss Lottie Williams did the "human bird trapeze act."

She was a shapely looking young woman, and at the moment of the Bradys' entrance was hanging from a trapeze by one foot, ready to make a spring and catch another trapeze, which she did as they took their seats.

"Do you know her, Governor?" inquired Harry.

"Very well," was the reply. "She is an old favorite out here, although it is many years since she has been seen in the East."

"She doesn't seem so very old either."

"She will never see forty again."

"And yet can jump about like that?"

"So it seems. I don't understand myself how she manages to keep so young looking. She is pretty good at hitting the opium pipe, too."

"Oh, I see. We have begun our search for that Chink."

"Exactly."

"Does Lottie know Chinatown?"

A burst of applause prevented Old King Brady from replying, and in silence the detectives watched the girl's performance through to the end.

The Bradys then returned to the stage door.

They found the old doorkeeper a little more inclined to be sociable.

"Miss Williams will see you, sir," he said. "Pass right in. She is in the green room waiting for you now."

The Bradys made their way through a long, dark passage and came out upon the back of the stage where a tall man in his shirtsleeves was swearing horribly at a short man wearing a ragged coat, and ordering him to shift about some scenery in a way that he seemed to be slow in comprehending.

"Which way to the green room, captain?" demanded Old King Brady.

"Down those stairs," replied the tall man.

"Now, now, now!" he added. "Can't you see which way them flats go? Blast your eyes! I should think —"

The rest was lost in the distance as the Bradys went down the narrow stairs.

They knocked at the green room door and were admitted by a red-headed boy, who appeared half asleep.

"Miss Williams will be here in a minute," he said. "You had better sit down and wait."

The human bird soon put in an appearance.

"Well, well, well!" she exclaimed. "So the old rat has come back again, eh? Brady, how you was? I haven't seen you in a hundred years."

"Is it so long?" chuckled the old detective, as they shook hands. "How well you keep your youth, Lottie! Upon my word, you look positively blooming, my dear."

"With rouge, yes," said the girl, loudly. "Hitting the hop has fixed my complexion. I haven't a particle left."

"Do you hit the pipe as hard as ever nowadays?"

"Nothing like I used to. I go for months without it sometimes. Still I am a bad one when I get started. Is this your son?"

"No; my pupil and partner. We call him Young King Brady. Harry, let me introduce you to Miss Lottie Williams."

"Glad to know you, Harry," said the human bird.

"And now, Brady," she added, flinging herself down upon a sofa, "what can I do for you? You have hunted me up for something. Give it a name."

"That's easy done," replied the old detective. "I'm looking for a Chink. Do you know the Chinks of Chinatown as well as ever?"

"Better. Tell me all about it. You did me a good turn once. If I can help you I certainly will. What's the Chink's name? What is he wanted for? Where is he supposed to hold out?"

"The first and last questions I cannot answer, Lottie. The man is not wanted. It is I who want to get a little information from him—that's all."

"Describe him."

"A man of about fifty, as near as we can tell the age of a Chink, which I always find it the hardest sort of thing to do, neither taller nor shorter than the rest of his people; but to identify him I have two strong points. He speaks in a hoarse, strangled voice, and has lost a little piece of the upper lobe of his left ear, which looks as though it might have been bitten off."

"Two strong points. Still I do not recognize the man from your description."

"Then you can't help me?"

"I don't say that. Did you ever see this Chink?"

"Yes."

"Did he look as though he was a hop fiend?"

"No more so than most Chinamen. Still, I should say that he hits the pipe once in awhile."

"I can take you to Charley Yong. That's all I can do. I know him very well."

"Who is Charley Yong?"

"The latest Chinese detective. He has taken Jim Wang's place and knows everybody pretty well."

"When can you go?"

"In about twenty minutes. I am through here, but I have to change my clothes."

"All right. I will call a cab. You will find me waiting at the door."

"Oh, we don't want a cab."

"But it is raining."

"Never mind. It is only a step into Chinatown, and a cab always attracts so much attention there. Let's walk it."

"Suit yourself. Shall we wait outside?"

"Wait right here," said Lottie, and then she left the room.

## CHAPTER V.

## WORKING AMONG THE CHINKS.

In a short time the human bird joined the Bradys, well wrapped up against the storm.

She took Harry's proffered arm, and they passed around into Dupont street, Lottie keeping up a constant chatter as they walked along.

"Learned to talk Chink talk yet, Brady?" she asked.

"Not I," replied the old detective. "To me their talk sounds as much like a lot of geese gabbling as ever it did."

"I have been told that there are as many different languages spoken in China as there are in Europe," remarked Harry.

"I don't know how that is, but I guess there are enough of them," was the reply. "But here we are at Charley Yong's holdout. I only hope we may be lucky enough to find him in."

The place was a queer little shop on the west side of Dupont street; but what they sold there Young King Brady was not able to make out, for all the goods on the shelves were done up in paper packages marked with red labels.

Behind a high counter an old Chinaman wearing spectacles was working his abacus, or counting machine.

He would run his fingers nimbly over the little balls and then write something down in his tissue paper book.

"It's a sort of prize package lottery that they run here," whispered Lottie, as they entered. "Of course it's a skin game; but these Chinks are just like other people. They like to be fooled."

She approached the counter and began rattling away in some sort of gibberish which seemed to pass for Chinese, and to which the Chinaman freely replied.

"He says Yong is out, but he is expecting him in inside of a few minutes," declared Lottie. "We had better wait."

In less than ten minutes a young Chinaman wearing American dress entered.

"Hello, Lottie!" he said, speaking good English. "What brings you here?"

"We are looking for a yellow Chink."

Charley Yong grinned and asked what was wanted of him.

Lottie introduced the Bradys.

Charley seemed rather suspicious of the detectives.

"Me hear whole lot about you," he said. "Me big detective, too. One detective he must help anodder detective. Mebbe I can help you yes, mebbe no. What you want?"

Old King Brady described his Chink.

"No know dat feller," said Charley Yong.

"But stop and think," continued Old King Brady. "I don't suppose he lives in Chinatown. My idea is that he

is a cook or a house servant, and lives somewhere near the Golden Gate—down around Eagle street, for instance."

Charley Yong showed no intelligence.

Old King Brady began to think that he did not want to.

"Come, come, Charley! Stir yourself!" cried Lottie. "You must know this man."

"No; me no know everybody," replied Yong. "If me know what company he belong to me can tell, p'laps."

Further discussion followed, but nothing seemed likely to come of it.

Old King Brady was just beginning to despair, when Harry suddenly made a bolt out on Dupont street, grabbed a young Chinaman by the arm and pulled him into the store.

The fellow looked frightened half to death when he saw Old King Brady and Charley Yong.

"Ha!" exclaimed the old detective. "This, I take it, is Mr. Wing Wang, chef for Sinkers Sam."

"Me Wing Wang," replied the butter cake cook. "What wantee? Wantee me tell?"

"Yes; tell him all in Chinese," replied Old King Brady.

"Listen, Yong. This man knows why I am after the Chink I described to you. Listen to what he has to say. Perhaps it may give you a clew."

A lot of Chinese talk followed.

At last Charley Yong gave a sudden exclamation and seemed to brighten up.

"Well? You have caught something?" Old King Brady asked.

"Yes," replied the detective. "Wing Wang thinks he has seen this man before. He says he is a cookee, too; allee same himself. Me takee you place where dey tell mebbe. Come on."

"Do we want Wing Wang?" demanded Old King Brady.

"No," replied Charley Yong.

The detective accordingly gave Wing Wang a couple of dollars and let him go on about his business, and all hurried up Dupont street almost to Cutter, where Charley Yong led them upstairs to a Chinese intelligence office kept by Low How.

Low How proved to be a very thoroughly Americanized Chinaman, and his English was perfect.

After listening to Charley Yong's explanation in Chinese he said:

"Yes; I know that man. I have put him in places more than once. He is a cook. His name is Jock Lung. See, I have a description of him in my book."

Low How produced a tissue paper book and read as follows:

"Jock Lung: Fifty-three years old. Canton man. Fourth-rate cook; wages \$25. Has——"

"How do you call that disease that makes you cough all the time?" he broke off and asked.

"Consumption!" suggested Harry.

"No, no; not that. Another kind—when you choke and cannot get your breath."

"Asthma," said Old King Brady.

"That's it. He's got asthma. Has lost a piece of his left ear."

"That's it!" exclaimed Old King Brady, in a tone of great satisfaction. "This Jock Lung is undoubtedly the man we want. Now, where can he be found?"

Low How gave a number on Dupont street.

"Why that is Canton Sam's hop joint!" Lottie exclaimed.

"Yes," said Low How. He tell me that he stay there a few days."

"If he is there to-night we can get him," said Charley Yong.

It began to look as though the Bradys' work in Chinatown was likely to come to a quick finish; but before putting their discovery to the test Old King Brady had a few more questions to ask.

"Look here, Low How, what was the name of the man who took this Jock Lung for a cook?" he inquired.

"The name I cannot speak," replied the intelligence office keeper; "but I make him write it on a piece of paper and I copy it in my book. Here it is. Read it for yourself."

Low How pushed the book toward Old King Brady, who read:

"J. Brichelhofft."

The address was Eagle street.

Jock Lung had clearly been engaged to cook for the mysterious occupant of Madman's Roost.

Here was a discovery of the utmost importance.

Old King Brady showed his great interest by no outward sign, however, but merely called Harry's attention to the name.

"That looks like business," remarked Young King Brady. "Shall we hie ourselves to the hop joint?"

"Just a minute," said Old King Brady. "Low How, did this man tell you why he was leaving his place?"

"He said the man was very cranky and he did not get enough to eat," replied the intelligence office keeper. "It looks so. He looked bad."

"He told you nothing else?"

"That's all."

"I'm done," said Old King Brady. "Let us go now, Yong."

They left the intelligence office and went down into Dupont street.

Canton Sam's opium joint was not more than a block away.

It was an upstairs place, and was reached through a dark hallway.

As the detectives were about to enter a small sized man, who was neither an American nor a Chinaman, pushed past them and sprang into a waiting cab.

The man, who was wrapped in a queer, old fashioned black coat, appeared to be somewhat deformed.

He passed the Bradys very quickly, and was whisked away in an instant.

"Wait a minute, friends!" said Old King Brady, and he drew Harry to one side.

"You saw?" he whispered.

"I did. He was a hunchback."

"Surest thing. If he had been a shade less quick I should have stopped him."

"You think it may have been Brichelhofft?"

"Such is naturally my thought."

The Bradys now passed up into Sam's joint on the floor above.

Canton Sam's was no common joint, but one of the best fitted up in Chinatown.

It occupied the entire second floor, and besides there were private rooms for more particular smokers on the floor above.

"Brady, I'm sorry you brought me here," said Lottie. "Once I get the smell of the stuff I never can resist it. Now I shall have to hit a pipe or two before I leave."

"For heaven's sake, do nothing of the sort," replied Old King Brady. "Just see if you can't control yourself. I am sure you can if you try."

"No; it's no use," declared Lottie; "but I can hold back a little while until you get through with your business. Anyhow, you won't be wanting me any longer, so may just as well leave me here."

The room into which they had entered after they had passed beyond a little arrangement for an office was cut up into numerous small alcoves, in which were the cushioned divans for the opium smokers.

Canton Sam himself came forward to meet them.

Charley Yong explained what was wanted in Chinese.

Canton Sam answered volubly in the same mysterious tongue.

"He's here," said Charley Yong. "Sam has engaged the cook to help in the private rooms upstairs. He is up there now."

"There you see, Brady, what you get by coming to headquarters," said Lottie, laughing. "If you ever want to know anything about Chinks always come to me and I'll put you straight. Now, while you get your man I'll just hang back here and have a smoke."

"You had better cut that smoking out, or it will cut you out," said Old King Brady, grimly. "Come, we will go upstairs now and get the man."

"Sam, he wantee know what him done," said Charley. "Do I tellee?"

"Nothing," said Old King Brady. "I only want to talk to him. We mean him no harm."

Charley translated to the Chink, whose mind seemed greatly relieved at the detective's words.

He then led the way upstairs.

"This is dead easy," he said. "Takes me to find people in Chinatown."

"That's what Lottie has just claimed for herself," said Harry. "There are a pair of you, I guess."

"Hold on!" exclaimed Old King Brady. "I smell smoke! Something is afire upstairs."



Although the others had not noticed the queer odor, they did now.

Even Canton Sam on the floor below got it and came hurrying up after them.

"Whatee matter? Housee on fire?" he cried.

Charley Yong pressed forward to the door which cut off the head of the stairs from the floor above.

"Locked!" he cried. "Sam, how is this?"

"No locked!" called Sam. "No can be locked!"

But locked it was, and the fire was clearly behind it.

A thin line of smoke came through the keyhole, and the smell of something burning was very distinct.

"Fire! Fire!" screamed Lottie, excitedly.

"Hush!" cried Harry, seizing her arm. "Calm yourself! Don't scare the people in the joint and bring in a bunch from the street until we have had time to find out what this means."

"It means mischief," said Old King Brady, throwing his full weight against the door. "Instead of being at the end of our job we have only just begun."

The door refused to yield.

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE MAN WITH THE DEATH-WHITE FACE.

"Have you a key for this door, Sam?" Old King Brady demanded of the joint keeper.

Sam had no key. There was but one, he declared, and that he had given to Jock Lung when he hired him not more than an hour before.

Waiting for nothing, Old King Brady put his shoulder to the door again and burst it in.

The door communicated with a sort of anteroom, beyond which were the private smoking apartments of the joint.

It was not necessary to go any further, however.

Right here in the anteroom a startling discovery had been made.

Upon the floor was a cheap mattress all ablaze, and upon the mattress with the flames rising all around him, lay the unconscious form of the Chinaman who had brought the clew from the Golden Gate to Sinkers Sam's.

"We must save that man!" cried Old King Brady, rushing for the mattress, while Harry threw up the window to let out the smoke.

Seizing the wretched Chinaman, Old King Brady dragged him away, and then with one quick movement he turned the mattress over, stamped on it and extinguished the flames, Harry and the two Chinks lending their aid.

"Is he dead?" demanded Young King Brady, as the old detective bent over the man, who was pretty badly burned.

"Dead!" said Old King Brady. "Look! He has been strangled! He was dead before the first was set."

It was indeed so.

There, plainly to be seen upon the Chinaman's throat, were the imprints of fingers.

Old King Brady had already made sure that the man was actually Jock Lung.

The mark on the ear settled it, but, indeed, both of the Bradys remembered the poor wretch's face too well to admit of any doubt.

"Is any one else up here in these rooms?" demanded the old detective.

Canton Sam declared that there was nobody, and a subsequent search proved that this was so.

The joint keeper further said that the only person who had engaged a private room during the evening had just gone out.

"Just before we came in?" asked Old King Brady, Charley Yong doing the translating to the joint keeper.

"Yes."

"A hunchback! a small sized man wearing a black cloak?"

Again the answer was yes.

"Then that man must be the murderer," said the detective. "Has he ever been here before?"

Canton Sam's answer was that the man was an entire stranger to him, and not in the habit of coming to the joint.

Calling Charley Yong aside, Old King Brady directed him to take this murder case in hand and report it to the police.

This, indeed, was the duty of the Chinese detective, as he was employed directly by the police.

The Bradys now left the place, Lottie Williams remaining behind to hit a few pipes of opium, which Old King Brady could not persuade her to forego.

After that the detectives, seeing nothing more to be done that night, returned to the Lick House and went to bed.

Old King Brady arose next morning with his mind made up as to what course to pursue.

Waiting only to interview the chief of police, out of which interview nothing new developed, the Bradys went down on Second street to look up Mr. Brichelhoff, whom Old King Brady had pretty well determined was the hunchback who had been seen leaving Canton Sam's opium joint the night before.

They found Mr. Brichelhoff's place on the fifth floor a large brick building occupied by a number of small manufacturers, who used the steam power furnished by the landlord of the premises.

The name J. Brichelhoff was on the sign at the door, and his business was given as that of an analytical chemist.

"There does not seem to be any great mystery about the man at this end of the line," remarked Old King Brady, as he and Harry started to ascend the stairs.

"What are you going to do? Arrest him if he proves to be the man that we saw last night?" asked Young King Brady.

"I certainly shall not," replied the old detective. "What is the killing of this wretched Chinaman in comparison with the success of our case? We want to solve the mystery of John H. Marling's disappearance. We are out for that, and nothing else."

They had now reached the fifth floor. The hum of shafting and the thumping of machinery had been heard all the way up, but on this floor things were quieter.

J. Brichelhoff appeared to be the only tenant.

A rough wooden door cut his rooms off from the head of the stairs.

Upon the door was a sign reading: "No Admittance Except on Business. Ring the Bell."

Harry pulled the handle, and a gong bell struck inside.

The door was presently opened by a pleasant-faced German wearing a white apron, who inquired their business.

He informed Old King Brady that Mr. Brichelhoff was in and would see them.

The detectives were then shown into a disorderly little office, which had a window overlooking the laboratory, where several men could be seen at work.

"Mr. Brichelhoff is busy just now; but he will come to you in a minute," reported the young man, looking in again. "We are in quite a rush here to-day."

He retired, leaving the detectives alone.

"Upon my word, there is nothing so very mysterious here," remarked Harry. "It looks like a good solid business place, and it looks to me also, as if we had been pretty well fooled."

"Wait," said the old detective. "Last night when we went up Canton Sam's dark stairs we thought we had about reached a finish; but we soon found we had only just begun. We can't tell a thing about it yet."

"That's what. But has a man engaged in such a business as this got time to go around murdering Chinamen and setting them on fire? Would he live in such a joint as that Madman's Roost?"

"Hush!" breathed Old King Brady. "Here he comes. We shall soon know all about him."

A heavy footstep was heard outside the door, which was opened by a tall, cadaverous looking old man about as different from the hunchback in the black cloak as any man could possibly be.

He was clean shaved, and his face was the whitest Old King Brady had ever seen upon a living man.

It looked altogether like the face of a corpse.

Perhaps his hair was naturally white, too; but it had been dyed black, and was so plainly dyed as to be noticeable to anybody.

The "walking corpse," Harry called him afterward, and he certainly looked the name.

"Did you wish to see me, gentlemen?" he asked, in a voice as soft as a woman's.

"We called to see Mr. Brichelhoff," replied Old King Brady, rising.

"That's me. What did you wish?"

It had to be the old gag about buying Madman's Roost again.

There seemed to be nothing else to offer.

"Yes, I own that place," said the chemist, when Old King Brady mentioned the roost. "Why do you ask?"

"The lot upon which that building stands suits me. I'd like to know your price for it," replied the old detective.

"It is not for sale," said the chemist. "That is, I do not care to sell it for any price you would be willing to give."

"Perhaps you don't know just how much I would be willing to give," said Old King Brady. "Suppose you name your price?"

"Are you the party who called up to my caretaker last night?"

"I am."

"Strange time to come to look at a piece of real estate, was it not?"

"I don't see it so. I am a busy man during the day. It seems to me that nine o'clock in the evening is a very good time to attend to outside matters."

"Very well; that's neither here nor there. What do you want the property for?"

"Well, that only concerns me. Is it one of the conditions of sale that you should know?"

"No; I don't know that it is. The house is all out of repair. It is useful to me. I have a private laboratory there where I sometimes do work which I do not care to have my employes know about. The house suits my purpose, but it certainly isn't good for anything else."

"How can you possibly tell that it wouldn't suit my purpose quite as well as yours? The only thing for you to do is to name your price."

"You can have the house and lot for \$20,000."

"This was four times as much as the property was worth."

Mr. Brichelhoff regarded Old King Brady curiously as he spoke.

"It's a high price, certainly," replied the old detective. "Still, I might be willing to pay it. I will entertain the proposition, Mr. Brichelhoff, and I would like to see the premises."

"You are in earnest about this?" he asked.

"Decidedly," replied Old King Brady. "I want to see the premises. If they suit me I will take the lot and pay the price."

"You do not belong here in San Francisco?" asked Brichelhoff.

"No; I have recently come from the eastern states with my son. We are going to locate here."

Brichelhoff pondered for a few moments.

"Well," he said, at last, "you can see the premises. What time will it be convenient for you to go there?"

"Any time which best suits you, Mr. Brichelhoff."

"Make it five o'clock this afternoon."

"Very well. You will meet me there?"

"Yes. By the way, you mustn't pay any attention to the stories you may hear around the neighborhood about the place. It has the name of being haunted; because for a number of years it was occupied by a crazy man."

"So I understand. I have already heard these stories."

"I suppose so. I have been to no pains to contradict them. I rather favored them than otherwise, because it made people keep away from the house and leave me alone."

"Your explanation is perfectly satisfactory, Mr. Brichelhoff. I shall be on hand."

The detectives then withdrew.

"A new character has come into the play," Harry remarked, once they found themselves on the street.

"Yes, and a dangerous one," replied Old King Brady. "That man has no more soul than an oyster, no more heart than a wooden image in a Chinese joss house, no more conscience than a rattlesnake, and yet he is as smart as they make 'em."

"He looks like a murderer; hanged if he doesn't," said Harry.

"Ah!" said Old King Brady. "Just wait till I have paid that visit to Madman's Roost. Then I'll tell you just who and what he is."

## CHAPTER VII.

### YOUNG KING BRADY TURNS CHINESE COOK.

At this time the Bradys separated, with an appointment to take lunch at Campi's famous Kearney street restaurant at one o'clock.

Old King Brady secured a table in a remote corner and here Harry joined him a few minutes after one.

"Well," asked the old detective, "and how did you make out?"

"I have made a very important discovery," said Harry. "Yes; you may say two important discoveries."

"As you can't very well give them to me both together, let us have them one at a time."

"First I worked into the good graces of the proprietor of the 'Poodle Dog.'"

"Once the most famous restaurant on the Pacific coast. Well, what did he have to say?"

"He remembers John H. Marling's visit very well."

"As I ascertained when I interviewed him a week ago."

"Exactly; but in all your interviews, and you had several, you were not able to find out what sort of a man was with him at the Poodle Dog on the day he disappeared."

"Quite true."

"I can now tell you."

"Good."

"When I described our white-faced Mr. Brichelhoff to

the proprietor of the Poodle Dog he remembered him at once, and declared that he was the man."

"This is indeed important. It is the first connecting link between the missing man and Madman's Roost."

"So I thought. The man at the Poodle Dog was very positive about it. You know that you felt that he really wanted to help us. He said he didn't see how he came to forget such a peculiar face."

"And the other point, Harry?"

"Well, I went down to Madman's Roost and had a look at it by daylight. Then I made cautious inquiries at several places where we did not go last night."

"Learn anything?"

"Just that no man of Brichelhoff's appearance is known in the neighborhood of the Golden Gate."

"Important in its way. How about the name?"

"The name is well enough known, and everybody believes it to belong to a little hunchbacked fellow who occasionally goes and comes at Madman's Roost."

"And that is all?"

"All. Now, how about your own discoveries, if you made any?"

"Here they are in a nutshell. First, I saw the chief of police. Nothing doing with him."

"Next, I looked up Dr. Bartlett. He declared that there are certain surgical points about that head which positively proved that death had taken place many weeks ago. He started into say months, and then corrected himself; and yet he is equally positive that the head has not been embalmed."

"Queer."

"Puzzling."

"About the Jock Lung case? Anything doing in that?"

"I saw Charley Yong, the Chink detective, and his report is nothing doing; but he had something else to report which I consider very important."

"What is it?"

"You remember Low How, the keeper of the intelligence office, of course?"

"Certainly."

"And that although Brichelhoff's address was given as Eagle street in his book, there was no number?"

"Yes; I remember that."

"Very good; this morning, bright and early, a young man called at Low How's from Brichelhoff, on Eagle street, to engage another Chinese cook."

"The deuce you say!"

"Yes; How told him that he would send one down during the day; and the young man told him to send one at three o'clock to Dr. Windt's drug store, next door to Madman's Roost, where he was to inquire for Brichelhoff and show a paper from the intelligence office."

"And what is to be done about it?"

"It is for you to decide."

"Is it open for me to decide?"

"It certainly is. Low How is shrewd and has no desire to come up against the police, so he at once sent for



Charley Yong and reported the matter, and Charley reported it to me."

"Do you want me to try and work in on the place?"

"You have played the Chinese cook successfully before. I see no reason why you should not do it again, though, of course, there is no doubt that this is a dangerous game."

"Cut the danger part out. I am ready. The cook will have to be deaf and dumb, I suppose?"

"No; Charley Yong says for you to pretend that you came from the district of Owang Quong."

"Owang Quong? Well, what about that?"

"There they speak a dialect which none of the Frisco Chinks can understand. Any old gibberish will do to represent it. Pigeon English will do the rest."

"All right. That works."

"You go there to-day at the time appointed. My appointment with Brichelhofft is at five o'clock. Very likely we shall meet before the day is through."

The Bradys then fell to discussing the case in a general way.

Later they again separated, Young King Brady turning up the hill to Chinatown again.

He went to the blind lottery office on Dupont street, and after something of a wait met Charley Yong.

Charley was a very intelligent Chink.

He took Harry first to a chop suey place in a nearby cellar, where they had quite a talk.

Charley had been looking up Jock Lung's record.

He had learned that the man was a Hong Kong Chink who was almost unknown in San Francisco's Chinatown.

All this went to show how lucky the Bradys had been to find him as they did, even in death.

Charley then took Young King Brady to a friend of his who was a costumer and dresser for the actors connected with the Jackson Street theatre.

This man soon made Harry up in the most approved Chinese style.

Not that but what Young King Brady could have done it himself. He always has the materials for a Chinese disguise handy, and has found occasion to use them many times.

This man did it a great deal better, however, and when Harry looked in the glass he was bound to admit that he looked the Young Chink clear through.

Thus prepared for business, Young King Brady took the car to Golden Gate and in due time turned up at De Windt's drug store on Eagle street.

This store occupied the next corner to Madman's Roost, being on the corner of Brandon street.

It was very small and very dirty, and altogether it did not look like a place which did much business.

De Windt proved to be a dried-up little foreigner, and was the only person in the place.

Harry shuffled in and presented the intelligence office paper.

"Yah! Yah!" said De Windt, glancing at it through his spectacles.

"This makee right place all right?" asked Harry, in his best pigeon English.

"Yah! Yah!" said De Windt, and he raised his hand to a bellpull.

Young King Brady heard no bell ring, however.

He waited a long time, during which De Windt paid no attention to him at all.

"Hello, mister," said Harry, at last, "man come me see blime bye quick?"

"Yah! Yah!" said De Windt.

"Me waitee muchee long time," said Harry.

"Yah! Yah!" replied De Windt, and he went into the back room, leaving Young King Brady alone in the store.

"He's not in it, and he don't mean to be in it," thought Harry. "I suspect that the Governor's theory is correct, and that whatever the mystery of Madman's Roost may be the real entrance to the place is through this house."

But Harry's wait was about over.

In a few moments the door of the back room opened and a very pretty young girl walked in.

She could not have been more than twenty years old, and from her dark, flashing eyes and coal black hair Harry judged that she might be a Mexican or South American; but her English showed that she must have been a long time in the United States.

"You are the cook?" she asked.

"Yes, missus," replied Harry, handing her the intelligence office slip.

"Where have you been working?" asked the girl, in a businesslike way.

Young King Brady had his story ready.

He had just come off a ship. He had been living in Australia, where he had learned to speak English. He had only been a few days in California and had no acquaintances in Chinatown.

This seemed to be very satisfactory to the girl.

"How much wages do you want?" she asked.

"How much people me cookee?" Harry replied.

"Three; sometimes four."

"Florty dollar month."

"No, no, no!" cried the girl, shaking her head. "We don't want a chef. \$20 a month."

Harry haggled.

At last he agreed to cut his price in half.

Then came the disclosure, which tallied with Old King Brady's theory that the entrance to Madman's Roost was through this drug store.

The girl informed Young King Brady that she lived in the strange house next door; but that she never used the entrance by the ladder, but the one from the drug store.

This entrance, she explained, was kept a secret, by the orders of Mr. Brichelhofft. If he, Ching Chow, which was the name he had given, would submit to be blindfolded, she would take him into the Roost and install him in his new position; otherwise, all business was off between them.

This the girl explained in a nervous, hesitating way. Evidently she expected some violent objection to follow.

"Me can go out some time?" was Young King Brady's reply.

"Of course you can. Any time you want to. All you have to do is to speak to me," replied the girl.

"Allee light," said Harry. "Me try place. Me no cookee you right, den me go away."

"Good!" said the girl. "Then follow me."

"She led the way into the back room, where De Windt was doing some sort of drug mixing at a long bench which was covered all over with chemical apparatus.

Saying something to him in a language which was certainly neither German nor Spanish, and which Harry could not understand, the old man took a cloth and bound up Young King Brady's eyes.

"Now give me your hand, Ching Chow," said the girl, "and we will go along."

Harry knew that he was being led toward the Roost.

He heard a door open, and when it slammed shut behind him he knew it was an iron door.

They advanced a few yards after that, and then the bandage was removed.

They now stood in a narrow room enclosed with rough boards, with a ladder leading up to a trap overhead.

The girl held a lantern, and motioned to the new cook to ascend.

"Push on the trap," she said. "It will open for you."

Harry did so, and found himself in a similar room to the one he had left, except that there was no ladder here.

The girl followed, and by opening a door in the rough partition by means of a key, Harry passed into an ordinary basement hallway.

He was then shown into his kitchen.

There was nothing peculiar about it, except that it had no windows, being lighted from a skylight overhead.

A little sleeping room opened off of it, and a store-room and a pantry.

All this the girl showed him, and told him to go ahead and cook supper for four.

She pointed out the stores, which were plentiful enough, instructed him about the range fire and other points, winding up by showing him a bellpull which he was to make use of in case he wanted to see her for anything.

He was to ring twice when dinner was ready.

The girl then informed him that her name was Nina.

She then withdrew, leaving Young King Brady duly installed in his new position.

Thus by a lucky stroke, Young King Brady became cook at Madman's Roost.

But the situation was rather startling when one comes to reflect that Jock Lung, his predecessor, had been foully murdered in Canton Sam's opium joint by one of the persons who frequented this strange place.

## CHAPTER VIII.

## A HOT RECEPTION AT THE ROOST.

Promptly at five o'clock Old King Brady turned up at Madman's Roost.

The rain was all over now, and the sun was shining brightly.

Although it was only the latter part of January, green grass and beautiful flowers were to be seen in every front yard along Eagle street, for California's spring had already set in.

Old King Brady first went into De Windt's drug store and bought a glass of vichy water at the soda fountain.

The old druggist was there to wait on him in person, and the old detective saw no assistant.

He tried to draw De Windt into conversation, but the case seemed utterly hopeless.

All the old man would say was "Yah! Yah!"

Old King Brady then ascended the steps, and climbing the ladder, rang the bell.

The same harsh voice called down the speaking tube in the same words:

"Vat you vant?"

"Mr. Brichelhoft," was the reply.

"Vat name?"

To the chemist Old King Brady had given the name of J. T. Robinson, and he gave it again now.

"All right," was the answer. "In von minute de door vill open, den you go in."

Old King Brady waited ten minutes, and nothing happened.

Of course the old detective, standing at the top of the ladder on the doorstep of Madman's Roost, cut a very prominent figure, and all the more so on account of his peculiar dress.

Everybody passing along Eagle street looked at him.

A group of laughing schoolgirls stopped and stared.

"Oh, look! There's the madman himself. He's going to roost!" one of them exclaimed.

Then all laughed and ran on screaming: "Oh, look at the madman up on the roost!"

Two boys followed.

They were evidently bad boys.

One shouted:

"Hey, Dave! Look at de old guy up at Madman's Roost!"

"Say, dat's the ghost!" replied Dave.

"Naw it hain't! No ghosts appear in the daytime!" was the reply.

Both boys stood staring up at the detective as though he was simply there on show.

Knowing how useless it would be to say anything, Old King Brady simply beamed down upon the lads with his pleasantest smile.

The result of even this attempt at friendliness was de-

cidedly unpleasant. One of the boys put his thumb to his nose and wiggled his fingers at Old King Brady, while the other picked up a stone and flung it at the detective, hitting the old white hat.

Then they ran; but it was only to be followed by a group of four more, who began guying the detective most unmercifully, and this time it was a shower of stones instead of one.

"Look at de madman! Look at de madman!" they yelled. "Look at de old guy what lives in de Roost."

In despair Old King Brady rang the bell again.

"And phawt are you doing up there?" a voice shouted.

It was not the Dutch voice through the speaking tube this time, but a voice decidedly Irish ascending from the street below.

Old King Brady looked around to discover that a policeman had driven away the boys and had started in to satisfy his own curiosity.

The situation was growing more awkward every instant.

"Officer, I am here on business with Mr. Brichelhoff!" the detective called down from his lofty perch.

"Then you'll not get in to do business with him, for the old humpy never opens the door to no one," retorted the policeman. "It's all the byes in the neighborhood you'll be pulling around to make riot and trouble."

"Officer, I can't help that," said Old King Brady, mildly. "I have just rung the bell. They will open the door in a minute, I daresay."

"No, they won't. I tell you they never open the door to nobody. You are just some blamed book canvasser or a peddler. Come down out of that now."

Old King Brady was in despair.

Not knowing what to say, he said nothing.

"Come down out of that!" cried the policeman. "If ye don't I'll come an' fetch yer. I won't have riots raised on my beat, so I won't."

The situation was beginning to look serious; but at this very moment the door was opened by unseen hands.

A well furnished hall lay beyond, but there was no one to be seen.

Old King Brady did not stop to investigate.

He was only too glad to get inside on any terms.

No sooner had he crossed the threshold of Madman's Roost than the door closed behind them.

For better or for worse, the detective had penetrated into the mysterious house on the sand hill; but instead of finding Harry there to receive him, as he had half hoped would be the case, there was no one there at all.

The detective was fully armed and prepared for any emergency; but when one expects an enemy and finds no one the situation becomes puzzling.

After waiting a minute, the detective shouted:

"Hello! Hello! Don't keep me waiting here all night. I want to see Mr. Brichelhoff. Tell me where I can find him, please."

A moment later there was a shuffling at the end of the hall, and Old King Brady saw advancing toward him one

of the most repulsive looking persons he had ever laid eyes on.

At last the detective and the hunchback, who was supposed to be the sole occupant of Madman's Roost, found themselves face to face.

The newcomer was not over five feet tall, and his spine seemed terribly twisted.

His huge head, covered with a heavy growth of flaxen hair, was all to one side. His ears stood out like muffins, his nose was crooked like a parrot's beak, his teeth were mere yellow fangs, and very prominently displayed.

In short, he was a person hideously ugly, and bore a stronger resemblance to some queer species of animal dressed up than to a man.

Waving one enormously long arm at the detective, he called out in the same harsh voice heard at the speaking tube:

"Dis vay for Mr. Brichelhoff! Dis vay!"

Old King Brady silently followed.

The hall, suiting itself to the octagonal structure of the house, was winding.

They passed several doors, pausing at last before one which stood slightly ajar.

"In dere!" said the hunchback.

Old King Brady pushed the door open and walked into a plainly furnished room where, seated at a desk busily writing, was the chemist with the death-white face.

"Good afternoon, Mr. Brichelhoff," said Old King Brady, as he removed his hat.

The man made no answer—paid absolutely no attention to him.

Prepared for trouble, Old King Brady heard the door closed and locked behind him with a sinking heart.

"It was madness to send the boy here alone," he said to himself. "This man is on to me, surest thing."

As Mr. Brichelhoff continued to be oblivious, Old King Brady quietly sat down, folded his hands and waited.

Waiting seemed to be the order of the day at Madman's Roost.

As much as ten minutes' time elapsed, during which the scratch of the chemist's pen over the paper was the only sound to be heard.

At last the letter was finished.

Mr. Brichelhoff sealed it, and pressing a call bell which gave a buzzing ring, touched a spring in the wall beside the desk.

A little sliding panel opened, into which the chemist tossed the letter.

"Let it be mailed at once, Heinrich!" he called through the slide, which closed in answer to the pressure on another spring.

"Now, sir, do you find yourself ready to attend to me?" demanded Old King Brady, as the chemist wheeled around in his chair.

"Now I am ready to attend to you," replied Brichelhoff. "What is it you want in this house?"

"Why, I was under the impression that I had an ap-

pointment with you," said Old King Brady. "You can hardly have forgotten our conversation this morning at your office."

"No, sir; I have not forgotten it."

"Then why this peculiar reception. If you do not care to sell me your property you have only to say so."

"I no more care to sell to you than you care to buy. You are not what you seem. State your business here."

"Sir?"

"Stop!"

"Well, what now?"

"We are talking at cross purposes. Let us be frank and open. You are Old King Brady, the New York detective, of course. I know it, and you know that I know it. Stop! Don't try to deny it. That will not help your case any. Frankly state your business with me, and I will just as frankly reply."

It was a case where nothing remained but to come out flatfooted:

Old King Brady replied:

"Very well, sir. Since you desire frankness, you shall have it. I am Old King Brady. You may be J. Brichelhoff, or your true name may be something else; but it is certain that you are the last person who is known to have been with John H. Marling on the day of his disappearance. My business in San Francisco is to find that gentleman. It is in pursuit of that business that I have come to this house."

"Just so," replied the chemist; "but why did you pick out this house?"

"Suppose I decline to allow myself to be questioned any further? What then?"

"I advise you to answer my question."

"Suppose I refuse to take your advice?"

"Since frankness is the rule, I tell you frankly that such refusal may cost you your life."

"Tell me what you know about John H. Marling, and I will tell you what you ask."

"Stop a minute. You slightly misunderstand the situation, Mr. Brady. Are you aware that you are wholly in my power?"

"It has that appearance."

"It is no appearance. It is an absolute fact, which I now propose to prove to you. Just sit quiet where you are for a moment."

Once more he pressed a spring, and the panel flew open.

"Heinrich!" called the chemist through the opening.

Brichelhoff began talking rapidly in some foreign language.

Old King Brady listened attentively.

The language was a new one to him, however. He could not make out what it was.

Then the panel closed and Brichelhoff faced the detective again.

"Mr. Brady, you and I must come to an understanding," he said. "The first thing is for you to understand

just how far my power extends. Suppose now you were to be suddenly seized with the idea that it would pay you to arrest me, and you should do it; after having arrested me, what would be your first move?"

"Humoring your peculiar style of talk, my good sir, I would say that my first move would be to take you through that door. That is what you want me to say, I suppose?"

"That's it. Look behind you at the door, please."

"May it please your honor, I prefer not to look behind with you in front. If you will go behind me, then I will look around."

"You think yourself wonderfully shrewd. You are not, sir. Your danger all lies behind. Now look!"

The chemist stepped behind the detective, who immediately wheeled around.

It was much as he had suspected.

In the wall behind them three round panels had opened, and out of the openings three rifles projected, covering the detective.

"There you are, sir!" exclaimed Brichelhoff. "At a signal from me three bullets are ready for you. Queer place this Madman's Roost. Do you feel like buying it now?"

## CHAPTER IX.

### FLEEING FROM UNSEEN FOES.

Old King Brady, with a careless glance at the rifles, resumed his seat.

"Are you not afraid that I will give the signal and have you shot in the back?"

"No; I do not fear."

"And why?"

"Perhaps I have had a little experience in my line of business. Fear is something I cut out long ago."

"That sounds well."

"I mean what I say! Come, come, sir! Don't let us waste words. Better return to that old frankness of yours. I'm ready to tell you all I know. Probably you are equally ready to return the compliment, as I have no doubt it is your present intention to kill me in the end."

"I don't know whether it is or not. I haven't quite decided what my intentions are, but I approve of your proposition. Talk away!"

"I have so little to say in comparison with yourself. Would it not be better for you to begin?"

"No; you begin."

"Very well; you asked me why I came here. I will answer you. It was to follow up that clew you sent me from the Golden Gate."

"The clew I sent you! What can you mean?" the chemist cried.

He did not turn pale. That would have been impossible, for no face could have been whiter than his.

It was rather a gray look which came over his countenance.

Old King Brady was not able to determine whether it meant surprise or fear.

"The clew that you sent me—that is what I said," he replied.

"And the nature of that clew?"

Now, Old King Brady had ordered the head photographed, and had seen to it that the negative was developed and a print made at once.

He produced this print and handed it over to Brichelhoff, who held it up to the light of the hanging lamp, which alone illuminated the room, for the window shutters were tightly closed and the shades drawn down.

"There you are! That is the clew sent me from the Golden Gate!" the detective exclaimed.

"What treachery is this?" Brichelhoff replied. "Do you mean to tell me——"

"That I received a human head, of which that is a photograph! Yes, sir! I mean to tell you that very thing."

Brichelhoff, with a most apparent effort, calmed himself and sat down by the desk.

"Tell me all about this, Mr. Brady," he said; "but first let me tell you I never sent this thing."

"I believe you," replied the detective. "Frankness is the word, you know."

"Proceed!"

"We have been three weeks in Frisco watching for John H. Marling, or, at least, trying to solve the mystery of his disappearance, Mr. Brichelhoff."

"I know it."

"I presume so. Yesterday we received a letter stating that if we would go in the afternoon to a certain cheap restaurant on Clay street, down by the wharves, we would receive a clew to the mystery."

"Have you this letter?"

"I have, but not with me. I have a copy, though."

"Let me see it."

"In a minute. Hear the end of my story first. We went to the restaurant, and in due time there came a Chinaman, bringing with him a box addressed to the keeper of the restaurant.

"After he had gone the box was opened. Inside was another box addressed to me, and inside this second box was the head, which certainly looked very much like that of John H. Marling. That is my story. Following up this clew brought us to Madman's Roost. It is not necessary to go into details. I need only add that I am well satisfied the head which reached us in that box came from here."

"And I know it."

"You admit it, then?"

"I have just said so. Still, I never sent it. The copy of the letter, please."

Old King Brady produced the paper, which Brichelhoff hastily perused.

He tossed it back to the detective, and resting his head upon his hand, for some time remained in thought.

Then suddenly he sprang up and began pacing the floor.

"Mr. Brady," he said, hoarsely, "I have heard that you were considered one of the best detectives in the world."

"I have been fairly successful, sir. It is not for me to say any more."

"It is not necessary that you say any more. Your reputation is well established. Who are you working for in this case?"

"The legal heirs of John H. Marling, as represented by a lawyer named Brown."

"You never knew Marling?"

"No."

"And have no other interest in this case except that you have been hired to solve the mystery surrounding it?"

"That's it."

"Then you drop the Marling case and work for me."

"I might; but why?"

"Because I will pay you better than the lawyer for this thing; because my life is in as much danger as is yours at the present moment; because if we don't pull together here in Madman's Roost this night will surely be our last."

Was this all a trap? Was it a part of the plot to deceive the old detective?

Old King Brady sat there watching that death-white face and wondering if it was indeed so.

"I can lose nothing by seeming to chime in with him," he thought. "The man seems to be sincere."

"Who is at the bottom of this plot against you, Mr. Brichelhoff?" he asked.

"Hold on!" said the chemist, showing many signs of fear. "Are you with me, or are you against me—that's the point?"

"With you for to-night, at all events, and there's my hand on it."

"Good; the thing now is for us to make a certain secret passage leading into the adjoining building, and to escape from this house if we can."

"Lead on! I'll follow!"

"I dare not lead. I am trembling with nervous excitement. I will pay you well to be the leader."

"What am I to do?"

"Get down on your hands and knees, crawl to the door by which you entered; there press a secret spring just underneath the lower hinge. In spite of the fact that it is locked, the door will open then the wrong way—that is, on secret hinges working in the jamb on the lock side. You understand?"

"But why not walk to the door? Why must I crawl?"

"My dear man! Obey or we are lost! Oh, my heart! I cannot stand this excitement! Oh! Oh!"

All this was evidently straight.

The chemist clapped his hand to his heart and sank back in the chair in a state of collapse, breathing heavily.



Old King Brady dropped to the carpet and crawled to the door.

All this time the rifle barrels were still projecting through the holes in the partition.

Old King Brady readily found the secret spring, and as he pressed it the door swung slowly open from the hinge side.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Instantly every rifle was discharged, and the room was filled with smoke.

The chemist fell forward to the floor and lay as one dead.

"Heavens!" gasped Old King Brady. "It was straight goods after all!"

He crouched there listening.

Not a sound could be heard anywhere.

"They'll be here in a minute, all the same!" breathed the detective. "Whoever this new enemy may be, he will be wanting to see the result of his work."

He crept back toward Brichelhoft, examining him closely.

The man had not been shot. He breathed faintly. It was evident that he was suffering from one of the worst forms of heart disease, and the deathly white face was now explained.

At the risk of running against another discharge of the rifles, Old King Brady sprang to his feet and lifted the man up, dragging him out into the hall.

The movement revived Brichelhoft. He gasped, choked and then stumbled upon his feet, clutching the old detective's arm in a desperate way.

"The rifles!" he gasped. "The rifles!"

"Yes; they were fired, but neither of us were hit!" replied Old King Brady, soothingly. "Brace up, my friend."

"Have you called out? Have you made any noise?"

"Not I. I have been as still as a mouse."

"And have heard no sound?"

"None."

"It looks bad. Are you armed?"

"Yes; and you?"

"Strange as it may seem to you, I am not. Give me your extra revolver, if you have one."

"No; for the present I will do the fighting for us both."

"You do not fully trust me."

"How can you expect it? Do you really want to leave this place?"

"Right now. If you knew what I know you would understand that it is death for us to remain here."

"Then show the way, and I will do the fighting, if it comes to that."

"Follow the passage. You must go first with your revolver."

Was it all a trick? Would this man shoot him in the back if he pressed on ahead?

"It can't be," thought Old King Brady. "If he had wanted to shoot me he could just as well have done it in the room."

It was dark in the passage. All the light there was came from the room they had just left.

"Halt here!" breathed Brichelhoft, when they reached the door on the left. "Listen!"

"I hear nothing," replied Old King Brady after a minute.

"Open the door, then. It should not be locked."

It was not. A narrow flight of stairs lay before them.

"Down!" whispered Brichelhoft. "Follow the passage at the foot of the stairs."

The stairs were unusually long.

Old King Brady knew that they must lead down to the street level.

It was so dark that he had to produce his lantern to keep from stumbling.

"Here we are! Now, what?" he whispered, when they came up against a wooden partition.

"Let me get in front. I can open the secret door if it is to be opened," replied Brichelhoft. "It looks as though we might escape."

He passed in front of the detective and began fumbling about the partition.

"They have cut us off!" he gasped. "It is as I feared."

"Explain," said Old King Brady, pressing up beside him.

"Look out! Be careful. Behind that door is a dynamite bomb, not big enough to blow the house to pieces, but plenty big enough to shatter the door and kill us both."

"What is to be done? Is there no other way?"

"There is the kitchen. It has a skylight opening on a level with the top of the hill on which the house stands. If you could raise it we might escape that way."

"I can try; but is there no way of cutting out this bomb business?"

"None. It is controlled by a wire from above. The connection has been set. To open the door will make it perfect, and death will surely result."

"Electric battery?"

"Yes."

"Then let us try the kitchen."

"There is an old Chinaman there—Jock Lung, our cook."

"No! Jock Lung is dead."

"Dead! Impossible!"

"It's a fact. He was strangled by a hunchback last night in Canton Sam's opium joint on Dupont street, and the place was set on fire to conceal the crime."

"Great heavens! Heinrich's work!" breathed Brichelhoft. "He has turned on me at last! I might have known."

"Brace up! Show me the kitchen!" said Old King Brady.

Was Harry there to give them help?

The old detective could only hope.

Brichelhoft led the way back along the passage to another door, which he opened cautiously.

It was the kitchen into which Young King Brady had been shown.

Like every other part of Madman's Roost so far seen, it appeared to be deserted.

Pots were boiling on the range. There was a smell of something good roasting in the oven, but not a soul to be seen.

"There is the skylight!" said Brichelhoff. "Let me look! Let me look! Ah! Again! We have been headed off everywhere. Back, man! Don't touch that rope which controls the raising of the light, or you will blow us all into the middle of next week!"

The situation now seemed desperate.

What was to be done to escape from these unseen foes?

## CHAPTER X.

### IN THE CLUTCHES OF THE STRANGLER.

Where, then, was Young King Brady, if not attending to his pots and pans in the kitchen of Madman's Roost. Young King Brady had been having his adventures, too.

They began at about the same time as his chief's, and must now be described.

It will be remembered that Harry was about two hours ahead of the old detective.

During the biggest part of that time he was left alone in the kitchen.

Twice the girl Nina looked in and gave orders about the dinner. Harry was treated to a view of the hunchback, Heinrich.

The man opened the door and glared at him.

Harry thought he had never seen any one so hideously ugly.

"You de new cook?" he demanded, as he peered in.

"Yes, boss," replied Harry, who was busy preparing a joint of lamb for the oven.

"Cook good! Cook good!" said Heinrich, with a chuckling laugh.

"Yes, boss."

"No cookee rats, hey! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Chinaman no cookee rats, boss! Dat all big lie."

"Lie, noting! Look out, you Chink! You cookee rats I makee you eat 'em, see? Ha, ha, ha!"

Heinrich slammed the door then and could be heard shuffling away.

"Heaven help the fellow who falls into that man's clutches," thought Young King Brady. "There can't be a doubt but that it was he who did up Jock Lung last night in Canton Sam's joint. I can imagine those fingers clutching a man's throat."

Harry put his meat in the oven, peeled the potatoes, and started them boiling, and having attended to other necessary matters, found himself with a little spare time on his hands.

"It beats all what strange places we strike," he thought. "If I am to put in the night here, and very likely I will have to, I ought to know a little more about it, and now will be the time to find out."

He opened the door and passed out into the passage, which he was able to noiselessly explore, thanks to his Chinese felt shoes.

He discovered that the passage formed almost a circle, being prevented from quite doing so by the kitchen, which occupied a sort of underground extension to the Roost.

Harry could discover no door. At each end he came up against a partition, and there were the stairs in the middle.

Listening at the foot of the stairs and hearing no sounds, Young King Brady ventured up.

His experience was the same as Old King Brady's.

Not a soul was to be seen, and a death-like stillness pervaded the house.

At the top of the stairs there was another passage which passed entirely around this most peculiar house, leaving what might be called a central core in the middle.

Into this interior house a number of doors led.

It was the most remarkable structure Harry had ever seen.

Every window opened off the circular hall, and they were all closed in by heavy wooden shutters.

Harry opened several of the doors.

It was so dark that it was difficult to see much.

Most of the rooms were in a sad state of dust and disorder; but there was one which was clean, and was fitted up as a sort of office.

Needless to say that this was the room into which Old King Brady was shown later on.

Harry pushed about here for a moment, examining one thing and another when, without knowing what he was doing, he must have pressed a secret spring near the little panel which Brichelhoff had opened for his letter.

A narrow bit of wainscoting glided back, leaving an opening just about wide enough for a man to pass through.

How he had opened it Young King Brady did not know.

He listened, but could hear nothing, and it was entirely too dark inside to see anything.

"I suppose I had better get back," thought Young King Brady. "I am sure to get into trouble if I push ahead with this thing, and yet——"

He determined to risk it.

Producing his electric dark lantern, he passed through the panel and crept up a flight of stairs which were not over a foot wide; at the end he opened a door and passed into a room which occupied the entire floor space of the house.

Harry stared about in amazement, as well he might.

What he saw must be described, and yet it is almost too ghastly for description.

At first glance Young King Brady might have been excused for fancying that he was in a morgue.

The room, let it be remembered, was circular.

Around one half of the circle were a series of marble-topped tables, and upon nearly all of them lay a human corpse.

Here it was an old man, there a young woman, again a child, the next a handsome youth of eighteen or nineteen, the next a beautiful girl, and so on.

There were fifteen of the corpses altogether. Each was covered with a sheet so placed as to leave the head exposed.

The opposite half of the wall space was given up to a broad work bench, where chemical apparatus of every imaginable kind was displayed, with shelves at the back upon which a great number of glass jars and bottles were ranged, containing powders and liquids, etc.

In the middle of the room was a circular furnace, a bellows, a series of ovens, large and small.

There were also many other peculiar features to this most remarkable laboratory which would take entirely too long to describe.

What could it all mean?

Young King Brady was at a complete loss to imagine. He heartily wished that the old detective was there to give him his opinion about the place.

"I must get right out of here," thought Harry. "This won't do at all. If I am caught here it is all day with me, surest thing."

He hurried around the tables, flashing his lantern upon one face and another.

All had that same waxy look which he had observed on the clew from the Golden Gate.

Presently he came to one where the face was not exposed, the sheet being drawn up over where the head was supposed to be.

This was the last corpse of the line, and Harry, anxious to get a look at it, too, pulled the sheet away.

He drew back, half sick with horror, for he found himself looking at the headless body of a man.

"It was here that the clew came from!" he gasped. "This mystery grows deeper and deeper! What can it all mean?"

But a moment's reflection showed Young King Brady that he had seen enough for awhile, and he crept back toward the panel which communicated with the stairs.

The panel stood open as he had left it, but as Harry was about to step through he suddenly darted back.

He had been discovered.

There stood the girl Nina with a cocked revolver in her hand covering him.

She glided through the opening, regarding Harry with flashing eyes.

"Cook, you're a fraud!" she exclaimed, hissing. "I suspected it from the first! Move those hands of yours one inch and I'll blow your brains out. I'm a deadshot and never miss my man. Now give an account of yourself. Why are you here?"

"I no likee dis place," replied Harry. "I try findee my way out. I go; run away."

"Rats! Cut it out! You are no Chink."

"Yes, missus! Yes!"

"Liar! You are a detective in disguise. Own up and I'll let you live. Stiek to that farce and I'll kill you where you stand!"

It was useless. Harry felt that.

Whatever this girl's real standing in the house might be she was evidently all business.

Young King Brady determined to be business-like, too.

"All right," he said. "I own up. Watch me, and you will see me change back into the detective that I really am!"

"Hold on!" said the girl, hurriedly. "Don't do that!"

"But, miss, there is nothing to be afraid of. I——"

"Hold on, I say. I would rather you remained as you are. I have my reasons. If you want to keep on my good side, just listen and obey."

"I am in your power, miss. I am listening."

"Are you one of the Brady detectives?"

"I am."

"Good! Young King Brady, the detective?"

"Do I look as though I could be Old King Brady?"

"You look like a Chink and nothing else. You are well made up; but you can't deceive me. Where is Old King Brady?"

"Don't know."

"Is he going to follow you here?"

"Can't say."

"Don't lie. I'm not to be bluffed."

"I can't tell you a thing about him."

"We will cut that out. Why are you here?"

"Just to pick up whatever information I can."

"Don't lie."

"I am standing up all right."

"Stand up for the truth. You will lose nothing by it. You are looking for John H. Marling. You came here following up the clew sent you from the Golden Gate?"

"Well, I——"

"Own up! Yes or no?"

"Yes."

"Enough. You raised that sheet on the last table. You now know where the clew came from. You Bradys consider yourselves the sharpest detectives in the world. Tell me, is it your opinion that you hold the head of John H. Marling in your possession?"

"Miss, it is not."

"As I suspected. The Bradys are not to be fooled. What do you think?"

"About the head?"

"Yes."

"That it is the head of a man dead many weeks is the conclusion we came to."

"Weeks!"

"Months, then!"

"Months! That man has been dead for years."

"Impossible!"

"Fact."

"Explain."

"I could, but I won't."

"Do you mean to tell me that all these bodies are those of persons who died long ago?"

"I do. The last one brought here died three years ago."

Harry was silent.

"You don't believe me," said the girl, at length.

"I don't know what to believe. I don't understand this situation. I am wondering who you are, and a whole lot of other things."

"Among others, if John H. Marling is alive and in this house?"

"Well, naturally that question finds a place in my collection."

"I'll answer it. He is alive and in this house; but you might hunt for him a month and you would never find him, my bogus Chink."

"It's a good job to get close to your man, at all events," said Harry. "Want any more questions fired at you?"

"You might try a few on."

"Who are you?"

"You asked that before and, seeing that you did not get any answer, you might as well cut it out now. I won't tell you."

"What's to be done to me for coming in here?"

"Nothing just now. You just get back to your pots and pans, and later on I'll give you a call, and we will have a social and professional confab."

"Professional! Are you a——"

"Detective?"

"Well?"

"Guess."

"I guess yes."

"And I don't say no. Now we cut all this out. If you are not back in your kitchen in two minutes' time your life will be in danger. In fact, it is in danger now."

"From you? You have lowered your revolver and don't look quite so fierce as you did awhile back."

"Not from me. I'm not the only one in this house. Where is Jock Lung?"

"In the Frisco morgue, a corpse."

"Look out that Ching Chow don't follow him. Seriously, friend Brady, you are up against the stiffest game you ever struck, in spite of all your experience. I now go. Give me one minute start, and then retreat to your pots and pans. So long!"

She vanished through the panel, leaving Harry filled with perplexity to know what course to adopt in the light of this sudden change of affairs.

He counted sixty slowly, and then made a start.

Scarcely had he reached the panel when a piercing scream rang out from below.

"Don't kill me, Heinrich! Don't kill me!"

"Traitor, you die!" a harsh, guttural voice was heard to answer.

"Help! Help, Brady, help!" came the cry, which was instantly followed by the sound of a heavy fall.

"It's business now!" gasped Harry.

Drawing his revolver, he dashed down the narrow stairs.

A light shone at the bottom.

Springing through the other panel into Brichelhoff's room, Harry saw the girl, Nina, stretched lifeless upon the floor.

No one else was visible, and Harry could see plain enough now, for the light of a large hanging lamp filled the room.

Fully realizing his danger, he approached the unconscious girl and bent down over her.

He had better have been more careful.

At the same instant Heinrich, the hunchback, crept out from behind Brichelhoff's desk so noiselessly that Young King Brady never heard a sound.

With one tiger-like spring, the hideous monster flung himself upon Harry.

"Ah, ha! Ah, ha! I got you now!" he hissed, as his long skinny fingers closed upon the detective's throat. Heinrich the strangler! Who ever escapes him? Ha, ha, ha!"

Fiercely Harry struggled to break that fearful hold.

Never before had Young King Brady been nearer death.

"No go! No go!" hissed the hunchback, pressing Harry's throat all the harder. "Heinrich, the strangler, never fails!"

## CHAPTER XI.

### IN BRICHELHOFF'S MORGUE.

Strange doings seemed to be the order of things at Madman's Roost that day.

It was, in fact, a strange house, and there had been strange doings there for many years since John H. Marling's brother disappeared.

The house had originally been built by Edward Marling, who was a most eccentric individual.

Before Brichelhoff appeared on the scene there were those who said that Marling's ghost haunted it.

Strange lights had been seen at night, moving about the Roost, and strange faces peering out of the windows from time to time during many years.

If the Bradys had been able to give a little more time to investigating the character of the house they would have learned many strange things.

As it was, Harry's investigation appeared to have been cut short, and Old King Brady was not in a much better fix when he found himself standing in the kitchen with Mr. Brichelhoff, who was in such a state of terror that he hardly seemed to know what to do or say.

"Where do we go next?" asked the old detective. "What's the matter with leaving this house by the front door and going down the ladder. That would seem, after all, to be the easiest way."

"Wait a minute," replied the chemist, passing his hand over his forehead. Give me time to think. My death is being plotted in this house. I can see that, and don't want to die, and so must make no mistake."

He hesitated for a few minutes, and then said:

"Understand, Mr. Brady, I have been playing a dangerous game here. In order to prevent trouble with the police I have had this place thoroughly covered with electric wires which are connected with a strong battery located in a room above us. These wires are so arranged that when the switch is adjusted the opening of either of the two doors by which we could get out, or by raising this skylight or any window on the floor above us, which is on a level with the sand hill upon which this house rests, a stick of dynamite will be exploded.

"Why I did this does not matter now, but I am telling you the truth, and the connection has been made. Unless the switch can be altered it is impossible for us to escape, and to attempt to do so will only sacrifice our lives."

"But who has set this switch?" asked the detective.

"One who has long been my assistant—Heinrich the hunchback."

"He means to kill you?"

"There can be no doubt of it."

"Can it be that this is a case of the biter being bit? That the methods which you have taught him to use upon others are about to be used upon yourself?"

"Put all these questions aside until later. Before we part you shall have a full explanation, if we live. What we want to do now is to save our lives if we can."

"I see; you are right. I am equal to anything. What do you propose?"

"On the top floor of this house is my laboratory. There we shall find the switchboard. We must penetrate to it if we can; but the chances are that we shall strike Heinrich before we can get there, or when we get there, in any case."

"We can only try," replied Old King Brady. "Meanwhile we are losing time. Besides this man Heinrich, who else is in the house?"

"No one but a young woman. A niece of Heinrich's who recently came from Bohemia."

"You are a Bohemian?"

"I came from a small district lying between Bohemia and Hungary. You would not know the name of the place if I was to tell you; but never mind all this. Follow me."

"Just one question more. Is there not a Chinese cook here now?"

"You say Jock Lung is dead."

"But another?"

"How do I know. Heinrich's niece may have engaged another. Why do you ask?"

"Because we shall need all the help we can get, probably, and a Chink would be better than nobody."

"That is not your reason. I am no fool. You have a partner—the young man who called with you at my office this morning. No doubt you have been working up some scheme to put him in here as cook. I know nothing about the business. I have not been here before in several days."

"This is a very shrewd and intelligent man," thought Old King Brady. "I must be constantly on my guard." Brichelhoff, without further talk, now started back up the stairs.

They reached the hall above, and once more entered the room.

The rifles had now vanished.

The room, however, was vacant, and the same death-like stillness prevailed.

"I'll examine the front door and see how matters stand," said Brichelhoff, stepping out again.

"Yes," he added, as Old King Brady followed him, "the connection is on there, also. There is nothing for it but to go to the laboratory. Now, Mr. Brady, prepare for the worst. For years I have been suffering from a very serious affection of the heart. I am liable to drop dead at any moment, so the doctors tell me. Should I die before we get out of this place the chances are that you would never get out alive, and your young partner, if he is here, stands a fair share of meeting with the same fate. So you want to stand by me all you can."

"I am right with you. Whoever attempts to interfere with you now will first have to settle with me."

"You will not be disappointed in the reward awaiting you if we succeed."

"The only reward I desire is to know the truth about John H. Marling, and to rescue him if he is here."

"It is as I supposed. You have come out flatfooted at last."

"Have I been anything else but flatfooted in my talk? I think not."

"Enough!" said the chemist, abruptly. "You follow me."

They now returned to the room, and Mr. Brichelhoff opened the secret panel through which Harry had passed.

"There lies the way," he whispered. "Lead on. One word. If you meet that hunchbacked fiend instantly shoot him. If you hesitate and he gets his hands around upon your throat you are lost."

"A strangler, eh?"

"Nothing less. His father was one before him. Now go."

Old King Brady, again producing his dark lantern, followed in Harry's footsteps and passed on up into the laboratory where the corpses lay, seeing no one and hearing nothing but the tread of the chemist's feet behind him on the stairs.

"Well, and what sort of a shop have we here?" he ex-



claimed. "Whatever it is, at least we seem to have it pretty much to ourselves."

"This is my laboratory," replied Brichelhoff, somewhat proudly. "Yes; we have it to ourselves, thank heaven. Now to cut off the switch."

He hurried over to the bench and moved a rubber key attached to a board fastened against the wall."

"Now we go!" he exclaimed. "The way is clear for us to escape."

But Old King Brady was in no such haste.

Despite the risk which he did not doubt he was running, he felt that he must know more about the place.

"What is this—a morgue? A dissecting room?" he demanded. "You cannot reasonably expect me to leave here without knowing more."

"It is my laboratory," was the reply. "Since you insist on knowing what all this means, listen to a brief explanation, and take the consequences of the delay if anything comes of it. Look at these corpses. Do they not seem to be people who have just died?"

"They do."

"And yet several of them have been dead for many years, and the youngest of them, or rather the latest to come into this place, is three years old."

"You wonder what it all means. You would not know if I told you how these bodies are preserved; but know this, for years I have been working on a secret process of embalming which is intended to preserve a corpse so naturally that the dead person will appear as in life. Could I succeed there would be millions in it. Death would lose some of its terrors; people would preserve the remains of their dead friends in their own homes. Each house would have its private mausoleum where the family dead would be preserved through all ages. And I am now near to success—very near. Only the eyes refuse to yield to my process. Behold!"

He was standing near the last table, where lay the headless trunk.

The sheet had been again drawn up, as when Harry saw it, and Brichelhoff did not seem to notice until he pulled it away, when he sprang back with a startled cry:

"I've been robbed! Robbed of my best specimen! Oh, the wretch! Oh, if I could only——"

He paused, panting for breath, and pressed his hand against his heart.

"Calm yourself!" said Old King Brady. "Remember your weakness."

"This man is surely a monomaniac," he added to himself, "and just as surely as he is crazy, so surely is that the body of the man whose head came to me as the clew from the Golden Gate."

"It is the work of that fiend Heinrich!" hissed Brichelhoff, still greatly agitated. "See! He has cut the head off my best specimen. It is that head which he sent to you in the box! Oh, what does all this mean?"

"Was it the head of John H. Marling?" asked Old King

Brady, sternly. "Surely now is the time for you to tell the truth."

"No; it was not," replied the chemist. "This is the body of Edward Marling, the chemist who built this house and for a number of years lived here alone, and who was quite insane. I was his pupil and assistant. It was he who first started to work on this most valuable process, and to me he imparted his secret, and I have labored for years to perfect it. There has been no murder done here, Mr. Brady. These subjects were all purchased from the hospitals. Even Marling died a natural death. He made such a beautiful corpse, and now to think that it is ruined forever. It is an outrageous shame."

"This man is as mad as Marling ever was," thought Old King Brady, "and yet there must be something in it all. Even Dr. Bartlett was puzzled, and—merciful heavens! What is this?"

Old King Brady passed on to another table. One which had been vacant when Harry entered the room.

It was not vacant now, however.

As he pulled away the sheet there he saw what appeared to be the body of a young Chinaman fully clothed.

Instantly the detective recognized Young King Brady, and started back with the exclamation noted above.

Old King Brady was terribly excited, and yet when Brichelhoff turned to the table he was as cold as ice.

"And who is this?" he asked.

"Ha! More of Heinrich's work!" continued the chemist. "That body was not here when I was last in the laboratory. A Chink! No! A man in disguise! Is this your partner? Upon my word, I believe it. See! There are the marks of Heinrich's fingers about his throat. He has been strangled by that fiend."

"It is my partner, as you say!" replied Old King Brady. "I do not leave this place now until he is avenged!"

## CHAPTER XII.

### CONCLUSION.

Young King Brady had the escape of his life in his struggle with Heinrich there on the floor.

For a moment he thought he was gone.

Indeed, there is little doubt that he would have been choked to death if he had not followed Old King Brady's tactics and played possum.

With a choking gasp Harry ceased to struggle and fell back upon the floor.

Then the terrible pressure upon his throat was relaxed.

"Another gone!" chuckled Heinrich. "Ha, my hand was ovid. It take me too long. Now to get dem ovid mit dis before the boss comes."

He picked up the girl and carried her from the room.

Harry's first thought was to spring up and renew the fight for life.

Then he knew how hard hit he had actually been.

The moment he tried to rise his head took to swimming, and he sank back unconscious.

At this most critical moment Young King Brady fainted away.

The next Harry knew he was lying stretched out upon the table in the morgue.

He was quite alone. This was some little time before Old King Brady and Mr. Brichelhoff paid the visit to this most remarkable man.

It did not take Harry long to understand that he had completely deceived Heinrich the strangler.

Of course the man believed him dead, and for that reason had laid him out with the other corpses.

Here for a few minutes Young King Brady lay, still gathering strength.

"I wonder what became of that girl?" he said to himself. "Did he actually kill her? Well, I guess she was a bad one. Can it be possible that she was a detective? If she still lives I ought to try to lend her a helping hand."

Harry was all mixed up in his head.

Wild thoughts were chasing each other through his active brain.

At one moment he thought he could hear Old King Brady's voice downstairs calling for help; the next and it seemed as though he had fainted away and then come to again.

This time he found himself standing on his feet over in one corner of the room.

He never knew how he got there, whether it was accident or not.

Whatever it was, it proved a lucky accident for Young King Brady's plans.

There in the wall he could see another of those little panel-like doors.

It stood open, and beyond was a narrow flight of stairs.

They appeared to lead upward toward the roof.

When he had been in the laboratory with the girl Nina Harry had determined that this was the top of the house.

Now it appeared as if this was a mistake.

Here were stairs leading up still further.

Young King Brady determined to explore.

He crept up the stairs, coming to a door at the top of the short flight.

This also appeared to be ajar. Harry found himself in a little octagonal chamber occupying the entire space of the cupola, which he had seen from the street when he first examined Madman's Roost.

Here upon an iron bed, directly on the springs, without mattress or pillow, lay the naked body of an elderly man.

At first Harry thought he was dead, for he was entirely unconscious.

His hands were tied up to the head bars above him, and his feet were spread apart and tied to the foot bars in the same way.

Harry fumbled for his dark lantern, and found it undisturbed.

So with his revolvers and everything else belonging to him.

Flashing the light upon the face of the man, Harry saw that he had found the object of his search at last.

The clew from the Golden Gate had been a straight tip in its way.

It had led the detective to the object of his search, for the man on the bed was surely John H. Marling and no one else.

"He must be dead!" thought Young King Brady, looking down at the silent form.

But at that very moment there was a twitching of the legs; the man seemed trying to draw them up, as though in pain.

Harry cut the man free, and lifting him to a sitting position, shook him up a bit.

It had the desired effect.

The man opened his eyes and stared in a dazed way.

"What are you trying to do to me now?" he demanded, thickly. "Why don't you kill me at once and be done with it? You mean to kill me in the end."

"Not I," replied Harry. "I'm not in that line. Brace up, Mr. Marling. I'm a detective. I'm here to help you, if I can."

The banker half opened his eyes, but they seemed to close again of their own accord.

"This fellow is half dead with opium, that's what's the matter with him," thought Young King Brady. "What on earth shall I do? At any minute that hunchbacked strangler is liable to pounce upon me. I can't see my way out of this snap at all."

He fumbled in his pockets, produced a tiny vial containing a dark liquid, and forced a few drops between Marling's lips.

This was a highly concentrated preparation of caffeine prepared by a skilled chemist for Old King Brady, and was one of the quickest and surest antidotes for opium known.

It had immediate effect upon Marling.

In a moment he was standing on his feet, staring about him.

"Who are you? Where is Brichelhoff?" he gasped.

"I am a detective," replied Harry, "and you are John H. Marling. Do you know where you are? Can you explain your presence in this place?"

Marling brushed his hand across his brow.

"At detective!"

"Yea."

"What is your name?"

"Brady."

"One of the famous Bradys?"

"I am Young King Brady."

"Ah! You are here—why?"

"I came to search for you."

"For me? Am I lost, then?"

"You have been missing for a month."

"For a month?"

"Yes. Do you know where you are?"

"No—yes! Madman's Roost. My unfortunate brother's house. I remember all now. Brichelhoft. He wanted me to sign a paper. I refused. They tortured me upon that bed. They kept me dosed with opium. It's a wonder they did not kill me. I'm more than half dead now."

"What paper did they try to make you sign?" Harry asked.

"Listen!" he exclaimed. "It is my fortune they are after. This man Brichelhoft, do you know who I mean?"

"Yes, yes, I know," replied Harry, hastily. "Go on!"

"This man Brichelhoft is a scoundrel. I have known him many years. He formerly worked for my brother. They have a secret process for preserving the body after death. I have advanced much money for the work. He wanted more. I refused. He drugged me. He tortured me. He wanted me to sign a will leaving him all my property. I think he must be crazy. I know I have been. This house is mine—it was my brother's. He was crazy. He is dead; but Brichelhoft preserved his body. I—you—he—oh, get me out of this! The mix-up in my brain is coming back again. Get me out of this, or I shall die!"

The caffeine had about spent its effect. Harry saw that he had a white elephant on his hands, so to speak.

"Where are your clothes?" he demanded. "We want to get you out of this."

But Mr. Marling knew nothing of clothes. He seemed to want to lie down on the bed again.

"You're no detective," he muttered, dully. "You're only a Chinaman. I might have seen that before."

"You are wrong! I am Young King Brady. Brace up! Could a Chinaman talk as I do? Of course not. Help me by helping yourself, and I'll get you out of this."

"If I can," he added to himself. "I'm afraid I'm promising more than I can perform."

Marling made no answer, and once more started to lie down.

Harry determined to bring him down into the laboratory. There he might at least hope to find something in the way of clothes to cover the unfortunate millionaire.

Half lifting, half dragging, he got him down the narrow stairs, when all at once the sharp crack of several rifles rang out below.

What could it mean?

Harry listened. Marling sank to the floor by his side.

"I can do nothing with the fellow!" thought Harry.

He felt that he must wait and see what was next to follow before making any move.

Seizing one of the strangely embalmed corpses, he dragged it off the table and pushed it under an old sofa at one side of the room.

Then, lifting the unconscious form of Marling, he shook him up again.

He was a little man, and not heavy, and as he partially helped himself, Harry had no trouble in getting him upon the table, where he sank down unconscious.

Now Harry began searching for clothes.

After a long hunt he found a suit packed in a box under the laboratory bench.

He was just about to take them out when, hearing footsteps on the stairs, he sprang upon the vacant table, lay down and drew the sheet over him; and thus Old King Brady and Brichelhoft found him when they entered the room.

It was an immense relief to Harry to hear Old King Brady's familiar voice.

Instantly he resolved to go out of business and turn matters over into the hands of his chief.

So he tipped Old King Brady the wink.

The secret sign given told the detective not only that his partner was alive, but that he was still working on their case.

This was what made Old King Brady change his manner when Brichelhoft approached the table.

The talk which followed showed Harry that his partner was not quite ready to have him declare himself yet.

"Is it safe for us to attempt to leave here by the front door now?" asked Old King Brady, turning to Brichelhoft.

"Safe enough if Heinrich don't kill us," was the reply.

"Is this man mad that he should turn on you so?"

"I think he must be. We have had many differences; he has threatened me many times. The fact is, he smokes opium and—merciful heavens! Am I going mad, too? Has the dead come to life? Help, Brady! Help! Marling! Keep off! I did not kill you! I——"

It was John H. Marling, and not his long deceased brother, as the chemist thought.

Aroused by the talking, he suddenly arose to a sitting posture on the slab.

But Brichelhoft took him for his brother.

The shock was too great for the chemist's weak heart.

As he thus exclaimed he clapped his hand to his breast and sank at Old King Brady's feet.

"There is the man! There! That's the villain who did it!" muttered Marling, pointing down at him, as Young King Brady rose up from the table now, looking like anything but a Chinese corpse.

"He is dead," said Old King Brady, bending over Brichelhoft.

Harry sprang off the table.

"Governor, is he actually dead?" he remarked.

"That's what he is," said Old King Brady. "The man was far gone with heart disease. It is not strange that he should die so. But who is this John H. Marling? Boy, you seem to have been at work!"

"That's what I have, Governor, and against fearful odds. Yes; that is Marling. He is loaded with hop. I——"

"Harry, don't let's stop to talk!" broke in the old de-

ective. "There is a man in this house who is to be feared—Heinrich, the hunchbacked strangler. He——"

"I know!" interrupted Harry, in turn. "I just saw him kill an unfortunate girl, and he tried to kill me. You are right, Governor. We must get out of here without an instant's delay; but first we must get clothes on that man."

Marling had sunk into unconsciousness again; but the Bradys shook him up, and between them pulled on the trousers and coat from the box.

This was all they attempted.

Harry then, by Old King Brady's direction, gave him another dose of caffeine, which again had a reviving effect.

"We leave this place now, and all explanations must come afterward," said Old King Brady. "Come, follow me downstairs!"

They had no sooner left the laboratory than the door of a closet which Harry had found locked when he made his search, cautiously opened, and the hideous hunchback came sneaking out.

Mad with opium the wretch undoubtedly was; equally certain was it that he had seen all that had occurred.

Old King Brady heard him moving about, and the sound sent him on down the stairs all the faster, Harry leading John H. Marling after him along the passage to the door of Madman's Roost.

Old King Brady flashed his dark lantern upon the fastenings, and comprehending them at a glance, threw open the door.

"Can you climb down that ladder, Mr. Marling?" he demanded.

"I—I—guess so," was the reply. "I must try."

He managed it and reached the steps in safety, Harry going ahead to help him down.

Old King Brady quickly followed.

"The first thing is to make sure of Marling," he said. "There are other things then, and—great heavens! What is this?"

Well, it was an explosion, and a terrible one.

To their amazement and horror the Bradys saw a flash of light, and Madman's Roost seemed to rise in the air, falling back upon the sand hill and all about them a shattered mass of bricks and beams, bursting into flames. In a short time the house was totally destroyed.

The drug store alongside was wrecked also, and glass was shattered in the windows of houses across the way; but the detectives and John H. Marling escaped unharmed.

Who now would be able to tell the secrets of Madman's Roost, when the strange old house upon the sand hill was no more?

\* \* \* \* \*

And those secrets the Bradys never fully learned.

What Brichelhoff told Old King Brady, and what Marling told Harry was all they ever knew.

That Heinrich, the hunchback, had blown up the house

was certain; but whether it was by accident or design was a mystery never solved.

The Bradys managed to get Marling into a hospital, and there the man gradually came back to full consciousness.

He was very thankful to the detectives for the part they had played in his rescue; but at the same time he was very reticent, and steadily refused to talk about his own affairs.

So the case, beginning in mystery, ended in mystery.

Brichelhoff was dead and his secrets, valuable to science, or otherwise, died with him. Not a trace of the bodies survived the fire which followed the explosion.

Even the fate of the girl Nina remained a mystery.

Was she a detective?

Brichelhoff had declared to Old King Brady that she was the niece of Heinrich, the hunchback.

The Bradys instituted inquiries among the various private detective agencies, but could learn nothing at all.

A mystery Nina remained, but Harry felt sure that she had actually been killed by the strangler when he himself so narrowly escaped with his life.

Remaining in San Francisco until Mr. Marling had sufficiently recovered to be able to travel, the Bradys, accompanied by the banker, went back to New York.

Meanwhile Old King Brady, by his direction, had ordered the head of Edward Marling buried in Lone Mountain cemetery, and a stone erected over the place.

Not a word about Madman's Roost would Marling utter during all the long journey; not a syllable did he breathe about his own affairs.

Upon reaching New York he walked into his office just as he had walked out of it.

The first thing he did was to draw a check to the order of Old King Brady for five thousand.

With this he expressed a desire to have the whole matter drift into the past.

He refused to see reporters, and he refused to give any information to his lawyers.

Following Marling's special request, the Bradys kept silent, too.

And such was the sudden and somewhat unsatisfactory ending of the very mysterious matter of The Bradys at Madman's Roost.

## THE END.

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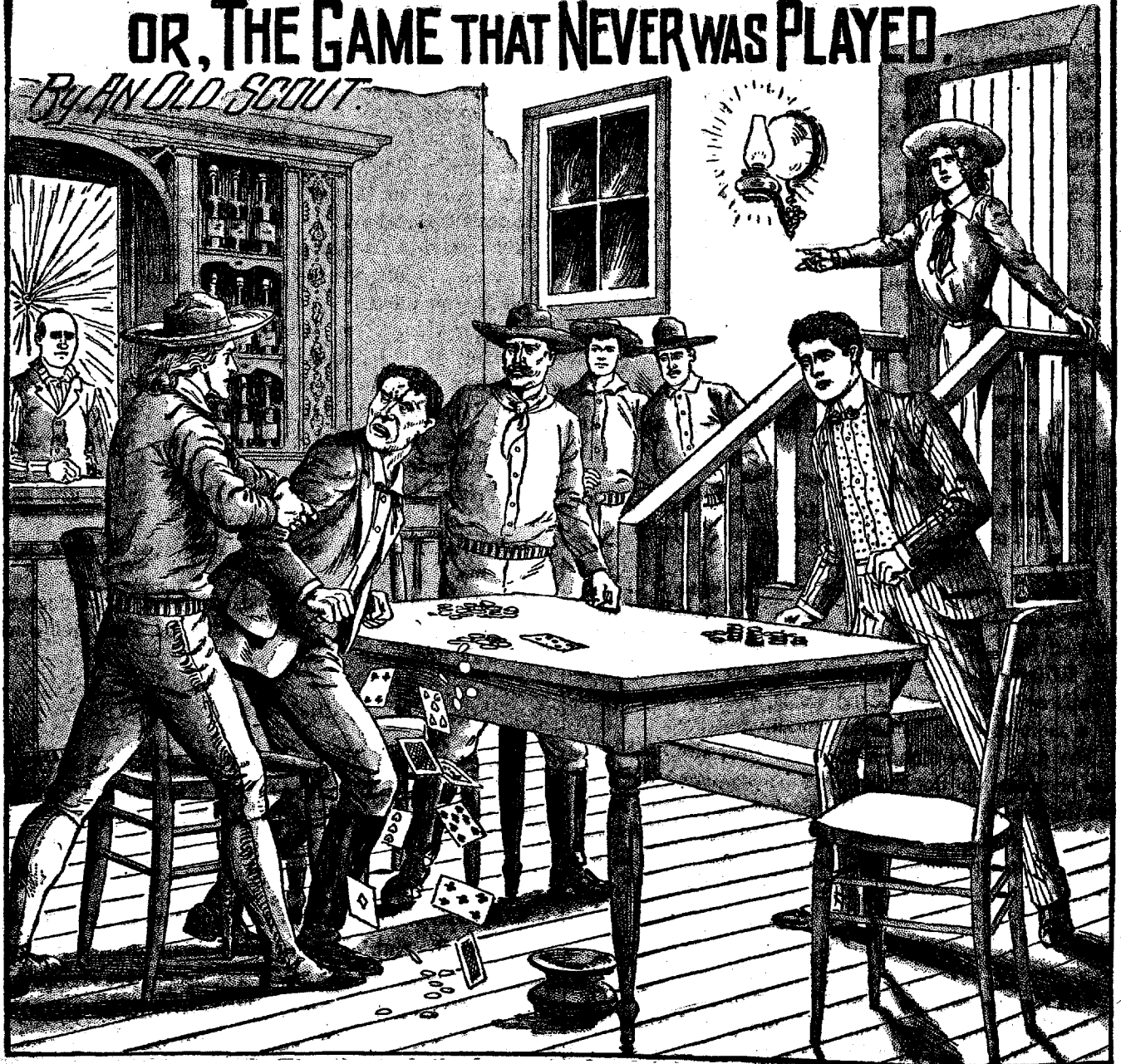
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