

SECRET SERVICE

OLD AND YOUNG KING BRADY, DETECTIVES.

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

No. 330.

NEW YORK, MAY 19, 1905.

Price 5 Cents.

THE BRADYS AND THE SWAMP RATS; OR, AFTER THE GEORGIA MOONSHINERS.

By A NEW-YORK DETECTIVE.



"Keep off! Keep off, old man!" shouted Dirk Dolliver as Old King Brady rose in the bow of the boat. Chloe clutched the rope and Nervy pressed forward with the gun, while Tony pointed to Harry in the tree.

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THE BRADYS AND THE SWAMP RATS

OR,

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CHAPTER I.

A BRAVE RESCUE IN THE HAYLOW SLEWS.

On a certain afternoon in May, the steamer Georgia Lilly was working her way up the slews which lie between the Haylow swamp and the ocean, guided by the skilled hand of Captain Papps.

The Georgia Lilly was on her way from Brunswick, bound for Billville, a little town far up the slews, whose only excuse for existence was the prosperous turpentine business carried on by Col. Tom Dalton, a well-known character in Georgia commercial and political circles.

That Col. Dalton carried Billville in his breeches pocket was a common saying in southeastern Georgia, for what there was about the township which he did not own was not worth owning, for it was all cypress, rank undergrowth, and slimy ooze.

On this particular May day Col. Dalton chanced to be a passenger on the Lilly, returning from Augusta, where he had been to look after business interests in the Legislature, now in special session.

With him was his daughter Bessie, a charming little miss of ten, the colonel's youngest and favorite child.

Besides these two important passengers, with the exception of two others to be mentioned in their turn, the list was made up of a few "Crackers," or "Swamp Rats," as they are locally styled.

"White trash," all of them, members of that unfortunate race who for a century and a half have eked out a miserable existence in the wilds of the Okefenokee, Haytow, and other swamps along the Georgia coast.

The two exceptions were both men, one young, the other well on in years.

They appeared to have no connection with each other, nor to have any desire to connect, for each had kept strictly to himself during the trip.

The younger had rather handsome features, was well built, quick and active in all his movements.

His clothes, however, were old and shabby, and to all appearance the finger of poverty had pressed him hard.

Taken altogether, he looked like a boy who had been long out of work.

The elder was of peculiarly striking appearance, particularly in the matter of his dress, which was decidedly quaint.

He wore a long blue coat with brass buttons, the whole fashioned in antique style; a big white felt hat with an unusually broad brim, an old-fashioned stand-up collar and stock.

Many times during the trip down from Brunswick Col. Dalton had eyed this old man curiously, and twice he had tried to pick up an acquaintance with him, but the old gentleman did not respond, not even taking notice of little Bessie as she went bounding about the deck.

The younger man did this, however, and had several conversations with the child.

Now that they were actually in the slews and the time of their landing at Billville close at hand, Col. Dalton arriving at the determination to take the bull by the horns, made a dead set for the old gentleman.

This he regarded as necessary, for as we have said before, Col. Dalton owned Billville, and he considered it his business to post himself in the business of every stranger who came to town.

So the colonel walked up to where the old gentleman was sitting, and planting himself alongside of him, said:

"My dear suh, I was about to take a drink when it occurred to me that perhaps you would like to join me. You are a stranger here, and probably are not aware that a little whisky is absolutely necessary to people of our time of life to ward off the miasma, which naturally arises from these lowlands."

"Thanks," replied the old gentleman. "I don't object."

The colonel passed his flask, which the stranger barely pressed to his lips, then carefully wiping the mouth of the bottle with a clean handkerchief, he returned it.

"Ah," said Col. Dalton, "I see my good opinion of you is justified, suh. You show a consideration which not every-one would; nevertheless, you need not have been so particular; when I ask a man to drink with me I stand ready to share the bottle with him unwiped. Here's looking at you, suh. I wish you success."

Then the colonel took a long pull, corked the bottle, and stowed it away in his hip pocket.

"And now, suh," he said confidently, the ice having been fairly broken, "I am Col. Dalton, of Billville. Who might you be?"

"My name is Mason, colonel—Henry Mason."

"Pleased to know you, Mr. Mason. You'll be from the Nawth?"

"From Chicago, sir."

"Oh, indeed! I don't ask your business in Billville, suh. I am not one of the inquisitive kind, but I may say it is very seldom we have a visitor from your town."

"I suppose so. However, there is nothing private about my business. I am in the lumber line. I am here in my own interests solely. I have invented a new process of treating cypress whereby it can be used for trimmings, imitating oak, walnut, maple, and other woods. My object in coming here is to arrange for the purchase of a tract of cypress timber which I can utilize in my work."

"Indeed! Then if that is the case you may consider yourself fortunate in having made my acquaintance, for I own all the land worth owning hereabouts."

"Yes, I have heard of you, colonel. I was intending to look you up directly I arrived at Billville. Excuse me, but isn't it dangerous for that little girl to lean so far over the rails?"

Little Bessie, with her feet thrust into the openings of the rope netting, was indeed in a dangerous position, for she had climbed as high as she could get, and was leaning over the rail, looking down at the muddy water through which the Lilly was making her way.

"Bessie, get off of there!" bawled her father.

"Oh, paw! I'm looking for alligators," replied the child, never budging.

"Nonsense! Alligators don't come down this far. Get off and keep off. Do you hear?"

The girl reluctantly obeyed, but in a minute she was on again over on the other side of the boat.

Col. Dalton, who did not observe this, went on with his conversation.

To do the man justice he did not urge the stranger to buy his lands; indeed, he rather threw cold water on the plan, and expressed his doubts about any system of treating cypress being capable of making it available for such purposes as Mr. Mason claimed.

"But, suh, I have cypress lands to sell," he added, "and I would just as soon sell them to you as anyone else. I shall take great pleasure in showing you around."

"Thanks," replied Mr. Mason. "What I want is a tract at tide water, if it can be had."

"And it can, suh. I have a dozen tracts at tide water, any one of which can be bought cheap, but you will have to hunt the swamp rats off'n 'em yourself, suh. I won't undertake that contract. That must be understood."

"It should be easy to exterminate the rats, colonel. Do they damage the trees?"

"You don't understand me, suh. I refer to the poor white trash who have been squatting on my land for years. Some of them think they own their places, and there isn't one of them who ever pay me rent."

"Oh, I see! You call these people swamp rats?"

"Yes, suh."

"Are there many of them?"

"Quite a few, suh, quite a few."

"Could not they be utilized as laborers?"

"What?" cried the colonel. "My dear suh, that shows how little you know of this yere country. Them people never work."

"How do they live?"

"By hunting and fishing, and—well, by other ways."

"A little moonshining now and then," said Mr. Mason, smiling as he filled in between the colonel's lines.

"Perhaps, suh. Perhaps. I don't say now. That's one of the things which a man in my position can't afford to muss with unless he is anxious to be shot in the back or to have his house burned over his head."

"I see. The best way then would be to wink at all such business."

"Yes, suh; decidedly the best. I tell you this because I want to be frank and honest with you, as I am with every man. I will tell you also that just now is a bad time to muss with the Swamp Rats, and you had better keep your mouth shut about your intentions in case you go among them."

"Why a bad time?"

"Because, suh, they have been stirred up lately. Stir up mud and you may expect fever; stir up the Swamp Rats and you make trouble for everybody. You understand?"

"But what has happened to stir them up lately?"

"It's the fool agents of the Secret Service, Mr. Mason. They were down here three months ago, and made all kinds of trouble without accomplishing anything. Three of them stopped here for good."

"Dead?"

"Drowned, suh; their bodies were found floating in the slews."

"This is serious."

"Yes, but you have nothing to fear if you tie to me. I tell you this because I understand that the Secret Service have engaged a firm of detectives to come snooping about down hyar—the Bradys. Mebbe you have heard tell of them?"

"I think I have. They belong in New York, don't they?"

"Yes, I understand they have been mighty successful in

breaking up gangs in one place and another, but this will be their last throw. They will never come out of the Haylow swamp alive."

At this instant the conversation was interrupted by a child's piercing cry.

It was little Bessie.

The child had climbed upon the rail once too often.

A sudden turn of the Georgia Lilly, made to avoid a small island, had caused Bessie to lose her balance and sent her headlong over the rail.

Two women who saw her fall echoed her piercing scream.

The man on the deck rushed to the rail, but none offered to risk his life to save the child, who had now risen to the surface and was screaming for help.

"Stop! Stop the boat, Captain Papps!" yelled Col. Dalton, as he rushed to the rail.

Mr. Mason followed him.

He seized the man's arm as he started to pull off his coat preparatory to jumping overboard.

"Unhand me!" shouted the colonel. "I must save my child!"

"It is needless! See!"

How he ever got into the water no one seemed to know.

We refer to the shabbily dressed young man to whom we have alluded before.

But there he was, swimming toward little Bessie with a strong, steady stroke.

"I must go and help him!" cried the colonel.

"Don't," said Mr. Mason. "He will do better alone."

Indeed, the young man had already caught Bessie under his left arm just as she was sinking a second time.

He seemed perfectly cool and collected.

"Throw me a line, some of you fellows!" he shouted. "I don't want to stop here in the water with this child."

This aroused a deck hand into action, and the line was thrown.

The young man, treading water, made it fast under Bessie's arms.

"Haul away!" he cried. "Look out you don't bump her against the side of the boat!"

"Whoever that fellow is he will get all I can give him!" broke out Col. Dalton.

"He'll get a suit of dry clothes from me, and that right now," said Mr. Mason, "as it happens I have one which should about fit him in my dress-suit case, for by mistake I brought my son's case down from Washington instead of my own."

It is doubtful if Col. Dalton heard him, for he had pressed forward to receive his child.

The rope was let down again, and the young man came up hand over hand as nimbly as a trained sailor would have done.

Col. Dalton, with Bessie clasped in his arms, was there to receive him, and he overwhelmed the young man with grateful thanks.

Then Mr. Mason repeated his offer of the suit.

"Come to my stateroom, young man, and I will fix you

off with dry clothes," he said. "It is luck that I happen to have mistaken my son's suit case for my own."

Col. Dalton thought so, too, and said as much.

Mr. Mason then led the way to the cabin, and the pair passed into a stateroom.

Now it became evident that they were not the strangers they had appeared to be, for the older man, as he shot the bolt, said in a whisper:

"Good boy, Harry! Nothing could have been better! You have got next to that old scoundrel in the most effectual fashion, and it will be the biggest kind of a card in our game."

CHAPTER II.

YOUNG KING BRADY AGREES TO PLAY DETECTIVE.

"I think it will come in play all right, Governor," replied the young man, beginning to strip off his wet clothes. "Pretty slick in you too to come in with that yarn of the changed dress suit case. It may put me safe from an attack of fever."

"Right. But I mustn't stop here while you make the change. That would excite suspicion. If this man was to guess that we were the Bradys our proposed work among the Swamp Rats would be pretty certain to come to a sudden end."

"Right. You think he does not suspect you of being Old King Brady, then?"

"On the contrary, I am very certain he does suspect."

"I saw him talking to you."

"Yes; I fought him off at first, but he was so persistent that I concluded I had better yield."

"Well, get out to him. Don't run any risk on my account."

"You are all right, Harry?"

"Sure, I'm all right."

"How did you get into the water? I didn't see you go."

"No? I was up at the bow, and happened to be looking back when the child went over the rail. I was in the water almost as soon as she was."

"You were on hand with your usual promptness. Well, I'll leave you now."

Old King Brady then passed out of the stateroom and went up on deck.

Col. Dalton was found pacing up and down in a state of great excitement.

"How is the little girl?" Old King Brady asked.

"She seems to be all right, sub, I am happy to say," replied the colonel. "I have turned her over to the colored stewardess, who will look after her. How fortunate! I'll tell you a secret now. It would have been mere madness for me to have jumped in, for I can't swim a stroke."

"She was in good hands, colonel, and I congratulate you. It might have been a sad tragedy indeed."

"Indeed it might, suh. By the way, did you find out that young fellow's name?"

"Yes; he says he is Jack Clark, a sailor who lost his ship at Savannah for some reason, which he did not explain."

"Did he say why he was coming to Billville?"

"He said that he was looking for work. He happened to be in Brunswick, and Captain Papps kindly offered him a free passage to Billville, where he told him he might get a chance at your turpentine works."

"Well?"

"He seems a bright young chap."

"He does, eh? Well, he can do better than working with the niggers in the turpentine camp. I'll take care of him."

Here the conversation ended, for the stewardess had sent a colored boy to call Col. Dalton down into the cabin.

"I wish I could read that man's mind," mused Old King Brady, as he walked over to the rail and lit a cigar. "At one moment I fancy he suspects me, and the next I am sure he does not. At all events, he is a wideawake proposition, and if I am going to find out whether or no he is backing the moonshiners who are shipping such quantities of whisky away from this section I have got to go very slow."

A few moments later Harry came on deck.

Now it was safe for the world-famous detectives to talk to each other, something they had not dared to do before.

"Anything new?" asked Harry.

"Nothing."

"You were talking with the colonel?"

"Oh, yes. I told him your supposed story."

"Did you? Well, what did he say?"

"Oh, he proposes to do great things for you."

"He does, eh? Do you think he suspects?"

"Not you. I am not so sure about myself."

"If you only would have disguised, Governor, instead of putting on that infernal rigging of yours, which everybody knows."

"My dear boy, I know my business. It would have been impossible for me to have learned anything about the true inwardness of these Swamp Rats and their business if I had come here in disguise, which you cannot learn better, for then the only way would have been for me to seek work among them, which would have been sure to lead to trouble. As it is, someone is going to pick me out even if Colonel Dalton does not, and that someone is bound to be the enemy of the colonel, or of the gang, or perhaps of both. That is what my trademark suit, as you call it, is for. Now you can get next to the colonel if you play your cards right, and between us both we may see our way to clean up this Swamp Rat gang."

"What you say sounds plausible enough," replied Harry, "and it is your usual line of argument. But suppose Colonel D. himself suspects you—what then?"

"Why, in that case he will try to lead me into some trap, and it may be turned into a trap to catch him. Then, besides all this, there is the strong chance that the secret service men who were here before us and made such a botch of the business are all wrong in their conclusions, and that

the colonel has nothing to do with moonshiners. In that case—but here he comes."

The colonel now appeared, leading little Bessie by the hand.

"This is Jack Clark, Colonel Dalton," said Old King Brady. "I suppose I hardly need to introduce him."

"Not to me!" cried the colonel, seizing Harry's hand. "Young man, how can I ever thank you? Bessie, give your preserver a kiss. When I think what might have been I—"

Old King Brady walked away then, leaving Harry to work his own way into the good graces of Colonel Dalton.

Meanwhile the Georgia Lilly was rapidly approaching Billville, and soon she had tied up at the little wharf alongside of Col. Dalton's turpentine refinery.

Old King Brady was one of the first to go ashore, and he made his way directly to the Bay Hotel, a small affair of unpromising appearance, but which the old detective afterward discovered, to his surprise, was well kept.

Here he registered and went directly to his room, as it was now getting toward dusk.

"Probably Harry will find some chance to see me," he thought, "and I had better wait here till he comes."

Meanwhile Young King Brady had been taken to Col. Dalton's handsome residence in a carriage, which was awaiting them on the wharf.

"You are to come right home with me," the colonel said. "I want to introduce you to my wife and later to talk business with you. I think you had better stop at my house until we can get you located, which will be inside of a day or two."

But Harry demurred.

"Oh, no, sir," he said. "I shouldn't like to do that. I'll go home with you, of course, if you wish it, but I am only a poor fellow, and not used to grand folks and their ways. Probably I can find some cheap place to stay."

"You'll stay in no cheap place," declared the colonel. "You'll stay right in my house, so say no more about it."

Thus put down, Harry could only yield.

He was taken to a large brick house in the upper part of the village, which stood alone amid beautiful grounds.

Here he was introduced to Mrs. Dalton, a sad-looking lady, who thanked him warmly for what he had done.

"Bessie is my last child, Mr. Clark," she said. "All the rest are married or dead, and I don't know what I should have done if I had lost her. You are right welcome here, and you must try to make yourself entirely at home."

They were very cordial.

Harry was shown to a handsomely furnished room on the second floor, and was told that it was to be his while he remained at Col. Dalton's house.

At dinner, which was served at six o'clock, the colonel questioned him closely.

He talked so rapidly that Young King Brady had hard work to make mental notes of his own answers, so as to be able to tell the same story over again if he was put to it.

The colonel seemed perfectly satisfied with his answers.

however, and after dinner he led the way out upon the broad veranda where, having produced cigars, he announced that he was now ready for their business talk.

"You want work," he then said, "and I naturally suppose you don't expect very big pay."

"I should be satisfied with almost anything for the present, sir," Young King Brady replied.

"There's where you are wrong. The present is not the whole thing. One must think of the future. Suppose, now, I could show you a way to make big money—real big—what then?"

"That would suit me."

"Are you sure?"

"How could it be otherwise?"

"Easily. Suppose there was a string to it?"

"Sir?"

"I said a string."

"I don't understand you."

"Oh, yes, you do. Suppose I showed you a way to make big money which was just a little bit against the law—would that make any difference to you, providing you didn't happen to get caught?"

He was bolder with it than Harry had ever imagined he would be.

There was only one thing to do, and that was to pretend to fall in with his plans.

"Sure, it wouldn't if you say it's all right," replied Harry. "You are a big gun here, colonel, and I am only a poor working fellow. I am sure you wouldn't lead me into anything wrong."

"Then you stand ready to do anything I tell you to do?"

"Yes, sir."

"All right, my boy. You have made a very wise decision, as you will soon learn. Now I am going to surprise you. If you will tie to me I can put you in the way of making several thousand dollars in a year."

"That will be great."

"But listen. I will be dangerous work. I have long wanted a young man whom I could rely upon to help me out in this end of my business. I have given the whole matter careful thought since I saw you, and I am satisfied that you were sent to me to help me out, so I am going to let you into my secrets, which even Mrs. Dalton does not know. But you must swear right now not to betray me; if you ever do then understand that hour seals your death warrant. Not even the fact of your having saved my daughter's life will save your own life then."

Again Harry assured the colonel that he could trust him, and he ventured to inquire the nature of the business.

"That you shall know in good time," replied the colonel. "In fact, you shall know to-night. In the meanwhile, there is something I want you to do for me."

"And I am ready. What is it?"

"To play detective? Can you do that? You ought to be able to, I should say."

"Detective!" faltered Harry.

It seemed to him then that he was up against trouble, and

that all Col. Dalton had said before had been simply intended to lead him on.

"Yes, detective," replied the colonel. "You remember the old fellow who gave you the clothes?"

"Yes, of course, and very kind of him it was, too. He told me I could keep them and he would buy his son another suit."

"He did, eh? Well! Now look here, Jack, I believe that man to be a United States secret service detective by the name of Brady, but I may be wrong. What I want is to prove it, and I want you to do the job."

"Do you think I can?"

"Of course you can. Just go to the Bay House and look him up. Tell him I want to see him in the morning, and then tell him that I have hired you to go to work with the Swamp Rats—remember the name, the Swamp Rats. Tell him you are afraid of me and don't understand it, and ask him what you had better do. Then come back here and tell me what he says."

"Good!" said Harry. "I can do all that. You may depend upon me to fool him, colonel, and you shall hear just what he has to say."

Five minutes later Harry was on his way to the Bay Hotel.

"I've started the ball rolling," he muttered, as he hurried on. "The colonel is in with the moonshiners. He is on to Old King Brady, but he isn't on to me."

CHAPTER III.

THE SHOT IN THE SWAMP.

Harry had certainly scored a point, and Old King Brady was not only destined to score another in short order, but to prove absolutely the wisdom of the theory which he had acted under when he came to Billville in his quaint clothes.

Harry not returning, Old King Brady went down to supper alone.

There were quite a number of persons seated at the long tables, and all eyed the old detective with more or less curiosity.

One thing which struck Old King Brady as peculiar was the action of a tall, gaunt man who stared the hardest of all, then leaving his supper abruptly arose and left the room.

"That fellow is on to me," thought the old detective. "He has gone to tip off somebody that Old King Brady is in town, surest thing. I shall hear more of this."

But in less than ten minutes the man returned, and without again looking at the detective finished his meal.

Supper over, Old King Brady walked out into the town.

There was but little to see, just the main street with a few brick stores and two or three other streets with residences.

At the head of the main street Old King Brady found

Col. Dalton's house, which was pointed out to him by a colored boy.

Beyond that the street became a country road, which trailed away into a dismal swamp.

Old King Brady walked as far as the beginning of this swamp, and then was just starting to return when a man suddenly darted out from among the bushes and stood in his path.

He was a desperate-looking fellow.

His face was pinched, his eyes staring; he was so thin that the rags of clothing which he wore hung about him like bags.

There he stood, barefooted and with an old straw hat upon his head, but he drew no revolver—just stared at the old detective with burning eyes.

"Well, friend, what is it?" asked Old King Brady, who had fully expected a demand for his money or his life.

"Say," drawled the man, speaking in a hollow voice, "you'll be Old King Brady, the great detective, I suppose?"

It was useless to attempt to deny his identity.

The detective felt rather proud of the success of his theory. He felt sure that his chance had come.

"Yes, I am Old King Brady," he quietly replied.

"I knowed it! My uncle seen you at the hotel. He give me the tip. I've been a-follerin' you, although you didn't see me."

"And who may you be? What do you want with me?"

"I'm Dick Duffin," replied the wretched fellow. "I'm just three weeks out of the convict camp, and what I want with you is revenge."

"Revenge against who?"

Dick Duffin jerked his thumb in the direction of the big house.

"Know who lives there?" he asked.

"Colonel Dalton."

"Yes; the man who downed me; the man who had me arrested for a robbery which was never committed, and saw me railroaded into the convict camp, where I have done five years."

"Ha, is it so?"

"It is so, Mr. Brady, and make no mistake. Do you wonder now that I want revenge?"

"Not a bit. But why did you let him do it?"

"How could I help it? He's the whole thing in Billville. I was only poor drunken Dick Duffin. Nobody would believe me."

"Why didn't you tell them what you knew about—well, you know what."

"Yes, and you know too, blamed well. You mean about him being in with the Swamp Rats. Waal, I tried that and got licked for my pains."

"I see. Well, what do you want me to do?"

"Say, I've read a lot about you."

"Yes."

"You're slick, you are."

"Yes, so they say."

"Oh, I know. I heard you were coming to town, so I

says to myself, 'This here's my chanst. I'll tell Old King Brady and I'll take him to the moonshine camp at a time when Tom Dalton is 'thar, and he shall see for himself.' That's what I said, and I told my uncle, and he said go ahead, and he promised to let me know as soon as ever the Bradys came to town."

"I'm here alone, as it happens. Is your uncle a tall, thin man who gets his meals at the Bay House?"

"Yes, but you mustn't say nothing to him about seeing me. He works for Tom Dalton, and he'd lose his job."

"I'm dumb. Well, Duffin, I am glad I met you, but tell me, how did you hear that I was coming here?"

"Oh, everybody knows that ar. It's all over town."

Evidently there was a leak in the Secret Service Bureau somewhere.

But this did not in the least surprise Old King Brady.

This was not the first time by any means that the doings of the Bradys had been tipped off from the same source.

"Duffin, I'm your man," said the old detective. "For whatever you do for me you shall be well paid."

"You will find me doing something to-night, then."

"Good! The sooner the better."

"But you must promise me one thing first."

"Well?"

"That you will take me away from here when you go, and pay my fare to Savannah."

"I promise you that cheerfully. But why do you want to go to Savannah?"

"So that I can get away from here, where everybody knows me, and where I expect to be killed any minute."

"By Colonel Dalton? He knows you are here?"

"By the Swamp Rats, Mr. Brady. No, the colonel don't know I am here. He'd have me put away if he did. The Swamp Rats they'd kill me blame quick if they knowed."

"I'll protect you, Duffin."

"Huh!" sneered the fellow. "You've got all you want to do to protect yourself, old man. Of course, the Swamp Rats are on to your coming, and they will kill you if they can."

"I don't fear them. And now, Duffin, out with what you have to tell, and if it serves my turn I'll not only pay your fare to Savannah, but I'll give you a hundred dollars besides."

"Wha—what?" gasped Duffin. "A hundred dollars! Why, that's more money than I ever see at one time in my life."

"Well, you shall see it this trip if you help me."

"And I will, mister. I'll take you to the camp of the moonshiners Tom Dalton is backing, and you shall see him 'thar for yourself with your own eyes."

"Good! He backs the moonshiners, then?"

"Sartain sure he does, mister. How else would they ship their whisky? Oh, say, this yere hain't no mountain still where they just sell to their neighbors; this yere's a reg'lar business, and Tom Dalton furnishes the bar'ls. They're all marked turpentine and they go to Savannah, that's what!

What becomes of them afterwards I dunno."

And now the importance of the connection he had made was clear to Old King Brady.

There at the edge of the swamp he talked a long time with Dick Duffin.

When they parted there was a thorough understanding between them.

Fortune had favored Old King Brady, just as he felt confident it would.

Col. Tom Dalton's enemy had turned up, thirsting for revenge.

Leaving Duffin in the swamp, Old King Brady strolled back toward the hotel.

He had covered about half the distance when Harry came up alongside of him so unexpectedly that for a moment the old detective was startled.

"What! It is you?" he exclaimed. "Well, what's the report?"

"The report is that I am a detective, Governor."

"Ha! I knew that before. I understand you. I am to be the victim. You are to spy on me."

"Exactly."

"He is onto me?"

"Certainly. Knew you at a glance, just as I told you he would. How could it be otherwise while you wear that beautiful blue coat?"

"Hold on now, Harry. Hold on! That beautiful blue coat has done its work all right to-night."

"Oh, it has, eh?"

"Yes, it has, and I'll venture to say that I've got further along with my end of the case than you have with yours."

"Don't know about that. You haven't heard my end yet."

"Tell it then."

Harry told.

"And so you have turned moonshiner's agent?" remarked Old King Brady.

"He hasn't told me that yet."

"Which only goes to show that I know more than you do, thanks to the beautiful blue coat."

Then the Dick Duffin story came out.

"This is important enough!" exclaimed Harry. "I take water. Hooroo for the beautiful blue coat!"

"But you haven't heard quite all. Duffin is to take me to the moonshiner's camp to-night, and there I am to see Col. Dalton. It appears that he has some appointment with these men, and it is down for midnight."

"Yes, I know. I'm to go with him, but he didn't tell me where it was."

"There you are. Well, Harry, the whole amount of the matter is this—we have jumped right into our case with both feet, you by your bravery and I through the beautiful blue coat."

"From what you tell me, though, our position is one of great danger."

"It surely is."

"What did this Duffin do to get into the convict camp?"

"He did not tell me the whole story. It would appear

that he had a falling out with the moonshiners, and they drove him from their camp. Then Col. Dalton brought some charge of stealing against him, and he was convicted. He is a poor, miserable wretch, and he is thirsting for revenge."

"You are going with him, of course?"

"Oh, certainly."

"Well, you may look to see me there too, I suppose, for I have no doubt that is where Dalton intends to take me."

"Good! And now we had better part."

"And what shall I tell him?"

"Tell him that I am Old King Brady; you can do nothing else."

"I don't see that I can. But for goodness sake look out for yourself, Governor. This man Duffin may be a fraud, after all. It may only be a trap to catch you."

"You wouldn't think so, then, if you could see the man and hear him talk. He is certainly sincere."

They had now reached the hotel, and here they parted.

Harry hurried back to Col. Dalton's to find that gentleman still smoking on the piazza.

"Ha, Jack! So you have returned!" he exclaimed.

"Well, what luck?"

"The best. I easily drew him out. He owned up that he is Old King Brady."

"As I thought. Did he say anything about moonshiners?"

"Yes; he thinks you are in with them."

"He does, eh?"

"Yes, and he wants me to keep a watch on you."

"Ah, ha! And you promised to do so, of course?"

"Yes."

"Good enough! We'll make the old fellow sick. They say he's as rich as mud. I hope he made his will before coming down here, for somebody is going to come right in for his estate."

"You mean to kill him, then? I would if he was after me, as he is after you."

"Spoken like a man! No, I shan't kill him. I have others who do such work for me. His life, though, isn't worth a rush. If he goes into the swamp, as I suppose he intends to, he will never come out alive."

Harry was silent.

The colonel spoke so confidently that for the moment he felt seriously alarmed.

"This is a stiff game," he thought. "I wish I could see the end of it. But I suppose nothing would turn the Governor even if I could give him the tip."

"And now, Jack," said the colonel, "we must come down to business. You have been wondering no doubt just what I want you to do, and moonshine business is the word. I am getting to be an old man, and going back into the Haylow Swamp don't agree with me. Same way with traveling around. I hate it. What I want you to do is to go back and forth to the moonshiners' camp for me, and to go up to

Savannah from time to time to see my agent there. If you serve me faithfully your reward will be so great that it will surprise you. As for the rest, I make no threats. I merely state that if you go back on me you know what to expect."

Of course, Harry promised to be faithful—he could do nothing else.

"And for to-night," continued the colonel, "as I told you before, I have an appointment which I must keep. The meeting place lies back in the swamp a couple of miles, and we shall have to walk there, as it is impossible to ride a horse in through the Haylow at night with any sort of safety. It is now half-past ten, and as I am a slow walker I think we had better be on the move."

They started a few minutes later.

Colonel Dalton led the way up the swamp road to a place at some distance beyond, where Old King Brady met Dick Duffin and here turned in on a narrow path which led them directly into the swamp.

As soon as they were well in among the bushes he stopped to light a lantern which he had brought along.

"Now we are ready for business!" he exclaimed. "A mile more will bring us to the spot, and there I will introduce you to Dirk Dolliver, my head man. He is a rough fellow, but you need not mind his talk, for he is devoted to my interests. I wish I could say the same for all these Swamp Rats. I have many enemies around here, I am sorry to say."

"I suppose every man who is anyway prosperous must make enemies," remarked Harry.

"It is a good deal so," replied the colonel. "I am not popular, but I am feared, and that is the next best thing."

They now pushed on in silence.

It was a dreary walk.

On both sides of the narrow path were stagnant pools of foul-smelling water, interspersed with muddy tracts and grassy hummocks.

There were many cypress trees, also, but the principal growth was the swamp alder, an ugly looking bush which grew with its roots exposed above the water, suggesting snakes and slimy things.

As they walked their footsteps in the sodden earth gave back no sound, nor could any sound have been heard above the shrill croaking of the frogs.

Thus they pushed on, coming at last into a small clearing where the land was higher and there was a log hut standing between two tall pines.

"This is our destination," said the colonel. "Now to give the signal."

He put his fingers in his mouth and whistled shrilly.

Scarce had he done so when a rifle rang out.

"I'm shot!" gasped the colonel, throwing up his hands. "What black treachery is this?"

He staggered back, and before Harry could catch him fell heavily to the ground.

CHAPTER IV.

AFTER THE SHOOTING.

It was all so sudden and so startling that for the moment Young King Brady stood motionless, fully expecting another shot, but it did not come.

"Colonel!" he cried, dropping on his knees beside the wounded man. "Where did it take you? Speak!"

"It is here in the left side, just below the last rib," panted the colonel. "Take it easy, now. There may be more of it. Fool that I was to come here with nothing but a revolver! It's in my hip pocket, boy. Out with it and be on your guard."

Harry got the revolver, and standing over the colonel, breathlessly waited.

"Can the Governor be in on this?" he thought. "Of course, he would never shoot this man off-hand, but it may be that fellow Duffin's work."

It was a natural conclusion to draw, but it was not the correct one, as will later be seen.

Not a sound was heard save the croaking of the frogs.

So sudden had been the attack that Harry found himself at a loss to tell from which direction the shot had come.

On all sides of the clearing there was a heavy growth of cypress; thus for a man to hide and make the attack would have been comparatively easy.

And evidently the attack had been directed solely toward the colonel, for as the seconds slipped by no other shot came.

"What's to be done?" demanded Harry. "You can't lie there so. Perhaps I could get the bullet out. Can you get on your feet? If we could get into the hut we should be safer. I'll do anything you say."

"Help me up," said the colonel faintly. "Raise me to my feet."

Harry obeyed.

With his support Col. Dalton was able to stand.

He felt for his whisky flask then, and draining it, threw the bottle away.

"There! Now I'm in shape," he gasped. "We will go to the hut. I know whose work this is! Heavens, if I can only live to get revenge."

"Tell me; I may help you," said Harry, as he supported the colonel in their walk toward the hut.

"I'll tell you this. If I die, see Old King Brady, and tell him that Tony Touchett killed me. Remember the name. Let him arrest the scoundrel and bring him to the gallows, where he should have gone long ago. Shooting would be too good."

"A moonshiner?"

"Yes. Let Old King Brady break up their business. Let him do his worst, and you help him. Those are my commands."

"And they shall be obeyed. But here we are at the hut now; if you will let me open your clothes and see what this

wound is like perhaps something may be done to relieve you."

"Do as you will," gasped the colonel, faintly. "Oh, heavens, what shall I do! It was all a trick to trap me, that letter. I might have known."

"If you could lie out flat," said Harry. "I don't think I can do much while you sit so."

The colonel assented, and Harry helped him to stretch out on the floor.

Here he loosened the man's clothes, and turned the lantern on the wound, which was bleeding but little, strange to say.

"Well," gasped the colonel, "what do you see?"

"It is deeply lodged, sir. I don't think I can get it out."

"I'm sure you can't, and I can never walk home. You'll have to go for help."

"Hush! Someone is coming."

Harry sprang to his feet as he spoke.

Looking through the door he saw two men with shotguns coming through the clearing, and so reported.

"Can you see—has one red hair?" demanded the colonel.

"I don't think so, but I can't see very well."

"Is one a tall man—does he walk with a limp?"

"Yes, yes! That's the man."

"They are my friends—if I have any. Heaven knows they may have been at the bottom of this."

"I don't think they can be, sir. They are just coming along quietly and don't appear to be excited at all."

"It is Dirk Dolliver and Podd Shuffleton," said the colonel. "Stand as you are. They might shoot you, being a stranger, if you was to show yourself at the door."

Harry kept back out of sight, and in a few moments the men were at the door.

"Is that you, Sam? Are you asleep in thar?" one called.

"Dirk! Oh, Dirk!" cried the colonel.

"Gee whiz! What's this yere?" shouted the tall man as they rushed in. "Kun'l! You! Wounded! By this fellow?"

Instantly two shotguns were turned upon Harry.

It would have been all up with him in an instant if Col. Dalton had not interfered.

"Don't shoot, boys! Don't shoot!" he cried. "The young man is my friend."

The shotguns were lowered, and the two moonshiners, for such they were, bent down over their wounded leader.

"Kun'l! Speak! You hev been shot. Who done it? Tell us all," one cried.

"Dirk—whisky!" gasped the colonel.

The excitement had been too much for him.

Now he had fainted, and it required considerable effort on Dirk Dolliver's part to bring him to.

Meanwhile the other fellow, Podd Shuffleton by name, turned fiercely on Harry.

"Who in thunder are you?" he demanded. "In spite of what Colonel Dalton says, I believe you are at the bottom of this yere black business, hang me if I don't."

"Well, you are dead wrong then," retorted Harry. "I

came here with Colonel Dalton, and just as we entered the clearing someone shot him from among the trees."

"But you are a stranger."

"That don't say that I am going to murder my best friend. Don't you suppose the colonel knows?"

"Ah, dry up, Podd," growled Dirk Dolliver, who was bathing the wounded man's temples with whisky. "Is the kun'l a fool? Don't you s'pose he'd know it if this feller shot him?"

"Didn't you see nobody?" demanded Podd.

"No, I didn't."

"Why didn't you go into the swamp and try to ketch the feller?"

"And leave the colonel to die? I did as I was told to do."

"And you didn't see nobody?"

"Ah, bite it off, Podd!" cried Dick angrily. "The boy told you that before. Come hyar. Get out yer probe and extract this yere ball afore the flesh closes 'round it if you want to save the kun'l's life."

Podd Shuffleton was something of a doctor, it would seem.

At all events he was enough of one to extract the bullet from the colonel's wound.

While this was going on the colonel revived and before it was finished another man who was addressed as "Sam Pelton" came into the hut.

It appeared that he had had an appointment to meet Dirk and Podd.

His surprise was too genuine to make it possible that he could have been the man who shot the colonel.

Matters were now improving, for with the help which had thus come unexpectedly to hand there seemed to be no reason why Col. Dalton should not be conveyed to his home.

This, indeed, Podd proposed, but the colonel himself objected, beginning to talk again now for the first time since his fainting fit.

"Podd," he said, in a faint voice, "what about it? Am I going to die?"

"Yer hard hit, kun'l, and no mistake," replied Podd.

"I reckon I am."

"Who done it?" demanded Dirk. "Hev you the least idea?"

"No."

"Mebbe it was that blame detective. I hear he's come to town."

"It is possible, but I don't believe it. He is an old man, and would never venture into the swamp at night."

"Mebbe somebody guided him."

"There is no one in Billville who would dare to. Bite it off, Podd. Dirk, where's Tony to-night?"

"We left him up to the camp, kun'l."

"Good. Boys, you go outside, all but Dirk and you, Jack. I want to speak to you two alone."

Sam and Podd went out then.

"Dirk," said the colonel, "you want to understand that this young feller is straight."

"Of course, or you wouldn't have brung him hyar, kun'l. What's his name?"

"Jack Clark. Jack, this is Dirk Dolliver, my right hand rat, as I call him. Shake, boys, and be friends."

They shook hands, but Harry saw that in Dirk Dolliver's eyes which told him that he was not trusted.

"Jack is to act for me till I get on my feet again," said the colonel. "You want to take him up to he camp and show him everything. I'll be able to walk home, I think, and Podd and Sam shall go with me. Understand?"

"I understand, kun'l. It shall be just as you say."

"Dirk!"

"Yes, kun'l."

"Did you write me a letter telling me to meet you here to-night, because you had something important to tell me?"

"Me, kun'l? Not on your life! I never writ nothin' at all."

"Sure?"

"Dead sure. Would I lie to you?"

"I never knew you to."

"An' I never did. But say, I want to know if you got a letter signed by my name?"

"Dirk, I did."

"Geezooleum! I'd like to see it."

"I left it home," said the colonel, evasively. "Now, Dirk, you go out and leave me with Jack, for I have something private to say to him."

Then Dirk vanished.

Instantly Col. Dalton produced a letter from his coat pocket.

"Jack, here is the letter," he said hurriedly. "You hold on to it. Get up to the camp with Dirk. There you will find a fellow named Tony Touchett, and you must do more detective work. Make him write for you, for he can write and Dirk can't. Compare the writing with this letter. Get back to me as soon as you can, and report the result. Understand?"

"I understand."

"While you are there you will take account of the whisky in stock, and find out when they want to ship, and how many empty barrels are likely to be needed for the next run of the still. Get back just as soon as you can and, mark you, say nothing of this shooting to anyone unless I die, and then you will do as I said."

This ended it.

A few minutes later Harry saw Col. Dalton led away by Podd Shuffleton and Sam Pelton. It looked as if he might get safely home, for he was better able to move than Harry had supposed would be the case.

They watched until the party had disappeared among the trees, when Dirk turned upon Harry fiercely, exclaiming:

"Now then, boy, who the mischief are you, and what does Tom Dalton mean by sending a stranger into our camp?"

CHAPTER V.

OLD KING BRADY CAPTURED IN THE SWAMP.

Dick Duffin met Old King Brady at the appointed time. The meeting place was in the swamp at the spot where they had parted.

"So you came, cap," said the ex-convict. "D'ye know, I didn' more'n half think you would."

"An' why should I not?" demanded Old King Brady. "I am not the man to go back on my word."

"I didn't know but what you would get talking to some one in town, and they would steer you off."

"Steer me off how?"

"By telling you how dangerous it was."

"Do I look like a man who would be turned off on account of danger?"

"Well, you don't."

"And I am not. Now then, what are we to do?"

"I am going to guide you to the Swamp Rats' camp. Of course, I don't suppose you can do no more than that to-night."

"Probably not. How many of these fellows are there?"

"Well, thar's only five up thar. Of course, thar's more moonshining done around the swamp here and thar, but the kun'l's still is run by five."

"It's the colonel's still I am after first. Do the others ship whisky?"

"No. They just still it for their own use."

"I shall not attempt to disturb them this trip."

"That's where your head is level. It would be a tough job to ketch all the Swamp Rats, and nearly every head of a family has his still."

"Did you know of the detectives who were killed here a while ago, Dick?"

"I heard about them—yes."

"Who did that job?"

"Of course, I don't rightly know, cap, but I suppose it was Dirk Dolliver's gang."

"Those are the colonel's people?"

"Yes. Thar's Dirk Dolliver, Tony Touchett, Podd Shuffleton, Sam Pelton, and Hi Graff."

"Anybody else in the camp?"

"The women folks, that's all."

They had been walking along the main trail, which was half a road, thus far, and now Dick turned into a narrow path and they plunged directly into the swamp.

After a long walk which took them through many windings, they came to the bank of a creak.

Here the cypress trees grew thick.

Their spreading branches were heavily hung with Spanish moss.

As Old King Brady stood looking about, two huge birds, with great flapping wings, rose from one of the cypresses and flew screaming off into the darkness.

At the same instant there was a loud splash close to where the detective stood.

"Back!" cried Duffin, pulling Old King Brady away.

"What's all this about?" demanded the detective. "Those birds——"

"Them's turkey buzzards. They skeered the 'gator."

"What?"

"Skeered the 'gator, I tell you."

"Oh, that was an alligator which splashed."

"Yep. We didn't really hev to git back, but he was close to us, and he mighter pushed his nose out and got you by the leg."

"We want light here."

"Not on your life we don't. Looker hyar, Mr. Brady, you dunno the Haylow Swamp. Nobody don't know it all, not even Tom Dalton, and he thinks he knows a lot."

"Yes. Tell me about it."

"I will when we git in the boat."

"Oh, you have a boat?"

"Sure. It's my boat. I hid it up the crick eight years ago, when I was put away."

"And found it again, Dick?"

"Yep."

"You must have hidden it well."

"You bet I hid it well. It leaks considerable, but by bailing we can make it go. When we get into it I'll tell you all about the swamp while we are pullin' up to Dirk Dolliver's camp."

"Are you sure you know the way, Dick?"

Duffin gave a short laugh.

"By gracious, you're a keen one," he said. "What ever put that into your head?"

"Well?"

"Cap, I'm not so sure. I never belonged to Dirk Dolliver's crowd. My people lived away back in the swamp, ten miles from hyar. I never was at Dirk's place but wunst, and that was ten years ago. Ye're a sharp one to guess it, yer are."

"Never mind. You must try your best to find it."

"You bet I will. Come on. The boat is up here."

Dick led the way further up the creek and soon they came upon the boat.

It was a wretched old affair, but it was of good size, and being flat-bottomed, was well adapted to working up the creek.

They were soon under way, Duffin pulling, and Old King Brady seated in the stern.

"How far do we have to go?" the detective asked.

"About five miles."

"So far! Look here, Duffin, there is one thing I want to ask."

"Go ahead."

"If Dalton is going up to the moonshiners' camp to-night, isn't there danger that we may meet him?"

"He won't go this way, cap. He'll go by a shorter road."

"That's all right then. Now tell me about the swamp. How big is it, to begin with?"

"It runs back twenty mile, and thirty mile down the coast."

"Not as big as the Okefenokee."

"No, not near so big. That's near two hundred miles long."

"It is said to be as big as the State of Connecticut."

"Whar's that ar State? Up nawth?"

"Yes; it is one of the New England States."

"Never heard tell of it. But then I dunno nuffin, never had no chanst to learn."

"You were born in the Haylow swamp?"

"I was. I'm a Swamp Rat clear through."

"Your people were moonshiners, Dick? You need not be afraid to talk freely to me. I shall never make you any trouble no matter what happens."

"We Swamp Rats are all moonshiners, like I told you, cap, on'y thing is we don't sell the stuff. We most of us live whar there's a patch of good land. We raise corn and sure we make whisky an' raise hawgs. That's how we live."

"Many colored folks living in the swamp?"

"Some; not so many, though. Our people don't favor them. 'Tain't like as though we had plantations to work 'em on."

"You are not all friends to each other, then."

"That's what we hain't. We don't pull together. Thar's them what would kill me on sight, just because our families have quarreled years ago. Easy killing in the swamp. But our people don't shoot so much. They hang them as they don't like."

"It is to be hoped that we don't meet any of your enemies, Jack."

"We might. Thar's the Tobinses and the Rices. They both hate the Duffinses. They live up this slew, and we have to pass their place. Oh, it's dangerous work, cap. I told you that at the start. That's why I don't want no light shown, an' we don't need none, for this slew will take us right up to Dirk Dolliver's camp."

But Old King Brady thought differently, for every now and then the boat would go bumping against some stump, or grinding on some sunken log.

Again and again they heard alligators dropping into the water with the familiar splash.

Once they heard a low plaintive cry back among the cypresses.

Duffin declared that it was a panther, and he went on to tell stories about panthers which he had killed in the Haylow Swamp in the past.

Meanwhile they were making fairly good time, and had covered about three miles when Duffin suddenly shipped his oars.

"What now?" demanded Old King Brady.

"We have come to the danger place now, cap. Right ahead of us is whar the Tobinses and the Rices live."

"Ha! We want to go slow."

"Yep; that's the way I'm a-goin'. We'll listen first."

They listened for some minutes, hearing nothing, and then a dog began howling in the distance.

"That's a bad job," muttered Duffin. "That ar dog scents us sure."

"Perhaps he is tied up. Anyhow, he would hardly come into the creek to attack us."

"Never tied, cap. He'll have the hull of 'em awake in a few minutes. Dunno what to do."

"Let us wait for at least half an hour. Let them wake and come out and see nobody. Then they will go to sleep again, and think nothing more about the howling of the dog."

"Mebbe that's the best way. Either that or to pull right ahead now and get by before they come out."

"You think they would attack us?"

"Sure they would. They don't allow nobody like you to pass their place."

"But they can't size me up in the dark."

"They'll know me all right, though."

"Then we had better wait, as I said."

For some minutes the dog continued to bark and then to yelp and howl as if in pain."

"Someone is beating him," said Old King Brady. "It is just as I said."

"That's what it is," assented Dick. "Let's see if he quiets down now."

The dog did quiet down in a moment, but Old King Brady waited the full half hour.

"Try it now, Dick," he then said. "But you had better muffle your oars."

"Hain't got nuffin to do it with."

"I suppose not. Well, go as softly as you can. Now we'll make a start."

Duffin pulled on up the creek, and it is only fair to say that he managed his oars so careful that there was scarcely a sound.

But they ran head on into trouble, for all that.

Soon they came to a clearing, where there was a considerable stretch of higher land.

Here there were a number of log cabins, each with its patch of corn now well up.

There were no lights burning, nor was anyone to be seen.

"It's all right," whispered Old King Brady. "Shoot by, Dick."

"Dunno whether it's all right or not," replied Dick. "Whar's their boats? They ought to be in sight, and they hain't. The Rices and the Tobinses must be out somewhar. I wouldn't want to meet them none."

There was a lot in this, of course.

Old King Brady anxiously watched the houses as they shot past the clearing.

He was just congratulating himself that they were coming out of it all right when suddenly the boat struck something with great force, and the stern was swung violently around inshore.

"A rope!" gasped Duffin, shipping his oars. "We are in for it!"

Old King Brady was about to draw his revolver, but on the instant he saw that it would be useless.

Three men suddenly sprang from among the bushes.

Two covered them with long-barreled shotguns, the third, who carried a blazing torch, flashed it upon the boat.

Then all on the instant other boats began to appear.

They came from among the bushes on the other side of the creek; not one carried less than three men, and there were four boats.

"Chuck up your hands, you uns!" shouted one of the men on shore.

Every man in the boats had them covered, and there seemed nothing else to do so far as Old King Brady was concerned.

The old detective therefore threw up his hands.

So did Dick Duffin, but he did not stop there.

"Who be you?" cried the man.

"The little feller's one of the Duffinses!" bawled a man in the first boat.

This was enough for Dick.

He gave one cry, and dove headfirst into the creek.

Instantly every shotgun spoke.

But Dick had vanished under water, and what is more, he did not come up again.

Meanwhile the boats pressed forward, surrounding Old King Brady.

"Kill him! Kill him!" the man with the torch shouted. "He's one of them Yankee detectives, surest thing!"

CHAPTER VI.

THE BOWIE-KNIFE BATTLE IN THE MOONLIGHT.

Young King Brady was ever one of the cool kind, and the chances are that his coolness saved him from serious trouble now.

"Oh, look here," he said when Dirk Dolliver turned upon him so fiercely, "I'm just nobody at all. You needn't be afraid of me."

"Afraid of you!" cried Dirk. "Who's afraid. On'y thing is I don't like strangers, and Tom Dalton knows that blamed well. He hain't got no call for to turn you over to me."

Then Harry got the chance to tell the story of the rescue of little Bessie, and to speak of Col. Dalton's kindness to him.

He managed it so well that he soon won Dirk Dolliver over.

"Oh, waal," said the moonshiner, "if that's the way it is I s'pose it's all right; but just the same I dunno how the boys will stand for it. We Swamp Rats don't take kindly to strangers."

"I suppose not, but you have nothing to fear from me."

"Fear!" sneered Dirk. "Ef I feared you there wouldn't have been no talk made. Waal, I s'pose as how I've got to stand for it. Come along, bub. On'y just remember what

Colonel Tom told you. If you even dream of going back onto us you are as good as dead."

Harry made no answer to this speech.

If Dick was satisfied then he was not.

"My job is a dangerous one," he thought. "These moonshiners are pulling against Col. Dalton surest thing."

Dirk led the way across the clearing and back into the swamp by a narrow, winding trail.

At last they came to a creek where there were two dug-out canoes tied to trees.

And in one of these Dirk Dolliver pulled Young King Brady far back into the Haylow swamp.

As the dreary region through which they passed was much the same as that traveled by Old King Brady, it need not be described.

After about an hour's rowing they were challenged by a man who suddenly shot out into view with another dug-out.

Dirk growled out something and the dug-out was turned aside to let them pass.

"Who's the boy?" demanded the guard.

"Friend of Tom Dalton's," replied Dirk.

"Huh! He hain't got no call to send strangers hyar."

"That's what I say. No, he hain't. Can't be helped though. The kun'l couldn't come himself."

"What's the matter with him?"

"Shot!"

"What!" roared the guard, who was pulling alongside of them.

Dirk very quietly explained what had happened.

"Waal, I swow! Who can have did it?" the man continued.

"Dunno," replied Dirk. "Say, is Tony in camp to-night?"

"No. He went a-hawg huntin', an' he hain't come in yet."

"Is that so?"

"Yep. What about it?"

"Nothin' about it. I on'y asked."

They pulled on, Dirk in silence, and the other still talking about the shooting.

In a few minutes they came to a place where a smaller creek ran out of the other, and the boats were crowded in through thick bushes.

It was a place which anybody might well have passed, supposing it to be impassable, but once they were through the bushes the creek broadened out, and in a few minutes they came upon much such a camp as Old King Brady had struck trouble in.

It was smaller, however.

There were only three log huts here, but in addition there was a long shed under which many whisky barrels were piled, and beyond that a rough log structure with a brick chimney out of which smoke was curling.

Young King Brady saw that he had reached the moonshiners' camp.

Nobody came out to meet them, and they pulled up to

a log boom which extended out from the bank of the creek, and to this made their canoe fast, the guard then turning and going back down the creek.

"I s'pose you want to take account of stock?" growled Dirk, as they walked up toward the huts.

"Those were Colonel Dalton's orders," replied Harry.

"Waal, you can't do nuthin' about it to-night. I'll show you whar you kin' sleep, and you had better turn right in."

"All right," said Harry, and he was conducted to a small hut which he had not before seen.

"This is Tom Dalton's roost. He allus sleeps in here when he comes to camp," said Dirk. "I s'pose I may as well put you up there. Fact is, thar hain't room nowhere else."

He threw open the door and lighted a tallow dip.

There was a good spring cot bed in the hut, and some other furniture.

There was but the one room, and this was comfortable enough.

"Do you want anything to eat?" asked Dirk. "I s'pose I can hunt you up some cold corn pone if you do."

"No, thank you. I don't want anything," said Harry.

"You kin hev some whisky if you want it. We've got the real thing hyar. None of yer doctored stuff."

But Harry declined that also, and Dick then withdrew, leaving him with a gruff "good-night."

That it was to be anything but good night for Young King Brady will presently be shown.

Harry made no attempt to undress; indeed, he had little idea of even going to bed.

The novelty of his situation would have been enough to keep him awake, and besides that was the thought that probably someone belonging to this camp of moonshiners had tried to assassinate Col. Dalton only a few hours before.

"If they will do that to the boss what can the man expect?" thought Young King Brady.

And that there was nothing reassuring in the reflection need not be said.

But Harry had not been searched, and Dirk Dolliver appeared to be satisfied with his explanations, so there was some comfort in that.

Harry sat down in an old rocking chair and listened to the incessant yelping of a dog in the distance.

It was now after three o'clock by his watch, which he had taken care to conceal.

Morning would soon come. Perhaps it would not be so bad, after all.

But as the moments passed Harry grew more and more restless.

He flung himself on the cot and tried to sleep, but it was no use.

At last he got up and began to pace the floor in the dark, and he was still doing this when he heard a voice outside call:

"Is that you, Tony?"

There was a mumbled answer which Harry could not make out.

Young King Brady crept to the door and cautiously opened it.

The moon had now risen, and he was able to see Dirk Dolliver standing down by the log boom at the landing.

A man was just pulling a dug-out up against the logs.

"That will be Tony Touchett," thought Harry. "I must hear what they say."

Closing the door to a mere crack, he listened.

"Whar yer been?" demanded Dirk as the man came ashore.

"Huntin' hawgs, ef it's any of your business, which it ain't."

"You don't seem to hev had no luck."

"I on'y see one. I shot at him and I hit him, too, but he got away."

"Where was this?"

"Down the crik a piece."

"So? Say, Tony, you're late home."

"Well, what of it? I'm my own boss, I reckon."

"Oh, of course," replied Dirk, with singular mildness, "but thar's been things a-happenin' sence I see you last."

"Yes?"

"Yes."

"Were you down to Billville?"

"I was to the hut. I didn't get as fur as Billville."

"I thought you wanted to see Tom Dalton?"

"So I did, an' I seen him, too."

"Wal?"

"I don't want to talk about it hyar. Come back a piece what there hain't no chanst of our being overheard."

"What in thunder ails you, Dirk? Suthin' has gone wrong."

"Sure."

"Waal?"

"Come on. I'll talk about it at the edge of the woods, but hyar I won't talk none."

They walked up toward Harry's hut in silence.

They looked like two bull-dogs eyeing each other, each ready for a spring.

As they passed the hut Harry closed the door, of course, but as soon as the sound of their footsteps began to die away he was out and dogging their heels.

It was comparatively easy, for they went directly in among the cypress trees which grew thick behind the hut.

Here they stood with their backs turned toward Young King Brady, and by dodging from one tree to another he soon gained a place where he could hear what was being said.

Tony Touchett was doing the talking. He was railing at Col. Dalton.

The grievance appeared to be that he had not allowed the moonshiners enough for their whisky, and had been slow even in paying the price he allowed.

Dirk said nothing, but just let him talk to the finish, which came soon.

"And is that all you have got to say?" he demanded then.

"All except that Tom Dalton don't get no more whisky with my consent, not until he pays up in full."

"All right."

"Did you speak to him about the money?"

"No, Tony, I didn't."

"And why didn't you? You said you were gwinter."

"I know I did."

"Thar must hev been some good reason. Why don't you tell it?"

"I don't think I hev to tell it to you, Tony."

"What the mischief do yer mean?"

"I think you know what I mean."

"I don't then."

"What if I was to tell you that Kun'l Tom was shot to-night?"

"What! Is he dead?"

Tony fairly shrieked the words, but Dirk remained as cold as ice.

"Don't get excited," he said.

"Who's excited?"

"You are. You hate Tom Dalton wuss nor pizen. Why should you care ef he's dead?"

"But is he dead? Why don't you tell?"

"No, he isn't then, an' he isn't gwinter die, I don't think. As long as it had to be it's a blame pity it wuzn't made a finish of, I say."

"Dirk Dolliver, what do you look at me that way for? Do mean to say that I shot Tom Dalton?"

"I do."

"You're a liar!"

"No, no! You done it, Tony, an' you didn't do it right. Not that I'd have done it. You've spiled our business. Without Tom Dalton we can't never sell the goods; but if it had to be done you'd better hev killed him outright instead of leavin' on him to take revenge and turn us all over to the United States marshal, as he sure will do."

Dirk spoke in the same slow measured way clear through.

When Tony called him a liar Harry expected to see things doing, but no attention was paid to that.

"You talk that sort of talk to me!" cried Tony. "I tell you I won't stand it."

"Who says so?"

"I say so."

"Own up, Tony. You fired that shot."

"Well, I did. Thar! I own up. I said I'd do it, an' I've done it."

"And you have ruined our business!" cried Dirk suddenly, breaking out into a wild passion, "and now I'm going to do you!"

The climax had come!

Instantly the two men whipped out bowie knives, and rushed upon each other.

Harry could see the flash of the knives in the moonlight, and hear their clang.

"Somebody is going to die there in a minute, and if it's Dirk Dolliver my fate is sealed!" thought Young King Brady.

But what could he do?

Breathlessly Harry watched the progress of the fight from behind the tree.

CHAPTER VII.

SAVED BY A DREAM.

Old King Brady did not have a ghost of a show with the Tobins and the Rices, for into the hands of these two notorious families he had fallen.

To have attempted resistance then would have meant instant death, and the old detective made no such attempt.

He preferred to take his chances of being able to do something later on.

"Don't shoot!" cried the man on the bank. "He'll better swing. That's our style, boys. Yank him out of the boat."

"Gentlemen, wait," said Old King Brady, "if you want to hang me don't start in by drowning me. I'll come ashore."

"Do it blamed quick then," replied the man.

His name was Terry Tobin, as Old King Brady afterwards learned.

The boat was then dragged ashore by the others, and Old King Brady went up on the bank.

He was instantly surrounded by this fierce gang, long, gaunt men, with faces in which one could read no mercy.

Now the old detective tried to argue in his usual persuasive style.

It was not a bit of use.

Terry Tobin cut him short.

"Are you the Yankee detective?" he demanded. "But I won't ask you. I won't give you the chanst to lie about it. I know you are. They had your picter down to Billville, and I see it thar."

"Then I will admit that I am Old King Brady. But, gentlemen, I am not after you."

"Who was that feller with you?"

"I don't know. He's a man I picked up in the swamp."

"He is Dick Duffin. Didn't he tell you that was his name?"

"Really, I didn't ask him his name."

"It don't make no difference. I seen him and I know him. He's a snake and the son of a snake. P'raps the 'gators has got him. If they hain't I'll make short work of him if he comes my way."

Again Old King Brady tried to pacify the man, who seemed booked to do the talking for the gang.

It was not a bit of use.

Tobin instantly cut him short.

"Shoot him, Ed Rice, ef he opens his mouth again!" he roared. "We'll hang him right hyar. I'll go and get the rope."

It was a bad outlook.

Old King Brady wondered as the men clustered around him why they did not search him.

But the Georgia "Swamp Rats" are not used to revolvers.

So long as Old King Brady had neither shotgun nor rifle they probably considered him unarmed; as for bowie knives, which they all carry, they well knew that no Northerner would be likely to have one.

In a moment Terry Tobin was back again with a rope.

Now Old King Brady put in a last petition for his life.

No one even answered him.

The rope was made fast around his neck, and the loose end slung over a limb.

This looked like the old detective's finish.

Calmly Old King Brady resigned himself to his fate.

Tobin and Ed Rice seized the rope, and were just pulling on it when from the thicket behind them a revolver rang out.

It was a good shot, whoever fired it, for it severed the rope just above Old King Brady's head.

"Great Heavens! My dream!" gasped Tobin, falling back.

But the others rushed forward into the bushes, shouting out that Dick Duffin had done it.

"Don't tech him! Let him go!" roared Tobin. "Boys, last night I dreamed all this yere!"

Probably there are no more superstitious people on earth than the Georgia "Crackers," and the "Swamp Rats" are just the same.

Everybody stopped short.

In among the bushes somebody could be heard crashing about.

The sounds ceased in a minute.

Meanwhile, Terry Tobin stood staring at Old King Brady, and the men around him stared at Tobin.

They seemed to be waiting for him to speak.

"Yes," added Tobin, after a moment. "I dreamed it last night. It's all come true. There must be no hanging, boys. This old man will help us to get revenge against Dirk Dolliver. That's the way my dream ran."

"Tell it, Terry," said Ed Rice, in awe-stricken tones. "If thar's anything into it we want'er know."

"Wull, thar is," replied Tobin. "S'elp me, I dreamed that I ketched a man snoopin' about our camp, an' I started to hang him to a tree, when all to wunst a shot came an' cut ther rope, an' he tumbled down on the ground." "Waal, this old feller didn't tumble none," said Ed Rice. "It was near enough," replied Tobin, "near enough." "An what then?" demanded Rice, while the other moonshiners with their mouths wide open stood drinking it all in.

"Why, then I dreamed the old man says to me, 'Come with me,' he says, 'an' I'll show you how to get squar with Dirk Dolliver. You always swore you would hang him, and so you shall if you do as I say.'"

"Mr. Tobin," broke in Old King Brady, "the first part of your dream has come true, and so shall the last part, if you will do as I say."

"Don't say no more!" broke in the moonshiner.

"And why not?" cried Ed Rice. "We uns has a right to know all."

"Because I dreamed I said it to him!" replied Tobin, "an' he says to me, 'We won't talk, Terry, we'll act, an' you shall see what I kin do.'"

"I say it now!" cried Old King Brady. "Gentlemen, it is not you I am after, but Dirk Dolliver and his band. You run no risk whatsoever in letting Terry follow out his dream."

"He's gotter foller it if he dreamt it," growled Ed Rice. "Ef he don't he'll hev bad luck."

"An' I might hev knowed when the dawg howled so that thar was something into it," said Tobin solemnly. "Boys, you leave him with me and go back to bed. I'm gwinter think careful over this."

Evidently he was the leader of the Tobin-Rice clan.

The moonshiners all walked off then, except Tobin himself.

He had taken the torch from the man who carried it, and he now stuck it in the ground.

"Yas, you're the man I see in my dream sure's shootin'," he said, staring at Old King Brady again.

"Terry, let us be friends," said Old King Brady. "Believe me, I have nothing against you."

Tobin picked up his shotgun, which had been leaning against the tree.

"Swar that you won't raise a finger against this camp!" he cried fiercely. "Swar it, and then we can talk biz."

"I swear it."

"Good! Shake!"

Old King Brady shook hands with the long moonshiner then, thanking his stars that the superstitious fellow had thus dreamed.

"An' now we are friends," said Tobin. "You must tell me now who was with you."

"You guessed it."

"Dick Duffin?"

"Yes."

"How did you come to take up with him?"

"It was he who took up with me. He is as fierce against Col. Tom Dalton as you are against Dolliver."

"As I am against Dalton, you may say. I've sworn to hang them both. I could hev shot them many a time, but ef I did that I'd go back on myself."

"I see."

"Do you believe in dreams, Mr. Brady?"

"Oh, yes."

"I'm glad to hear you say so. This hain't the fust time my dreams has come true."

"Will he never cut loose from his dream?" Old King Brady thought.

Tobin did it then.

"One thing sartin," he said. "I kean't never work with no Duffins. The Tobinses and the Duffinses hain't been friends not in a hundred years."

"You don't have to. Work with me and we are bound to succeed."

"What did Duffin say? When did he get out of the convict camp?"

"A few weeks ago."

"Tell me how you came to meet him?"

Old King Brady told the whole story.

"Waal," said Tobin then, "he has reason to hate Dirk Dolliver, Dick has, for Dirk swore false agin him time he was took. But I have more. He hung my brother and I swore I'd hang him."

"Then let us get down to it. I am a Government officer. I am sent here to break up Col. Dalton's moonshine business. You have spoiled my chance of locating the Dolliver camp; now it is up to you to come with me and show me where it is."

"Old man, I'll do it. But tell me true, how did you expect to capture Dolliver and the rest of 'em alone?"

"I was trusting to luck, and I have struck it—through your dream."

"I'll be hanged if you haven't."

"Don't talk of hanging—it makes me think of what might have been. Tell me, when can we start?"

"At daylight. Me an' Ed Rice, my brother-in-law, will take you up thar, an' show you the camp, but we can't undertake no fighting this trip. 'Twon't be safe."

"Are you on speaking terms with Dolliver and his men?"

"Yas. I never picked no quarrel with him, for I knowed it would spile my chanst."

"How long since he hung your brother?"

"Two year come 4th of July."

"And you have kept on good terms with him ever since, hating him all that time?"

"Captain, I hev! They call us Swamp Rats. Did you ever know a rat to go squeakin' about unless in a time of flood or fire? No, sir. Mr. Rat lies low; he watches his chanst an' he gits thar every time."

And this was the shrewd, calculating sort of fellow Old King Brady had come up with!

The detective appreciated him for all he was worth.

He saw that Terry Tobin was likely to be far more useful to him than ever Dick Duffin could have been.

That Duffin was alive and had shot him down Old King Brady had no doubt; nor did he doubt that through the feuds of these swamp rat families lay his best chance of success.

The remainder of that night was spent in talking with Terry Tobin in his hut, for the long moonshiner showed no disposition to go to bed.

So Old King Brady heard all about the feuds between the "Tobinses" and the "Duffinses," the "Dollivers" and the "Touchetts."

It appeared that this was only one settlement of the Rice-Tobin clan, and that there were several others lying back in the swamp.

Before they had reached the end of their long conversation Tobin had agreed to gather the whole clan together and make a general raid on the Dolliver stills if necessary.

but he agreed with Old King Brady that as a starter it would be better for them first to pay a visit to the Dolliver camp.

"You needn't show yerself," he said again and again. "You can keep out of sight and I'll go in and see what's a-doing. Mebbe I can pick up some pointer what will give us just the chanst we want."

Towards morning Terry pulled out and left Old King Brady to catch a few minutes' sleep in the chair before the rising of the sun.

The sun came red and hot that morning, and the swamp was shrouded in mist.

Old King Brady walked down to the creek and washed up.

The Swamp Rats were all on the move now.

The men were lolling under the trees, the women busy getting breakfast, and the children playing about.

Nobody attempted to hold any conversation with Old King Brady, but as he passed among them each one he met said "Good-morning, captain," most respectfully.

Evidently Terry Tobin was absolute master.

He had taken up with Old King Brady, and that was enough.

Back among the trees the old detective plainly saw the moonshiner's still house.

Of course, he made no attempt to examine it.

That never would have done at all.

Upon returning from the creek Old King Brady's attention was attracted to a woman who seemed at first to be kneading bread, and he stood and watched her.

In a moment he perceived that instead of dough it was clay that the woman was rolling about on the flat stone.

These moonshiners were then "clay eaters."

Long before Old King Brady had met a colony of these singular people in the mountains of Tennessee.

The woman kneaded the clay a long while, and kept throwing water on it until at last she reduced it to about the consistency of ordinary bread dough.

Then she patted it up into a loaf, and put it in an iron pan in which she placed a quantity of pork fat.

This done, she stuck cloves into the clay loaf, and passing into one of the huts, put it in an oven to bake.

Old King Brady felt afraid that the baked clay was going to be served for breakfast, and that he would have to eat some of it out of sheer politeness.

It was a great relief when, Terry having called him to breakfast, he found that a big platter of pork chops well cooked was to serve for the meal, and he learned later that it took several hours to bake the clay loaf.

Terry assured him that it was fine, and that Mrs. Terry the thin, silent woman who sat opposite to them at the table, could bake the best clay loaf of anyone in the camp.

Breakfast over at last, Terry, Ed Rice, and another got busy, and shortly after eight o'clock, taking poor Dick Duffin's boat, they started up the creek, heading, as Terry assured the old detective, directly for Dirk Dolliver's camp.

CHAPTER VIII.

HARRY FACES DEATH.

The bowie knife fight came to a sudden end.

Perhaps neither of the moonshiners actually meant business.

It seemed to Harry that Tony Touchett was the most active, and that he might have done for Dirk Dolliver if he had chosen, and this was borne out by what now happened.

It had been nothing but a clash! clash! of knives, neither attempting to stick the other, when all at once Dirk stumbled and fell.

Then Tony, planting his foot on his antagonist's back, raised his knife as though he intended to give the fatal thrust.

Harry could stand it no longer.

At the risk of his own life he sprang into view.

"Don't you kill that man!" he shouted. "If you do it will be your finish. Colonel Dalton——"

Harry paused.

Tony, springing up, gave a yell and started back.

"Who are you?" he shouted. "Whar did you drop from? Out of the sky?"

It was fear and nothing less that the fellow displayed.

"A coward!" thought Young King Brady, glad now that he had not drawn his revolver.

He walked boldly up to them, Dirk having regained his feet.

"Stop, Tony!" said the moonshiner, pantingly. "Put up your knife and I'll put up mine. Let us have peace. There is nothing into it for us to quarrel. We must pull together or we shall both fall down."

"It's off for the present, at all events," replied Tony, pocketing his bowie knife in imitation of Dirk Dolliver. "But who is this boy?"

"A friend of Tom Dalton's."

"So?"

"Yes. His name is Jack Clark. I brought him here."

"You did?"

"Yes, I did. He represents Dalton while the kun'l remains sick."

"Sick!"

"You hear. Is it over? Say? Bite it off now if you are going to, or we'll fight to a finish; one of the two. I could have stuck you half a dozen times, but I didn't. You know that blamed well."

"Same here. I'll bite it off, Dirk. Let's be friends."

Then to Harry's surprise Dirk turned savagely upon him.

"What brought you out hyar?" he demanded. "Why didn't you stay where I put you? Speak!"

"I heard the fighting. I came to help you," replied Harry, realizing that he had put himself in a hole.

"I didn't need any help. I'm able to fight my own battles."

"I am sorry I came now. I'll go back."

"Not yet. Stand as you are. How long have you been out of the hut?"

"I just came out."

"I don't believe you."

"I can't make you believe me. I wish I had stayed in."

"It would have been a blamed sight better for you if you had. I was against bringing you up hyar in the fust place. I believe you are a spy."

"You know my story. If you believe different from what I told you I can't help that."

"What is his story?" demanded Tony. "What does he mean?"

"Oh, he came down from Brunswick this afternoon, Tom Dalton's little gal fell off the Lilly and this feller rescued her; so Tom took up with him."

"And he never see him afore?"

"That's what he says."

"A great note! You see now what things is coming to? The idee of Tom Dalton sending a stranger up hyar! Of course he's a spy. I most wonder at you bringing him."

"Would you have me leave him behind to work against us? Because I brung him hyar it don't stand that I shall ever let him go back again. Fellers have been lost in the Haylow swamp afore now. He may get lost—see?"

Tony looked Young King Brady over with an expression of profound disgust.

"You know my views, Dirk," he said, after a moment of strained silence. "Thar's got to be a different way of doing business hyar if I am going to stick to this camp."

"Yes," replied Dirk. "Very good. Clark, go back to the hut and don't you come out again if you value your life."

There was nothing for it but to obey, and Harry retreated to the hut.

He was thoroughly disgusted with himself.

He felt that he had made as bad a break as ever before since he took up with the detective business.

"If I had only kept quiet," he said to himself again and again. "I did not have to show myself. It would have been better if I had let him kill Dick Dolliver, as I believe he would have done."

He listened at the partly open door and at last heard the two men approaching.

It seemed hard to believe that only a few minutes before they had been at each other's throats, for they were now talking in low, confidential tones.

Harry closed the door, and let them pass.

He half expected that they would come in upon him, and that he should have to fight for his life, but they did not.

When they were well past him he again opened the door and peered out.

Dick and Tony had disappeared.

"If I could only get one of the boats I might escape," thought Young King Brady. "But I don't suppose there is much chance of that."

There was no chance.

For some five minutes Young King Brady remained listening and watching.

Suddenly a tall figure wearing a turban glided into view. It was a colored woman.

Harry watched and saw her take her position against a tree at no great distance from the hut.

Here she remained, with her eyes fixed on the door.

Harry closed the door and waited as much as half an hour.

Not a sound was heard except the barking of the dog in the distance.

At last he ventured to open the door again and peered out.

There stood the colored woman.

She had not changed her position, and she evidently did not intend doing so, either.

"If I was to attempt to leave this place she would yell," thought Young King Brady. "I'm in for it. They could hardly have placed a better guard over me."

The case seemed hopeless.

There was only one window to the hut, and that was alongside the door, consequently there was no means of escape from the rear.

Worn out with watching and worry, Young King Brady flung himself on the bed, not intending to go to sleep.

But in spite of all his troubles he did fall asleep, and when he woke up there were Tony Touchett and Dirk standing over him.

Tony carried a coil of rope around his neck, and his face wore a fierce, vindictive expression.

"Get up," he said fiercely. "Get up. We are going to search you now."

It was broad daylight.

Young King Brady had slept for several hours, and his time of trouble had now come.

But he was prepared for it.

He had carefully concealed his shield and his money.

The revolver he would have to lose, of course; he had made no attempt to conceal that.

As Harry rolled off the cot, Dirk drew an old horse pistol out of his coat pocket and covered him.

"This is yourn, Jack Clark, if you make any attempt to resist Mr. Touchett," he drawled.

"Are you going to kill me?" demanded Harry. "Why should you? I have never harmed you, and when I thought your life was in danger I tried to save it. Is that the reason why I am to die?"

"No talk," put in Tony. "Throw up your hands now. Shoot him, Dirk, if he attempts to let them down till I get through with my job."

"Gentlemen," said Harry, "I want you to understand that I'm only a poor boy. I'm not worth killing, indeed I'm not!"

"Shut up!" bawled Dirk.

"Ha, ha!" laughed someone at the door. "So you are going to hang him. Won't that be gallus! We hain't had

a hanging in camp these two years. Not since Bill Tobin was strung up."

"Shut up, Nervy, and git out of the way," snarled Tony, who was searching Young King Brady now.

It was a girl of nineteen or so, Tony's daughter, as Harry later learned.

She was a wild, slatternly looking creature, apparently not more than half witted.

"Ha, ha, ha!" she laughed. "I'm going to stay hyar an' watch. P'raps he's got a gold ring about him that he is hiding. If he has, paw, will yer give it to me?"

"I'll give you the strap if you don't go away and mind your own business," cried Tony, turning fiercely upon the girl, who ran off then, shrieking with laughter as she went.

The search was soon accomplished.

What they found on Harry outside of the revolver amounted to little.

Young King Brady had looked out for that.

"Huh!" said Tony. "He don't seem to have nothin' after all."

"Told you so," growled Dirk. "The boy has told a straight story. 'Tain't wuth our while to muss with him. All the same, if you say so, why so let it be."

"I do say so," retorted Tony. "I won't have strangers sent up here."

"Hadn't you better wait and see what Podd and Sam have got to say?"

"No."

"You'd better. Tom Dalton may not be dead. I tell you, Tony, the kun'l's a man to be feared, and you know it blamed well."

Tony made no answer.

Ordering Harry's hands down, he proceeded to tie them behind him. Then tripping him over on the cot, he tied his legs, too.

"We'll talk about this outside," he then said.

As they were walking away from the hut Harry caught these remarks:

"I tell you, Dirk, the day of this hyar camp is over. What we really want is to get square with Tom Dalton. If we could get the whisky he's got stowed away we could——"

This was all Harry heard, for the moonshiners passed out of sight then.

Two hours passed, during which time the colored woman several times peered into the hut.

Her face was sour and stern.

When Young King Brady spoke to her she moved away.

Others came, too. There were three women and several children.

The women made remarks about Harry, but did not directly address him. The children pointed at him and called him names.

Harry expected to see the girl Nervy—Minerva, her name must have been—return again, but she did not appear.

At last came Tony, who untied the cords about Harry's legs.

"You will follow me now, boy," he said.

Young King Brady tried to reason with him, but Tony was glum and would not reply.

"This is my finish," thought Harry. "I don't see how anything can save me. They mean to hang me, and they probably will."

And indeed it looked so.

Harry was led down near the landing in front of the long shed under which the whisky barrels were stored.

Here Dirk Dolliver sat upon an empty barrel sucking a pipe.

He did not seem disposed to take any part in the proceedings, neither did he interfere.

Nervy was there also, and so was the colored woman.

The rest of the women were invisible, and the children had all disappeared.

As for men, Harry was satisfied that besides Dirk Dolliver and Tony there were none about the camp.

And now Young King Brady started to make one last appeal, addressing himself to Dirk Dolliver, who cut him short.

"It's no use to talk," he growled. "I'm not going to interfere."

"Chloe, get the ladder!" called Tony then.

The colored woman brought a ladder from under the shed.

"Are the women folks and the young uns all shut in?" demanded Dirk. "I won't have 'em see the hangin'—no!"

"They be," replied Tony, "all but Nervy, and she don't count."

"Ha, ha, ha!" screamed Nervy. "No, I don't count. I'm silly, I am, but I just love hangin's—yes, I do."

"Git the gun," said Tony.

Nervy ran under the shed and returned with an old shotgun.

Meanwhile the ladder had been placed against the nearest tree, over a limb of which a rope had been thrown.

Tony now cut the cord about Harry's hand.

"Git up that ar ladder an' sit in the crotch of the limb," he ordered. "Nervy, you plug him full of shot ef he funks!"

There was nothing for it but to climb the ladder, and Harry took his seat up the tree.

Tony followed him up, and tied his hands and feet finally then, making the rope fast to his neck.

All this time Nervy kept jumping about, screaming and laughing wildly.

But never for an instant did she neglect to keep Young King Brady covered.

Tony now descended the ladder and carried it back under the shed.

"Now we are ready!" he exclaimed, as he seized the loose end of the rope.

It looked like the end.

Young King Brady had resigned himself to his fate when suddenly Chloe gave a scream.

"Oh, massa! massa! Dar's a boat a-comin' up de slew!" she cried. "I hears de sound ob de oars."

CHAPTER IX.

THE SIGNAL.

The third man in Old King Brady's boat was Mart Rice, the brother of Ed.

He was a grim, surly looking fellow, with little or nothing to say, and his brother Ed was much the same.

They had not proceeded more than half a mile when an adventure occurred which was destined to work out to the advantage of the Bradys in the end, although at the time it looked as though it meant a "killing," as the Swamp Rats style a murder.

The boat was just rounding a bend in the creek when suddenly a shrill and most peculiar cry was heard.

Three times it rang out through the dense thickets of the Haylow swamp.

Instantly the Rice boys, who were doing the rowing, shipped their oars.

"Gee whiz, Terry!" cried Ed, "that ar's serious, that is."

"It's the cry of the Duffinsés, all right," replied Terry. "Keant be, though, that Dick Duffin has got his people about him."

"Don't see how it can."

"How fur to the nearest Duffin house? So long sence I've been thar I most forget."

"Twenty mile best you kin make it."

"Then it's only Dick himself. Kean't be no one else."

Here was more feud business.

Old King Brady listened, deeply interested, but he did not attempt to interfere.

"What do yer say?" demanded Terry. "Shall we pull ahead?"

"I'd like to hear what Mr. Brady has got to say," replied Ed Rice. "Mebbe he knows something about this yere?"

"Gentlemen, upon my word, I know nothing about it," said the old detective. "Everything I know about Dick Duffin I have told to my friend Tobin here."

"Pull ahead," said Terry. "I'll lay ready."

He produced his shot-gun from the bottom of the boat, and the Rice boys pulled around the bend.

It was as they anticipated.

There, standing under a tree, upon one of the larger grass hummocks, was Dick Duffin.

His arms were folded, and his face white and set.

Old King Brady could see that it was the face of a man who was prepared for instant death.

"Don't shoot him off-hand, Tobin," he exclaimed. "That boy wants to tell us something."

Tobin already had Dick covered, but he now lowered his gun.

"Dick Duffin, is that ar' you?" he called. "Know who I be?"

"It's all there is left of me," replied Dick. "Yas, I know you, Terry Tobin. You kin kill me if you've gotter mind ter, but I never done you no wrong."

"Your grandfather fit my grandfather, and knifed him to death," replied Terry. "What about that ar'?"

"That happened afore I was born," replied Dick. "I dunno nuffin' about it, but I know you Tobinses have killed six Duffinses sence I remember, to say nuthin' of what ther Rice's have done."

"Dick, what do you want?" called Old King Brady. "You knew we were coming. You had some reason for giving that cry and standing there."

"Yas, I did."

"What war it?"

"Are you in with them uns?"

"Yes, I am."

"Are you all agin Tom Dalton and Dirk Dolliver's gang?"

"We be," replied Tobin. "That ar's the truth. If you kin help us out I'll overlook you bein' a Duffin an' let you live."

"I kin."

"Waal?"

"Come closer in shore. I'm powerful weak. I can't holler so."

"We'll do it," said Tobin; "but if you unfold your arms you're a dead one for suah!"

"I won't," answered Dick. "Come on."

They pulled in closer to shore.

"Mr. Brady, I'm tellin' you," said Dick then. "I'm glad you got out of that business alive last night, for fust off I didn't think you would. I've been knocking around the swamp sence then, an' I've found out something. It's where Tom Dalton has got his whisky stored, and I know something else. There's a boat coming for that whisky tomorrow at two o'clock, an' I'll take you and the Tobinses an' the Rices thar if they'll promise to do me no harm."

"Whar is it?" cried Tobin. "I knowed Dirk Dolliver had some secret hold-out, but whar?"

"It's whar they killed the detectives three weeks ago."

"That don't tell me nuthin', for I don't know whar that wuz."

"Well, I'm not tellin'. Couldn't make you understand if I tried. But I'll take you thar and show you."

"I say go in for that," said Old King Brady.

"S'posin' we do," added Tobin, "whar do we come in? You want the whisky, I s'pose?"

"Yes; but you shall have five hundred dollars cash to divide among your followers if I break up Col. Dalton's business. I promise you that."

"Ed, what do you say?" demanded Tobin.

"I say yes, if it is gwinter break up Tom Dalton's business and wipe out Dirk Dolliver's gang," replied Rice.

There was something rat-like in Dick Duffin's peaked face as he stood there watching and listening.

"You swar to do me no harm if I show you the place?" he demanded now.

Rice and Tobin gave the required assurance, Old King Brady adding his.

"Then meet me at this place to-morrow at noon," said Dick.

He turned away, glided back among the cypress trees, and disappeared.

Tobin shouted to him to come back and tell them more about it, but there was no heed paid to his calls.

"He'll never do nuffin'," said Ed Rice, contemptuously. "Thar was never no Duffin what could be trusted."

"He will do as he says," replied the old detective quietly.

There was a lot of discussion between Tobin and the Rice brothers after that as to the best way to proceed in the matter.

Old King Brady did not join in the talk, but when it came to an end without any definite decision having been reached he said:

"Gentlemen, it seems to me that all you have to do is to make sure that Dirk Dolliver and his gang go to this place to-morrow at the appointed time. Then if your crowd is better than their crowd you have nothing to do but to jump in and fight it out."

"Sounds easy," said Terry, "but how are you gwinter make sure they will go?"

"I think you had better leave that to me. I am well used to managing such matters. I can talk them into it. You can take me direct to Dolliver's camp and leave me there. I'll undertake to do the rest."

It was a bold plan, but in it Old King Brady felt that he saw his chance.

He would play one gang of Swamp Rats against another, and in the fight sure to follow take his chances of breaking up their business altogether.

"You never can," declared Terry Tobin. "They will put you out of business sure."

Old King Brady said nothing.

Once the old detective forms his plans he seldom changes.

So he sat silent and let them talk while they pulled the boat up the creek.

And in spite of his determination even Old King Brady felt doubtful, for after all they were only depending on Dick Duffin's word.

And now they began to hear voices ahead of them.

"We are close on the camp," said Terry. "For the last time, Mr. Brady, let me advise you to land hyar and wait for us to come back."

"No," said the old detective stubbornly, "my mind is made up. I will go with you and I shall manage my end of the business. Of course you won't tell who I am."

"You can bank on we uns," declared Tobin. "All the same you won't never get out of it alive."

They turned a bend in the creek a moment later.

The scene which met their gaze was so startling that Old King Brady sprang to his feet.

They were now in full view of the Dolliver camp.

There sat Harry, ready for his hanging.

"Keep off! Keep off, old man!" shouted Dirk Dolliver, as Old King Brady rose in the bow of the boat.

Chloe clutched the rope, and Nerry pressed forward with the gun, while Tony pointed to Harry in the tree.

It was a most critical moment.

A word, a gesture might turn the tide of events for or against the Bradys.

"Gentlemen, don't hang that boy!" cried Old King Brady. "At least not until you hear what I have to say."

"Who the mischief are you? Terry Tobin, what do you mean by bringing a stranger hyar?" Tony fiercely demanded.

"Waal, now, I've done it for the best," drawled Terry. "I come hyar on business. Didn't expect to be just in time for a hangin'. You uns know that spite of what you done to my brother I hev allus been your friend."

"Sheer off. We hain't receivin' no visitors to-day!"

"You will make a mistake, gentlemen, if you don't receive me," said Old King Brady, without the least trace of excitement.

If he had shown any it would have been all up with Harry.

Chloe had only to pull the rope to seal the boy's fate.

Meanwhile Terry kept the boat a little off from the log boom, and made no definite move to land.

"Who be you?" demanded Dirk. "You are making a lot of talk, but you don't tell us nuthin'."

"I am a whisky buyer," replied Old King Brady. "I am prepared to give you good money for pure moonshine, friend."

It was the inspiration of the moment, and it told.

Always doing business through Col. Dalton, Dirk Dolliver had never come in contact with a direct buyer of whisky.

And now, owing to the dissatisfaction of the gang with the colonel and his methods, this was just what they wanted.

Old King Brady had hit the nail on the head.

"Whar you from?" called Dirk.

"Savannah."

"Hev you done business with Tom Dalton?"

"Yes, and I do no more. He is a robber. I have made up my mind to deal direct with you moonshiners if you will let me, and I have come up into the Haylow Swamp at the risk of my life."

"You bet it's the risk of your life, old man."

"I struck in first at these gentlemen's camp," continued Old King Brady mildly, "but they told me they had no whisky to sell, and very kindly brought me up here. I hope we can trade, gentlemen. There will be good money in it for you, rest assured."

Dirk and Tony spoke in whispers for a few moments.

Then the latter said:

"I'd like to talk it over with you, old man, but we have got to finish this hyar business first. Sheer off, and when we are through we will give you the call."

"No, no! If I sheer off I shan't come back again. If you hang that boy I shall expect you to be hanging me next, and there will be no trade."

"What do you care about the boy?" demanded Dirk.

"I don't like hangings, friend. Come now, I've said my last word. What has the boy done, anyhow, that he should be strung up?"

"He's a spy sent hyar by Tom Dalton. We're all through with that man. We are gwine to run for ourselves after this."

"Then I've come just in time."

"Yas, in one way you have."

"In more ways than one, as you will find out if you will only listen to what I have to tell. You can use the boy in carrying out my plan, and if you are after revenge against Col. Dalton I will show you how to get that, too."

"What do you say, Tony? Shall we cut it out for the present?" demanded Dirk.

"Waal, I dunno but what we might as well," growled Tony. "To get the best of Tom Dalton is what we want."

"Oh, say, don't, paw! Don't!" screamed Nervy. "I want to have the hanging!"

This seemed to settle it, and probably through sheer contrariness on Tony's part.

"You squawkin' jaybird, get up to the house and stop thar!" he cried. "Chloe, you go along tew. Thar'll be no hangin' for the present."

The command was obeyed, but Nervy went away loudly protesting.

"You kin come ashore, you uns," said Dirk then.

He went out on the boom to help make the boat fast. Meanwhile poor Harry was left tied up on his perch.

For the time being he was saved.

CHAPTER X.

OLD KING BRADY HOCUSSES THE MOONSHINERS AND SAVES HARRY'S LIFE.

Old King Brady felt anything but comfortable as he walked up to the hut where Harry had been confined, along with Dirk Dolliver and Tony Touchett.

In obedience to his own command, Terry Tobin and the Rices had pulled back down the stream.

They had nothing to do with the business, they assured Dirk Dolliver, simply to bring the whisky buyer to the camp.

There was a bench outside the hut, and here Old King Brady and the moonshiners seated themselves and had a long talk.

They seemed to have no suspicion whatever that he was other than he seemed to be.

Before they had talked five minutes Old King Brady discovered that these two men were not nearly as bright as Terry Tobin and the Rices.

Old King Brady had, in view of some such emergency as this, prepared a business card with the name of Mason & Co., Savannah, printed on it.

The business was whisky and the card looked straight. Indeed, it was very doubtful if either of these men could read.

Introducing himself under the name of Mason, the old detective made up a very plausible story.

He understood that Col. Dalton had a large quantity of whisky stored somewhere in the swamp. He had engaged a certain party weeks before to locate this whisky, and it had been done. The man was to meet him to-morrow, and the Tobins and the Rices had offered their help and their boats to run the barrels to tide water, where he, Mr. Mason, would have a steamer meet them, and the whisky could be loaded on.

He did not want to rob anyone, he only wanted to get square with Col. Dalton.

He had heard that the colonel paid next to nothing to those who made his whisky, and he, Mason, was prepared to pay full price.

Anyhow, they had a right to the whisky, seeing that they made it. He would settle with the Tobins and the Rices and give them so much a barrel clear.

Such was the line of Old King Brady's talk.

The two moonshiners listened attentively, saying but little, but it was easy to see that they were greatly impressed.

"And now, gentlemen, what do you think about it all?" demanded Old King Brady. "Are you willing to go in for this?"

"Hev you got yer money with yer?" demanded Dirk.

"Certainly not. I am not such a fool. I have come here without a dollar. My money is in the Billville bank."

"Then how do we get it?"

"You get it as soon as I get the whisky, friend. But perhaps there is nothing in it. Perhaps you know I am misinformed, and that Col. Dalton has no whisky hidden in the Haylow swamp."

"He's got it hid all right," growled Tony, "but if you kin find out whar it is then it's more than ever we could do."

"How have you been in the habit of shipping your whisky before?"

"The kun'l sent boats for it."

"Why didn't you follow the boats?"

Dirk shrugged his bony shoulders.

"It's plain that you don't know Kun'l Dalton none," he said. "Howsoever, we don't do no more talkin' than we can help. Who is this man who has posted you?"

"His name is Dick Duffin. He is an ex-convict. He hates Dalton like poison."

The two moonshiners looked at each other meaningly.

"I reckon he hates us tew, pooty well," said Tony. "But it's likely he hates Tom Dalton wuss."

Old King Brady then told a plausible story about Dick to which the moonshiners listened in silence.

"We run a big risk trusting him," said Tony at last, "but I'm for goin' in on this thing."

"So'm I," added Dirk.

"Are there no others of your party here?" inquired Old King Brady.

"They're all away jest at present," said Dirk. "Some on 'em has gone back in the swamp to buy corn, and some went to Billville last night, and hain't come back. I suppose you know that Kun'l Tom was shot last night, and is dead now mebbe?"

"No, indeed! Tell me about it!"

Old King Brady showed the excitement he felt as Dirk told the story of the shooting.

"Then now is surely our time," he said. "Do you think that boy shot him?"

"No, we don't," said Dirk. "The boy is likely a spy, though. That's why we strung him up."

"It looks as though you had intended to break with Col. Dalton anyhow."

"Waal, we had. I dunno jest what we ought to do, but I guess we'll take up with your scheme."

"Then hear the end of it. I must get to Billville and talk to Dalton if he still lives. I want to make sure this information is straight."

That's what," said Dirk. "Likely you kin find out. You can talk against us as much as you like. We mean to break camp hyar and light out as soon as we get your cash. We won't never run another still for Tom Dalton, and that's flat."

"Then let me take the boy with me. Let him report to Dalton how you tried to hang him. It will make the colonel all the more anxious to close out his whisky to me, for I shall pretend that I want to buy it. If he tells me it is already sold then I shall know that Duffin's story is true. In any case I shall meet you here to-morrow in time for us all to keep our appointment with Dick Duffin at noon."

And it was by such plausible talk as this that Old King Brady won the moonshiners over.

We need give no more of it.

Altogether the conversation lasted two hours, and in the end Old King Brady felt himself master of the situation.

Before this he persuaded them to let Harry come down out of the tree.

Young King Brady was brought to the hut, where his partner sharply questioned him.

As is well known, the Bradys have certain secret signs by which they communicate with each other.

Harry, acting under orders thus received, stuck to his story, and whiningly begged for his life, offering to do anything he was told.

It ended in his being set free, and in Dirk Dolliver rowing them down to the Tobin camp.

Here he left the Bradys, and they parted with a programme all arranged for the next day.

How Dolliver could trust Terry Tobin was a mystery to the old detective, but he seemed to, and they even drank together.

At last he departed, and went back up into the swamp, leaving Tobin to row the Bradys down to the Billville road, where they parted without leaving the least suspicion in Terry's mind that the two Bradys had ever met before.

"Governor! That's the neatest piece of work you ever did!" cried Harry, when at last they were beyond hearing, in case Tobin should have taken a notion to hide in the swamp.

"It isn't finished yet by a long chalk," replied the old detective. "Oh, the amount of talk it has taken! I am all tired out."

"You saved my life, all right, though. How did you ever manage to get next to that fellow Tobin?"

Then Old King Brady had to tell his story, and Harry told about the shooting of the colonel and the bowie-knife fight.

They had talked it all out by the time they came in sight of Col. Dalton's house, where they parted.

Harry was now to visit the house, and the old detective hurried back to the hotel.

Here he found that the Swamp Belle, the sister steamer to the Georgia Lilly, had just come in from Brunswick, bringing as passengers a number of men, ten all told, who had taken rooms at the hotel.

Old King Brady paid no attention to them, but casually enquired of the clerk who they were.

"Oh, they are a lot of State surveyors. They are down here to see about running a road through the swamp," was the reply. "It won't never amount to nothing, though. We have heard that sort of talk before."

Old King Brady went immediately to his room.

He had not been there more than ten minutes before there came a low knock on the door, and opening it, the detective found one of the surveying party outside.

"I am here, Mr. Brady," said the man, in a low voice.

"Step right in," replied the old detective, and he made haste to bolt the door.

"Well, marshal, I see you have got here," he then said.

"Yes," replied the stranger. "We are here according to agreement, but I don't look to see anything come out of it. Colonel Dalton carries too many guns for you, as I told you in Brunswick, and——"

"Hold on a minute," broke in Old King Brady. "I want you to understand that I have been working during my twenty-four hours' start. I have spiked some of Colonel Dalton's biggest guns already, and I shall spike more of them. I suppose you have heard that the colonel was shot last night?"

"Heavens, no! Is that a fact?"

"It is."

"Who by?"

"One of his own moonshiners."

"I never heard a word about it. Is he dead?"

"That I don't know yet, and I was in hopes you would be able to tell me. But I shall have a full report in a little while when my partner comes."

"And you feel that we may have a chance to succeed?"

"Marshal Smith, we shall succeed. We must. Remember, you are now working with the Bradys, and the Bradys never fail."

CHAPTER XI.

THE U. S. MARSHAL TAKES A HAND IN THE GAME.

Young King Brady did not enter the Dalton mansion, as he expected to do when he left his partner.

It was just dusk when he came up to the gate, and two men were coming along the broad walk which led up to the house.

One was evidently a clergyman, the other looked as if he might be an undertaker.

"We can't have the funeral before Wednesday; they will have to give me time to get the coffin down from Brunswick," Young King Brady heard the latter say.

Harry walked straight on past the house.

So the colonel was dead!

He, at all events, had passed beyond the reach of the Bradys.

How this was going to affect Old King Brady's plan Harry could only guess.

In fact, Harry did not think very much of the plan, anyway.

He had never seen Dick Duffin, but he had seen enough of the Swamp Rats in general to make him inclined to doubt anything any of them might say.

Now, Old King Brady's instruction had been for Harry not to attempt to communicate with Mrs. Dalton in case he should learn that the colonel was dead.

Furthermore, he had expressly told him not to come to the hotel until after dark, and not even then except in one of those disguises which the Bradys know so well how to assume.

This being the case, Harry walked back along the swamp trail to kill time.

He had almost reached the spot where Old King Brady encountered Dick Duffin the night before, when a young man answering the description of that individual suddenly stepped from the bushes and blocked his way.

"Hold on!" he exclaimed. "I seen you with Old King Brady when you left Terry Tobin up the swamp. Mebbe you don't know me?"

"That's right," replied Harry. "I was with Old King Brady. Yes, I think I know you. Dick Duffin, I suppose?"

"That's me. Are you Young King Brady?"

"I am."

"You were up to Dirk Dolliver's camp?"

"I was."

And what's the word? Is Old King Brady going to meet me to-morrow as he agreed?"

"He is. He talked Dolliver over. They are all to be there."

An expression of supreme satisfaction appeared on Dick's haggard face.

"That's good," he said. "You shall get the whisky if I can bring it about. You know that Tom Dalton is dead?"

"Yes."

"Who killed him? You were in Dirk Dolliver's camp—did you hear it said while you were there?"

"They did not tell me anything about it," said Harry, guardedly. "When did he die?"

"He was shot last night. Two of Dolliver's men took him home. He died early this morning."

"Will that affect your plan?"

"No. He gave orders last night to move the whisky from its hiding place and take it down to the turpentine factory, where it will be secretly stored to-morrow night. No, it will not affect my plan. But we must know when they are going to start."

"Can't you find that out?"

"No, I can't. I don't want to show myself around Billville. Fust thing you know they will say I shot the kun'l, then they'll hang me."

"Colonel Dalton was your enemy?"

"Indeed he was my bitter enemy. If I was to show myself I should sure be arrested for his killing. It wouldn't make a bit of difference what I said."

"Can I help in any way?"

"Yes, you can. If you can get down to the turpentine works and find out how many are going, and when they are going to start it would help a lot."

"I can try it if Old King Brady is willing. Who is the head of the affair?"

"Seth Townley, the superintendent."

"How do they go?"

"They have got a little steamer what they keep hidden up the slews. They go in that and bring the whisky down. I must know to-night, not later than twelve o'clock, how many of them are going, and when they are to start."

"What do you want to know for?"

"That's my business. I'm not telling all I know or all I intend to do."

Dick seemed in deadly earnest.

Harry could only give his promise to return at midnight, and tell him whatever he might be able to learn.

This he had no sooner done than the ex-convict plunged into the swamp and disappeared.

"This case is closing in faster than I ever supposed it would," thought Young King Brady as he stood there, undecided as to what course to take. "I must hustle down to the turpentine works and see what I can find out."

He pushed on until he came to the path which led to the hut.

Turning in here, Harry made one of his quick changes for he had lost nothing except the revolver in the Swamp Rats' camp, thanks to his secret pockets and the care he had taken to conceal his belongings.

By a clever arrangement of the lining which it would take too long to describe, Young King Brady was able to change

his coat into one such as would be worn by an ordinary working man.

To this he added an old cap which he had concealed about him, and by removing his collar and tie and attaching a strip of collar to his shirt front, the transformation was completed except for certain lines about his eyes which he was able to put on by the aid of his little paint-box, and that without the help of a mirror.

So much for knowing one's business.

During those few minutes Young King Brady was able to completely transform himself.

Satisfied now that no one would recognize him, he strolled down to the turpentine works.

The place was closed, but there were three men hanging about the door, talking in low tones.

One was a tall, well-dressed person, while another Harry recognized as Podd Shuffleton.

The Swamp Rat eyed him closely, but did not speak.

Young King Brady walked right by and was well on his way to the boat landing when someone called:

"Hey, young feller! Hey!"

"Recognized, by gracious!" muttered Harry, "and I thought I had done the trick pretty well, too."

He stopped and faced about, fully expecting to see Podd Shuffleton, but instead of that it was the tall man who was coming toward him.

"Did you want me, mister?" Harry called out.

"Yes, I did," replied the man. "Just hold on a minute. Who were you looking for up there?"

"Up by the works?"

"Yes."

"Nobody. I thought mebbe I could get a job, but I see I'm too late, for the place is closed."

"Perhaps you are not too late. You are a stranger in town. When did you come in?"

"I came on the steamer this afternoon."

"Looking for work, eh?"

"Yes, that's what I said."

"What can you do? Did you ever work on a steamer?"

"Oh, yes, sir. I've been assistant engineer, and I've been a fireman."

"What's your name?"

"Jack Harvey."

"Where are you from?"

"I belong in New York, but I worked in Savannah last. Are you the boss of the works? Mr. Townley, they told me the name was."

"That's me. Now I'll tell you I want a man who can run the engine on a small steamer for a day or two. You are sure you could fill the bill?"

"Positive, sir."

"Would you like to try it? We are going up the coast a little way. After that I shan't need you. I'll give you ten dollars for the job. It won't be more than two or three days' work."

"I shall be very thankful for it, sir. When shall I report?"

"To-morrow morning at five o'clock. Where are you stopping?"

"I have to look up a place, sir."

"Got any money?"

"Not a cent."

"Then here are a couple of dollars; go to the hotel and get a room. Don't say a word to anybody that you saw me or what you propose to do. If you talk there will be nothing doing—see?"

"I understand, sir," replied Harry. "Am I to report here?"

"Yes, be here promptly at five."

Harry promised and started for the hotel.

It seemed almost too good to be true, but it certainly looked as if Young King Brady had been engaged to run the engine on the steamer which was to carry the whisky out of the Haylow Swamp.

* * * * *

Old King Brady was still conversing with Marshal Smith when there came a low knock on the door.

The old detective opened it to admit Harry in his disguise.

"Ha! At last!" he exclaimed. "Marshal, this is my partner, Young King Brady. Well, Harry, what's the word?"

"Col. Dalton is dead for one thing."

"Indeed! Well, it was to be expected. When did he die?"

"This morning."

"You did not go to the house?"

"No; I obeyed orders. When I found it out I walked on into the swamp."

Harry looked at his partner doubtfully, but as he got the sign to speak out freely, he went on to tell what had occurred.

"You are in great luck," said the old detective. "I cannot understand how that man came to engage you."

"There is just a chance that Shuffleton knew me," suggested Harry.

"There is the chance, of course, but I don't think you were recognized. Anyway, you did right to accept the offer, and I think you will be good for whatever may come up. You had better go."

"How am I to notify Dick Duffin? It won't be safe for me to leave the hotel."

"You positively must not leave it. I will undertake to notify Duffin. Marshal, I think we may say that things are working well."

"So well that I see no necessity for you running the risk of keeping your appointment with these Swamp Rats in the morning," replied the marshal. "Why not join forces with us. We will sure capture the whisky and those who are going after it. Why not let the Swamp Rats go?"

"Not at all," replied Old King Brady, emphatically. "I am determined to capture Dolliver and Touchett. Just think of it! They would have hung my partner anyhow. Touchett is the colonel's murderer, and he shall swing for

it if I have anything to say about the matter. No; everything must go through as arranged."

They talked until nearly midnight, when Old King Brady went up to the swamp to meet Dick Duffin and Harry went to bed.

Young King Brady was up at four o'clock next morning and without attempting to communicate with his partner he quietly left the hotel and hurried down to the turpentine works.

It was still dark when he reached them, and as he stood looking about he could not see a soul.

Still, as it was not yet five o'clock there was nothing to do but to wait, and in a few minutes Mr. Townley put in an appearance.

"Ha! You are on time," he said. "That's right. Nothing like being prompt. Will you have a nip of whisky before we start?"

"No, thanks. I have no use for the stuff."

"Nothing like it to keep off the fever. We are going into the swamp."

"I don't care for any."

"I do then," replied the superintendent, and producing his flask, he took a long drink, after which he ordered Harry to follow him.

Leading the way back into the swamp by a narrow path which ran along the edge of the slew, Mr. Townley conducted Harry to a place where a small boat lay tied in among the bushes.

"Get that boat out now, boy, and pull me up the slew," ordered Townley, and Harry obeyed.

Most attentively did he listen as they passed in among the overhanging cypresses, but not a suspicious sound was heard.

At last they came into a sort of lagoon, after having made many turns and passed from one slew to another.

Here a small steamer lay moored to a rude log boom.

She was merely a little pleasure boat, and as it was light now Harry was able to see that her name had been painted off the stern.

They were challenged by a man who appeared on deck as soon as they came in sight.

He proved to be Podd Shuffleton.

"Any news? All quiet through the night?" Townley asked.

"Waal, purty quiet," replied Podd. "Long about two o'clock Sam Pelton made sure he heard the sound of oars, and he called me, but we couldn't see no one, although I watched an hour. I reckon as how it's all right."

"Of course. Sam had been hitting the moonshine?"

"Reckon likely. He usually does when he gets the chance."

"He dreamed it. There has been no alarm since?"

"No."

"It's all right, then. Get aboard, boy, and I'll show you your work. Podd, we'll make this boat fast astern."

They went aboard then and Mr. Townley took Harry to the engine-room.

The engine was a simple affair.

Young King Brady has often had occasion to run similar ones, and he at once convinced Mr. Townley that he knew his business.

"It is so lucky that I got you," said the superintendent. "You see, the man we had engaged got drunk on us, and our Swamp Rats know nothing about running an engine, while as for myself, I know less. Just as soon as I laid eyes onto you it struck me that you might know—heavens! What is that?"

"Mr. Townley! Mr. Townley!" Podd Shuffleton was shouting.

Then all at once two shots rang out.

"Good heavens! Can it be that those Bradys are in on us, after all?" the superintendent gasped.

He flew up on deck, Harry following.

Three boats carrying four men each were closing in on the steamer, while Podd Shuffleton lay on the deck.

"Shot?" cried Townley.

"No, but I would be if I stood up," whined Shuffleton.

"I fired at 'em. I—"

"Hello there, Mr. Townley!" cried a man from the first boat. "How are you feeling this a. m.?"

"Who the mischief are you?" growled Townley.

It was no use.

As Harry learned later, there were only two men besides Podd Shuffleton aboard, and both were drunk and asleep.

Superintendent Townley was as pale as death when he put the question.

The answer did not seem to reassure him any.

"I am the United States marshal for this district," replied Smith. "I'm coming aboard, and so are my men. You are going to take us up the slews to the place where the late Colonel Dalton had his whisky stored."

CHAPTER XII.

CONCLUSION.

At the time of the capture of Col. Dalton's little steamer Old King Brady stood on the bank of the creek at the spot where Terry Tobin and the Rice brothers had left him the day before.

Here he was expecting to meet them again, and here they came about an hour later.

They were long past the time of their appointment.

As is well known to everyone who has any acquaintance with that peculiar people, the Georgia Swamp Rats have not the faintest idea of the value of time.

"You are late, Terry," said Old King Brady.

"That's what, cap. I s'pose it is late," replied Tobin. "Howsoever, it don't make no difference. We've got all the morning to get up thar in, an' it's easy done."

"Is there any news?" asked Old King Brady as he stepped into the boat.

"None," replied Terry. "Only thing is one of our boys was up around Dirk Dolliver's camp last night. He didn't land, of course, but he hung around thar. He says that none of Dirk's men hev come back. He thinks they've all deserted him and gone back up the swamp whar they belong."

"Very likely it is so. The Dollivers and the Touchetts don't belong to your regular swamp families then?"

"Neither one on 'em do, but most of their men belong to the up-swamp families. Dolliver himself comes from the Okefenokee swamp, and Tony he belongs down Florida. They hain't true Swamp Rats—no. But what's the news with you, cap? And whar's that ar boy you rescued from Dolliver's camp?"

"Oh, I left him behind me," replied Old King Brady. "He's no earthly use. As for news, why, Colonel Dalton is dead."

From the three moonshiners a shout of joy went up.

Each one had something bad to say about the colonel.

That they had all had business relations with Col. Dalton Old King Brady never doubted.

He kept his mouth shut and let them talk.

"Yas, we hated him, and we hate all his gang," said Terry at last. "Ef it hadn't been for that, of course, we never would have favored you."

"I understand that perfectly," replied Old King Brady. "We talked all that over yesterday, Terry. Stick to me, see me through with this business, and you get what is coming to you—see?"

"Have you got the cash you are gwinter give us along with you now?" demanded Terry curiously.

"I haven't a cent. You go with me to Billville or meet me in the swamp and you get it after the job is done."

"All right. I'm a-trustin' you. But thar's one thing I want to know."

"Out with it."

"Supposin' any accident should happen to Dirk Dolliver and Tony, will it make any difference about our getting the pay for helping you out?"

"I want Tony. I don't care for anything else."

"Oh! And what fer do you want him?"

"Never mind."

"You think he killed the kun'?"

"I know nothing about the shooting of the colonel, except what that boy told us yesterday."

"All right. We won't talk no more. I think we understand each other, cap."

Old King Brady made no answer to this.

He had determined to bring Tony Touchett to justice, while as for Dirk Dolliver, he was equally determined not to interfere in his case come what would.

And so the old detective was pulled up to the Tobin-Rice camp, and at twelve o'clock he was on hand at the place appointed to meet Dick Duffin.

But Old King Brady was far from being alone.

Although it had been agreed that not more than ten men of the Tobin-Rice clan should accompany him to the

trysting place, twenty went along, and Old King Brady made no effort to interfere.

It would have been useless.

Indeed, he rather expected something of this sort, and he fully realized that his own safety and the success of his plans depended upon his seeming to chime in with these men.

They pulled up the creek in their dug-outs, and as they drew near the place, like rats all vanished except the ten.

The other boats slipped in among the innumerable openings among the cypress trees.

The ten went on to the meeting place, where a few minutes later a boat containing Dirk Dolliver and Tony Touchett came down the creek.

"So you are hyar?" cried Dolliver. "Good enough. I didn't more'n half expect to see you. Whar's the Duffin boy?"

"He hasn't shown up yet," replied Old King Brady. "We are waiting for him here. Won't you come ashore?"

"We'll stop out hyar, I reckon," replied Dolliver, suspiciously. "What's the news down to Billville? and why didn't you bring that ar boy back?"

Old King Brady's answer was the same that he had made to Terry Tobin.

"So he's dead," said Dirk slowly. "Waal, I'm glad."

Tony said nothing; his face did not even change.

"You had better come ashore," said Tobin. "It's tejus a-sittin' out thar in the boat. We are all friends. Thar's nothing to be afraid of, I should say."

"Ef we was afeered we shouldn't be here!" replied Dolliver; "all the same we stop whar we be."

"Thar's Dick Duffin now," cried Terry, as the same strange cry which Old King Brady had heard the night before rang out through the swamp.

"It's the cry of the Duffinses, that's one sure thing," said Dirk. "But what does he give it for?"

It was a question which was destined to be instantly answered.

Before anyone could reply a dug-out carrying three Swamp Rats suddenly shot into view on the right.

Then it was another on the left with Dick Duffin in it, then another on the right with Dick's very duplicate in the bow.

Another and still another followed, until forty Swamp Rats, all armed with shotguns were upon them, and all done so quick that neither the men ashore nor the two men in the boat could make a move.

Instantly Terry raised his voice, and gave the cry of his clan.

Then the boats of the Tobinses and the Rices came popping out from the concealment of the swamp.

As for Old King Brady, he gave himself up as lost.

A feud fight between the Swamp Rat clans was on in an instant.

Almost before the old detective had time to realize what it all meant the shotguns were peppering away.

"Down! Down, Mr. Brady!" shouted Dick Duffin.

Old King Brady jumped behind a tree, and before he could get there he saw Terry shot dead, but not before the leader of the clan Tobin had put a charge of shot into Dirk Dolliver's brain.

The fight was on!

With fierce yells the Swamp Rats turned on each other, banging away for all they were worth.

And Old King Brady watched the battle from behind his tree.

* * * * *

"Is it surrender, or is it fight, Mr. Superintendent Townley?" cried Marshal Smith, as the boats closed in about the little steamer. "We have got you dead to rights, and I'd just as soon shoot your kind of a rat as any other kind, so say the word?"

"I'm no Swamp Rat," growled Townley. "I dunno what you are talkin' about nohow? You hain't got no call to arrest me."

"Throw your gun overboard, and let those other two fellows do the same with theirs," replied the marshal. "Come now, it's a case of one—two——"

"Oh, I cave," retorted Townley. "You needn't bother about shooting me. There hain't nothing into this thing for me anyhow. I might have knowed I should get into trouble over it before I was through."

Thus saying, he tossed a revolver into the slew.

"I haven't any gun, boss!" cried Harry.

Podd Shuffleton was stirred up next, and his shotgun went over the rail.

Then the marshal and his men came aboard.

It had been arranged that they should not recognize Harry, as there was no telling what need they might have for his services later on.

While several of the men went below to tie up Sam Pelton and his companion, Marshal Smith tackled Townley.

"See here, brother," he said, "you were after Colonel Dalton's whisky. Do you want to turn State's evidence? There will be one allowed to do that. Just one and no more."

"I'm it," replied Townley quickly. "I take that chance."

"Settled. Who own's this steamer?"

"It belonged to Tom Dalton."

"You were after the whisky?"

"Yes."

"Hold on!" cried Podd Shuffleton. "If you go back on the gang, Seth Townley, why then——"

"Tie that fellow up and gag him if he don't keep his trap closed!" broke in the marshal.

"How about this other fellow," he added.

"Oh, he don't know nuthin' about it," said Townley. "He's a new hand. I engaged him to take the engineer's place. He hain't in it at all."

Shuffleton was tied and run below.

Meanwhile the questioning continued.

Townley made good his word.

He told everything.

It appeared that Col. Dalton was in the habit of using this steamer to carry his whisky to tide water at a lonely point on the coast where a Brunswick boat called for it.

Townley gave names, and thus a Brunswick merchant became involved in the affair.

When the marshal accused him of intending to steal the whisky he did not deny it, but he declared that Col. Dalton had sent for him and ordered him to ship the goods just before his death.

The hiding place, he stated, was about five miles back in the swamp.

Then Townley was given the wheel, and one of the marshal's men was sent to run the engine.

Soon they were under way, two men guarding Townley with orders to shoot at the first sign of treachery.

All this accomplished, the marshal called Harry to the bow.

"Brady, I want to congratulate you," he said. "You and your partner have done what none of the Secret Service men have been able to do, and you have done it in the only way it could have been done, by mixing with these people and learning their secrets. For us to have attempted it would have been useless, but you, by your peculiar methods, have been able to work it out to success. If Old King Brady comes to time with his moonshiners the job will be the slickest piece of work ever turned out in these parts."

Soon they came in sight of a long, low shed built well back in the swamp.

As they drew near a dozen dug-outs filled with armed men shot out into view.

"The Swamp Rats!" gasped Townley. "What does this mean?"

The rats stared at the marshal and his men.

"Say, is Townley arrested?" one of them shouted.

"That's what he is!" cried Smith. "I am the United States marshal, and if you make me trouble you'll get it in return."

"We are not agin you, we are for you!" shouted the man. "The whisky is thar. Wait here till one o'clock and you'll get Dirk Dolliver and Tony Touchett, tew."

Thus saying, the boat shot back among the bushes, and the others instantly followed it.

"They must be Dick Duffin's friends!" exclaimed Harry "That's why he was so anxious to know the time the steamer was to start. He sent them here to help us out."

And so it proved.

The marshal and his men ran the whisky aboard the steamer to the last barrel, and through the long hours of the morning they waited for the appearance of Old King Brady.

But one o'clock did not bring him, nor did two.

It was just half-past two, and Harry was getting fearfully anxious, when at last a solitary boat came down the slew.

In it sat Old King Brady and with him were two men.

A moment more brought a second boat into view.

This contained three men, and one of them was a prisoner, bound hand and foot.

"A truce, marshal!" cried Old King Brady. "These are my friends, the Duffin brothers, and in the boat behind we have the murderer of Col. Dalton. My end of the job is done."

But in truth Old King Brady had very little to do with the ending of it, as it proved.

The old detective then came aboard, and Tony was hauled on the steamer, too.

Then the two Duffins and their friends retreated into the swamp, and the Bradys and the marshal ran down to Billville, where Tony was jailed and the whisky run aboard the Georgia Belle next day and taken to Brunswick.

It appeared from Old King Brady's story that Dick Duffin had encountered his twin brother in the swamp that first night.

He it was who went for the Duffin contingent, and in the fight which followed the Tobin-Rice clan was well-nigh wiped out.

As Col. Dalton was dead and also Dirk Dolliver, the moonshining business was broken up.

Here in the Haylow swamp local moonshiners who consume their own whisky are seldom disturbed.

Tony Touchett confessed to Dalton's murder, and was hung, but Terry Tobin never lived to fulfill his vow and hang Dirk Dolliver. Both were shot dead in the fight.

Podd Shuffleton and Sam Pelton went to the convict camp.

As for Dick Duffin, Old King Brady gave him a hundred dollars for his share in the capture.

As soon as the fight was over the ex-convict went ashore, and after telling the old detective of the wrongs he and his people had received at the hands of the Tobin-Rice clan, he

and his brother rowed him to the whisky station, as has been seen.

It was entirely due to the Duffins that Tony was captured, for Old King Brady took no part in the fight.

And thus by following out their peculiar methods, the Bradys won their way to success in that most difficult of all undertakings, a moonshiners' case.

Perhaps there is less illicit whisky distilled in the Haylow swamp now, but that some speculator will soon try to put the moonshiners at work again is reasonably sure.

Still it will probably be some time before the Billvillians forget the case of The Bradys and the Swamp Rats.

THE END.

Read "THE BRADYS AND 'HANDSOME HAL'; OR, DUPING THE 'DUKE OF DAKOTA,'" which will be the next number (331) of "Secret Service."

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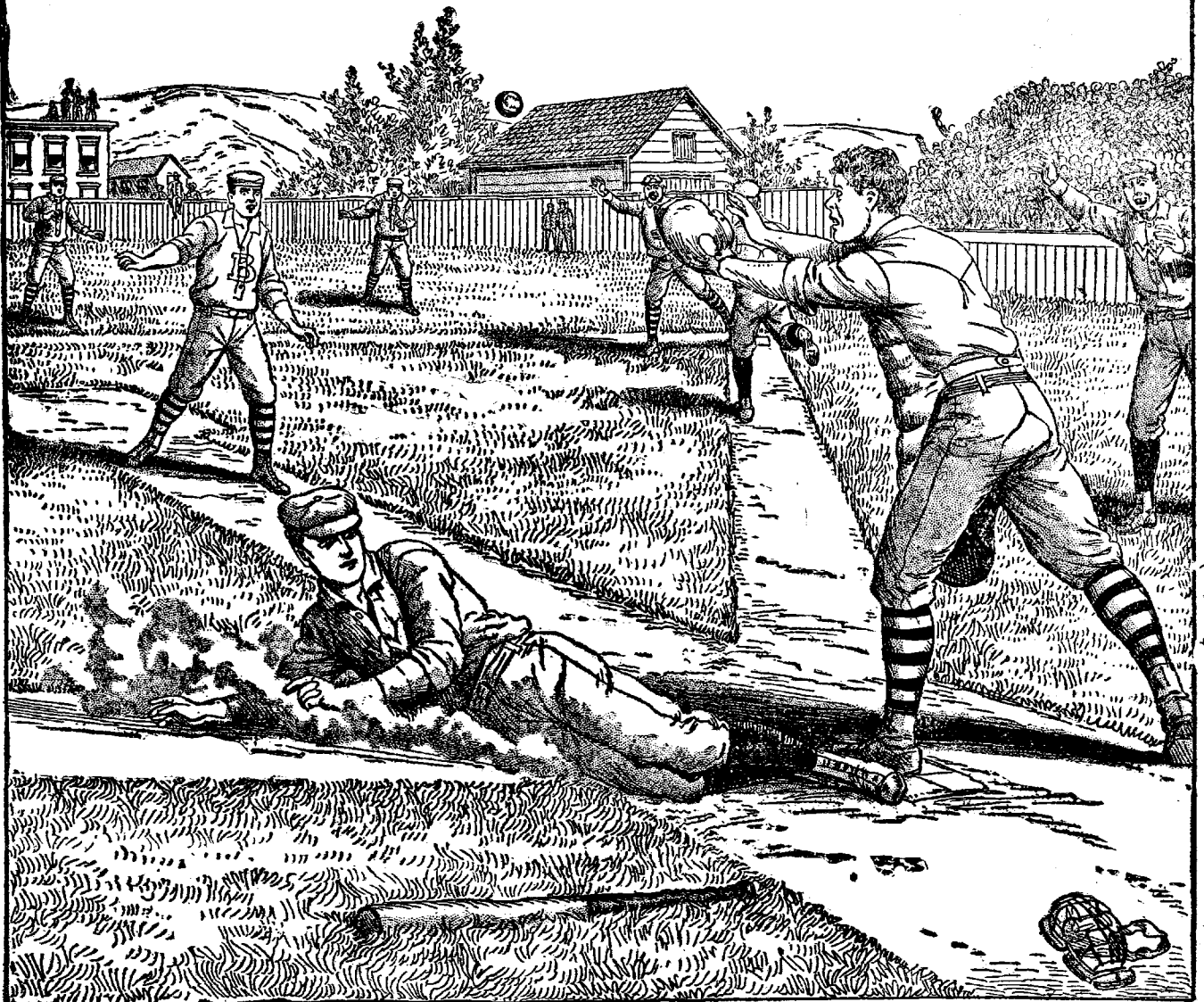
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