

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. 441.

NEW YORK, JULY 5, 1907.

Price 5 Cents.

THE BRADYS AND THE CHINESE DWARF; OR, THE "QUE HUNTER" OF THE BARBARY COAST.

By A NEW-YORK DETECTIVE.



The Chinese Dwarf seemed to be having everything his own way. The wood was rapidly piled around Old King Brady and Harry. The other Chinamen watched all these preparations with stolid indifference. There seemed no hope of escape.

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CHAPTER I.

A MYSTERY OF THE BARBARY COAST.

On the morning of June 30th, 1906, three persons ascended the stairs of the little two-story shack on lower Market street, San Francisco, California, in which at that time was located the office of Secret Service Commissioner Narraway.

They were the three constituting the famous Brady Detective Bureau of the City of New York.

Foremost was Old King Brady, wearing his long blue-coat, with brass buttons, his old-fashioned stock and stand-up collar and his big white hat with its wide brim.

Young King Brady, the old detective's former pupil, followed.

Last came Miss Alice Montgomery, the female member of this famous firm.

The Bradys, acting under orders from the Secret Service Bureau at Washington, had come to "the coast" post-haste and were now completing their instructions by reporting to Mr. Narraway.

That gentleman proved, however, to be absent up the State.

The Bradys found a letter awaiting them which read as follows:

"I should have remained in town pending your arrival if important business had not called me away.

"The summons means simply this:

"We have every reason to believe that the opium smugglers have broken loose again and that large quantities of the drug are being brought into this port without paying duty.

"Who are the principals in the matter and what their scheme is we have no idea, but we do know that the present stock of opium in the San Francisco market is far in excess of what it should be.

"My instructions are that you are to investigate this question thoroughly. I expect to be in town on Tuesday and we will discuss the matter at length then.

"Sincerely yours, P. H. Narraway."

Old King Brady having read his letter, handed it to Harry, his pupil and partner.

"Just keep that," he said. "You need not read it now." They immediately left the office.

"What's all that about?" demanded Harry. "Why were you in such a hurry to get out?"

"Did you not observe that Mr. Narraway has a new clerk?" replied the old detective. "As you are aware, there have been several occasions of late where we have run up against leaks in our Secret Service work. I don't care to discuss our affairs before a stranger. That's all."

"But what's the case?"

"There is no case. Simply too much opium on the San Francisco market. We are expected to turn up a gang of opium smugglers."

"Even if we manufacture them," said Alice.

"Right. It ought not to be impossible to produce them. Opium smuggling is going on in this port all the time."

"To say nothing of New York," put in Harry.

"Quite so. But now we must get at it and get done with it, for I don't care to remain here any great length of time. You, Harry, and you, Alice, better get busy among the Chinks while I will tackle the drug trade and see if I can pick up a few points. We will part here, as I have an idea which I want to immediately work up."

Thus saying, Old King Brady turned down Sansome street, leaving his partners with unusual abruptness.

"What can have struck him?" queried Alice. "One would think he knew just where to put his finger on these smugglers from the way he acts."

He knows a great deal about San Francisco and is acquainted with many people here," replied Harry. "But you can't tell what he is driving at. Question is what shall we do?"

"I suppose it means disguise as Chinamen in our usual style."

"Let us get down to Portsmouth Square and move about the refugee camp first. We may see something to give us a start."

At this period, owing to the total destruction of San Francisco's wonderful Chinese quarter by earthquake and fire, the people of the Chinese colony were largely congregated on the old Plaza, or Portsmouth Square, as it is now called.

Here the Chinese were living in little frame shacks, all of one pattern, and here the bulk of them still live, although Chinatown is rapidly building up, and will within a year probably be fully restored.

In working up their Chinese cases Alice has proved of the greatest assistance to the Bradys.

This shrewd young woman was born and reared in China, being the daughter of a missionary, and her knowl-

edge of the Chinese language is so complete that she can both speak and read it freely.

They strolled up Market street to Kearney and thence proceeded to Portsmouth Square, where they wandered about the refugee camp for a while.

Finding nothing here to interest them, they went up on Dupont street and walked among the ruins.

They had just crossed Pacific avenue, entering thus upon what had once been the far-famed "Barbary Coast," the "Tenderloin" of San Francisco, when they saw a crowd made up largely of Chinamen gathered in front of a building which had only been partially destroyed.

"Some excitement," remarked Alice.

"Yes," replied Harry. "It is a cold day when there is nothing doing here. Suppose we butt in and see what it's all about."

But this was easier said than done.

The street was blocked by chattering Celestials.

Two policemen guarded the door leading up to the second story of the ruined house.

"Listen to what they are saying, Alice," said Harry. "I'll leave it to you whether it is worth while to investigate this business or not."

They mingled with the crowd.

The next Harry knew Alice was addressing a man in Chinese.

The fellow stared at her with wide-open eyes.

A moment later they were "hinging" and "hanging" together.

The Chinaman seemed quite overcome to find a white woman able to speak his peculiar tongue.

Alice took Harry's arm and drew him on.

"Well?" demanded Young King Brady.

"He says that a Chinaman has been murdered upstairs in that house."

"By whom?"

"Highbinders, he thinks, but he is not sure. He made use of a term which I never heard before."

"Which is what?"

"Literally translated, it would be cue-hunters."

"In what connection?"

"As having done the murder."

"You mean these hair-gatherers?"

"Yes."

"Probably they have cut off the dead man's pigtail."

"He says so."

"Cue-Hunters would be a good translation, perhaps."

"I am satisfied that is precisely what the expression means."

"I think we better take this affair in."

"As there is nothing else doing, yes."

"Here comes the ambulance. The man may not be dead."

With its bell jangling, the ambulance forced its way through the scattering crowd.

Following in its wake, Young King Brady and Alice

succeeded in reaching the door just as the young doctor started upstairs.

"Keep back," said one of the policemen gruffly, and he barred the way.

Young King Brady displayed his shield and the officer stepped aside.

"But not the lady," he said.

"She is a detective, too."

The officer offered no further objection, and they went upstairs.

The room which they entered was a large rear chamber.

The ceiling had partially fallen, the windows were all broken and some blackened remains of furniture stood about.

There were several Chinamen in the room and one policeman.

The Coroner and the ambulance surgeon were also present.

Upon an old lounge lay a Chinaman who appeared to be dead.

His cue had been cut off close to his shaven head.

It was not possible to come close up to him, as the doctor and the Coroner, with two Chinamen, crowded around.

Harry and Alice stood listening to their talk.

"It's the same mark," said the Coroner.

"Seems to have been burned with a hot iron," said the doctor.

"Are you sure it's that?" demanded the Coroner. "It don't look that way to me. Nor did the others."

"How many others have there been?"

"This makes the fourth in a month. All had the same mark."

"Singular. Let me examine more closely."

The doctor seemed to be examining the dead man's forehead.

Harry shifted his position and saw that upon the forehead of the dead man was a peculiar reddish mark like a star.

"Done with acid," said the doctor.

"So I think, and so I thought in the other cases," replied the Coroner.

"Had the pigtail been cut off in each of the other cases?" demanded the doctor.

"Yes; in every one of them."

Thus they talked.

Harry waited his chance.

The doctor had been summoned for the purpose of officially pronouncing the man dead, it would appear, and the intention was to remove the body at once.

While preparations to this effect were being made Young King Brady succeeded in getting the Coroner's ear.

Introducing Alice and himself, he asked about the case.

"It is a complete mystery, Mr. Brady," said the Coroner.

"The body of this man was discovered by some workmen who were preparing to pull this building down. Whoever he is, he can't have been dead more than twenty-four hours. We have had four such cases within a month."

"So I heard you say. Tell me more about them. I am interested in all such mysteries."

"Well, all there is to tell is what you see here for yourself. In each case a Chinaman has been found dead in some half-ruined building like this with his pigtail cut off and that same scar on his forehead. The strange part of the business is that none of the dead men have been identified. Many Chinamen have viewed the bodies, but no one seems to know who the victims are."

"How was this man killed?"

"Shot through the heart."

"And the others?"

"Each one was the same."

"May they not be cases of suicide?"

"One might think so, but in no case has a revolver been found."

"That would seem to spoil the suicide theory."

"Exactly. The whole thing is a deep mystery, and I for one should be very glad to see it solved."

"May I have a closer look at the body?" demanded Alice suddenly.

"Certainly, if you wish," replied the Coroner, and he ordered those about the lounge to move aside.

Alice stood for some little time contemplating the features of the dead Chinaman.

"Well?" demanded the Coroner as she turned away.

"Oh, I don't see anything of particular interest," replied Alice.

"Miss Montgomery was brought up among the Chinese," explained Harry.

"Indeed," said the Coroner, "and do you speak their language, miss?"

"I do," replied Alice.

"Remarkable!" exclaimed the Coroner. "I never heard of a white woman being able to do that."

As they were now about to carry the remains downstairs, Harry and Alice withdrew.

"Did you tumble to anything, Alice?" demanded Harry as they walked back along Dupont street.

"I did, most decidedly," replied Alice, "but as we are not working for the San Francisco police, I thought I would keep the information to myself."

"And quite right. What was it?"

"That is no star on the forehead, Harry."

"And what, then?"

"It is a Chinese character."

"Ah! You think it was branded with a hot iron?"

"I do most decidedly."

"And I also did not take kindly to the acid theory. But what does this character mean?"

"It means traitor."

"Which would seem to indicate that the dead man was a member of some Chinese society and had betrayed its secrets?"

"That is the way I regard it. The loss of the cue indicates that also."

"Certainly. It is the greatest disgrace that can happen to a Chinaman to lose his cue."

"So we have turned up something to report to Old King Brady."

And it was all that they did turn up.

After walking about for some little time, and seeing that nothing was likely to come of it, Harry and Alice went to the Palace Hotel, where they had engaged rooms.

CHAPTER II.

HARRY HAS A NARROW ESCAPE.

Alice was quite right when she said that Old King Brady had some definite idea.

The old detective walked down Sansome street to Sacramento and down Sacramento to Drumm, where he turned into an old ark of a building and went upstairs.

Here on the water front a fringe of old buildings which should have fallen a prey to the flames for some strange reason escaped.

In the hall to which Old King Brady had now penetrated there were sundry doors bearing tin signs which indicated that the occupants of these offices were engaged in the shipping interest.

Upon one door was a sign reading simply, "Angus McFloyd."

Here Old King Brady entered.

It was a shabby little room with bare floor, a rickety desk and a few chairs.

Seated at the desk was a little hunchback, an elderly man with a huge head, which set deep down between a pair of high, rounded shoulders.

"Hello, Mr. Brady!" cried the hunchback. "Well, well! Glad to see you! When did you come to town? Excuse me getting up. I'm lower than ever these days."

"Keep your seat, keep your seat!" replied Old King Brady, advancing and shaking hands. "How are you, Mac? Sorry you don't feel well."

"Oh, I'm well enough for that matter," was the reply. "It is just my legs. They bother me all the time. You see, they were never built for this clumsy body of mine."

This was a fact.

Anyone could see that the little man's legs were not much bigger than those of a half-grown child.

Old King Brady pulled up a chair.

"When did you hit San Francisco?" demanded McFloyd.

"That notable event occurred yesterday afternoon, Mac. You seem to have been shaking things up pretty well here."

"It's the worst ever, Brady. You should have been here to see it."

"Well, that is what I was."

"Do you mean it? You were here during the fire?"

"And the earthquake."

"Oh, it was the fire that did the mischief."

Old King Brady laughed.

"I see you are like all other San Franciscans, Mac," he said. "You won't admit that there ever was such a thing as an earthquake on the coast."

"Never you mind. We shall be bigger and better than ever in a year's time."

"But what do you want of me, Brady?" demanded the little man, changing the subject abruptly. "Of course I know you must want something or you wouldn't have come."

"Mac," replied the old detective, "where's Sandy McGown?"

"He's alive."

"In the pen or out?"

"Out. He came out six months ago. He was in here yesterday."

"Looking for someone to stake him in some piratical expedition?"

"I guess that's about the size of it. If he could get someone who would stake him he would be chartering a schooner blame quick."

"Have you any idea where I should be likely to find him?"

"Yes. He was in here the other day. I know where he is stopping."

"Good! I thought it likely you might know."

"Will you write me his address?"

"No."

"All right, Mac."

"Oh, I'm not refusing, Brady. You won't have to go far to find him."

"What do you mean?"

"Why, he has a room upstairs here. The offices on the top floor are in such a condition that nobody wants to hire them. Since the fire most of them have been rented as lodging rooms. Sandy has one now."

"That's all right, Mac. I was sure you would help me out. Which one?"

"The last on the left. Likely you will find him there now. He was in here pretty drunk just before I closed up last night. Probably he finished the job and you will find him sleeping late this morning."

"Good! I have hit it off just as I hoped I might. Well, so-long, Mac. Hope your legs will soon be better."

And thus saying, Old King Brady pulled out.

It is ever thus with the old detective.

In almost every city in the United States he has friends who are under obligations to him.

In the case of the hunchback, McFloyd, Old King Brady had been the means of establishing him in his present business as a broker in coasting freight, which had proved profitable enough.

There were few men engaged in the coasting trade that Angus McFloyd did not know, and Sandy McGown was certainly not one of the few.

This man was a born adventurer.

He had come to California as a young gold hunter in '49. Three times he had made his pile, but only to lose it again, and once he was worth a million.

He had led a filibustering expedition into Central America, he had been a pearl pirate in the South Seas; more than one cargo of "laborers" had he run from the Pacific islands into Australia, where they were put to work under "contract;" in other words, made slaves.

As for pelagic sealing, that was Sandy's regular diet, and for this he had been arrested about three years before and sent to the penitentiary.

As Old King Brady happened to know the man, he also knew that there was no one more likely to aid him in his opium case than Sandy McGown, who had many times dipped into the business himself.

So Old King Brady went upstairs, and walking the length of the shabby hallway, pounded vigorously upon the last door on the left.

It required much pounding before he received a response.

At last a gruff voice demanded, "Who's there!"

"McGown, this is Old King Brady," the detective called through the keyhole.

He could hear a growling voice within and somebody getting out of bed.

Then the bolt was shot and the door opened.

"A pretty time to disturb a fellow," growled the grizzled old seadog, crawling back into bed. "All the same I am glad to see you. What do you want?"

Old King Brady shut the door and drew up a chair.

He knew that to get anything out of this man it would be necessary to come to the point at once, so he briefly stated his case.

Old Sandy looked wise.

Pulling himself up in bed, he asked for a cigar, and having lit it he said:

"I think I can put you next."

"Very good."

"And what is there in it for me?"

"I'll see the Secret Service Commissioner and get him to name a reward; it will probably be a percentage on the hop recovered and an upset sum to be paid on conviction of the smugglers."

"That would mean that I shall have to appear as a witness against them?"

"Yes."

"I won't do it. You'll have to fix it some other way."

"And how?"

"Give me twenty-five per cent. of what you get."

"That wouldn't suit you. Our fees have been cut down of late; but I'll tell you what I'll do if we succeed, I'll guarantee you a thousand dollars. Part of it at least I shall put in my bill of expenses. I have a perfect right to do it, for it might take me six months to get next to this gang and that would cost the government more in the end."

"That's too blamed little."

"Are you sure you can put me next?"

"Pretty sure. Can't say for certain, of course."

"It's all I can promise you. If there is a big haul of hop, very likely I can raise the ante somewhat."

"Oh, well, all right, I'll go you, Brady. I know just how to use a thousand about now."

"Well! Bust ahead. You have suspicions as to who may be controlling this gang?"

"Yes."

"White or Chink?"

"Chink. When can you get on the job?"

"This afternoon. You'll have to stake me, though. I'm clean broke."

"How much?"

"Say a hundred."

"It is yours. When and where shall we meet?"

"There's no better place than this; come here to-night."

"Very good."

"Probably we shall need an interpreter. Do you know anyone you can trust?"

"Yes."

"Who?"

"A young lady."

"Young lady be blowed! I want someone who saves the Chink talk."

"That's what I mean. I know the very person. What's more, she is a member of my firm."

"Oh, I didn't know that you had a woman in the firm. I heard you had taken a pupil, though."

"That was long ago. My pupil is now my partner. So is the young lady in question."

"And she is white?"

"The whitest ever."

"Oh, I don't mean that. You know what I mean."

"Yes, and she is white in the way you mean it, too."

"But I'm afraid I can't use a woman, Brady. If I succeed in what I propose to undertake it may mean big risk."

"Oh, this woman is different from others. She can come disguised as a man and you would never know the difference."

"Could she come disguised as a Chink?"

"Yes; she can do that, too, and so can Harry; my partner, I mean."

"Well, let it be that way then. I might not want to use them; then again, I might."

After some further conversation Old King Brady left Sandy McGown with the understanding that they should meet at nine o'clock.

Returning to the Palace Hotel, it pleased the old detective to make a mystery of all he had done.

Not a hint did he give his partners further than to state that he had made a beginning and that Harry and Alice were to make up in Chinese costume.

This was agreed upon and Old King Brady then asked them what report they had to make.

"Well, none so far as the case is concerned," replied

Harry. "All the same, we have unearthed a Chinese mystery."

He went on to tell of what they had run up against.

"Drop it at once," said Old King Brady. "We can't undertake any such matter while we have Secret Service business on hand."

So directly after supper Harry and Alice went to the Kearney street costumer usually patronized by the Bradys, and as this man had managed to get together some stock which he carried in a little frame shack where he also lived temporarily, they were able to fix themselves up as they wished.

They still had an hour on their hands at the time these preparations were complete and they strolled over to the Barbary Coast to see if they could pick up any further points on the murder case, just for their own satisfaction.

But the excitement had all died out and the half-ruined house which had been the scene of the murder appeared quite deserted.

Harry and Alice, being now in Chinese disguise, were able to mingle with the Chinks.

But these were not very numerous, this end of Dupont street being beyond the old limits of Chinatown.

None that Alice spoke to—and she tackled several—seemed to know anything about the murder.

There are so many Chinese in San Francisco that to some this would not have seemed strange.

But Alice was not satisfied to take it that way.

"They are horribly afraid and won't talk," she said. "That is certain. Even my Chinese don't help me here."

"It is a queer business," replied Harry. "Suppose we take the place in for a few minutes?"

"I am willing. I should like to see more of it myself," was the reply.

So they proceeded to the house and groped their way up the gloomy stairs.

The room in which the murder had been committed, or rather, we should have said, in which the victim had been discovered, was lighted by a large arc lamp which was burning on Stockton street and shone directly into the windows, as no buildings were standing between.

The window sashes were gone and the room was thus open to the night.

"Whatever could have brought that Chink in here?" queried Harry, looking around. "This furniture is not such as the Chinese use. It seems to me that this room was probably occupied by whites."

"It looks that way," replied Alice; "but then the body might have been brought in here, of course."

"There is that chance. Just the same I doubt it. Risky business, that."

They strolled into the next room.

Here there was more evidence of white occupancy.

In the corner lay a pile of half-burned paper novels. In a closet were some articles of woman's clothing, which certainly had never been used by any Chinese specimen of the female sex.

Here the ceiling had fallen and the lathing was all broken away in places. There seemed to be an attic overhead.

"There ought to be some way of getting up to that place," said Young King Brady.

He had scarcely uttered the words when the report of a revolver rang out and a shot came whizzing down through the broken laths right past his head, missing him by a close shave.

CHAPTER III.

THE BRADYS FIND THEMSELVES FAIRLY STARTLED ON THEIR CASE.

So suddenly was this surprise sprung upon them that for a moment Harry made no move.

Then seizing Alice by the arm, he dragged her out of the room and to the stairs.

"Quick! We must get out of this," he cried.

"Goodness, Harry! Don't pull me about so!" said Alice. "I can walk."

"Downstairs with you, quick!" gasped Young King Brady. "You are altogether too dear to me, Alice, to make me want to take chances on your life in a case which does not concern us."

They ran downstairs and gained the street.

No one followed, although both expected it.

Harry had only spoken the truth.

His fair partner was, indeed, very dear to him.

More than once had he asked for her hand, but thus far Alice had always declined to consider his suit seriously.

Not that she did not return his affection in a measure, for this she certainly did.

But Alice had become altogether too fond of the adventurous business which she had chosen to be willing to tie herself down to humdrum married life.

"That house needs further attention!" she said after they had waited a few minutes, expecting someone to appear.

"I should say so," replied Harry. "But it would have been a nice piece of business if you had been shot. Think what the Governor would have said! And after he particularly ordered us to let that matter alone."

"We had no business there."

"That's right."

"Just the same, you were the one who were nearly shot. The bullet did not come anywhere near me."

"Near enough! Too near. But, come, we may as well get out of this. We have no more than time to keep our appointment."

And so they went down on Drumm street, where they found Old King Brady standing at the door of the old building smoking a cigar.

"Are we on time?" demanded Harry, looking at his watch.

"I think so," was the reply. "By the way, what was your hurry?"

"Hurry? What do you mean?"

"Why, you went out of that door as though you had been shot out of a gun."

Young King Brady looked foolish.

Alice, who often has to get Harry out of similar scrapes, laughed.

"So you were watching us?" she said. "Well, that was my doings. I insisted upon going into that house."

"Nonsense! I alone am responsible," Harry exclaimed.

"Both responsible. It would have been just as well if you had obeyed orders," grunted the old detective. "But what happened? Why did you come running downstairs?"

"Somebody fired at us," said Harry.

"See the person?"

"No. The shot came from the garret through the broken plastering."

"Humph!"

"But, Governor, where were you?"

"Busy trying to find out whether you intended to obey orders or not, young man."

"Well, you found out."

"I did."

"I apologize. It shall not occur again."

"Ditto," added Alice. "The fault was all mine."

"No, mine!" objected Harry.

"But where were you, Governor?" he persisted. "I don't see how I could have missed you?"

"But I missed you, Harry. Frankly, I was in the garret. I missed you a moment after the shot was fired! As soon as you recovered from your astonishment you began to tell Alice how much you loved her and then you both lit out."

"Did you fire that shot?"

"I did not."

"Who did?"

"As a punishment for your disobedience I propose to keep the secret, for the present at least."

Now all this was very vexatious.

But having been caught with the goods, so to speak, Young King Brady said no more.

He knew that sooner or later his partner was certain to tell him all about it.

"We must get busy," said the old detective. "There is a man upstairs whom we have to see. Slide in."

They ascended to the top floor and knocked on Sandy McGown's door.

It was immediately opened by the old pirate in person.

He stared in surprise at the supposed Chinamen.

"Brady, do you mean to tell me that these are not real Chinks?" he exclaimed.

"No more than you are," laughed the old detective, and he introduced his partners.

"And can you really talk Chinese, miss?" demanded Sandy.

"I really can, Mr. McGown," replied Alice.

"Let's hear you. You can't fool me. I know the real thing."

Thus urged, Alice gave a sample of her skill.

"It's sure Chink patter," said Sandy. "Blame me if I would have believed it!"

"And now to business," broke in Old King Brady. "What are we to do?"

"It's like this," replied Sandy. "When I made that deal with you this morning, I only had one idea in mind. I have put that into practice. In a way it has worked. It is up to you to do the rest of the thinking and planning, though, of course, I am with you till the finish. I'll help all I can."

"Right," said Old King Brady, "and what is the story, Sandy?"

"The story is just this. I imagined that this smuggling might be done by the Ging Yok bunch. I had noticed Yok going into a certain place on Clay street nights, down by the water front. You have heard of Ging Yok, of course?"

"Can't say I have."

"So? You surprise me. He is one of the slickest smugglers in San Francisco, and what is more he has never been ketched yet. That's because he don't keep at it all the time."

"Because he has never been caught is probably the reason I never happened to hear of him."

"If you once had seen him you wouldn't never forget him. He's a dwarf."

"Yes?"

"Yes, and just about the ugliest-looking specimen you ever laid eyes on. He's up to something, Brady, that's sure, but whether he is the man you want or not of course I wouldn't undertake to say."

"And what's the programme?"

"I'll take you to the place he holds out in. They rent rooms upstairs and I managed to hire one by good luck. I thought likely you could bore a hole through the floor or something. There's private rooms below. Of course they mightn't meet in the one right underneath us, but it was the best I could do in the time I've had."

"Sandy, you have done first-rate," replied Old King Brady. "But now to put your scheme to the test."

"That's up to you, boss."

"And I accept the commission. This place is a saloon?"

"Yes; it's Tony the Greaser's."

"I knew it. I have taken a gang of hop smugglers out of there once before. If you could not have helped me it would have been the first place I should have struck in at."

"That's it."

"You are known to Tony?"

"Sure. I took the room in my own name."

"Very good. You and I will go there together, then. Harry, you and Alice are to call on us just half an hour after we enter—see?"

"Right."

"And this time orders will be obeyed?"

"They certainly will, Governor. Now don't trouble yourself any more about that."

And this was the last allusion Old King Brady made to the matter.

In spite of his kind-heartedness and broad-minded charity, Old King Brady is a strict disciplinarian, as no one knows better than Harry himself.

Sandy now locked up his place and he and Old King Brady went down on Clay street.

Harry and Alice slowly followed.

"Singular that he should have been in that house," mused Harry.

"It must have been that he was determined to find out whether we were going to obey him or not," said Alice.

"No; he wouldn't do that with me now. It was an accident. I am sure he had no intention of going there when we left him after supper. But no matter. It will all come out sometime or another."

They kept on and located Tony the Greaser's.

It was a low, waterfront saloon of the worst type, being like the Drumm street building—one of the few which had escaped the fire.

They went down on a wharf, where they stood for a few minutes looking off on the moonlit bay.

The romance of the scene was suggestive of lovemaking, and it is not strange that Harry's arm found its way around his fair partner's waist.

Time was when Alice would have resented this, but she did not do it now.

The fact is Alice had been not a little startled at Harry's narrow escape.

She had been thinking how she should have felt if the mysterious shot had accomplished its deadly purpose.

After awhile they wandered back in sight of Tony the Greaser's.

"Time's up," said Harry. "We better get in."

"Wait!" breathed Alice.

"Hello! What now?"

"That man spoke of a Chinese dwarf. What about that old fellow coming down the street being the man?"

Harry had not noticed him, but now, as he looked, he saw a strange figure coming their way.

It was an undersized Chinaman, enormously fat, with a crooked back and a big, ugly head.

A sort of Celestial Angus McFloyd on a large scale, in fact.

Young King Brady had never seen so ugly a specimen of the Chinese race.

"I should say he would fill the bill," he exclaimed.

"Shall we wait a minute and see if he goes into the Greaser's?"

"By all means; but let us walk toward him. He must not be allowed to suspect."

With their hands thrust into the sleeves of their blouses, Chinese fashion, they moved up the street.

The Chinese dwarf eyed them for an instant, but shuffled right on.

"How old should you say he was?" demanded Harry.

"Fifty odd, for a guess," replied Alice.

"All Chinks look alike to me."

"They don't to me, then. There is as much individuality among them as there is among whites."

"There! he has gone into the Greaser's."

"That's right. We better get inside."

They crossed the street and tried the side door. It opened readily and they groped their way upstairs to the third floor.

Here a grimy lamp burned in a niche.

"Wonder which room it is?" breathed Harry.

Just then a door opened and Old King Brady peered out.

"In here," he whispered.

They slipped into a little room and the old detective closed the door.

Sandy was sitting on the bed, which had been moved out into the middle of the room.

Harry saw that an auger hole had been bored in the floor underneath where the bed had stood and a faint glimmer of light shone through.

"Isn't that a risk?" he asked. "Suppose you have knocked the plaster down?"

"Captain McGown looked into the place this morning. The ceiling is boards, same as this."

"Even so, it might show."

"We are taking chances, Harry."

"Anyone in there now?"

"No."

"We saw a humpbacked Chink go into the saloon; don't know whether he is your dwarf or not."

"Very fat?" demanded Sandy.

"Yes; as big as a house."

"That's Ging Yok. There should be something doing soon, if only they meet in the room below."

"That's where we are taking chances again," said Sandy.

"By the way," remarked Old King Brady, "what is the regular business of this dwarf?"

"He used to run a lottery at one time. I don't know what he has been doing of late. Nothing much except to follow the races, I reckon. He does that right along."

"Is he supposed to be rich?"

"They say so; but who can tell?"

They remained talking in an undertone for about half an hour, when a stir and voices were suddenly heard in the room below.

Old King Brady got down on his knees and put his ear to the auger hole.

Thus he remained for a moment, and then moving away, beckoned to Alice.

"Your job," he whispered.

"Chinks?" breathed Sandy.

Old King Brady nodded.

Alice got down on the floor and for a long time remained listening.

Old King Brady in the meantime passed around the cigars and they remained smoking in silence.

All this time the voices continued to be heard.

At last Alice got up and put her foot over the hole.

"They are through talking business now," she whispered.

"Well?" demanded Old King Brady.

"They are opium smugglers all right. The dwarf is going somewhere in a boat when he leaves here. It is lying at the foot of Washington street under a wharf. I thought probably you would want to follow, in which case we ought to pull right out."

"Right," said Old King Brady. "Sandy, your job."

"I can get a boat," replied McGown, "but it will take half an hour."

"Probably it would take us longer to get one ourselves. Where will you pick us up?"

"At the Sacramento street pier."

"Good! We will pull right out. We best go first."

"Yes, in case we are being spied on."

"We take no chances. Don't be an instant longer than you can help, Sandy."

"Bank on that," replied the pirate.

Old King Brady slipped out then.

Harry and Alice followed within a few minutes.

They could see nothing of the old detective when they struck the street.

"Well," said Harry, "there is one thing sure, we are fairly started on our case."

CHAPTER IV.

SHADOWING ABOUT THE BAY.

"I suppose we may as well get down on the wharf," said Young King Brady, after they found themselves well away from Tony the Greaser's; "I don't doubt that we shall find the Governor there."

"The sooner the better," replied Alice. "I have a lot to say and it should be talked out before we meet that man McGown."

"Something you overheard?"

"Yes."

"Tell it."

"I don't care to tell it but once, Harry."

"Oh, all right. Suit yourself."

"Now you are jealous because I won't make you a special confidant."

"Not at all."

"You are—you know you are."

"Let us change the subject."

"As you will."

"What sort of Chinese were those fellows talking?"

"The best Cantonese."

"You had no trouble in understanding them, then?"

"None whatever. I understood them just as well as I can understand you now."

"I wish I had your gift."

"It is too late for you ever to hope to acquire it beyond

the few phrases which you have been able to pick up under my tuition."

"Which have helped a lot."

"We will keep at it. In time it might amount to something, but you must remember that I learned Chinese as a little child."

They passed on to the Sacramento street pier.

Here they found Old King Brady pacing up and down.

"Well, Alice," he exclaimed, "what did all that listening amount to?"

"It amounted to a whole lot, Mr. Brady, but it is a story in two parts."

"I shall want to hear both. How many were there down in that room?"

"Three."

"All Chinks?"

"Yes."

"That means the dwarf and two others?"

"Of course I can't say that the dwarf was actually there. I could not see them."

"True; but we cannot doubt it. Well?"

"About the opium first?"

"All right."

"They seem to have a holdout over the bay somewhere. That is the place they visit to-night. Associated with them seems to be some white man."

"Get his name?"

"No; you know the Chinese make dreadful work of our names. They generally light upon some distinguishing mark to designate us."

"And in this case?"

"They called the man 'brass buttons.'"

"That would seem to spell an officer of some ship."

"So I thought. He is in the deal. They are expecting a consignment by the tramp steamer Billington Castle."

"When is she due at this port?"

"Very shortly. I didn't get the date."

"All right. And this officer attends to the landing of the hop?"

"That is what they are going over there to-night to arrange for."

"I see. Anything else in the opium line?"

"That is all, except that one of the speakers is to handle the smuggled hop."

"Probably the dwarf. Now for part second."

"Part second is an entirely different matter. It concerns the murder of the Chinaman we saw dead in that house on the Barbary Coast."

"Great Scott! You don't mean it!" exclaimed Harry.

"That is it."

"Most interesting! Let us have the details."

"Before I go into them," said Alice, "don't you think it would be just as well if you posted us on your part in that mysterious affair, Mr. Brady?"

This was said rather slyly.

Alice likes to tease the old detective sometimes. It seemed to her that the opportunity offered now.

Old King Brady laughed.

"I suppose you think you have me, Alice," he said, "and I'll admit that you are right. I'll tell."

"It would make what I have to say plainer to Harry, I have no doubt."

"Well, then, it is like this. After you left me—indeed you had not been gone ten minutes—there came to me my old acquaintance Wing Fang, the rich Chinese importer, whose place used to be on Sacramento street. You remember, Harry? We called on him about three years ago and he gave us a cup of a famous orange tea? Well, he said that he had seen me on the street and that he wanted to consult me about his brother, who had just been murdered."

"Murdered!" exclaimed Young King Brady. "Was he the dead man?"

"Yes. His name was Charlie Fang. Wing saw the body in the morgue, and while he fully identified it, he did not dare to admit the fact for fear——"

"For fear that he would be killed himself by the members of a secret society similar to the Highbinders called the Hair-Gatherers," put in Alice.

"I see you two are determined not to let me tell my story in my own way," said the old detective. "Well, that is just it, except that instead of Hair-Gatherers Wing Fang called it Cue-Hunters."

"It amounts to the same thing. We heard the same suspicion expressed by Chinks on Dupont street."

"Wing Fang is sure that they are responsible," said Old King Brady. "He didn't have time to tell me much about this singular society, for as a matter of fact I could not spare the time to listen, but I made an appointment with him for to-morrow. He asked me, however, to arrange to have his brother's remains buried in Chinese style without mixing his name up in the matter, which I promised to do. He is enormously rich and will, I know, pay not only all expenses, but treat us liberally besides."

"Did he want you to catch his brother's murderers?" demanded Harry.

"Yes, if I could do it without mixing him up in the matter, and I promised to try. So I went to that house just to take a hurried survey of the ground."

"Wing Fang gave you no clew?"

"Nothing further than that his brother was a great race track fiend and lottery gambler, who was rich one day and poor the next. He stated that he supposed Charlie had gone back on some of his friends and that these had hired the Cue-Hunters to kill him. It seems that the brand on his forehead did mean 'traitor,' just as Alice said."

"That is certainly what it does mean," said Alice positively.

"But about that mysterious shot?" demanded Harry.

"Now that is where you get left," replied Old King Brady. "I went first to the room where the body was found. Then, seeing that there was a garret, I went up there."

"How did you get up there?" broke in Harry.

"There is a ladder in a closet in the hall," replied the old detective.

"I had scarcely got into the garret," he continued, "when I heard your voices talking below, so you must have been right behind me; at the same instant I heard a rustling sound over at the other corner of the garret, where the roof is burned away. Anxious to know what it meant, I crawled down in a dark corner under the eaves and waited. I could only hear your talk indistinctly then. Suddenly I saw a white figure glide into view. To me, as nearly as I could see in the uncertain light, it appeared to be a man with a sheet thrown over him. Instantly the figure stooped and I heard the shot. I drew my revolver and was going to fire when a sort of blur seemed to come over my eyes. The next I knew the figure had vanished and I could hear you and Alice running downstairs, but I caught your low talk in the meantime.

"That is all. I got down as quick as I could and hurried to our meeting-place. How I came to be ahead of you I cannot say."

"Oh, we took our time," said Alice.

"A very singular piece of business," mused Harry.

"It puzzled me. But for this work of to-night I certainly should have waited to investigate further."

"Which you will do now?"

"Oh, yes. We must try to work the two cases together somehow. I don't like to refuse Wing Fang. He gave me very efficient help in a Chinese case which I had out here some years ago."

The Bradys discussed the matter at further length.

At last a low whistle heard on their left put an end to the talk.

This was the signal agreed upon with Sandy McGown.

Looking over the side of the pier, they saw the pirate in a rowboat.

"I am all ready!" he called. "Can you climb down? Shall I row around till I find a standing ladder? I don't know where there is one. It may take time."

"We can climb down," said Old King Brady. "I think you can manage it, Alice?"

"Well, I don't know about that," replied Alice, rather dubiously.

"Oh, I am sure you can. Harry, you get into the boat first. I will lower Alice into your arms."

The scheme worked, and Young King Brady having placed Alice comfortably astern, lent his chief a hand.

"Now we will get around to the Washington street pier," said Sandy, "or do you think it would be better to pull out into the bay and do our watching from there?"

"The last will be the best," replied the old detective. "Can you manage the oars alone?"

"Certainly. It is nothing," grunted Sandy, and he pulled out a hundred yards or so, then working his way down opposite the Washington street pier.

It was too dark to see much.

All they could do was to wait and hope that they were not too late.

And the wait which followed was a long one.

Nearly an hour passed, and still they remained the only boat in sight.

But at last the situation changed.

Just as Old King Brady was about to say give it up a boat shot out from under the Washington street pier.

There were two men in it, one at the oars and one seated astern.

Old King Brady got out his powerful night glass and surveyed the outfit.

"The dwarf is there all right," he announced.

"All O. K.," growled Sandy. "I'm on the job, Mr. B."

"Keep well out of their way," replied Old King Brady, lighting a cigar.

Away out in the bay facing San Francisco lies Yerba Buena Island.

Here there is a cable station and a naval recruiting station. The old man-of-war Hartford, now a receiving-ship, lies at anchor off the island also.

The shore facing San Francisco is steep and rocky and quite wild in appearance, the buildings of the two stations being on the other side.

A high fence divides the two stations, passing over the middle of the island.

It was towards this island that the boat of the Chinese dwarf made its way.

"Come," said the old detective, "it looks very much as though Mr. Brassbuttons might prove to be a United States officer."

"What's all that about?" demanded Sandy. "You haven't told me what the lady caught on to yet."

"Tell him, Alice," ordered the old detective.

Alice ran over the points.

"They are standing in with some fellow, either at the recruiting station or the cable outfit," growled Sandy.

"How?" demanded Old King Brady.

"Want me to give away the game?" asked the ex-hop smuggler.

"Since it isn't your game, why not?"

"Oh, I don't mind. If I had a friend on Yerba Buena my way would be to arrange to have the hop dropped overboard in a rubber bag and I should be on hand with a boat to pick it up. Too dangerous to try to land it in the city with a Chinese steamer just coming up the bay. Too many of your kind flying about. Yerba Buena would be a blame good place to put it and it would be an easy job to run it over some dark night."

"And so that is your way, Sandy," laughed the old detective. "Well, I fancy it is their way, too. It's the way we do such things in New York, and I presume it is just the same out here on the coast. Do they see us, think?"

"Can't tell. You've got the glass, boss."

"I'll have a look."

Old King Brady surveyed the boat, which Sandy had allowed to get well ahead of them, long and earnestly.

"It doesn't seem to me that they can see us," he said at last. "Still a Chinaman is not one to show excitement.

Pull on past the island slowly, Sandy. Then turn and work back again. It is all we can do."

But this scheme led to the desired results.

The Bradys saw the Chinese dwarf land on Yerba Buena.

He walked along the beach a short distance and was then joined by a man wearing an officer's military cloak.

The two remained in conversation some twenty minutes. Meanwhile the Bradys hovered off in the bay.

At last the dwarf re-embarked and started back towards San Francisco.

The Bradys did not attempt to follow them.

Sandy McGown pulled them away over to the foot of Brannan street and they landed alongside the Pacific Mail piers.

CHAPTER V.

ON THE TRAIL OF THE CHINESE DWARF.

There was nothing further done that night, of course.

Sandy McGown promised to hang around Tony the Greaser's, and keep his ears open for any information he might pick up.

Meanwhile there was little or nothing that the Bradys could do in the matter but await the arrival of the Billington Castle.

This gave the detectives just the opportunity they wanted to get busy on their Barbary Coast mystery.

First thing next morning Old King Brady looked up the chief of police.

It was easy to arrange to give Charlie Fang a proper Chinese funeral.

This done, he reported to Wing Fang and they had a long talk.

Harry and Alice did not join in all this.

As Old King Brady knew Wing Fang, it was thought better that he should manage the matter alone.

At eleven o'clock the detectives again met at the Palace Hotel.

"Well, Governor, did you pick up any new points?" demanded Harry.

"Nothing of any consequence," was the reply. "It would appear that money could not have been the motive for any of these mysterious murders, for neither Charlie Fang nor any of the other Chinks who have been found dead with their cues cut off had any. Charlie was perhaps the best off of the lot on account of having a rich brother to fall back on."

"Was any demand made on Wing Fang for money?"

"No. He is entirely ignorant also of his brother's associates, beyond the fact that he was constantly playing the races, hitting the lotteries and so on. Charlie had pulled Wing Fang's leg so many times that of late there has been nothing doing in that line, and he saw very little of him. As for the Cue-Hunters, he assures me that the organization, if there is one, is no ancient Chinese affair, but quite a modern institution. He wants to see his brother avenged

and he is willing to pay for it. That sums up my interview, I think."

"And what is the programme?" demanded Harry.

"Suppose we get over on the Barbary Coast and see what we can make out of my pistol-shooting ghost?"

"I don't see what else we can do."

"I think of nothing else myself, so we will start about two o'clock. Meanwhile you and Alice get into your Chink toggery again. I'll pick you up on Dupont street."

And this plan was carried out.

At quarter past two the Bradys and Alice found themselves in the ruined house once more.

The risk they ran in it by daylight seemed slight.

They ascended to the garret and here half an hour was spent in searching for something to explain the mystery of the night before.

And the discovery was made at last.

The house was a very old one for San Francisco.

Evidently its history dated back to the great fire in 1853, when all this part of the town was burned over.

While working under the eaves near the point where the white figure vanished Old King Brady discovered a trapdoor.

This upon being opened was found to communicate with a secret stairway so narrow and so adroitly concealed that no one would ever have suspected its existence.

"Here you are!" exclaimed Old King Brady, and, calling his partners to him, he showed them what he had discovered.

"I wonder who lived in this house before the fire?" questioned Harry.

"That ought not to be difficult to ascertain," was the reply.

"It is a little out of the line of Chinatown."

"A trifle beyond it, yes. Just the same, there were a good many Chinamen living in this section of the Barbary Coast, a bunch here and a bunch there. While the furniture in the rooms below does not exactly indicate Chinese tenants, you must still remember that in these days there are a good many Chinamen who like to Americanize themselves as much as possible. It may have been such a bunch who lived in those rooms."

"Probably we shall know more about it after we have investigated what lies below here," said Alice.

"Exactly," replied the old detective, "and that is what we shall proceed to do now."

Old King Brady accordingly got out his dark lantern and led the way down the secret stairs.

They extended down to a point a little below the cellar line and there ended up against a heavy wooden door, which was fastened.

Old King Brady examined the lock.

It was nothing out of the ordinary.

Producing skeleton keys, he opened it and they passed into a small room boarded up on four sides.

Here there was another door, which he soon succeeded in opening.

This revealed a boarded passage striking off towards the street.

They followed it for a distance which they calculated must take them across Dupont street, when their way was blockaded by a solid redwood partition of decidedly modern appearance.

This ended their tour of discovery in this direction.

Old King Brady went vigorously to work to search for secret springs, but could find nothing of the sort.

"This thing is held in place by bars on the other side," said the old detective. "We shall do no business here."

"Probably it is left open when they have occasion to use the secret passage," suggested Alice.

"It may be," replied Old King Brady. "Now I have a theory and it is based on fact."

"What is it?" demanded Harry.

"I was talking with the chief of police this morning about these Chinese murders," continued the old detective. "It appears that the body of Charlie Fang is the only one of the series which has been discovered in a house."

"Is that so?"

"Yes; one was found lying on the sidewalk on Dupont street, but all the others have been discovered in cellars among the ruins, where they had evidently been placed during the night."

"I see your drift. Your theory is that the victims were all killed in the room where Charlie Fang was found."

"There, or behind this secret door, and carried to the places where they were discovered."

"Perhaps behind this door lies the secret lodgerooms of the Cue-Hunters."

"It would not in the least surprise me. But this mystery has to be solved. I am determined to win out on this case. Let us return."

They went back on Dupont street by way of the garret. Opposite was a cellar filled with halfburned rubbish.

"You stay here," said the old detective. "To have two Chinamen investigating in that cellar would surely attract a crowd. I'll tackle it alone. I shan't be long gone."

"We better keep on the move," said Harry. "We will walk slowly around the block until you are ready to join us."

"Do so," replied Old King Brady, and they parted.

"This case is getting ahead of the other," remarked Alice as they walked along.

"So it would seem," replied Harry. "I must confess I am deeply interested in it. These mysterious Chinese society murders always attract me. They are about the most difficult class of cases we ever have come our way."

"It is sure to be solved once Old King Brady puts his hand to it," laughed Alice. "The Cue-Hunters haven't a ghost of a show."

They talked and laughed about Old King Brady taking up their impromptu Chinese case, which at first he had utterly rejected.

They were walking along Stockton street then, and suddenly Alice laid a hand on Harry's arm.

"See!" she breathed. "The Chinese dwarf!"

There was little Ging Yok crossing Stockton street on Broadway.

"Let's trail him," said Harry.

They hurried to Broadway street, reaching it in time to see the dwarf turn down Dupont; indeed they could see his big head moving between the ruins here and there as they advanced.

They hurried on, watching across the choked-up cellars.

"By Jove, he has stopped right where the Governor is!" breathed Harry.

The dwarf bolted by the ruined house for a moment and then crossed to the cellar opposite where Old King Brady was supposed to be.

Here for a minute he stood motionless, looking up and down.

There were comparatively few people on the block.

Building had not yet begun; the Chinese were keeping close to their refugee camp, the lawless denizens of the Barbary Coast had been scattered far and wide.

Watching his chance when not particularly observed, the dwarf seemed to get it.

Suddenly he ran down a flight of steps into the cellar and disappeared.

"He'll be up against the Governor in a second," muttered Harry.

"Looks so," replied Alice. "Can we do anything?"

"I don't see what we can do, dressed as we are."

"I suppose Old King Brady can take care of himself."

"Against that bow-legged outfit! Every time, you bet. We can only wait."

They got on the move, but kept the place in sight.

Fifteen minutes passed and still there was nothing doing.

At the end of that time Harry and Alice, who were strolling past the cellar, again saw the Chinese dwarf suddenly emerge from the ruined house.

He glanced suspiciously at them and shuffled away.

"He has been through the secret passage!" exclaimed Harry. "This is great!"

"He'll soon begin to know us, I am afraid," remarked Alice.

"Can't be helped. By Jove, I wish the Governor would come!"

But Old King Brady was actively engaged just about then.

The old detective first took a general survey of the ruins.

The cellar appeared to be choked up everywhere save at the point where the steps went down from Dupont street.

At the foot of the steps there was an arched opening, which the old detective followed back to the end of the lot.

He saw at once that someone had been at work here.

The rubbish which had fallen into the opening had carefully been banked up on either side.

There was not so much of it, as the arch had only been broken in a few places; thus Old King Brady was able to make his way to the end.

Here he found himself up against a brick foundation wall.

It appeared to be solid and the prospect was not encouraging.

The old detective peered about in his usual fashion, but without very much hope of accomplishing anything, when suddenly he spied a trapdoor in the wooden floor.

This part of San Francisco is all built on shifting sand.

Old King Brady knew that if there was an opening below this cellar level that it must have been constructed for some definite purpose.

He caught hold of the ring, which was set in the trapdoor, and easily pulled the thing up.

A short ladder was revealed.

Descending this, the old detective found himself standing in a corresponding passage boarded up on all sides.

Here he hesitated at first, uncertain whether to give it up and try again at night, or whether to push on in his investigations.

He decided upon the latter course, so returning and closing the trap, he got his electric flash lantern into commission and started to explore.

The passage ran straight back in the direction by which he had come.

Old King Brady knew that he was crossing Dupont street.

The passage kept straight on, coming to an end against a heavy wooden door.

"Some old secret meeting place here," he said to himself.

Nor was there anything surprising in this.

The secrets of this sort revealed by the fire in Chinatown were many, but the Barbary Coast was not without its share.

Old King Brady now proceeded to examine the door.

It appeared to be secured by an ordinary lock, and with his skeleton keys Old King Brady soon mastered it.

Behind the door was a large room which certainly had never originally been fitted up by Chinamen, although evidently used by them now.

It was filled with tables and chairs. On one side was a short bar with empty jugs, bottles and demijohns behind it.

A few Chinese mottoes hung against the wall, curiously intermingled with cheap colored prints of race horses, clipper ships and the like.

On one of the tables stood an ugly little wooden idol, with boxes of joss sticks before it, and this was about all.

Had the old detective penetrated into some improvised joss house?

He did not so read the situation.

It seemed to him that the place had originally been one of the many underground drinking joints of the Barbary Coast, in which all kinds of wickedness had been no doubt hatched.

That later it had been passed over to some Chinese secret society, which supported its own idol, the wooden god having particular supervision over its fortunes.

Knowing that he must be under the ruined house, Old King Brady felt himself entirely justified in believing that the heavy redwood partition on one side was the same which he and his partners had already discovered.

But there were no bars.

If he was right, then the partition was controlled by a secret spring.

Old King Brady went right to work to figure this problem out.

He was still at it when his sharp ears caught the sound of footsteps in the passage through which he had just passed.

Fortunately he had closed the door and locked it behind him.

Quick as a wink the old detective shut off his lantern and crouched behind the bar.

He was none too soon, for instantly the door opened and some heavy-footed person came shuffling in.

A match snapped.

Bringing his eyes up to a level with the top of the bar, Old King Brady peered over it.

What he saw was Ging Yok, the Chinese dwarf, in the act of lighting a grimy lamp which stood on the table before the wooden god.

CHAPTER VI.

OLD KING BRADY MAKES A REMARKABLE FIND IN THE CUB-HUNTERS' SECRET LODGE ROOM.

Thus it will be seen that while Harry and Alice were parading the streets Old King Brady was having an interesting time studying into the secrets of the Barbary Coast.

The old detective got back behind the bar in a hurry.

He worked his way noiselessly to the end and peered around the corner, for the dwarf was silent now.

The old detective saw that he had poured out a box of joss sticks on a table before the idol and was pushing them about with one finger.

Apparently the box did not contain the stick bearing the required answer to the question which he desired to put to the wooden god, for the dwarf soon restored all the sticks to this box and tackled the next one.

This seemed to be all right.

He lit an incense stick and began shaking up the joss sticks in the box.

Three times he threw the sticks out upon the table in front of the idol.

Whether the desired stick came out or not Old King Brady could not tell, of course, but he assumed that it did from the satisfied grunt given by the Chinaman.

Ging Yok then wrote something on a slip of red paper with a blue pencil.

Going over to the other side of the room, he unlocked the door of a little cupboard built in the angle of the wall.

Old King Brady could not see into the cupboard, but he saw the Chinaman put the paper inside.

After this he locked the cupboard and walked over to the redwood partition.

Old King Brady was now forced to crawl back out of sight.

But he was still able to get a look at what was going on, and he saw the dwarf kneel down on the floor.

This was the time he must have pressed the secret spring.

The partition moved slowly outward like a door.

The dwarf slipped through the opening and the partition swung to behind him, the spring closing with a snap.

Once more Old King Brady found himself alone and highly elated over his discoveries.

Here were his two cases dovetailing together.

Now he could work on either one without feeling that he was neglecting the other.

Hurrying to the cupboard, he soon had it open with his skeleton keys.

Inside was an abacus, or Chinese counting machine, and a Chinese book such as laundrymen use, partly filled with writing. Against the wall, between the two shelves, was a hook upon which were various pieces of red paper with blue Chinese letters upon them.

Old King Brady assumed that the outside slip was the one the dwarf had written.

He pocketed the bunch, and doubling up the book stowed it away in his pocket.

Then he got busy about the redwood partition and soon discovered the secret spring, which was plain enough here.

The partition swung open.

Old King Brady stopped to see if it could be opened from the other side, but failed to discover any way.

But as soon as he stepped on the floor boards beyond, the partition swung back into place and the spring clicked.

Old King Brady tried to open it, but failed.

As before, the partition was as firm as a rock.

He gave it up after one or two trials, and a few minutes later Harry and Alice, who were watching on Dupont street, saw the old detective come out of the ruined house, about ten minutes behind the dwarf.

They trailed after him, for by a secret sign he indicated that they must not recognize him then.

It was not until they were abreast the refugee camp that the old detective turned and joined them.

"Did you think I was never coming?" he asked.

"We began to get worried for fear the Chinese dwarf had done you up," said Harry.

"Ha! Then you saw the dwarf?"

"Oh, yes. He followed you into the ruins. Didn't you see him?"

"See him? I should say I did. Where did you first strike him?"

"He was coming down Broadway street."

"I found a secret room down there. It may not be the

lodge room of the Cue-Hunters, but it is a secret meeting place for some Chinese organization, that is certain."

"Was the dwarf in there?"

"He was, but he didn't see me."

Old King Brady proceeded to describe the room and the doings of the dwarf.

But he had another of his secretive fits on him, it would appear, for he never said a word about his find.

"We will go to Sandy McGown," he remarked. "I have some important business to discuss and the old pirate may as well be in it. Always best to give a man of his stamp your full confidence if you are going to use him at all."

They went down on Drumm street, but Sandy's door was locked and knocking brought no response.

"Perhaps he is in his room at Tony, the Greaser's," suggested Alice.

They went there, and sure enough found the ex-hop smuggler in bed.

He said he would get right up and dress, however, and, after giving the Bradys a brief wait in the passage, he admitted them.

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

But Sandy had no word. From his appearance it was quite evident that he had finished out the previous night with a drunk.

Old King Brady ignored this, however.

"We have picked up a few points on the dwarf," he said, and he proceeded to tell what had occurred.

"Oh, that's Billy Gans' old place," said the ex-opium smuggler. "I thought that had been closed up ages ago, but it would seem that the Chinks have got it, same as they have everything else."

"What about Billy Gans?" questioned Old King Brady.

Sandy McGown entered upon a long rambling narrative.

According to him, the underground barroom dated back twenty-five years.

He intimated that but for Alice's presence he could tell some lively stories about it.

As it was, he contented himself by saying that it had been a resort for crooks and that more than one opium smuggling scheme had been concocted there in which he himself was engaged.

About ten years before, he went on to say, the house which stood over the cellar passed into the hands of a Chinaman.

Of the secret passage leading through to the ruined house where the dead body of Charlie Fang was discovered he declared he had never heard.

"And now," said Old King Brady, "let me go on with my story, for I have not told all yet."

Harry gave Alice a knowing look.

He had been sure that something of this sort was coming.

Old King Brady produced his Chinese book and the bunch of slips.

"What's them?" demanded Sandy.

"Those I found in a cupboard in your Billy Gans' bar-room."

"So? They won't do us much good, then, I fancy, unless the lady can read what's written onto 'em."

"Try it, Alice," said the old detective. "What does this first slip say?"

Alice made short work of it.

"Of course if I translate literally you will hardly understand," she said; "but in plain English it reads

"Meeting of the Hair-Gatherers, or Cue-Hunters, at nine o'clock. Notify the members. Important business. The god is favorable. Don't fail."

"By thunder, that's great!" cried Sandy, admiringly. "I wish I could read Chinese like that. 'Twould have been worth a mint of money to me in the old days."

"And the others," said Old King Brady. "Briefly now. We haven't time to go into every detail."

"Just a minute," said Alice. "This slip is not signed Ging Yok."

"What, then?"

"The words mean Little Father."

"That would seem to fit the dwarf all right."

"Perhaps. It is hard to tell."

"Get busy with the others."

There were forty odd slips.

Alice examined them all without speaking.

"They appear to be all the same," she said at length. "Notices of meetings of the Cue-Hunters. That is all I can make out of them."

"Are they all signed Little Father?" demanded the old detective.

"No, they are signed by different names, but there are more Little Father signatures than any other kind."

"Probably any member has a right to call a meeting. Now tackle the book."

Alice got busy with the book then, and while she worked over it Sandy McGown and the Bradys talked of other things.

But the old detective had given Alice a secret sign of caution which warned her not to disclose the contents of the book unless she thought best.

Meanwhile Harry was watching his fair partner closely.

He soon became convinced that she was discovering things which she did not propose to talk out before Sandy McGown.

"I can't make much out of this, Mr. Brady," said Alice at last.

"In a general way what is it?"

"A record book of the meetings of the Cue-Hunters."

"Probably they have made it obscure purposely."

"It seems so to me."

"Well, we will get out. Now, Sandy, stick to your job and pick up all the points you can."

"Right," growled Sandy, "and, say, if you hit me any time when I'm a little bit lush, you may know that I got so working on the case."

Old King Brady laughed, and, slipping the old pirate a ten-spot, they withdrew.

"Well?" he demanded when they found themselves out on Clay street.

"Why, that book contains a full record of the Cue-Hunters' murders," said Alice. "There seems to have been a lot of Chinks killed by them. Before the fire they appear to have dropped the bodies in the bay. They hire out their services to anyone who will pay for them, I should say. The stamping of that character meaning traitor is just a blind."

"Does it really say that in the book?"

"Yes. In a sort of preamble which amounts to what you might call a constitution and by-laws."

"I see. Is Charlie Fang's murder mentioned?"

"No. But there is one which took place three weeks ago spoken of."

"Is there? Probably the recording secretary of the Cue-Hunters had not written his book up to date."

"It may be so."

"Does it give all the details of the murders?"

"Oh, no. The entries run something after this fashion: The guild, or society, met on such a date. By vote decided that Lee Fung, or whatever name you like, must die; as they write it, the reading is must receive on his forehead the stamp of the Hair-Gatherers and forfeit his cue."

"I see."

"Then follows a few characters which appear to have been entered later. They run like this:

"On such and such a date Lee Fung forfeited his cue, which was bestowed upon the Little Father, and received the stamp of the society on his forehead. May his spirit be received into paradise and not be permitted to return to annoy the brothers."

"Wise provision. Anything else of interest, Alice?"

"Only one point which I saw."

"Which is what?"

"In the beginning of the book is written:

"Brothers of sub-societies visiting San Francisco should apply for admission to meetings to the visiting committee, and the names are given. These appear to have been changed from time to time. There is also a list of sub-societies and the passwords belonging to them."

"Most important and interesting. How many sub-societies are there?"

"Six—Seattle, Sacramento, Portland, Oregon, Los Angeles and New York."

"Oh! They have one in New York, have they?"

"So it would seem."

"What is the password for New York?"

"Wee soo yong."

"What does it mean?"

"Oh, they are just arbitrary words, Mr. Brady. I cannot explain their meaning so that you or Harry could understand."

They walked on in silence.

"Any allusion to the present opium smuggling expedition?" demanded the old detective suddenly.

"Not to the present one, but to several in the past."

By this time they had reached Montgomery street, and here the old detective suddenly paused.

"You two better get to the costumer's and change your clothes," he said.

"Look here, Mr. Brady," exclaimed Alice, "I know what you are thinking of."

"Well?"

"You want me to attend that meeting to-night."

"No, no, Alice! It would be too dangerous. I only wish——"

"Well?"

"That I could do it. But that is impossible."

"Impossible for you, but not so for me. I don't believe the risk would be so great."

"You don't go alone," said Harry, realizing that Alice intended to have her way."

"Well, I shall not insist on that. If you choose to go with me——"

"Seriously, Alice, what do you think of the scheme?" demanded the old detective, evidently greatly taken with the idea.

"I am willing to try it, Mr. Brady."

"I am afraid the danger is too great."

"Harry and I might call on the visiting committee. The names are here in the book."

"Well?"

"There would not be much risk in that. We could report before we tackled the meeting."

"Suppose you try that. Are there names and addresses given since the fire?"

"One name. Before that there appears to have always been two on the committee."

"And the name?"

"Is Ping Quee."

"Where does he hold out?"

"Roseland avenue, near Jackson street."

"Why, that is in the unburned quarter."

"Is it? Probably he keeps a laundry there."

"He may live with some friend who does."

"Well, try it, Alice. Go now, both of you, and see what comes out of my remarkable find."

CHAPTER VII.

HARRY AND ALICE UNDERTAKE A MOST DANGEROUS MISSION.

Harry and Alice went to the refugee camp and enjoyed an excellent Chinese dinner before starting on their peculiar mission. The place they selected was an improvised restaurant. But the service and cooking were as good as anything in that line which they might have struck in a Dupont street restaurant in the olden days.

Here, as always when he and Alice go out on Chinese detective work, Harry pretended to be deaf and dumb.

Thus the meal passed in silence as far as they were concerned, but Alice kept her ears open for everything which

was passing around them. No points were picked up, however. Alice was in hopes that some allusion would be made to the murder of Charlie Fang. But the Chinese are very loathe to talk of such matters in public.

A death by a Highbinder's bullet is by them regarded as the hand of fate. To discuss it openly they feel may bring a similar fate upon themselves.

"Well, did you learn anything?" demanded Harry when they found themselves on the street at last.

"Not a thing," replied Alice.

"We shall have to wait."

"Evidently."

"Let us settle on our names."

"Very good. What shall they be?"

"Oh, the selection must be with you, Alice."

"Well, let me see. I am Hing Foy."

"All right, Hing Foy."

"You are Fen Quok."

"That's a beaut. Dumb since birth, I suppose?"

"Exactly, and look out if any loud noise is suddenly sprung upon you that you don't give yourself away."

"I'll be on my guard."

And it proved very necessary that both should be on their guard.

Of course the whole thing was likely to prove a failure.

If Mr. Ping Quee should undertake to question them about the New York brethren of the Hair-Gatherers' guild it was almost certain to be so. But this did not happen, and the surprise came to them in another form. The number on Roseland avenue proved to be attached to an ordinary laundry. Harry and Alice peered through the window, only to see two Chinks in baggy trousers ironing away industriously.

"In we go," said the latter. "Look sharp now."

Harry assumed his most stupid facial expression and they entered the laundry. Alice began her Chinese talk.

She inquired for Ping Quee. The answer was that he had been stopping there since the fire and was in the back room then, but the Chink added that he had been hitting the pipe and he did not know whether he would be able to talk or not.

"Can we go in and see?" asked Alice.

The laundryman nodded, and they passed into the back room to see lying half-undressed in the bunk no less a person than the Chinese dwarf. Alice gave Harry a warning look. But this was scarcely necessary, for the man appeared to be sound asleep. Alice went outside and asked the laundryman if they had better wake him up or wait. The laundryman thought that waiting would be the best.

"We will come again in an hour," said Alice, and they passed out of the shop.

"That's great!" growled Harry. "What are we going to do now?"

"Push ahead," replied Alice emphatically. "We seem unable to get away from that man, try as we will. I want to see this thing through."

"Very good. Just as you say."

"Don't you think yourself it is best?"

"It looks to be a pretty dangerous game to me."

"It is certainly that; but since when have I balked at danger, Harry?"

"Never! If anything, you are too rash."

"We will tackle the dwarf," said Alice emphatically, and that settled it and Young King Brady said no more.

They strolled about for an hour and then turned up at the laundry again. Ping Quee was awake, so the laundryman informed them, and they passed into the back room.

The dwarf was still lying in the bunk and looked pretty stupid. All that Harry could make out of what followed was that Alice used the password, "Wee soo yong."

The dwarf mumbled his words, but seemed to be civil enough. The conversation was a very brief one. At last the dwarf extended his hand to Harry and then shook hands with Alice, and they left him. They did not speak, however, until they were several blocks away.

"What success?" demanded Young King Brady then.

"The very best," replied Alice. "He never tumbled. I consider it all right."

"Do we get into the meeting?"

"He said we could. He was very civil clear through."

"Did he ask you any questions about the New York brethren?"

"Oh, a few. I pretended to know them. He did not press matters. He said it would be all right."

"He had a pretty good load of hop on, Alice."

"Oh, I know. To-night it may be different when he is clear-headed; but the password worked all right, and I am game to see the scheme worked out to a finish."

So they reported to Old King Brady, who met them by appointment on Portsmouth Square.

He listened to Alice's story and then said:

"Well, I don't wish to urge you in the matter one way or the other. You must do just as you think best."

"Oh, I am for seeing it through," said Alice.

"Go ahead then, and may good luck attend you. More than once you have come successfully through undertakings just as dangerous."

"More so," replied Alice. "I'm not the least bit afraid."

The arrangement with the Chinese dwarf had been to meet him at the refugee camp. He had given Alice the number of one of the shacks and told her that he would be there at half-past eight o'clock. And sure enough he came.

He looked to be wide-awake enough on this occasion.

Harry, of course, could only listen to the talk which followed. It was rather more lengthy than he liked.

But at last the dwarf made a start. Alice waited a few seconds and then fell in behind him, Harry keeping close to her side.

"Is it all right?" he whispered.

"Yes, I judge so," replied Alice, looking straight ahead.

"Any objections raised?"

"None to me."

"But to me, yes?"

"He said that he could not understand how they ever came to take a deaf and dumb man into the order."

"I was afraid of that. How did you get out of it?"

"Oh, I told him you were my cousin, and that you were a great fighter. I led him to believe that you had a lot to do with opium smuggling. He seemed to like that, and said that he might find use for you, and if so it would mean a good bit of money in your pocket and in mine, too, if I wanted to come along."

"Hello! This looks as if we were to be taken into the opium deal."

"It seemed so to me, but I did not press the matter."

"How do we get in?"

"By the ruined house. A man is to be sent out to pilot us in. He goes the other way. We are not to follow him. But we better not talk any more, Harry. For all we can tell, someone may be observing us from behind."

"And that's no dream. Well, I'll bottle up now."

"You can't be too careful. Don't forget that."

They turned up Dupont street, following in the wake of the Chinese dwarf. As the old Chink came opposite the ruined house he threw out his left hand and pointed.

Alice at once crossed the street, and with Harry passed into the house and hurried upstairs. Whether the dwarf went into the cellar of the ruins opposite or not they did not see. Gaining the room where the remains of Charlie Fang had been found, they waited for a long time. It was nervous work.

"When they find that the book and the slips are gone they may suspect that detectives are on their track," breathed Harry at last.

"I am thinking of that very thing," returned Alice in the lowest of whispers.

"I don't suppose it is very safe to talk here, but I just can't keep bottled up any longer."

"Don't blame you. I am just as nervous as I can be."

"Let's cut and run."

"Now, Harry, that won't do. You wouldn't do it if you were alone, would you now?"

"Oh, I don't know."

"You do know very well that you wouldn't. It is entirely on my account you want to do it now."

And this Young King Brady could not very well deny.

"I hate to see you expose yourself to such fearful risks, Alice," he said.

"The risk is no greater for me than for you. Less, in fact. I've held my own before, and I can do it again."

"Hark!"

"I don't hear a thing."

"It seemed to me that I heard something moving about up in the garret."

"Then hush, for heaven sake!"

But the alarm proved false. After a little Harry broke out again:

"One can't help remembering that it was here the dead man was found," he said. "What if they should take it into their heads to go gunning for our cues!"

"Perish the thought! They would find them so false that it would be our finish."

"Come, Alice, let us go. This is really too dangerous."

"Harry, I just won't. So don't you suggest it again."

There was another long silence. This time it was broken by a genuine stir in the garret. Stealthy footsteps could be heard moving about, boards creaked, and in a minute in the dim light they saw a yellow face peering down at them through one of the holes in the plastering.

Instinctively Alice clutched Young King Brady's arm.

Harry made a move towards the door.

But instantly the face was withdrawn and Alice pulled back and laid her finger on Harry's lips. It was well that they did not go out into the hall. Just then there was a stir there and two Chinamen wearing white cloth masks appeared in the opening. Each carried a cocked revolver, and as quick as a flash the detectives found themselves covered. They were now up against it and their lives might depend upon their absolute self-possession.

One of the masks said something in Chinese.

Alice's reply was:

"Wee soo yong."

Further talk followed. Alice was as cool as an icicle.

Harry could not help admiring the way she handled herself. At last the revolvers were lowered and the men started away. Alice followed. It was Hobson's choice now for Harry—a case of must. One of the Chinks climbed the ladder leading into the garret. Alice followed, then Harry, and last the other Chink. The trapdoor was open and they descended the secret stairs, following the underground passage and bringing up finally at the red-wood door partition. This was closed. The Chinks halted.

One knocked nine times on the partition. There was, however, no response. After waiting a little the Chinaman began to talk with Alice. Harry would have given a lot to know what they were saying, but this was not to be.

He might have supposed that they were all barred out if he had not known the deliberation with which Chinamen do everything which they undertake. Evidently those within the lodge room were not ready to open the door, so there was nothing to do but to wait. At last the end came. Suddenly a rapping was heard on the inside of the secret door. Six loud, distinct knocks were tolled off.

The Chink who had knocked before now rapped three times in return. Then the red partition swung slowly back and Harry and Alice found themselves looking into the lighted room.

CHAPTER VIII.

OLD KING BRADY MAKES A BAD BREAK.

It was only with the greatest reluctance that Old King Brady consented to his two partners going on their dangerous mission. But the chance seemed such an admirable one to get next to the secrets of the Cue-Hunters that the old detective persuaded himself to yield.

That night as he sat in his room at the Palace Hotel he half regretted the course he had taken. As time went on

he grew more and more nervous. At last he went out on the street, feeling that he would be easier while on the move. Starting down Montgomery street, he had not gone further than the corner of Bush street when he ran into Sandy McGown. The old pirate had evidently put away a quart or so of whisky, but with him that was nothing at all, and he was perfect master of himself.

"Mr. Brady, I'm right glad I struck you," he said. "I was just coming to the Palace to try to get a chance to speak to you. Which way are you bound?"

"Nowhere in particular, Sandy. I was just walking about. What's the word?"

"I think I can get next to whoever is backing the dwarf over to Yerba Buena."

"Good enough!"

"It will cost something, though."

"Never mind the cost. Out with the yarn."

"Well, it's like this: Them Chinks kept running in and out of Tony the Greaser's place all day. I sat in the corner taking it all in and pretending to be full. At last the little one came in and got to talking to Tony in English."

"Ha! Tony is in the deal, too?"

"He sure is. It seems that the feller what's been letting the Chink boats, Murphy, down on East street, has took sick and they have carried him to a hospital. Meantime the sheriff jumped in and swiped all his boats—I suppose there was a judgment or something standing against him."

"I see."

"Well, what the Chink wanted was to have Tony find someone who would let him have a boat whenever he wanted it just for a few days, he said. Tony didn't know anybody and he asked me if I did. I didn't, but I told him I did, and that I'd look the fellow up and see what could be done about it. You see, they talked freely to me, knowing that I had been in the hop line myself."

"Yes, yes. Well, what did you do?"

"Well, I've seen Billy Henty, a feller I know, what lets out boats at the foot of Bush street. I told him that I wanted to get next to this Chink outfit and that there would be a reward coming if he would help and that he was to rent his boat to Ging Yok, but only with the understanding that his man was to go along and take care of it, and that I would furnish the man—see?"

"Meaning me?"

"Yes."

"You gave him to understand that you were working with detectives against the dwarf?"

"Yes, I just had to."

"Did you name the Bradys?"

"Nope."

"Well, Sandy, I am perfectly satisfied. You have done fine."

"Will you go, Mr. Brady?"

"Certainly. When?"

"Right now. I want you to understand that I didn't do

this without some trouble. I had to tank Billy Henty up pretty good before he would listen to any such proposition."

"But won't he be apt to give us away if he is full, Sandy?"

"Don't you fret. He never will. Once he has given his word, Billy is as true as steel. I'd go myself and pull the boat, but of course that would never do. I am altogether too well known to the trade."

"Right. But about this confederate on Yerba Buena, Sandy?"

"Oh, yes. Well, what I got by listening is that what they are going over for to-night is to complete the arrangements with this man, whoever he is."

"I see. What time do they start?"

"They don't know themselves. They expect to get word from the island."

"It may be an all-night job."

"That's what they expect it to be, I believe."

They pushed on to the foot of Bush street.

Here in a little shanty stuck in a corner between piers they found Billy Henty's den. It was a mere booth, where crullers and coffee were sold along with candy and soft drinks. But the back opened on a ladder which led down to the slip, and here Billy had a few boats. They found Mr. Henty decidedly drunk in his legs, but clear enough in his head. He agreed to all Old King Brady asked and the old detective right before the two men made one of his lightning changes, much to their amazement, transforming himself into the very respectable longshoreman, thanks to the wonderful resources of the old blue coat.

Sandy was then sent back to the Greaser's to keep an eye out. Henty crawled into a bunk and went to sleep, leaving Old King Brady on the watch. It was a long wait.

At midnight Sandy McGown looked in with the report that nothing had been seen or heard of the Chinese dwarf at Tony the Greaser's.

Old King Brady told him to give it up and go to bed.

At one o'clock Billy Henty woke up, perfectly sober.

"Nothing doing yet?" he asked.

"There hasn't a soul been here but McGown," was the reply, "and he had nothing to report."

Henty offered to go on the watch and Old King Brady decided to let him and seize the opportunity to snatch a little sleep. He was awakened at half-past three by Henty shaking him.

"Well, what's up?" he whispered, master of himself on the moment, as he always is when thus aroused.

"They have come."

"Yes? I'll get right up. Where are they?"

"Outside. I wouldn't let them come in."

"Oh, good. Well?"

"It's the dwarf and another Chink."

"All right. Jolly them for a minute. I'll be right with you."

Old King Brady pulled himself together and went out.

The dwarf was standing with his companion smoking a cigar. He merely glanced at the old detective.

"This is the man who will pull you out on the bay," said Henty.

"Alle light," replied the dwarf. "You tellee him me pay good."

"Yes."

"You tellee him he go dead so he talkee 'bout dhis tlip?"

"Yes, he understands, John," replied Henty. "You need not be afraid of him."

He led the way to the ladder and Old King Brady was soon pulling out on the bay with his singular fare. Not a word was uttered. As yet Old King Brady did not know where he was going, as the dwarf had informed him that he would tell him that when they got out on the bay.

Instinctively the old detective headed for Yerba Buena.

"Now I wish I knew what you know about Harry and Alice," thought Old King Brady as he sat watching the dwarf.

But this, unfortunately, was information not to be his.

At last the dwarf spoke. Waving his hand towards the island, he said:

"You go dere."

"Yerba Buena?"

"Yair, Lerber Blena."

"Where do we land?"

"Never mind. Go island. When you gettee dlere me tellee you."

They landed in the same place where the dwarf had gone the night before. Not a word did either Ging Yok or his companion utter except when the dwarf designated the landing place. They now went ashore, telling Old King Brady to remain in the boat.

In the distance in the direction which they walked was a ruinous little building. The Chinamen passed around this and disappeared. Old King Brady had no notion of patiently waiting for their return. This was his chance and he was resolved to take it. Removing his coat and hat, he managed to fasten them on one of the oars and to so tie the oar to the seat that in the distance and the dim light it would look as if a man was still sitting in the boat.

This done, the old detective made for the little building in a crouching position, almost on all fours in fact. He covered the ground with a speed hardly to be expected of one of his years. As he drew near the hut he caught the murmur of voices. They were talking in Chinese.

Old King Brady got up against the building and peered through a crack. It was just the dwarf and his companion.

They were sitting on a bench outside, apparently waiting for someone.

"Confound the luck," muttered the old detective. "It will be daylight soon. If they don't get through with their business pretty speedily my case is settled, for I shall have to light out."

Ten minutes passed, and then the dwarf, who was doing most of the talking, suddenly stopped and got on his feet. The other man followed his example.

Footsteps were soon heard in the distance—and in a minute a white man wearing a military coat and an officer's fatigue cap came into view. Old King Brady was willing to believe that he was the same man he had seen the night before.

"Helló, Yok!" he exclaimed. "Well, here we are again, it appears."

"Yair, clapping," was the reply. "We comee one time more. What now?"

"Well, I got my wireless despatch."

"Yair. Good!"

"Day after to-morrow the Mikado ought to be near enough to the Golden Gate for our purpose."

"Yair. Good!"

"You can get your schooner around here any time. I have fixed it so she won't be disturbed."

"Yair. Good!"

"You best start to-morrow night. Does your captain think he can find the steamer?"

"Yair. He tink dat. So he fail, dlen we folly stleamer out when she sail and gettee hop dlen."

"Let us hope he may succeed. The other plan I am afraid of. Are you going, too?"

"Yair. Me go."

"That's all right. But now, Ging Yok, I want to tell you something which you won't like very well. There is more danger in this deal than you think."

"Hello, clapping, whattee you mean by dlat?"

"I mean that the Secret Service men are after you. I got the straight tip from Washington. They are here in San Francisco now."

Old King Brady was disgusted. But this was not the first time that the movements of the detectives had been tipped off from Secret Service headquarters. That an army or naval officer was in this crooked deal made the fact all the more interesting.

"Somebody shall suffer for this," thought Old King Brady.

Meanwhile the conversation was going right on.

"You tellee me dlat?" said the dwarf. "Well, dlat one blad job."

"It is as I tell you. Ever hear of the Bradys?"

"Yair. I sabe all Bladys. Big detlectives."

"They are the ones. They bear a great reputation, Yok. If it was not for the unusual size and value of this shipment of opium, and the big money myself and friends have invested, I'd be hanged if I wouldn't call the deal off."

"Too muchee late now, clapping."

"Of course it's too late. No; it can't be done, but we must look sharp. Meanwhile I've done the best I could."

"What you do, clapping?"

"Oh, I've hired a couple of fellows to look out for the detectives. If they catch 'em foul it will be all day with them."

"You killee dlem?" demanded the dwarf, bluntly.

"Well," replied the captain, "you Chinks like to call a

spade a spade. I'll put it a little different and say that I shall probably take steps to see that they are mercifully removed."

"Me no lunderstand."

"Let it go your way, then, Yok."

"Belly good. You killee dlem, dlat will be best."

Old King Brady had heard enough. He felt that further details of the opium plot could scarcely help him.

Clearly the stuff was to be thrown into the sea far from the Golden Gate and the bags were to be recovered by the schooner's people.

As to finding out who the confederates of the smugglers on board the Mikado were, Old King Brady scarcely expected to do that. He determined to retreat and started for the boat. But this was the time the old detective's luck deserted him. Stepping on a round stone, he managed to turn his ankle and to give it a fearful wrench. It was a sprain of the worst kind. Summoning all his resolution, Old King Brady tried in spite of the pain to regain the boat. It was impossible. In terrible agony he walked a few steps and then sank down in a faint. When he came to himself, to his horror, he found Ging Yok standing over him covering him with a huge revolver.

"Hey, you!" demanded the dwarf. "What you do away from boat? You spy?"

"I have sprained my ankle. I am almost dead!" groaned the detective.

"You be full dead one time, mebbe. You spy."

"No, no."

"Dlen why you go away and leave bloat!"

In too great pain to be diplomatic, Old King Brady only groaned. Now hurrying footsteps were heard approaching. In a moment the other Chink, accompanied by the officer, came up.

"Who ddis man?" demanded the dwarf. "Mebbe him flaud. Mebbe him Old King Blady one time—yair."

The officer put on a pair of eyeglasses and looked the old detective over.

"You are right!" he exclaimed. "Sure, he is Old King Brady. Well, here's luck!"

CHAPTER IX.

YOUNG KING BRADY FINDS HIMSELF BETWEEN TWO FIRES.

It would have been some comfort to Old King Brady in his trouble if he could have known what Harry and Alice had accomplished in connection with the Cue-Hunters of the Barbary Coast.

But even that was to be denied him.

The old detective had fallen into hard lines.

But the truth was, even if Ging Yok had told all that he knew on that subject, it would not have helped Old King Brady much. The visit to the lodge room under the ruins was in a certain sense a fiasco, for it brought little information to the detectives.

What Harry and Alice saw was what Old King Brady had seen. The only difference was that in the underground lodge room there were ten Chinks gathered, with-

out counting their two conductors. Among them was Ging Yok, the Chinese dwarf. What they heard can be briefly described in four words—talk, talk, more talk!

There were no strange and occult ceremonies of any sort. For an hour and over the talk continued. Alice joined in with the others. Poor Harry had all he could do to keep from going to sleep, for the room was frightfully hot and close and several of the brothers were smoking fearfully strong tobacco in cheap bamboo opium pipes.

No one paid the least attention to Harry, although all regarded him curiously when he first came in. Still it was a matter of congratulation that they did not appear to be suspected in any way. Nobody seemed to be angry, nobody appeared particularly excited. It was just talk, talk, more talk! At last the meeting broke up and they all left the place via the underground passage through the ruins, going one at a time. The dwarf went first. One of the brothers took Harry and Alice through the passage next.

The Chinaman went out alone first, and at last Alice found opportunity to speak.

"Harry," she whispered, "we are to stay here until I can count a hundred and then I go out; when you have counted the same follow. I have to go with the dwarf. You get out of the way as quick as you can."

"But you must not," objected Harry. "Alice, this won't do!"

"It has to do. Don't attempt to interfere. I am on the verge of important discoveries. He does not suspect me. Now don't you interfere and spoil it all."

Young King Brady was wild. But he knew Alice's determined character too well to attempt to argue.

"Where are you going?" he breathed.

"I stop at that laundry to-night."

"Alice, it must not be."

"Harry, it has to be, so say no more about it."

"Have they discovered the loss of their record book?"

"Yes, but now I am going out."

"Insist upon taking me with you, Alice."

"No. They won't have you, and that is all there is to it."

"Try!"

"No fuss now. I am determined to win out in this case, and I shall do it, too."

She left him then, and none too soon, for another Chinaman came up behind them in a second.

Harry smiled at him. The man made certain signs. Perhaps this was Chinese deaf and dumb talk, but all Harry could do was to shake his head. He did not count. In fact, he was too deeply worried even to remember that he had been told to do so for the moment. When the recollection came to him he passed out, and ascending the cellar steps, came up on Dupont street. Across the street, standing in the doorway of the ruined house, were Alice and the Chinese dwarf. The former made one of the secret signs to him. It meant, "Go down the block and come back on the other side and join us."

This Young King Brady did, and then all three went around on Broadway street, where they halted.

Alice then began to talk in English with her fingers, the dwarf looking admiringly on. This was Harry's chance to get posted. Both he and Alice are most expert in the use of the deaf and dumb finger talk.

"I have told him that you came from North China," said Alice, "and that we talk in signs only known to ourselves."

"That's well enough," replied Harry, "but I won't have you going away with this man alone."

"You can't stop it, for I have made up my mind to go."

"But your reason?"

"I am going with the opium smuggler on a schooner."

"Oh, Alice!"

"Now don't you get nervous. I can take care of myself all right."

"I don't like it."

"You can't help it."

"Try to persuade him to take me along."

"I have tried. He won't have you. It is no use."

"Shall I see you before you start?"

"If possible, yes, but I can't promise. You can hang around here; if I can get a chance to join you in the morning I certainly shall do it. Now I am going, and you go back to the hotel."

They parted company then, and Young King Brady went to the costumer's, who had agreed to admit him at whatever time of night he might call.

Having made his change, he returned to the Palace Hotel, a very much disgusted young man. To add to his disgust Old King Brady was missing and had left no word as to where he had gone or when he expected to return.

The night passed and he did not return. Harry was in despair. During the morning he hung about the ruined house, sticking closer to it than was really safe. But he saw nothing of Alice, much to his disgust.

"She will overdo this Chinese business some of these days," he said to himself again and again.

His only hope was that Alice had not done it in this instance. At noon he gave it up and went back to the hotel. And now he found real cause for alarm.

Old King Brady's room key still remained uncalled for.

The old detective had now been gone for many hours.

That something serious had happened to him Harry could not doubt. Thus he found himself between two fires.

In his dilemma he went down to Tony the Greaser's, in his Chinese disguise, and knocked on Sandy McGown's door. Late as was the hour—it was now two o'clock—he found the old pirate in bed, as he usually was in the daytime. It took a lot of knocking to obtain admission, but at last Harry got in.

"What's the matter? What brings you here alone?" demanded Sandy, adding:

"I didn't get to bed till nearly two o'clock. I was trying to get a little sleep."

"Sorry to have disturbed you, Mr. McGown," replied Harry, "but what about Old King Brady?"

"What do you mean?"

"Why, he has not been seen since last evening."

"What!" cried Sandy. "Do you mean to say he didn't come home this morning?"

"No."

"Then there must be something wrong."

"There is, of course. What do you know?"

Sandy told of the doings of the night.

"The Governor has managed to get himself into trouble, surest thing," said Harry. "We must see this man Henty at once."

"I'll dress and go with you," replied Sandy. "If Billy Henty is at the bottom of this business I'll make him suffer for it, that's all."

But when they got to Henty's they found themselves no better off. The coffee and cruller man was wild with indignation. His boat had not been brought back. He was sure the Chinks had "swiped" it. He appeared to be quite indifferent as to Old King Brady's fate. Harry at once took the initiative. Matters had become too serious to allow his fears to interfere with business now.

"We want to find out what has become of that boat," he said. "What's the thing worth?"

Henty put a price on his boat. Harry promptly paid it.

"That secures you against loss, and you can return the money to me in case you get back the boat," he said. "Now you two just get busy and see what you can do about finding it. The boat must be somewhere along the water front."

And this was as far as he could get. Henty had gone directly to bed after Old King Brady rowed away with the Chinese dwarf and his companion, it appeared. He declared that he had no idea in which direction they went.

"This is a bad job," said McGown, after they got away from the place. "What do you think I better do?"

Harry gave up another ten-dollar bill.

"Hang around the Greaser's and see what you can pick up," he replied, "but whatever you do don't get too full to understand what's going on. Look also for the boat."

"You trust me for that," growled the old pirate. "So long as there is any business to be done I never get full."

They parted on Drumm street and Harry went back to the ruined house. Here he hung around for an hour and was giving it up as a bad job, when, while standing on the corner of Dupont and Broadway street, he saw Alice coming down the hill, still in her Chinese disguise.

"At last," growled Harry to himself.

As she drew nearer he saw that her face wore an anxious look. He waited for her to come up and they turned into Dupont street. Here Alice began to talk with her fingers.

She had previously signed to Harry not to speak.

"Trouble, Harry?" was what she said.

"Well, I should say so!" replied Young King Brady. "As near as I can figure it out, the Governor has been captured by the Cue-Hunters."

"That's right."

"Do you know anything about it?"

"Only the fact. I wish I knew the details, but I don't."

"Tell me what you know."

"Why, the dwarf came to me this morning and told me that he had captured the notorious detective, Old King Brady; that he had him a prisoner on an island in the bay; that he had sprained his ankle and could not move, and that the intention was to kill him."

"Serious enough! Did he say what island?"

"No, he didn't, but of course it is Yerba Buena."

"Probably. Did he tell you how it happened?"

"No; as I told you, he gave no details."

"It is dreadful. What about yourself. We can do nothing for the minute, so tell me all that happened to you last night."

"There is very little to tell, Harry. I went to the laundry and was given a room to myself upstairs. There I slept until nine o'clock this morning. I then got up and dressed and went down into the laundry. The dwarf was there. He took me outside, and while we were walking about he told me what I have just told you."

"And why did you go with him, Alice?"

"They are going out in a schooner to-night to meet the Mikado and get the opium. He asked for volunteers while we were talking at the meeting last night. Only three were willing to go. He wanted five, so I consented to go."

"I don't like it."

"I can't help it whether you do or not. I am determined to see the adventure through. No discussion now. We have something more important to think about. What are you going to do about Mr. Brady? Decide quick. We may be watched. I have to get right back or I may spoil it all."

"Do you believe the dwarf told the truth?"

"I do. Still it may not be so."

"If he lied to you then he suspects you."

"I know that's so."

"Alice, it is too dangerous. Listen to me."

"No. Mr. Brady wants to learn who on the Mikado is in this deal, and that is what I propose to find out."

"I don't know what to do. I am sure Old King Brady would not want me to go for the police."

"Of course he would prefer to have you rescue him quietly if it can be done."

"I think I shall try it with the help of Sandy McGown."

"I am sure that will be the best."

"When do you start? What is the name of the schooner you are going on?"

"Don't know. We meet to-night at nine o'clock at Tony the Greaser's."

Young King Brady was in worse despair than ever now.

But he could say nothing to dissuade Alice from her dangerous course and they soon parted. Harry made a bee-line for the costumer's, and, shedding his Chinese disguise, assumed one which resembled the dress of a long-shoreman and struck out for Tony the Greaser's.

But for Old King Brady's predicament he would have moved heaven and earth to get a chance on the smuggler's craft. But just now Young King Brady found himself between two fires. What to do he did not know.

CHAPTER X.

YOUNG KING BRADY TURNS THE CASE OVER TO THE SECRET SERVICE COMMISSIONER.

Old King Brady was indeed in a sorry fix. Morning had just begun to dawn when the officer came up and recognized him. The old detective thought as he looked at the man that he had never seen so evil a face. Cruelty and dissipation were written upon every line of it. It was the face of a heartless fiend.

"I have less to expect from this fellow than even from the Chinese," he said to himself.

And he determined to be particularly careful what he said to the man.

"Ging Yok, you break away for a few minutes," said the officer. "I wish to talk to this old man alone."

The Chinese shuffled off, halting about a hundred yards away.

"I am right," said the officer then. "You are Old King Brady, the detective?"

"I am," was the calm reply.

"You are here on the business of trapping opium smugglers, I suppose?"

"I am."

"You see the trouble to which your meddling interference has brought you. Why didn't you have sense enough to keep away?"

"Do you ask me that question? I am in the employ of the United States Government just at present, same as you are. I don't allow my work to go by the board."

"So? Now look here, my friend, you have run your race. In coming up against me you have bumped into a bad man. Do you realize that?"

"Fully. You needn't wave your revolver, captain. It is sufficient that you have the drop on me. I am lying here helpless. I could not fight you, even if I was so disposed."

"And it is a good job for you that you are so; otherwise I should shoot you on the spot."

"And you an officer and a gentleman? Is it army or navy, captain?"

"It's none of your business which it is, nor anything else about me."

"Oh, very well. Please yourself."

"I intend to. Old man, listen to me."

"I am listening."

"You have brought your pitcher to the well once too often. The mere fact that you have seen my face and have identified me with these Chinese opium smugglers makes it necessary that I should put you out of business."

"And you propose to do it?"

"I do. There is absolutely no help for you."

"That is discouraging."

"You may as well face facts."

"I am facing you, captain."

"Oh, I am not going to be your executioner. Don't think it. I shall leave that to the Chinks. But enough of this. I was sure I recognized you. I only wanted to make certain that I was not making a mistake."

"It is no mistake. I am Old King Brady, the detective, but I want to say to you that I am not alone in this work. Whatever you do to me, or permit these Chinamen to do, is sure to become known. For one government officer to connive at the murder of another is pretty serious business. It will surely spell your finish. Now mark what I say!"

The captain bit his lip and backed away. He still seemed to be afraid that Old King Brady might fire on him, as, indeed, he readily might have done.

Thus the captain joined the Chinamen, and after a brief conversation all returned to the helpless detective.

The dwarf now did the revolver act and held Old King Brady covered, while the captain and the other Chink went through his clothes, taking away his revolvers, knives and most of his other belongings. The two Chinamen then picked him up, head and heels, and carried him along the shore without showing the least regard for his sprained ankle. The pain was agonizing. It was all the old detective could do to endure it and keep his mouth shut.

At last they came to an iron door built in the rocks.

Above was a sign which read: "Dynamite. Keep off!"

And here in a dark vault, hollowed out in the rocky side of Yerba Buena Island, with boxes of high explosives all around him, Old King Brady was shut in. Truly the life of a detective is not a bed of roses by any means.

As for Old King Brady, he found his bed a pretty hard one, for they laid him down on the rocky floor and locked the door upon him. They brought his coat and hat and gave them to him, and for this small favor he felt grateful, for the vault was decidedly damp.

"I shall not tie you up," said the captain just before he closed the door on the old detective. "The more you stir around the more danger you will be in. If you happen to explode the dynamite and blow yourself to pieces, why just so much trouble will have been saved."

And with this he retreated and locked the door of the vault. And such was Old King Brady's disagreeable and perilous situation. Here he remained for many hours, hearing nothing, seeing nothing. It was a situation calculated to drive one mad. Here he was when Harry entered Tony the Greaser's that afternoon and looked about for Sandy McGown. The old pirate was sitting at a table half asleep. Young King Brady went up to him and shook him.

"Say, who are you? What do you want? Lemme be," growled Sandy, who had already made a big hole in the ten-dollar bill.

"I want to see you outside," whispered Harry.

It is only due to Sandy to say that, having recognized Young King Brady's voice, he was on the job at once.

"All right," he growled, and staggered to his feet.

Harry thought then that he was so drunk that he was

not going to be able to do anything with him. But it did not prove so. Once they got on the street, and Sandy had time to pull himself together, he appeared to be as sober as usual.

"Say, I didn't know you first off," he growled. "Anything doing? Any news?"

"That's up to you. Did you find the boat?"

"Yep."

"Where is it?"

"Over by Brannan street, where they landed that time."

"So?"

"Yep."

"Pick up any points?"

"Yep."

"Well, let's have them."

"There's a schooner at the other end of the rope to which the boat is tied. Her name is the Leonard. I am dead certain that she means to sail before dark. I seen a Chink come off'n her. I believe she is Ging Yok's outfit, Brady. The old man may be aboard."

"I doubt it," replied Harry, and he told what Alice had said.

"Well, probably he is on Yerba Buena," cried Sandy.

"It looks so to me."

"Do you propose to go over there?"

"Well, I am thinking about it. Want to go along?"

"I can, of course, but I was waiting in Tony's for a feller who I expect can put me next to what's doing on the Leopard."

Just here Sandy's legs began to wobble a bit. Harry saw that it would not be much use to depend upon him.

"Well, go it your own way," he replied. "I'll go on to Henty's and get a boat. I'll pull over to the island alone."

Sandy seemed troubled. But he spoke out frankly.

"I hate to have you do it, Brady," he said. "It's a big risk, but the fact is I am too full to be of much use to you."

"I see you are. I wish you could manage to keep sober until we get done with this job. I'm in a whole lot of trouble, besides the capture of Old King Brady."

"You are, eh? Well, what now?"

Harry explained what Alice had done.

"Come, that is serious," said Sandy, who seemed to be straight enough in his head. The girl runs a terrible risk."

"It is too much altogether. Know what I'd like to have you do?"

"What"

"Ship aboard the Leopard and look out for her."

"I think I could do it. The fellow I'm waiting for is the mate. He's an old friend of mine."

Harry jumped at the chance.

"Do it, then," he said. "It will relieve my mind immensely, only do try to keep straight."

"I won't touch another drop till this is done, I promise you."

They parted soon after, Harry going on to Henty's.

On the way Harry thought fast, and before he reached

the boatman's place it came to him very clearly what he ought to do. He determined to put his conclusions into execution if possible, for it seemed the only way.

Henty had looked for the boat, he declared, but could not find it. Young King Brady seeing, although he received the price of a new boat for an old one, the man was not disposed to do anything, he did not press the matter, and telling him that he would want a boat in an hour he went away. He now hurried to the Brannan street docks and had a look at the Leopard. She was an old two-masted schooner which looked as if she had been due at the graveyard years before. The two men whom he saw moving about her decks were not prepossessing. There was no sign of cargo going aboard.

Harry ventured close to her and hailed one of the men.

"Any chance for a berth, mate?" he asked.

"Naw," replied the man. "Crew's all engaged."

"I'd work for me grub. Are you the mate?"

"Naw. He's gone ashore, so's the skipper. 'Twouldn't be no use."

"Going down the coast?"

"Naw. Just up the bay to Vallejo for a load of stone."

"When do you sail? I might come back again and see the mate."

"Dunno when we sail. 'Twouldn't be no use, I tell you. Crew is all engaged."

Harry pulled out. There was nothing here to bear out Sandy McGown's statement that he could see. But, then, he reflected, the old opium smuggler knew the water front and its ways far better than he did. At all events, it was necessary to tie to his opinion since he was not able to form one of his own. So Young King Brady hurried to Mr. Narraway's office. The commissioner was in and received him cordially.

"Sorry I was away when you called," he said. "How is Mr. Brady? Have you been able to do anything on the case?"

"I should say that we had worked it up almost to the closing point," replied Harry, "but right here we have struck a snag."

"Well?"

"I have every reason to believe that Old King Brady has fallen into the hands of the enemy. He has disappeared and I believe he is being held a prisoner."

"That's a bad job. Tell me what you know."

But this Harry had no intention of doing. Briefly he detailed their discoveries, but omitted to tell how they had been made and all mention of the Cue-Hunters. He did tell of the trip to Yerba Buena, however, and intimated that he believed Old King Brady to be held a prisoner there. Mr. Narraway looked grave.

"It would appear that some naval officer was in the deal," he said.

"That is what I believe. One thing is certain, the Chinese who are running this business intend meeting the Mikado on a schooner. I think I know the craft. If I am right she is now lying at the Brannan street docks and

will sail some time this afternoon. What I need is help. Can you send a tug to trail her with Secret Service men enough aboard to make the capture?"

"Certainly," replied Mr. Narraway. "You will go with them?"

"No; I am going over to Yerba Buena to look for Old King Brady. Your men will have to run the business themselves."

"It shall be done. What is the name of the schooner?"

"The Leopard."

"Very well. How many men do you think will be needed?"

"It will be better to have too many than too few. Could you raise ten?"

"Yes. I will put them in charge of Al Wilson, one of my best detectives. Do you want him to overhaul the schooner without waiting for word from you?"

"The way I am situated it will have to be so, for the chances are against me being able to help. If he sees a hunchbacked Chinaman on deck he will know that he is on the right trail. Then let him use his judgment about the time to strike the final blow; but I should recommend waiting until they have actually taken the hop on board before going for them."

"Do you think they have a cannon?"

"I didn't see one."

"I shall see that we have one."

"Very well."

"You have not told me the name of the parties you suspect."

"No."

"Do you propose to?"

"It is against Mr. Brady's way of doing business, but——"

"Oh, suit yourself."

"I am not unwilling, Mr. Narraway, but I must request that you work strictly on my lines."

"Oh, certainly. Is Captain McGown in the deal? I have just learned that he has been seen about town during the last few days."

"I know for a certainty that he is not in the deal."

"You spoke of a hunchbacked Chinaman. Do you mean one Ging Yok?"

"That is the man."

"Ah! So? He has been mixed up in opium smuggling before. I was not aware that he was in town."

"He is, and he is the man Wilson must look out for."

"It shall all be as you say, Harry. But don't you think it would be better to let me send a man or two with you to Yerba Buena?"

"No; I prefer to go alone."

"Very well."

And thus Young King Brady threw the case over on to the Secret Service Commissioner.

It was the best he could do under the circumstances.

How fortunate it was that he took this course will soon be shown.

CHAPTER XI.

HARRY IN THE TOILS.

Having completed his arrangements with Commissioner Narraway, Young King Brady hurried to the Palace Hotel to see if there was any word from his partner, but there was none. He then went over to the Barbary Coast and hung about the ruined house for a few moments, hoping to see something of Alice, although hardly expecting it.

Here again he was disappointed, so he soon gave it up and started for Henty's, where he got his boat and pulled out into the bay. Instead of going directly to the island, he rowed around by the way of Brannan street and got a sight of the schooner. There appeared to be some hustle aboard. The sailors were loading on a few bags and boxes.

He pulled on and at last drew near Yerba Buena, skirting along the rocky shore. Never had he felt so helpless.

He rowed slowly on, and at length came in sight of the dynamite magazine. Little did he imagine that at that very moment Old King Brady was concealed behind the iron door beneath the warning sign.

"I shall do nothing here," thought Harry. "Really I don't see how I can hope for it. I believe I shall have to give it up and make for the tug. At least I shall be near Alice in that case."

But still he could not bring himself to give it up, and he continued to pull along the shore. Presently he came in sight of a little pier. Here a man was fishing. Harry ventured to turn a glass on him and saw that he had on uniform trousers.

He turned his boat towards the pier, fully expecting to be ordered off. Just at this moment a man wearing a white suit and a straw hat came into view around a bend of the rocky shore. He was smoking a cigar and carried in his hand a light bamboo cane.

"That fellow is a bigbug of some sort," thought Young King Brady. "I believe I shall have to give it up."

The man's attention was drawn to him at once. He took out an opera glass and looked Harry over. Then he hurried towards the pier and said something to the fisherman.

Harry pulled slowly on, intending to pass pretty close to the end of the pier and see what these men would do.

That they were watching him intently was evident, and he was curious to know the cause. As he drew near the end of the pier the man in the white suit put his hand to his mouth and called:

"Hello, the boat! Come in here, will you! I want to talk with you."

"Aye, aye, sir!" responded Harry, not forgetting that as far as his dress went he might be taken for a bay thief, of whom there were always enough about. So he pulled in to the end of the pier. The man was of medium height, with a red, pimply face and big staring eyes. Still, from his dress and general appearance, it was evident that he was a person of education and standing, whatever his position on the island might be.

"What are you rowing about here for, young man?" he

asked in a tone not entirely uncivil. "You are aware that this is government property; I suppose?"

"Oh, yes, sir," replied Harry. "I was just rowing around, that is all. You called me, so I came ashore."

"Are you certain that you were not looking for someone? I am Lieutenant Haffen, of this station. I have a reason for asking this question."

"Well, sir, I don't know——"

"You don't quite understand me, I daresay. I will explain. Early this morning a sentry who is on guard at the top of the hill heard loud cries for help on the shore here. A few minutes afterward he saw a boat with two men in it pull away. He aroused some of the men connected with the cable station and they came down with lanterns, but could find no one. At daybreak the matter was reported to me and a little later we made another search, which resulted in finding a peculiar blue coat with flat brass buttons which had been turned inside out. In one of the pockets was a soft white felt hat with a very wide brim. These articles were lying on the rocks near the water's edge. My idea is that a murder may have been committed, though I confess that I can't understand how the murderers, if they threw the body of their victim into the water, came to leave his coat and hat behind. Of course I have reported the matter to the proper authorities, but I have heard nothing as yet. It just occurred to me when I saw you pulling along here that you might be a detective sent to investigate, or something of the sort."

The man's manner was so frank and he spoke so civilly that Young King Brady, although suspicious, allowed himself to be thrown somewhat off his guard.

"I'll risk it," he thought, and aloud he added:

"Well, sir, you are right. I was sent here by the chief of police just to look about a bit. My instructions were to see Lieutenant Haffen, and you appear to be the very man."

"Ah, yes! Is any detective missing? To be frank with you, I imagined that the coat and hat might belong to the famous Old King Brady. I once had the pleasure of meeting the gentleman and I distinctly recall that he wore a similar coat."

"I don't know," replied Harry. "I was just sent over to get full particulars. No name was given me. I thought I would look the ground over first, and——"

"Quite right. Quite right! I will give you the coat and hat if you care to take charge of them. Would you like to talk to the sentry? I can arrange that; too."

"It will not be necessary, sir, but I will take charge of the coat and hat if you are willing to give them up to me. As for my authority——"

"Oh, never mind your authority. Your face is guarantee enough for me, young man. Just come ashore. I have the coat and hat in our dynamite vault. It is close by here."

This did not sound particularly encouraging. But Young King Brady felt that the lieutenant could not very well blow him up without disposing of himself into the

bargain, so he determined to risk it. Making his boat fast, he climbed upon the pier. Meanwhile the younger man had been intent upon his fishing and had not said a word.

"What is your name, may I ask?" inquired the lieutenant.

"Thomas Hardy, sir."

"Yes, yes."

"Are you a lieutenant in the army or the navy?"

"In the navy. Just now I am on detached duty at the schoolship station. George, you have the key of the vault? Come and open it. You understand the lock. I don't want to run the chance of blowing myself and this young man out of the world."

"All right, sir," replied the fisherman, beginning to reel in his line.

Harry watched and listened. He could not make up his mind whether these two men were sincere or not. He felt that he was running a great risk, and yet he could not draw back now, he thought, nor, indeed, did he see any real reason why he should. They walked towards the dynamite vault, the lieutenant talking all the while.

Arrived there, "George" fumbled for the key.

"I can't seem to find it, sir," he said. "I think I must have left it in my coat pocket."

"And where is your coat?" demanded the lieutenant.

"On the pier."

Go and get it, George, and be quick. We must not keep this young man waiting."

George stepped back. At the same instant Harry had it made disgustingly plain that he had walked into a trap.

Quick as a flash the lieutenant whipped out a revolver and covered him. Then, before he could make a move, George jumped on him from behind.

"Move an inch and you are a dead one!" hissed the officer.

But Harry's move was forward, for George bore him to the ground. He went down flat on his face, with the young fellow on top of him.

"Choke him! Choke him!" cried the officer. "Don't let him get away from you. I'll shoot if he gets the best of you. Choke him, George!"

Harry, heedless of the threat, struggled all he knew, but it went for little. George was a husky fellow and held him firmly. Getting him by the throat, he squeezed it for all he was worth. It was a terrible situation. Young King Brady felt consciousness skipping away from him. He gagged and strangled—he was black in the face, but still that terrible grip tightened about his throat until at last all consciousness left him. Only too well had "George" done his work. Weak, sore and terribly oppressed, Harry wandered back to life. He was in the dark. Someone held his hand tightly. For the moment he thought he was dead.

"Oh, oh! Oh, what a fool I was!" he groaned.

"Harry!"

It was Old King Brady's familiar voice.

"Governor! You here?"

"Yes; I am here, Harry," was the reply. "Be careful how you move. This vault is full of dynamite or some such stuff. I can do little to help you. I cannot stand on my feet."

"Then you were in the vault?"

"I have been here for hours. I have sprained my ankle, and it has swelled twice its natural size. It's a bad business, my boy. I suppose you were looking for me."

Little by little Young King Brady managed to pull himself together and the detectives were able to compare notes.

"The man who got you is the same who put me here," said the old detective.

"I suspected him from the first," said Harry, "but I wanted to find you. Suppose I examine your foot, Governor. I find I have my flashlight, although they have cleaned me out of both revolvers and about everything else."

"Do it. I don't suppose you can help me much. They got my flashlight. I have had no chance to examine my foot."

Harry got out his light and glanced around.

"Stifing here," he said.

"Terrible," replied the old detective.

Harry examined the old detective's foot. The shoe had been removed and the foot was terribly swollen. Harry could do nothing, of course. The hours passed. It was dreary work sitting there in the darkness, but at last the end came. As near as the old detective could figure out it was about seven o'clock when Harry dropped asleep. He slept for hours, and Old King Brady did not disturb him. At last, away along towards morning, he was suddenly startled by sounds outside. Then the door swung back and there stood the Chinese dwarf and three rough-looking white men. The "lieutenant" was in the background wrapped in his cloak.

"There they are, Yok," he said. "Now you have the whole outfit. I trust you to dispose of them. By sunrise the far-famed firm of Brady must be a thing of the past."

CHAPTER XII.

CONCLUSION.

Alice, although she put on a brave front to Harry, was really more nervous than she had been for many a day over a case. If her disguise was discovered she felt that her chance of escaping alive out of the hands of the Cue-Hunters was very slim. She had not told Harry all, nor half of what she heard in the secret lodge room of that singular organization. Two of the brothers were detailed to attend to each of these cases at the meeting. The opium smuggling appeared to be a side issue of the dwarf's.

The discovery of the fact that the record book and slips were missing had been duly made, and the Cue-Hunters

were furious over it. But they laid it to a certain Jim Sing, whoever he was, a member who had turned traitor and joined the Highbinders. His death was decreed at the meeting. It was ordered by the dwarf, who appeared to be the grand master, so to speak, that whichever brother happened to get wind of where the man was first was to drop all else and go on his trail, never stopping until he had secured his cue.

Up in the rooms over the laundry the dwarf showed Alice twelve cues, which he informed her had been cut from the heads of the victims of the order within a year.

Alice went directly back to her room over the laundry after leaving Harry. She remained in her room until late in the afternoon, when the dwarf walked in without warning. To give the conversation which passed between them literally would be impossible. As jotted down in Alice's notes it ran something as follows:

"So you are here?"

"Yes, and ready for business."

"We start now. It may be that we do not sail until later, but now we go aboard."

"Have you heard anything more of the detectives?"

"No more. I have not been to the island, but to-night we go there. I only wish that old man had a cue to add to my collection. But no matter, I shall dispose of him in another way."

Poor Alice was almost in despair. Still she determined to persevere. At five o'clock she went with the dwarf to the foot of Brannan street and on board the Leopard.

Here there were three other Chinamen, two sailors, white, and the captain and mate, also white.

At seven o'clock the schooner was towed out into the bay, where she dropped anchor off Yerba Buena. Of the events of the evening nothing need be said. The Chinese huddled together in the cabin, serving a cold meal to themselves. At nine o'clock the dwarf informed Alice that her services would not be required until the next day and that she could turn in if she wished. There were three small staterooms in the cabin, and to her immense relief the dwarf told Alice that she could have one of these to herself. She lost no time in shutting herself in. And, as here she remained until morning, Alice played no part in the events which happened later. Somewhere along towards morning she awoke to find that they were moving, and supposing that they were standing out to sea in pursuit of the Mikado, she went to sleep again. What happened in the interim we must now describe.

* * * * *

Old King Brady and Harry were ordered to get up and follow the dwarf, who in common with the Chinamen with him, displayed a revolver. But it was impossible for the old detective to stand. The dwarf appeared to have anticipated this. He ordered the two sailors to get the old detective on his feet and bring him along. Harry recognized these men as the two he had seen on board the Leopard, but he looked for Sandy McGown in vain.

They got Old King Brady on his feet and half carried.

half dragged him down to the shore and put him in a boat, Harry being escorted there by the Chinks. The Leopard lay in the offing and the boat was pulled over to her. The lieutenant watched these proceedings from a distance, but he did not speak again. Once on the schooner, the Bradys were tumbled on the deck in a corner and left to themselves, with a Chinaman carrying his revolver displayed, marching up and down nearby. Sails were run up and the schooner started up the bay. Soon anchor was dropped off a ruinous wharf, where there was a half-burned factory standing on a high bank. The place appeared to be utterly deserted. Now the prisoners were hustled into the boat again. Their only hope was in the success of Harry's arrangements. From the first they knew that they were being followed by a tug. But was it the Secret Service tug? Now as the boat started shoreward, they saw that the tug had vanished. But the green hills above San Francisco have many windings. Everywhere the shore is indented with little coves. Into any one of these the tug might have slipped.

The sailors were not in the boat this time. It was just the dwarf and four other Chinks, one of whom was a man who had not even been seen by Alice, wherever he kept himself. They pulled out in two boats, one containing the Bradys, a rower and a man with a revolver always watching, the other the Chinese dwarf and his two companions.

The boats were pulled directly to the ruined wharf.

Here they landed on the beach. Harry was ordered out at the revolver's point. The dwarf and his men closed in on him. At the head of the pier were two piles driven in the mud, and to one of these Harry was securely bound.

Not a word was spoken. Once he was secured, Old King Brady was dragged ashore and tied up to the other pile.

The detectives now gave up hope. Both the Bradys made up their minds that they had been tied up to be shot, but there was worse to come, for now the Chinks began to gather dry wood, of which there was a lot lying about the ruins of the half-burned factory. This they piled about the Bradys. The dreadful truth was now made plain. The intention was to burn the detectives alive. One lighted a torch, another worked at the wood which had been brought. The Chinese dwarf seemed to be having everything his own way. The wood was rapidly piled around Old King Brady and Harry. The other Chinamen watched all these proceedings with stolid indifference. There seemed no hope of escape. But that darkest moment which is commonly supposed to precede the dawn had come and passed. Help was closer at hand than the Bradys knew or had allowed themselves to believe.

Suddenly a gun boomed over the bay and a tug ran into view between the schooner and the old pier, coming out of a nearby cove. The dwarf gave a yell of rage, and a great jabbering in Chinese followed. The man with the torch flung it down and started for the hills. But he came back flying. Then all hands made for the beach.

Down the hill from behind the ruined factory a number of men with guns in their hands came running. Help

had come at the critical moment. It was Detective Wilson and his Secret Service posse. The Bradys were saved!

* * * * *

It was an easy capture. The Chinamen were cut off by a cove on each side. As for the schooner captain, when he found himself up against a cannon, he promptly surrendered. The Chinamen were soon secured and the Bradys freed. Harry took one of the boats and made a bee-line for the schooner. He demanded to know if there was another Chinaman aboard. The captain grunted out that he neither knew nor cared. But Harry found out for himself. His knock awoke Alice from her sleep to learn that all was over and success had come.

The Bradys and their prisoners returned to San Francisco on the tug, one sailor being left to guard the schooner.

All hands were promptly jailed. Old King Brady was taken to a hospital, and it was two weeks before he was able to move about again. Meanwhile Harry had closed up everything. Thanks to Alice, six of the Cue-Hunters were arrested.

The Mikado came in and the head steward also found himself in the toils, for the dwarf gave him away, and nearly sixty thousand dollars worth of opium fell into the hands of the Secret Service men. The smugglers received the law's full penalty. The dwarf and two Cue-Hunters were tried for the murder of Charlie Fang. The dwarf was hung, the two Cue-Hunters got fifteen years each.

No direct evidence being obtainable against the remaining Chinese prisoners, they finally went free. But this broke up the society of the "Hair-Gatherers," so far as is known.

The first thing in the afternoon Young King Brady, with a Secret Service posse of Mr. Narray's men, went over to Yerba Buena to find the "lieutenant." And they got him. The man had the audacity to give his true name, it appeared. Thus Lieutenant J. H. Haffen, U. S. N., was landed in a cell. But here his disgrace seemed to prey on his mind, for he took his life by opium poisoning.

Wing Fang rewarded the Bradys liberally.

The Bradys looked out for Sandy McGown and Al. Wilson. The Secret Service fees were forthcoming, of course.

Sandy admitted that he had been drunk on the night the Leopard sailed, hence his absence at the critical moment.

But all is well that ends well, and such was the ending of the case of "The Bradys and the Chinese Dwarf."

THE END.

Read "THE BRADYS AMONG THE 'HANDSHAKERS'; OR, TRAPPING THE CONFIDENCE MEN," which will be the next number (442) of "Secret Service."

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