

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. 380.

NEW YORK, MAY 4, 1906.

Price 5 Cents.

THE BRADYS' TEN TRUNK MYSTERY; OR, WORKING FOR THE WABASH ROAD.

By A NEW-YORK DETECTIVE



"Well, well! So you have got your trunks!" exclaimed Old King Brady, looking around. "This is very satisfactory." "Look out!" shouted Harry. Suddenly a man rose up beside the old detective and thrust a revolver in his face.

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CHAPTER I.

MR. MOORHOUSE TELLS ABOUT THE TEN TRUNK MYSTERY.

The case which we propose to record in this story happened several years ago.

It was, in fact, shortly after the time when the world-famous detective, Old King Brady, took the young man, Harry Brady, his pupil, but not his relative, as a partner.

In some respects this "Ten Trunk Mystery" proved as puzzling a case as the detectives had ever dealt with.

And yet in the end the explanation, like that of most mysteries, proved to be simple enough.

The beginning was a request from the Wabash Railroad that the Bradys take up a case for them.

This having been granted, the detectives received a telegram from the president of the company requesting them to meet a Mr. Moorhouse, superintendent of the Missouri division, at Kansas City, at as early a date as possible.

The day was fixed, and promptly on time the detectives turned up in that flourishing western city.

It was early one June evening when they reached the Coates House, registered, and were shown to their rooms.

Old King Brady was growling over a delay on the road, and after they had washed up Harry suggested that inasmuch as they had arrived too late to see Mr. Moorhouse at his office they look up his home address and telephone him.

"It might save us a day," he declared. "If we could get at him the time we have lost to-day would not count."

Old King Brady having approved of the plan, Harry went at it, and before they sat down to supper they had arranged a meeting at the hotel at nine o'clock.

Mr. Moorhouse proved to be a plain, common-sense sort of a man of about middle age.

"I am very glad you have decided to take this matter up, gentlemen," he said. "Not that I have much hope that anything will come of it, but for the reason that I should be greatly relieved to have it settled. Several suits have been brought against the company, some of which are for quite a considerable amount—twenty-five thousand dollars in one case. There are two others for ten thousand each, and one for fifteen, besides several smaller claims."

"We shall do our best," replied Old King Brady. "Others have tried their hands on the case, I suppose?"

"Yes; our regular detectives had it at first, and then the Pinkertons and other agencies tried."

"And all without success?"

"Entirely without success; in short, it seems to be a mystery absolutely without a clew."

Old King Brady smiled.

"Clews don't grow on bushes," he said. "They have to be searched for, and some are more successful in their search than others."

"Oh, I know your reputation for success is the very best," said Mr. Moorhouse. "Indeed, it was I who suggested that you be engaged. It should have been done before."

"Well, we don't claim to be any sharper than our neighbors," laughed Old King Brady.

"It don't make any odds what you claim; I know what your reputation is," replied Mr. Moorhouse. "You should have been put in charge of the case in the first place. It was a great mistake that you were not."

"And now that we are to take charge let us get at it," said the old detective. "One of our rules is that every moment counts."

"Oh, it can scarcely be so in this case. It is three months old now."

"That makes no difference. If it was three years old we should work in the same way."

"Shall I proceed to explain, then?"

"I wish you would," replied Old King Brady, and Mr. Moorhouse began as follows:

"I don't know how closely you follow up our railroad affairs out here, Mr. Brady, but it is possible that you may remember that our train No. 10 was held up by the Buck Boys, an outlaw gang, one evening last March, and after escaping from that disagreeable experience the passengers went on to encounter wreck and death at the Finister bridge."

"I remember something of the sort. The rear cars went down with the bridge, and there was a considerable loss of life."

"Over a hundred and fifty. Strangely enough, nearly every trainhand went to his death."

"Yes, I recall it now."

"That is the singular part of it," continued Mr. Moorhouse. "The only trainmen who escaped were the fireman and the men in the mail car."

"But the engine got over safely if I recollect right."

"Yes."

"Then what killed the engineer?"

"He fell dead of heart disease in the cab when he saw what had occurred."

"And the baggage car and express car employees?"

"Upon that point the whole matter hangs. It was like this: That night there was a general delay all along the lines on account of the heavy rains which washed out the foundation of the Finister bridge, and caused the accident."

"The express matter down from Omaha was late and the cars were held back. I decided to run them through by special train."

"So there was no express car, then?"

"None. Just as the passenger train was made up it was discovered that one of the wheels of the baggage car was cracked, and the car was removed. As it happened, we could not easily get another car in front, owing to the confusion which our trainyard had been thrown into by the heavy rains, so an old baggage car which happened to be available was hitched on behind."

The train went on its way, and the hold-up took place. Within a few minutes the accident followed, and the cars went down into Finister creek, which was swollen beyond anything which had ever occurred within the memory of the oldest settler.

"At the time it was believed that all the rear cars went down, leaving only one passenger car, one Pullman, the mail car, and engine standing on the other side of the break."

"Pardon me, but I want to follow you closely point by point. My partner, you see, is taking notes, and we want to be accurate. How many cars in all went down?"

"There were three passenger cars, one Pullman, and the smoker, which was in the rear just in front of the baggage car."

"Exactly. Go on."

"Well, Mr. Brady, now we come to the mystery. Next day, when the storm was over and our people began searching for the bodies of those who had been drowned, it was discovered that the baggage car was missing, while in the smoker at the rear end were discovered the bodies of the conductor and three brakemen huddled together."

"And the Pullman conductor and porter?"

"Oh, I don't count them as train employees, as they were working for the Pullman company. They were lost, however, and were found in their own car."

"Proceed."

"Well, now we are at the mystery. No trace of that baggage-car has even been discovered. In it were ten trunks which happened to be of unusual value, so much so that there were two extra men on guard in the car besides the regular baggage-master, three in all, not one of whom has ever been seen or heard of since."

"Yes. Did the Buck Boys enter the baggage car?"

"They did not, according to the testimony of the fireman and several passengers who escaped. They confined themselves to robbing the passengers. From remarks they were overheard to make it would seem that they were

disappointed in finding no express car attached to the train."

"Was the baggage-car seen at the time of the hold-up?"

"Of that there can be no doubt. There are several witnesses to prove it. It must have disappeared between the hold-up point and the bridge."

"Is there no chance that it was carried down the creek?"

"Not the least. In the first place, it would have been stopped by trees lower down. Then again, the whole ground was gone over repeatedly. None of the cars were badly injured. The passengers were drowned like rats in a trap, but the cars were all raised afterwards, and are running to-day."

"How about the coupling of the smoking car?"

"It was not broken. That the baggage car had been uncoupled in the ordinary way there can be no doubt. Now as to its contents——"

"Just a moment; You say that the conductor and brakemen were found huddled together in the rear of the smoker?"

"Yes."

"Was it suggested that at the time of the accident the absence of the baggage car had just been discovered?"

"Yes. It was so believed. We think that the conductor had called the brakemen together, and that they were looking out the back door of the smoker discussing the matter."

"By the way, was any search made for the outlaws?"

"Didn't I tell you about that?"

"No."

"Well, I intended to. Not a trace of that gang of six has ever been discovered. Like our baggage-car they seem to have vanished off the face of the earth."

"Singular. They never reappeared at their old haunts then?"

"Never. Their wives—some of them were married—believe them to be dead."

"Who composed the gang?"

"I have a list which I will hand you. Bill and Jack Buck were the leaders."

"Very good. Now about the contents of the car."

"Well, Mr. Brady, aside from the ten trunks there was not much any value. These trunks——"

"Let me understand. All told, the trunks numbered only ten?"

"Only ten. We need not consider the rest; a few bicycles, some fresh meat for a butcher at Bagly, and a few odds and ends."

"They cut no ice."

"None at all. The company has settled for them long ago; but with the trunks it is different. One contained twenty-five thousand dollars in small bills, shipped by the Otten Bank of Kansas City to the Bagly bank. The money was to be used in paying off a lot of railroad laborers hired by a certain contractor, to whom the Bagly bank had been forced to make good."

"That's one. Next!"

"Next we have two trunks filled with diamond jewelry, property of Hahn & Putzel, Maiden Lane, New York; big jewelry house. They were in charge of Tom Grossman, their salesman, who was drowned in the wreck."

"And their value?"

"The company is being sued for ten thousand on each trunk."

"Value was declared?"

"Yes, and a special man traveled in the baggage car as guard."

"Who has vanished like the rest?"

"Like the rest. Nothing has ever been heard of him."

"He was a company man?"

"Yes. Special rates were paid on the trunks to cover all this. There can be no doubt of their value. Hahn & Putzel claim that \$50,000 would not make good their loss."

"But they can only sue for value declared?"

"That is all."

"Next."

"Next we have a trunk owned by Israel Fishmer, the great expert in pictures, who carries on business in Chicago. There had been an art exhibition at Kansas City, and Fishmer loaned the Kansas City Society of Fine Arts a number of small oil paintings for which he claimed great age and value. They were all without frames, and were packed in a large trunk. We have a suit of \$15,000 on our hands for this. Fishmer claims a loss of over \$100,000, and he is suing the society, which guaranteed safe return of the pictures; they, in turn, only declared a value of \$15,000, and are suing us for a like amount."

"Exactly. Next."

"Those four trunks are the principal loss. The other six were personal baggage, no value declared. Claims for them are limited, of course, and all have been settled. Even if they were recovered it is unlikely that their contents would repay the company for the money expended on the claims."

"And that is the case as it stands?"

"That is it. If you wish to know what has been done to find this car——"

"Oh, but I don't. I am not at all interested in that. We shall begin work all over again, and pursue it on our own lines."

"The Pinkertons think that the Buck Boys knew of these valuable shipments, and captured the car."

"But who captured the Buck Boys?"

"Just so. There you are."

"I suppose the picture dealers throughout the country have been communicated with?"

"They have. None of the pictures have been offered for sale."

"What was the date of this affair?"

"March 9th."

"Well, I think that is all."

"You will take the case, then?"

"Oh, certainly. That is understood."

"I am sure I wish you every success," said Mr. Moorhouse, and soon after he withdrew.

CHAPTER II.

LOOKING OVER THE GROUND.

"Well, Governor, and what do you think of our railroad mystery?" asked Harry, when the Bradys found themselves alone.

"Call it our ten trunk mystery," replied Old King Brady, lighting a cigar. "Upon the fate of those trunks the whole thing hangs."

"I agree with you."

"Well, as for my opinion, I think that the Buck Boys planned to get the baggage car, and got it. Who got the Buck Boys and the trunks is the question before the house."

"You think they are dead, then?"

"I should say that there could be scarcely a doubt on that score. Our predecessors would have surely found some trace of them if it was not so."

"I suppose that is true enough. I was surprised that you did not ask Mr. Moorhouse if the fall of the bridge was certainly an accident."

"Oh, I knew that already, Harry. I was so assured in New York."

"What are your plans?"

"To get down into that region without delay, and look over the ground. Now let us look it all up on the railroad maps."

The examination showed that Bagly was a small town lying between Carrolton and Brunswick in the swampy section which borders the Missouri river.

"Carrolton then must have been the last stop the train made," said Old King Brady, consulting a time-table.

"Yes, that is right. Let me see what this little book says about the Wabash which was given me at the New York office. Ah, here we have it! They change crews at Carrolton on those trains which make the important stops, as this one did."

"It was not a through express, then?"

"It took the place of the through express. Remember that on account of the freshets the traffic was much disorganized. Carrolton is then our first point. Let me see if we can get there to-night."

Consulting his time-table further, Old King Brady found that such was the case.

This being ascertained, the detectives, in their characteristic way, immediately pulled up stakes and went to Carrolton.

They reached there some time after midnight, and going to the Jackson House, immediately went to bed.

Not until breakfast the next morning was the conversation renewed.

"And now, Harry," said Old King Brady, "while you were taking that somewhat lengthy bath I have been looking up distances."

"And the result?"

"I find that it is ten miles to the scene of the hold-up, a place called Exum's swamp."

"A hold-up in a swamp! That is unusual."

"Very, considering that it was a time of freshet. I can't imagine how the gang got in there on their horses. It is a very important point."

"And the scene of the accident?"

"Is two miles further on, at Finister creek. Five miles beyond that lies Bagly, a small place, where the train was not supposed to stop, but the intention was to do so that night on account of the trunk of money."

"Did you learn anything about the Buck Boys?"

"Yes; they were a Clay county bunch, who attempted to imitate the James Boys. They had done one hold-up on the Alton, but outside of that only bore a local reputation as horse thieves and all-around marauders."

"Not likely to have cooked up any deep plot, then?"

"Very unlikely. It looks to me as if some intelligent person put them up to it."

"And what is the plan?"

"I shall buy a horse and ride down to the scene of the hold-up. I can easily get in through the swamp at this dry time, they tell me. I expect to return here to-night."

"You speak as if you were going alone."

"I propose to. In the meantime I want you to disguise as a railroad man out of a job. Get around among the railroad men, particularly the track walkers, and pump them dry. Meet me to-night, and we will compare notes."

"Very good. You will not go on to Bagly, then?"

"Not without special reason shall I cross Finister creek."

After breakfast the Bradys separated, and started off on their separate missions.

The old detective purchased a fairly good horse, and rode down the Bagly road until he came to Exum's swamp.

He made no halt until he reached the swamp, although he passed several houses on the way.

Here he struck about as desolate a region as one could ask to see.

For miles to the southwest the swamp extended.

It was on the north side of the Wabash tracks also, and stretched off several miles in that direction.

Through it ran the railroad and the highway.

The latter was practically a causeway built upon logs, as Old King Brady subsequently learned.

Over these logs crushed stone had been dumped, at great expense.

The road was a good one, but it was easy to see that at times of freshet the water must flow over it.

At one part a branch track started off southwest.

It crossed the road, ran on for about a hundred yards, and then ended.

The last rails visible were at the beginning of a broad pond across which the track must at one time have extended.

The shores of the pond were thickly overgrown with oak and willow trees.

It was a damp, dismal looking hole, if ever there was one, and Old King Brady wondered for what possible reason this branch track had been constructed.

For some little time the old detective remained in the saddle, studying the scene.

He now understood better about the hold-up.

It would have been quite possible to do the trick if the water had not been more than three or four feet above the road bed, above which the tracks were slightly elevated.

The branch track began at the same elevation, and ran down over a steep grade to the edge of the pond.

"I wonder if this brute will stand while I walk down that track?" thought the old detective.

This had been guaranteed by the man to whom he had just paid \$75 for the horse.

There was nothing to hitch to, for no tree grew nearer than the pond's edge.

"If a train comes along I am done for," thought Old King Brady, "but I would like above all things to get a look at the end of that branch track. I can't imagine why Mr. Moorhouse did not mention it. It is a most important feature in the case. I see that the old switch is still in place. Certainly the baggage car might have been turned off on to that track."

Old King Brady listened, but could hear no train approaching.

"I'll risk it," he thought.

Dismounting, he led the horse to the edge of the road nearest the swamp.

Here there were bushes and tall grass growing out of the mud.

The horse immediately attacked the young twigs of the bushes.

"Keep busy there for a few minutes," muttered Old King Brady.

He started down the branch track.

In a moment he was at the end and peering into the water.

The water was clear enough, but the bottom was black with mud, so there was little to interest him.

But he saw what he came to see.

A line of piles, much sunken, and in some places missing altogether, extended through the pond.

"Yes, the road once crossed there," he said to himself. "I must find out where it ran to. If I could only see a track walker. Oh, confound it! Now I'm in the soup!"

A whistle sounded around the curve beyond the edge of the swamp.

A train was close at hand.

Old King Brady ran for all he was worth.

From the start the horse had shown nervousness at the trains.

It was too late to prevent the inevitable.

Before the detective could get off the branch tracks an express train went sweeping by.

The horse caught the sound before Old King Brady had covered half the distance, and went galloping down the road.

Old King Brady was furious with himself.

"If ever I did a stupid thing it was that!" he growled. "Now, what is to be done?"

There seemed to be but one course, and that was to push on toward Bagly in the hope of overtaking the horse.

He soon came to Finister creek.

Here there was a new road bridge, and a new railroad bridge as well.

One glance was sufficient to show him that the car could never have been swept down the creek.

The channel was very narrow, and the swamp, here thickly overgrown with trees, stretched off on both sides.

There were even trees growing out of the bed of the creek.

The car would have been sure to lodge against them.

"Wonder if both bridges were swept away?" thought the old detective. "It may be so. Confound that man! If he had only been more definite. If the road bridge stood the car surely could not have passed it. But I guess it didn't. It looks new enough."

He stood for a few minutes surveying the scene of the disaster.

But except for evident signs of the flood, no trace of it remained.

Nor was there any sign of the horse.

Old King Brady pushed on, coming after he had covered about half a mile to a place where the ground was firmer.

Here a trail turned into the woods, and through the trees he could see smoke ascending.

Now for the first time he caught the horse's tracks.

The animal had turned off and gone into the woods.

Old King Brady followed his example, and in a few minutes came in sight of a clearing.

Here, to his surprise, he saw a large frame house standing.

It was pretty well in ruins, but one end of it appeared to be inhabited.

The windows were open, and clothes were drying on a line.

Near the door was the missing horse hitched to a tree.

"Good!" muttered the old detective. "I guess I shall have no trouble in getting my horse back."

He started ahead.

Before he had gone a dozen steps a tall, slatternly-looking woman emerged from the house.

She was dressed in a faded calico, and wore a hood of the same material upon her head.

At her heels came a small boy with nothing on but shirt and trousers.

He was carrying a small tin pail, and over his shoulder was a fishing rod.

"Good-morning, ma'am," cried Old King Brady. "I was looking for my runaway horse. I see you have got him all right here."

The woman stopped and stared.

"Who be you?" she drawled, as Old King Brady advanced. "Heow dew I know whether that ar hoss belongs to yew or not?"

"Oh, my dear lady, he has but just run away from me," began the old detective. "I——"

"Now, looker hyar, yew man!" cried the woman, "don't you go to callin' me your dear lady, or I'll yell for my husband, and he's within hearing, tew. The idee of you trying to shine up to me, an' I never see yew before in my life."

"You entirely mistake my meaning, missus. However, all I want is my horse. I'll pay you whatever trouble you have been at."

"Yew will, hey? Yew will not!" cried the woman. "That ar hoss came in hyar, of his own free will. Yas! Findin's is keepin's. I don't know yew, an' I don't want, what's more."

"Say, maw!" cried the boy, "shell I go fer pop?"

"Yas! Go! Tell him to come right away. Tell him thar's a hoss thief hyar!"

The boy threw down his pail and pole, and started for the woods on the run.

Meanwhile the woman folded her arms and stood glaring at Old King Brady.

"Don't yew come no nigher, man!" she sneered. "If yew dew I'll yell, an' Ben Bim will bore yew full of holes with his shotgun."

"Confound the luck! I seem to be up against it for fair," thought Old King Brady. "What shall I ever do to get my own property back?"

CHAPTER III.

YOUNG KING BRADY TURNS TRACK WALKER.

While Old King Brady was having troubles of his own, Harry was out on the information hunt.

He pushed about Carrolton trainyard, and talked with three or four different railroad men, but without deriving any information which seemed to be of any value.

To his disgust the last man told him to his face that he was a detective, and that he couldn't pump him.

Young King Brady was new at the business then, and did not know so well how to go about it as he does to-day.

Disgusted with his lack of success, Harry started down the track.

There were few persons moving about in this desolate region.

Harry did the first mile without seeing a soul.

When at last he struck the swamp he saw a young man coming toward him along the track.

"Now is my time," he thought. "If I don't hit it better than I did at Carrolton I shall have but a sorry report to make."

He pulled out a cigar, of which he had a pocketful, and tried to light it, purposely letting the match go out.

The young man came on, eyeing him suspiciously.

"Have you got a match, pard?" Harry asked, as he drew near.

"I reckon I have," was the reply.

Harry got his match, and in return gave the young man a cigar.

Of course, there could have been no better step taken toward an acquaintance.

"Thanks," said the fellow. "Say, this looks to be a good one."

"I think you will find it all right," replied Harry. "I did a little job for a man up to Carrolton, and he gave me a pocketfull. Have another."

"Oh, I don't want to rob you."

"Take it."

"Oh, thanks. Which way are you going?"

"Oh, any old way. I'm looking for work."

"So?"

"Yes."

"What's your line?"

"Well. I was braking on the Alton last. Got laid off, and haven't been able to strike nothing in six weeks."

"So?"

"Yes."

"They must have got you blacklisted."

"Well, I reckon that's what."

"That's what they allus dew, blame 'em! What was the trouble?"

"Oh, I got a drink too many in, and some kind friend reported me, I suppose."

"Yes, yes. That's allus the way. Whar do yer belong?"

"Up to St. Jo. What's yours—track-walking?"

"That's all I've got now. I was assistant in the tower beyond the Finister bridge, but the towerman got the bounce after the accident last spring. The super wouldn't give me his job, so I took to this."

"There was an accident?"

"Yes. Bridge washed away last March. The east-bound midnight went down into the hole, and there was a deuce of a lot of people drowned. Same night there was a hold-up. 'Twas claimed that the towerman stood in with the Buck Boys what done it, but that thar was a lie, as I happen to know."

"Oh, yes," cried Harry. "I heard about that. There was something about a baggage-car being missing, wasn't there?"

"Well, there was. It had a lot of valuable trunks into it. Hain't never been seen since. Neither have the Buck Boys. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, they got it, did they?"

"Sure they got it, whatever they done with it. But they got it, all right, all right."

"Was it a rich haul?"

"They say thar was half a million dollars in gold into it. I dunno whether the yarn is true or not."

"But what did they do with the car?"

"Oh, I dunno."

"I'll bet you have your own theory about it."

"Well, I wuzn't born yesterday, brother, an' I wuz in the tower that night."

"I wisht I could get a chanst like that."

"Ah, now, come; I didn't get none of it. You needn't think that. But which way are you going?"

"On down the track, I s'pose. I was going to put it through to Bagly and see if I couldn't get a job there. Is it much of a place?"

"No place at all. You won't get nothing to do there."

"Well, I shall have to go on further, then."

"Come on, I'll go back along with yer, and show yer whar the hold-up was."

They walked on together.

Now Harry immediately changed the subject.

He knew that the young track-walker was certain to take it up again when they reached the scene of the hold-up.

He sympathized with the fellow over his long hours and hard work, etc.

By the time they reached the branch track they had become pretty chummy.

Harry saw that the next tower was on the other side of the bridge, which could be seen in the distance.

"Is that where you were when the hold-up happened?"

"Yes," was the reply.

"I should have thought you fellows would have known the bridge was unsafe."

"You would, hey? Waal, you don't know nothing about it."

"Oh, I s'pose not."

"Sure you don't. I could tell you something, but I won't. A dozen detectives have tried to make me talk, but I wouldn't. Honest, I believe that they have kept me on in hopes that I would open my mouth some day."

It looked as though this was a clew worth working up.

Still, even at that stage of his career, Young King Brady had learned the lesson that there are always persons to be met in cases like this who pretend knowledge which they are very far from possessing.

So he kept silent, and let the fellow talk.

"Yas," drawled the track-walker. "here's where they done it. The water was near up to their horses' belly-bands, but they rode right in hyar and give the engineer the red and stopped the train."

"The train must have been running through water, too."

"It was some over the track, but not so much. It's a good bit higher, as you see."

"I see. Did they get much?"

"How should I know? I heard tell they went through the passengers pretty well."

"Did they break open the baggage-car?"

"Of course not. Why would they when they had the thing uncoupled?"

"Oh, I see. They got away with it. But how?"

"Dunno. Nobody knows. They done it somehow, though. That ar's sure. But say, I'm not talking any more."

"Oh, all right. I must be moving."

"Hold on. Mebbe I can give you a job."

"You?"

"Sure."

"But at what?"

"Track-walking."

"I don't just understand."

"Perhaps not; but I go to make you, as an old pard of mine used to say."

"Fire away."

"Well, to begin with, what's your name?"

"Bill Leary. What's yours?"

"Jerry Brown. Now, listen, Bill, for if this thing is to be done it's got to be done right away. There's to be a dance in Carrolton to-night, and thar's a little gal I know who wants to go almighty bad, and I want to take her. Ketch on?"

"You want me to take your place?"

"You tumble?"

"S'pose I'm caught by the super, or whoever is over you?"

"There isn't one chance in a million. But what I was thinking was this. You and me are about of one height, and we don't look unlike each other. If you will meet me in Carrolton and just slip into my clothes, and take my place to-night I'll stake you two bones. Come, what do you say?"

"I say yes, an' much obliged for the offer, if it isn't going to get you into trouble."

"There is no danger. Sometimes Casey, my boss, runs through and looks us fellers up, but it isn't once in a couple of months. He was around only day before yesterday, so I don't see where the danger comes in."

"I'll go yer."

"Right."

"When do I go on?"

"I go off in an hour and go up to Carrolton on 22; you can go with me. I'll fix that."

"All right. Where do we get the train?"

"She slacks up at the tower to let me get on. I'm supposed to go on again at nine o'clock to-night. I come down on the way freight."

"Right."

"You have walked track before?"

"Oh, sure."

"Very good. Then if you will take a turn with me now I'll show you the beat."

They were standing near the branch track while this conversation took place.

Harry had it on his tongue's end to ask what the track was ever built for, but he postponed it now that he saw he was coming that way again.

Brown walked back with him about two miles, and then they turned and walked east again.

When they reached the scene of the hold-up Harry suddenly put the question.

"Where did that branch run to?" he asked.

"Back to Budd's Island," was the reply.

"Where is that?"

"Back in the swamp about five miles. There used to be a lead mine worked there, but it was abandoned years ago."

"Is it an island in the swamp?"

"So they say. I was never there. You can't get to it. You see, there was a road in there in old times, but it was washed away, and the track went with it. As the mine had petered out long before, and there was nothing doing, the thing was never built up again. I don't believe anybody ever goes in there now unless it is the swamp rats."

"Who are they?"

"Oh, there are people living in the swamp. They call 'em swamp rats. I dunno nothing more about it. That track has been as you see it ever since my time."

They walked on to Finister creek, and crossing the bridge, approached the tower.

Jerry gave a shout, and the towerman looked out of his window.

"All right," he cried. "She's a-comin'. Better stop where you are."

In a moment a westbound way train came along.

The towerman signaled it, and the train slowed down.

Harry and the track-walker got aboard, and in a few moments they were at Carrolton.

Jerry took Harry to a restaurant, and paid for his dinner.

During the meal he gave him full instructions, and then they went to a furnished room, where the track-walker lived.

"I'm going to leave you now, Bill," Jerry said. "You can turn in and have a sleep. I'll set the alarm for you, and leave my clothes here for you to put on."

"Oh, I won't undress," said Harry. "I'll put your clothes on now, and you can see how I look."

This was done.

"You'll do in the dark," declared Jerry. "Only thing is, if the boss does come through, pull your hat down over your eyes, and say as little as possible. If he speaks to you don't actually say you are me—see? Better come out flat-footed."

"All right. I'll manage, I guess."

They parted then.

Harry slept for a while, but he got up long before it was time to take the way freight, and went to the hotel.

Here he inquired for Old King Brady, when he found that he was not in the room.

But the old detective had not been seen about the hotel since he went away in the morning.

"The Governor has caught on to something," thought Harry. "Pity I can't see him and let him know what is in the wind."

He hung about the hotel as long as he dared, and then went to the station.

Jerry had spoken to the conductor of the way freight who came on duty at Carrolton, and Harry was promptly received in the caboose, and let off at the beginning of the track-walker's beat.

The more he thought of it the more firmly convinced Young King Brady became that Jerry really knew nothing of the missing car.

"A fellow like him would have told long ago if he had known," he said to himself. "With all the detectives there have been on the case, they couldn't have missed him. There is nothing in his talk but wind."

Lighting a cigar, he walked on down the track, carrying his lantern.

"Will anything come out of this?" he asked himself. "Queer what became of the Governor? It can't be that he has got himself into trouble, for there seems to be nobody about here to make it. Perhaps he has gone through to Bagly. Anyhow, he will turn up all right, I have no doubt."

He walked on to the scene of the hold-up.

Here he went down to the end of the branch track, and stood looking off upon the pond.

"Upon my word, it seems to me that where we want to get to is this Budd's Island," he said to himself. "And yet, how can it be possible—ha, what is that?"

Away over on the left of the pond he suddenly caught a flash of light.

"Some one in a boat with a lantern," thought Harry. "What can they be doing there this time of night?"

He immediately extinguished his own lantern, and stood watching.

It was a bright, star-light night, and with one's eyes accustomed to the dimness a good deal can be seen.

Harry was soon able to make out a raft being sculled in his direction.

Upon it were three men.

"There is surely something in the wind," thought Young King Brady. "I must keep a sharp eye on those fellows."

He threw himself flat upon the ties at the end of the branch, and waited.

The raft was working his way, and before long it was just abreast the end of the track, but a hundred feet or more out on the pond.

He could hear the men talking, but he could not distinguish words.

Then all at once one of the two men who stood in the middle of the raft turned on the other.

"This for yours," he shouted. "We've done with you!"

Throwing himself upon his companion, the fellow pushed him into the water.

"Step! Oh, don't! Spare me!" yelled the man, "I can't swim a stroke."

But no attention was paid to this appeal.

The man was forced into the water.

There was a loud splash, and he vanished on the instant.

"Heavens!" gasped Harry. "This spells murder!"

The man at the sculling oar worked it vigorously, and the raft moved away into the darkness.

"That poor snoozer must have sunk like a stone!" thought Harry.

As near as he could see, no one rose from the water, nor was the cry heard again.

CHAPTER IV.

TRAPPED IN THE SWAMP.

Old King Brady stood irresolute for a moment. He did not care to reveal himself as a detective unless it was absolutely necessary to do so.

As usual, he tried the easiest way.

Money makes the mare go, and probably money would bring his horse back to him, he thought.

He felt in his pocket and brought out a handful of loose change.

"Come, missus, the horse is mine, and you will have to give him up," he said quietly. "Of course, I understand that you have been at some trouble with the beast, for which I am willing to pay."

"You'll settle that ar with Bim," replied the woman. "He'll make yew pay, yew bet; same time, if yew want to square up with me yew kin."

This was all she was after.

Old King Brady handed her two dollars in quarters.

If he had offered her a two-dollar bill it would not have made half the impression.

As it was, the woman came forward and snatched at the silver as a hungry dog would snap at a piece of meat.

"Where is Mr. Bim?" inquired Old King Brady. "I want to see him."

"Oh, he's a-gunnin'," replied the woman. "The boy has gone for him. Don't you tech the hoss till he does come, though."

Old King Brady waited.

Mrs. Bim watched him.

"Whar d'yer hail from?" she asked, after a minute or two.

"Oh, I come from Kansas City," replied the detective.

"Do yer? I wisht I could go thar wunst."

"You never saw Kansas City, then?"

"Never! They say it's a sight big 'un, neow."

"It's a lively place."

"Biggest town in the United States, they tell me."

"Well, hardly that."

"Come, neow, don't yew tell me I lie, old man! I know blamed well what I'm talking about."

"How about Chicago?"

"Can't hold a candle to it."

"And St. Louis."

"Kansas City's bigger, I know."

"Then there's New York."

"New York!" cried the woman, with infinite contempt.

"Why, heow you talk! Are you that ignorant that you go agin' yer own town? Everybody knows that Kansas City has New York beat a mile."

The case seemed very hopeless.

But Old King Brady in his day has had many dealings with these Missouri swamp dwellers.

He felt that he could manage the man if he could only get rid of the woman.

Still, she continued to rave in the same senseless fashion.

Old King Brady was very sparing of his answers.

In a few minutes, to his immense relief, he saw the boy come out of the woods, accompanied by a man at whom he did not have to look twice to determine that he was Mr. Bim.

As soon as the woman saw him approaching she stopped her talk and bolted.

The boy regained his pole and pail, and went off in another direction.

Old King Brady advanced toward the man.

He was a tall, slab-sided individual with long red hair hanging down over his butternut coat.

His trousers were blue-jeans, and seemed engaged in an attempt to shrink up above his knees.

Over his shoulder he carried an ax.

"How are you, Mr. Bim," called Old King Brady, rather doubtful about his reception.

The man eyed him with a foxy expression.

Ignorant Mr. Bim might be, but Old King Brady felt that he was dealing with no fool.

"Howdy, stranger," replied Bim, after a moment's deliberation. "Whar mought yew have kum frum?"

"I rode down from Carrolton this morning," replied the old detective. "I got off my horse for a moment, and the beast bolted. There he stands. I followed him in here."

"Oh, yew did, hey?"

"Yes."

"Waal, I ketched that ar hoss. Kin yer prove property? I don't know yer from a crow."

"Oh, yes; the horse is branded with a star on the left flank."

"Yer mought have seen that ar."

"The saddle is lined with red and blue cloth on the underside. Your wife will tell you I haven't been near the horse."

"Waal, I guess that'll dew. Heow much dew I get for ketching him?"

"Five dollars if you make no more fuss about it."

"Oh, waal, hit's all right, I reckon. Let's have the five."

Old King Brady handed over the bill.

Bim had no sooner received it than he broke into a coarse laugh.

"Waal, yew-uns from teown is green as grass, an' no mistake. Knowed it was your hoss. I was eout by the pond when he bolted. Seen yew standin' on the old track. I reckon I got the best of yew that time, stranger. Haw, haw, haw!"

"Oh, it's all right," said Old King Brady, cheerfully, "or if it isn't you can make it right by answering a question or two."

"What do yer want to know?"

"Where did that old track lead to before it was washed away?"

"Now, looker hyar, mister, if yew want me to talk yer'll hev to pay for it. Yew'll be one of them detectives huntin' them thar lost trunks, of course."

"You have had detectives here on that errand, then?"

"Yas; more'n I could shake a stick at."

"And nothing doing?"

"Not a doggoned thing. Mebbe it would be different with yew ef yew'd cough up another five."

It seemed useless to deny his identity.

This man appeared to be the only settler about the neighborhood of the hold-up, and somebody had to talk.

Old King Brady accordingly showed his shield.

"You are a very sharp man, Mr. Bim," he said. "It's a pleasure to talk with an intelligent person like you. The five will be coming if you will tell me what I want to know."

"Waal!"

"About that track."

"They tell me it's the old Budd's Island branch."

"And where does it lead to?"

"Budd's Island, of course. They tell me that thar's an old lead mine in thar; 'tain't worked now. The washout what made the pond kum ten years ago."

"How far to this Budd's island?"

"Five or six miles, they tell me."

"You have never been there, then?"

"Never. I only kum hyar from Pike keounty a month ago."

"Oh, you are not an old-timer here."

"No, sir. I jest tuk up quarters in that heouse. Hit was the boardin' house in the days when the mine was worked. Thar was a station hyar then. The rest of the houses was washed away, so they tell me."

"I suppose you have heard a lot about this hold-up and the lost car since you came here?"

"Oh, yes; quite some."

"What's your idea of what became of the car?"

"Haven't any."

"Do you imagine the thieves could have run it to Budd's Island?"

"Waal, neow, what fool talk yew make. Heow could they get acrost the pond?"

"Is there any more of the track on the other side of the pond?"

"Yes, thar is. Yew kin see it from deown hyar a piece."

"Wasn't the pond frozen over? Isn't it possible that the car could have been run over the ice?"

"Dunno nuffin' abeout it. Wusn't hyar then. Kean't tell."

"Mr. Bim," said Old King Brady, "I would like very much to go to this Budd's Island. Is it possible?"

"Dunno. Hit's all swamp beyond hyar."

"Have you a boat?"

"I've got a dug-out."

"Couldn't we get to the track in that?"

"We might. It would be hard work."

"I am willing to pay you well if you will make the attempt."

"Waal, I don't mind trying. I never wuz thar. I've allus meant to go thar some day."

"Have any of the other detectives who have worked on this case been there?"

"Not ez I know on. None of them ever axed me about it before."

"Will you go?"

"Heow much?"

"Another five."

"Waal, all right. I'll just tell the old woman."

"Can't you put my horse up in the meantime and give him a feed?"

"Hain't got no barn. It's all tumbled down. Hain't got no hay, nor no oats, nuther."

"Well, then, let him stand as he is. I s'pose your wife will see that he don't get away."

"I reckon she will if I tell her tew. She knows what'll be coming tew her ef she don't."

Thus saying, Mr. Bim, telling Old King Brady to wait a minute, started for the house.

"Now, there's something about that man that I don't like very well," thought the old detective, "but just what it is I can't quite make out. One thing is certain; he is no ordinary jayhawker. I must be on my guard."

Bim returned in a few minutes, and bidding Old King Brady follow him, led the way down to the shore of the pond.

Before they reached it the land grew swampy, and they had to jump from one hummock to another; but just before they came to the water's edge they found themselves upon firmer ground.

Here Old King Brady could see that the swamp extended off indefinitely on his left.

Trees grew out of the pond here, and he saw that there was no depth of water excepting in the direction of the Wabash tracks.

"I suppose they had this water dammed up before the branch track was washed away," he remarked.

"So they tell me," drawled Bim. "I dunno nuffin' erbout it. I'm only a squatter hyar. Hain't been around these yere parts long enough to larn the ropes. But hyar's the dug-out. Will yer get in?"

The dug-out was evidently a new one, and this bore out Bim's claim to being a new comer in the swamp.

Old King Brady got in astern, and Bim seating himself amidships, threw out his paddle and started.

He worked his way in among the trees with considerable skill.

Soon they had left the pond behind them, and were in the "slews," as Bim termed the narrow waterways.

After about fifteen minutes they came to a place where the trees had been cut away.

It was all swamp still, but there had been an attempt made to ditch and drain the land.

Directly in front of them a railroad track was to be seen, extending southwest over a low embankment which was clearly artificial.

Here, also, was the remains of a telegraph line.

The wires were down on the end toward the pond and the Wabash tracks, and two fallen poles lay entangled.

In the other direction, however, the line was all right, and lost itself from view around a bend in the track.

"Neow, this is as fur as ever I went," said Bim. "I dunno whether yew kin foller them tracks through to Budd's Island or not."

"I propose to try," said Old King Brady. "You will come along, I suppose."

"Sartin, ef yew want me tew."

"Make your boat fast, and we'll try it."

"Is it your idee that in some way them thieves runned the lost car up hyar?"

"I want to see what there is up here."

"But what's your idee?"

"Oh, I haven't any particular idea, Mr. Bim. There is a car missing, and here is a track. Let us see where it leads."

"Oh, all right. I'm with yer. I only wanted to know what you thought."

Bim tied up the boat to a stump, and then climbed up the embankment to the tracks.

A more horribly desolate place Old King Brady had never seen.

The swamp was now on all sides of them, and the trees with which it was thickly overgrown were of considerable size.

The rails were old and badly rusted.

In some places the ties had sunk down, and they soon came to a point where the road-bed was gone altogether.

Still, it would have been entirely possible to have run the baggage-car over this abandoned road once it was got upon this section of the track.

"They might have laid rails over the ice," Old King

Brady said to himself. "The idea seems far-fetched, but it certainly might have been done."

They had now come to a point where the road-bed took a turn, and lost itself among the trees.

About two miles had been covered, and this was the first variation the road took from a straight line.

Bim was ahead, and seemed determined to keep so.

While Old King Brady stopped to examine things the swamp rat pushed rapidly forward. He was now close to the bend, and about two hundred yards in advance.

"Hold on there, man!" shouted the old detective. "Let us keep together if we can."

But to this Bim paid no attention.

He did not even seem to hear.

On he hurried, and passing around the bend disappeared.

"Confound the fellow!" muttered Old King Brady, "what does he mean by charging ahead in that steam-engine style?"

He pushed on around the bend.

Now he could look along the track for half a mile or so.

No Bim was in sight.

On the right, a little ahead, stood an old shack, apparently deserted.

"Bim! Bim!" shouted Old King Brady, pushing forward.

He had just reached the shack when a man armed with a rifle jumped out on him.

"Up hands, thar, boss, or you're a dead one!" he cried.

CHAPTER V.

NICK RYAN TELLS ALL.

"Why, that's murder, by gracious!" exclaimed Harry, as he stood watching the raft, which in a few seconds vanished among the trees which on the east grew directly out of the bed of the pond.

It was all done so quick that he had scarcely had time to realize what was going on until it was over.

He sprang to his feet, and peered off in the direction where the tragedy had taken place.

Now he saw a man's head just above the water.

It did not move.

The owner of the head appeared to be standing on something.

"By jove, the water isn't so deep out there as I thought!" muttered Harry.

Evidently the man saw him.

"Help! Help! Save me!" he shouted.

Harry's answer was a wave of the hand.

He did not dare to shout lest the two men on the raft should hear and return.

Instantly he began to undress.

In a minute he was stripped, and he took a header into the pond.

The man saw him coming, and made no further outcry.

The distance was not over two hundred yards, and

Harry soon covered it.

He put down his feet as he drew near, expecting to touch bottom, but it was not there.

"Hello!" he called. "What are you standing on?"

"Haint standin' on nothin'!" was the reply. "I'm a-holdin' on to this here spile."

"Can you swim?"

"Not a stroke."

"Well, hold on there. I'm coming up alongside of you; but don't you grab me. If you do we shall both drown."

"I won't. I'll do jest as you say."

"Take hold of me by the hips and hold tight; keep as far back as you can. Think you can do that?"

"Sure, I can."

"Be careful now. There will be no sort of trouble in saving you if you will only do as I say."

Harry then came up alongside the man, and paddling with his hands, half trod water, throwing his hips back as far as possible.

The man made a frantic grab, and caught him around the waist.

If Young King Brady had been anything but the excellent swimmer he is both would have gone under.

But Harry was able to hold up.

"Now, now!" he cried. "Do as I told you. Let go of me. Take hold of my hips firmly, and give me a show."

"I—I'll do it!" sputtered the fellow. "But what am I to do with my legs?"

"Nothing at all. Only keep them still. That's better. Now, don't you stir a peg!"

Then, by a strong breast stroke, and as much leg work as he was able to get in, Harry managed to tow the man ashore.

He was a big, rough-looking fellow without a coat to his back, but the battered old hat which he wore on the raft had been retained.

Never was a man so relieved as he when he climbed up upon the branch track.

"Gee, I owe my life to you, all right, young feller!" he gasped. "Gee! I tought I was gone!"

"Not yet," said Harry, rubbing himself down with his hands preparatory to putting on his clothes.

"'Tain't them snoozers' fault, den. De blame geezers! Gee! But I'll get square!"

"What ward in New York did you live in, or was it Brooklyn?" demanded Young King Brady, suddenly.

"De tent, Brooklyn," replied the man. "Bond street, near Butler. How did you know?"

"By your talk."

"You from Brooklyn?"

"New York. I am track-walking here now."

"Oh!"

"Yes. Say, you had better get your clothes off and wring the water out of them."

"I s'pose I had."

"You will get your death if you don't; the night air in these swamps is bad epough, anyhow."

"Oh, I know. Ought to! I'm jest out of de hospital at Hannibal."

"Yes? Hurry up and get off your clothes."

The man began to undress, making picturesque remarks about his late companions as he proceeded.

But he was careful not to name them, as Harry specially noted.

The man wrung his clothes dry, and put them on again.

"Say, you ain't de track-walker what was here de other night."

"No. I'm the shift."

"Was you on duty the night de Buck Boys held up de train last March?"

"No."

"You've heard tell of it, I s'pose?"

"Sure."

"What's your name?"

"Bill Leary. What's yours?"

"Well, it's Nick Ryan. You needn't give it de holler, dough, if annybody asks if you see me—see?"

"Sure not."

"Say, I owe my life to you, Bill."

"Oh, cut that out. I saw that fellow push you off the raft. What else could I do? You would have done as much for me."

"Not on yer life! I can't swim. If you had been in my place and I in yours, you'd be a dead one now."

"What did he do it for?"

"Oh, we got to scrappin'."

"Friend of yours?"

"Naw! I don' know him. Never mind about that."

"Hurry up. I'll have to go on with my walk."

"Sure. Say, will you let me walk wit yer?"

"Certainly. Which way are you going?"

"Well, I'll be blame if I know. I'm not in it round here. I'd like to get square, dat's what I'd like."

"I should say so? Could I help you?"

"You could help me a lot, young feller, if I could trust yer."

"Why not?"

"I trusted them snoozers. You see what came of it."

"Suit yourself. I never go back on a man as long as he uses me right."

"Blamed if I don't feel like tryin' it. I can't do nothing alone, dat's one sure thing."

This remark Nick Ryan made beneath his breath.

At last Ryan seemed to come to a decision.

"Say, Bill, if I was to put you on to a big ting would you help me fight dem geezers off?" he suddenly demanded.

"That depends."

"Upon what?"

"How good a thing this good thing is, and how much I am to get out of it—see?"

"Half."

"Is it something to do with the missing baggage car which disappeared on the night of the hold-up?"

"Yes, it is."

"Do you know where that car is?"

"Yes, I do."

"Where?"

"Burned up."

"And the trunks?"

"Well, I know where dose is, too. But I'm not saying no more yet."

Young King Brady felt that fortune had favored him, and that his chance had come.

"I'm with you, Nick," he said, "only I want to say one thing."

"Well?"

"You must tell me all. No halfway talk. I want to know all."

"Well, you shall. I've gotter have he'p. Dat's sure. Not for all dem trunks contain would I let Jim Rice and Nosey Dunn pull off de job now."

"That's the way to talk. Out with it, man. You'll find me all right."

"Well, den here goes. You see, I come out here wit a circus, an' last fall I took sick wit a fever, an' got left behind in Hannibal, dis State."

"I know. You said you were in the hospital there."

"Yair. Part of de time as a patient, and part as a helper. 'Long in March dere came a feller dere wit a broken arm. He had been on a drunk for two weeks, and was about de woist looking mut you ever see."

"Well, I tuk care of him till he died, and de night he did die he telled me dat his name was Jack Buck."

"Hello! One of the outlaws who did the hold-up."

"Yair. He told me de hull story."

"I shall be glad to hear it if you are going to tell it to me."

"Oh, I am. I've made up my mind to dat. It seems dat de job was planned out weeks before. Know dat railroad track what's broke off by de pond—where we landed. I mean?"

"Yes."

"Well, dat pond was froze tight dat winter, of course, and dese here Buck Boys and dere pals, three of 'em railroad men what helped 'em do it, run rails down and hid 'em."

"De day before de hold-up dey laid 'em over de ice, and connected with dat broken track on both sides. Then come de rain, which like to have spiled deir plans."

"I see. Go on."

"Well, it appears dat dey got tipped off about dat baggage car having a lot of money an' diamonds into it, so it was dat night or never wit dem. I want yer to understand, Bill, dat dey hadn't nothing at all to do with de

accident what follered. Dat was an accident pure and simple—see?”

“I follow you.”

“All right, den. Well, de Buck Boys dey went troo de passengers jest for a bluff, though of course dey wanted all dere was a-comin’ to dem.”

“They uncoupled the car and ran it down the Budd’s Island branch?”

“Yair. But let me tell it. It was raining like de mischief, and de ice was rotterner dan dey knowed, but dey got de car over all right.”

“But what pulled it?”

“Oh, dey had four horses hid in de woods beyond de pond, or mebbe it was six, I dunno. Anyhow, dey got de car dere where dey wanted it all right.”

“And the men in it?”

“Dey shot every mother’s son of dem!”

“So?”

“Yair. Oh, dey muster been a bloody lot. Well, dey took de trunks out and piled ’em up, den dey started on de horses to go fur a wagon to haul de swag. Dey hadn’t had time to get it in dere. When dey was crossing de ice it give way under dem, an’ all hands was drowned except Jack Buck, and he managed to get ashore.”

“Well, well!”

“Wasn’t it a great note? He was all used up, but he managed to get to Carrolton, where he got a train and went to Kansas City. He got to drinkin’ in Carrolton, and he didn’t know where he was till he turned up in Kansas City. There he kept on boozing, having plenty of money, his share of what was tuk from the passengers. To cut de story short, he turned up in de Hannibal Hospital wit a broken arm, like I told you. He didn’t remember how he got it. He was all gone inside, too, and he died on me hands after telling his secret.”

“And what did you do?”

“Dere’s where I made a fool of meself. I should hev tried to work it alone, but likely I couldn’t have done it anny way. As it was, I give de snap away to two crooks what I run into in a saloon—Jim Rice and Nosey Dunn. Dey was to stake me. We come down here and we finds de trunks. Dat was yesterday; but say, instead of ten dere was only six, and what was into dem didn’t amount to nuthin’ at all. Some feller had cut in ahead of us and got de haul.”

Here was an unpleasant revelation.

“And what were you doing on the raft to-night?” inquired Harry.

“Aw, say, it’s Nosey, he won’t give it up. He tinks some feller is hiding in de swamp wit de valuable trunks. We seen lights last night, and heered someone a-calling. We was a-huntin’ round when Jim Rice and me got to crappin’, an’ he pushed me over. I tink it was a put-up job.”

“But where does the money come in if the valuable trunks are missing?” inquired Harry, who was becoming a little mystified at this stage of the game.

“Aw, say,” replied Ryan, “I don’t believe dey was never tuk fur. Who burned de baggage car? Who writ dem tings on de wall of de old shaft-house at de lead mine? Who is it dat keeps a-hollerin ‘I’ve got de money! I’ve got de diamonds!’ all night long. Besides, dey have got de greatest detective ever in dere, and we wanter do dem up and get de old feller to solve dis here mystery fur us—see?”

“How did you get this detective?”

“Oh, we captured him.”

“Who is he? What’s his name?”

“What’s his name!” cried Ryan. “Well, you’ll know his name all right when I tell yer. He’s Old King Brady, de greatest detective ever! ’Twas luck to get him, but dem two fools dunno how to use him—see?”

CHAPTER VI.

OLD KING BRADY FINDS HIMSELF IN AN AWKWARD PREDICAMENT.

The man who so suddenly confronted Old King Brady was none other than Harry’s new acquaintance, Nick Ryan.

Right behind him stood Mr. Ben Bim, the treacherous swamp-rat, with a sickly grin on his face.

“Don’t you budge a peg, old man,” said Ryan. “Dere’s tree of us in de deal, an’ right on top of yer now, an’ dat don’t count dis here galoot wit de auburn locks.”

Two men came hurrying up.

Both carried revolvers, and Old King Brady, as he stood there with his arms folded, looked them over with a smile.

They were typical New York crooks, all three of them.

One he personally knew, and that all knew him by sight he could hardly doubt.

It would have been strange if it were not so.

There are very few criminals in New York who do not know that familiar figure in the long blue coat with its flat brass buttons, and that ancient stock and high-pointed stand-up collar.

Those peculiarities of dress have made the old detective famous in a way, and he had not taken the trouble to change them when he started out upon this mission.

By the big, broad-brimmed white hat which he wore he was recognized by Mr. Jim Rice and Mr. Nosey Dunn even before they spoke.

“And so it’s you?” exclaimed the former, coming around in front of Nick Ryan’s prisoner. “Who would ever have thought of seeing you here now?”

“How are you, Jim?” replied Old King Brady, quietly. “What are you doing out here in Missouri?”

“Well, I’m asking you de same question, boss. What brought you here?”

“That’s easy answered. I’m working for the Wabash road, and you, I fancy, are working on the same mystery, but on your own account.”

“That’s what,” laughed Rice, who in his home city was known as a noted burglar and all-around crook.

"Say," he added, "I wanter have a good talk wit you; but let's settle wit dis Rube fust off."

He turned to the grinning swamp rat.

"Well," he said, "you did do as I told you to, then?"

"Yas!" drawled Bim. "Yew telled me if I fetched a detective in tew yew yewed give me something handsome. I didn't hope to ketch one so soon, but here he bees. Now, what do I git?"

He was soon to learn the nature of his reward.

Rice suddenly raised his revolver and covered him.

"What do you get? Why, git!" he cried. "Git right now, you blamed, red-headed geezer! Get, or I'll pump yer full of lead!"

"So you stick me, do yer?" snarled Bim, shaking with rage. "All right for yew! I—I'll git squar! Jest yew wait and see!"

He turned and stalked off down the track, the crooks calling out after him in a way which was not calculated to improve the situation.

"How little they know his kind," thought Old King Brady. "It is my opinion, Mr. Jim Rice, that you have signed your death warrant, if you only had sense enough to recognize the fact."

Old King Brady's turn was next.

While Ryan and Nosey Dunn held him covered, Jim Rice went through the old detective's pockets in approved style.

Not that he got much.

Old King Brady is always prepared for such emergencies.

It is a sharp man who can fathom all the secrets of the wonderful blue coat.

Thus, while Rice relieved the detective of one revolver, he still left one behind him.

The money which Old King Brady carries openly he did not touch; the real money pocket he did not find.

The search complete, Old King Brady's hands were tied behind him.

"Now you two leave me to deal wit dis man," said Rice. "Chase yerselves. If anyone of us can get what we want get out of him it's me."

He took the old detective by the arm and led him to a bench outside the shack.

"Sit down dere now, an' we'll have a talk," he said. "I wanted a detective, and I engaged dat Rube to get me the first one who came along. I never thought it would be you?"

"That's all very pretty, Jim," replied Old King Brady. "but do you think you are treating me very well?"

"It's on account of me partners, Mr. Brady. Only for dem I would be willing to trust you not to bother me, but I can't take no chances."

"Very good. Suit yourself."

"Oh, I know you are tinkin you'll square up wit me later; but say, I'll use yer right. Don't I know yer?"

"You ought to. I've arrested you three times, and I sent you to Sing Sing once."

"That's what yer did. Looks like dis was my chanst to get square."

"Oh, cut that out. Come down to business. You are here trying to get those ten trunks."

"Yes; so are you."

"Of course. I haven't denied it."

"Where's Harry?"

"Can't you see for yourself he is not with me this trip? Will you come to business or not?"

"Oh, I'm comin'. I want your advice."

"Well?"

"Do I get it?"

"Very likely. You'll get nothing till you have told me the whole story. That is sure."

"Oh, I'm going to tell it. Listen to me now."

Rice then went on to tell the story which Harry was destined to hear from Nick Ryan later on.

Needless to say that Old King Brady listened with close attention.

He questioned Rice particularly about the strange cries which these men had heard the night before in the swamp.

"It is very evident," he said, "that someone has abstracted the valuable trunks from the pile you tell me about."

"Speak English. Don't use dem big words. But who can it be?"

"That remains to be seen. You speak of writing in the shaft-house of this old lead mine on the island. What is it that is written there?"

"Aw, it's a lot of trash about diamonds and money. You'll have to see it for yerself."

"Jim, it sounds to me as you tell it as if a crazy man was in the deal."

"Jest what I say. Jest what I telled the boys."

"You opened all the six trunks?"

"Yes. Dat is, we looked into dem. Dey had all been busted open before we came along."

"Take me up there and let me see all there is to be seen, if you want my opinion."

"All right. We'll go in a few minutes."

"When did you come here?"

"Three days ago."

"And you have made a thorough search for this man?"

"Oh, yes; pretty good. We've got a raft what we made. We've been around as much as we could in the time. Of course, we couldn't go everywhere. This swamp is a big place, I want you to understand."

"Well, I'm ready."

"I'll be wit you in a few minutes. I wanter talk to de boys."

"You better untie my hands, Jim."

"Naw! I won't do it. Ye're as slippery as an eel. I want yer help too blame bad. I hain't taking no chances wit yer."

And with this Rice walked away, joining his companions.

ions, who stood together at a little distance down the track.

An animated conversation followed, which soon developed into a quarrel.

Ryan and Rice almost came to blows.

What it was all about Old King Brady could only guess.

At last peace was patched up, and Rice returned to the old detective's side.

"Come on now," he said. "We'll put it troo to de island, an' you can see de trunks and de writing for yer-self."

It was a long walk, and doing the distance with one's hands tied was decidedly tedious.

At last they came in sight of a low hill rising out of the swamp.

This proved to be on Budd's Island.

The track ran at the foot of the hill, and just beyond stood a few old ramshackle frame buildings, the remains of the lead mine plant.

Upon the track was all that was left of the missing baggage car, the wheels and a mass of burned and twisted iron.

Lying heaped up nearby were six trunks.

"There you are," said Rice. "Now, you see that my story is true."

"I never doubted it, Jim," replied the old detective. "But let us get right down to business. Where is this writing on the wall?"

"Come this way," said Rice.

He led the old detective into one of the smaller buildings.

It was the shaft house of the old mine.

Old King Brady glanced down into the deep pit which yawned at his feet, but could not see the bottom.

Turning aside into a little room, Rice pointed to the wall.

They were of rough boards, and were all scribbled over with chalk.

The writing was in a bold hand, and in detached sentences, which ran in the following style:

"I'm all right now!

"I'm worth a million in diamonds!

"I've got more money than any man on earth.

"I've got the jewels of a king's crown!"

There were several dozen of these singular sentences. It would be tedious to enumerate them all.

"There!" cried Rice. "Would anyone but a crazy man write on the wall like that?"

"Well, Jim, it is a mystery. I'm willing to help you solve it, but I think you ought to set me free."

"Not yet. We can't do nothing about it anyway till night, and not den until late. I've got someting else to attend to. I've got an idea of me own what I want to look into, and it will take us away from here for awhile. You and me will take dis matter up later on."

This ended the talk.

To Old King Brady's disgust he was taken into an old

building which appeared to have once been the boarding-house of the mine.

Here his feet were tied, as well as his hands, and he was tumbled over upon an old bed.

"These wretches mean to put me out of business just as soon as they get through using me," thought the detective. "It's a bad job. That fellow Rice owes me an old grudge, and this is surely the time he will attempt to pay me up. I must have a heart to heart talk with him when he turns up next."

But Old King Brady lay there for hours and no one came near him, nor could he hear a sound outside.

Night settled down over the old lead mine on Budd's Island, and still they had not returned.

CHAPTER VII.

HARRY COMES UP WITH THE TRUNKS.

The night passed, and still Old King Brady found himself in the same predicament.

During the long tedious hours of that night Old King Brady found out that the strange cries referred to by Rice were no freak of the ex-burglar's imagination.

The yelling began about midnight, and it kept up at intervals until nearly daybreak.

It invariably began with a cry which sounded like:

"Hoo! Hoo! Hoo! Hoo! Ho-o-o-o!"

From this it rose and fell, and words seemed to be spoken.

Old King Brady thought that the madman must be a German; still, he could not be sure.

But that the cries actually came from a madman he felt certain.

It was not his first experience of this sort, and he was therefore well able to judge.

Sometimes the sound seemed to be quite near.

Then again it appeared to die away in the distance.

The last time he heard it the sound seemed to come from near where the trunks were heaped up.

Then came daybreak, and those strange sounds were heard no more.

Old King Brady, aside from the great discomfort he naturally felt, began to be alarmed for his own safety.

He simply could not free himself from his bonds.

His limbs were beginning to swell around the cords.

What if no one ever came to his aid?

"But that cannot be," he assured himself. "It is my opinion that my friend Mr. Bim has done for those crooks; if that is so he will be apt to look me up when he get's around to it."

Thus uncomfortably the night passed.

Meanwhile Harry was getting next to Nick Ryan.

"We can't do anything until morning," he said to the fellow, after hearing the end of his story. "So we must finish out the night the best we can."

"When are you laid off?" asked Ryan.

"I believe my relief will be down on a freight train

which passes here about seven o'clock," Harry replied.

"That's the agreement, at all events."

"You speak as if you wasn't a regular man."

"I am not. I'm only an extra."

"Then you can go wit me as soon as yer relief comes?"

"Yes."

"All right, den. I believe I'll build a fire and try to dry me clothes a bit."

This was done, and Young King Brady left the fellow hovering over the blaze while he went back over his beat.

Three times he passed the place during the night.

Ryan had stretched himself on the ground and gone to sleep, and Harry had to wake him up in the end.

This was after Jerry Brown turned up.

The freight was on time, and Jerry dropped off of it, meeting Harry near the bridge.

The track-walker had a pretty good load aboard, but he was perfectly well able to take care of himself.

"What kind of a night did you have?" was his first question.

"Oh, I made out all right," replied Harry.

"Nobody came near you?"

"No railroad man. There came along a tramp, though, who turned out to be an old friend of mine. He's asleep back there now, and I am going to stick with him."

"Well, I'm much obliged. Here's your two dollars."

Harry thanked him, and then put the question which had been on his tongue's end:

"Say, Jerry, this friend of mine wants me to go up the swamp with him."

"And what for? What the deuce——"

"Oh, he's no fool. He claims to know a place where there are lots of fresh water clams. He wants me to help him look for pearls."

"Well, they are found around here. That's right."

"Where could we get a boat?"

"Blamed if I know."

"We might build a raft if I had the tools. Could you help me out on that?"

"I guess so. The tower man has a kit of tools. I could borrow them for you."

"I wish you would, then?"

Ryan was awakened and introduced.

Later Jerry got them a saw, hammer, nails, and rope. The raft was knocked together in short order.

By nine o'clock they were ready for a start, and without seeing anything of Jerry, who had gone up the track, they pushed off upon the pond.

"Let's work down the other way first," said Harry. "If that fellow should see us striking right across to where you say the railroad begins again it might arouse his suspicions."

"All right," said Ryan.

"Say! Isn't that the other raft over there?" asked Harry.

They were working their way through the trees in the direction of Bim's house.

At a little distance away was a raft lodged between two trees.

"It certainly looks like de raft," cried Ryan.

"And dem two snoozers is asleep on it!" he added as they drew nearer.

"Let's pull out!" cried Harry. "We don't want to have a mess now."

"Not on your life!" growled Nick Ryan, who was doing the paddling. "Dis is my chanst. I'll drive a knife into dem!"

Harry tried to carry his point.

But Ryan was obstinate.

"Hold on now! Don't gimme no more of dat!" he snarled. "I've got a revolver. If I can only get de drop on to 'em it's all I ask, dough I'd rather give 'em de knife."

It looked like trouble ahead.

Finding himself powerless to dissuade the fellow, Harry waited patiently for what was to come.

But as they drew nearer the raft there was no movement on the part of either of the men.

What could it mean?

Harry, who was standing forward, was the first to discover.

The raft was covered with blood.

"They are dead!" he thought. "By jove, they have killed each other!"

He kept his mouth shut, however, preferring that Ryan should make the discovery for himself.

"Here, Bill, take the sculler now," said Ryan, when they were pretty close to the raft. "I want to get ready for business."

Harry silently complied.

Ryan had no sooner gone forward than he gave a yell.

"Gee! Dem fellers is dead. Look at de blood!"

"I saw it."

"Den why didn't you holler?"

"It was time enough when you saw it."

"Gee! What can it mean?"

"I fancy they got in a fight between themselves and killed each other."

"We must find out. Hey! Hey, Jim! Nosey! Hey! Say!"

There was no answer.

Those two sleepers were sleeping the sleep from which there is no awakening.

Harry brought the raft up alongside the other, and Ryan jumped aboard.

"They are as dead as smelts, bote of 'em!" he cried. "Good enough! I only wisht dat I had done de job!"

He stooped down and examined the bodies.

"Jim Rice was shot in de back," he announced. "Nosey's got it in de breast. Guess his heart is plugged, all right, all right."

"I don't see how they could have shot each other so," said Harry.

Without replying Ryan began searching Jim Rice.

Harry saw him pocket a roll of bills, but he said nothing.

Then it was a revolver.

Ryan opened it up, and examined the chambers.

"Full up!" he cried. "He's got anoder, dough. He tuk it from Old King Brady."

The second revolver was found and examined.

This was also "full up," and so was the one taken from Nosey Dunn.

"Can this be the Governor's work?" thought Harry.

But Ryan had quite another idea.

"I see it all now!" he cried. "Say, we better be gettin' out of dis or we'll get plugged, too."

"What do you mean?"

"Hold up. I'll explain in a minute."

He immediately tumbled Jim Rice's body into the pond.

"There, you bum! Good riddance to bad rubbish!" he cried.

It was as cold-blooded business as Harry had ever seen, and he turned his head away.

Nosey Dunn followed his companion, and then Ryan came back on the raft, bringing with him the rude sculling oar from the other, which was better than theirs.

"I'll tell yer how it all happened," he said, and he went on to tell about Old King Brady's capture, the details of which he had omitted the night before.

Of course, the turning down of Mr. Ben Bim was told with the rest.

"You think that fellow shot them then?" questioned Harry.

"I do," was the reply. "Don't you think it is likely?"

"I think it is very likely."

"Then there you are. I got my revenge, all right, but we must look out we don't come in for our turn."

"I should say so! The sooner we get out of this the better. It is just like those swamp rats to hide behind the trees and plug a feller."

They sculled over to the tracks then.

How Harry saw how easy it had been to connect it with the other end of the break merely by laying a few rails on the ice.

Making their landing, they hurried along over the ties.

Ryan was jubilant.

He saw the way all open before him, now that he had gotten rid of his treacherous companions.

Consequently, after the manner of his kind, he immediately began to plan treachery himself.

"Say, Bill," he exclaimed, "I tell you what our game is."

"Well, tell it."

"Old King Brady we left tied up, while we came down here to make a thorough search of the different waterways before we took him into de deal."

"Well?"

"Of course, he must have got pretty tired by dis time. We will turn him loose and make a lot of him. Den we'll

get his best work. Dey say he's great. If he can't solve dis mystery den nobody can. Once we get dere I'll do him, and tumble him into de swamp. Den it will be only you and me."

Harry pretended to coincide, as there was no other way.

So they pushed on to the old lead mine.

There, sure enough, alongside the track lay a heap of trunks.

CHAPTER VIII.

SINGULAR EXPERIENCES OF OLD KING BRADY.

As the reader knows, Old King Brady, so far as Jim Rice or Nosey Dunn were concerned, might have remained in the boarding-house of the old lead mine forever.

Two of the old detective's captors were dead.

The third would have been in the same boat but for Harry.

But with the coming of morning Old King Brady was to have another experience which was anything but pleasant.

It was about half-past nine when he heard footsteps outside.

"At last!" thought the detective.

"Jim!" he shouted. "Hey, Rice! For heaven sake give me some relief!"

The only answer was a loud, unearthly laugh.

It was enough to make one's blood run cold to listen to it."

"The lunatic!" thought Old King Brady. "It is with him I have to deal. Can he have killed those men?"

He did not call again.

In fact, he did not know what to do.

Therefore he waited in silence.

Still the movement outside was heard.

The man appeared to be pacing up and down before the door of the boarding-house.

After a little he was heard going away.

Once again, for the fortieth time, perhaps, Old King Brady struggled with his bonds.

It was no sort of use.

Never before had he been tied up so tight.

"If I don't get relief soon this is going to be my finish," he thought.

And not the least of his troubles was hunger.

Not since the previous morning had the old detective tasted food.

Fifteen minutes passed, and suddenly the footsteps were heard again.

This time they were coming directly toward the door.

"I'm up against it now," thought Old King Brady.

The mysterious walker entered.

But instead of coming into the room where Old King Brady lay, he passed up the stairs, and could be heard tramping about overhead.

There was something positively uncanny about it all.

For half an hour and over Old King Brady endured this.

Up and down the man could be heard pacing.

It seemed as if his restless walk would never come to an end.

At last he descended the stairs again, and could be heard passing through the front hall toward the outside door.

"Anything is better than this suspense," thought Old King Brady. "I'll give him another call."

"Friend! Will you step in here a minute?" the detective cried.

The footsteps halted.

Another wait of fully ten minutes followed.

Then suddenly a strange-looking object came stalking into the room.

It was a stout man dressed in a suit of clothes which were practically rags.

Around his waist was an old cartridge belt with a revolver thrust into it.

No face was visible.

A big slouch white hat in the style of Old King Brady's own was pulled down over his eyes, so that the crown completely covered the man's face, showing only a short black beard below.

In the crown two peep-holes had been cut, and behind two glittering eyes could be seen.

Nor was this all.

Pinned upon the coat were as many as twenty diamond brooches, the real goods.

They flashed and glittered as the strange figure stood there staring through the peep-holes.

Not a word was spoken. The man just stood there motionless.

Old King Brady stood it for a minute or two, and then tackled him again.

"Friend," he said, "you see my predicament. Will you kindly set me free?"

There was no answer.

If the man had been a wooden image he could not have paid less heed.

"I have been here a long time," continued Old King Brady. "I am an old man. I am almost used up with it. Please have mercy on me and set me free."

Then came such an answer as Old King Brady will not forget in a hurry.

The man burst into peal after peal of wild laughter.

The room fairly rang with it.

It made Old King Brady's blood run cold.

"Lunatic, of course," the old detective said to himself. "If I could only fix my eyes on his I might make him obey me. As matters stand the case is hopeless, I am afraid."

It was to go differently from what he thought.

Quieting down after a minute, the man suddenly whipped out a long knife and made a rush for the detective.

As he came he gave a queer snarling cry.

"I am done for!" thought Old King Brady. "This is the end!"

Anyone might have thought so.

But all the man did was to cut the bonds about the old detective's ankles.

Then, with another blood-curdling laugh, he rushed out of the room.

Still running, his footfalls died away in the distance, until they were heard no more.

"Confound the luck!" muttered Old King Brady. "I suppose I ought to be thankful that he did not kill me, but why in the world could he not have finished his job?"

Question was now how to get up?

For a young athletic fellow this might easily have been accomplished.

Old King Brady made several ineffectual attempts.

At last, after crawling over to a chair upon which he could rest his body, he did succeed in getting on his feet.

"Good!" he muttered. "I ought to be able to fix it now. If I could only find a nail or something against which I could grind these cords."

He went out into the open.

It was a beautiful morning; the birds were singing in the swamp, and the sun shone brightly.

No trace of the lunatic could Old King Brady discover.

"The chances are that fellow has killed those men during the night," Old King Brady said to himself. "Who can he be? But whoever he is, he has got hold of some of that jewelry, all right. This is turning out to be a most peculiar case. If Harry was only here!"

He walked about, trying to discover some way by which he could free his hands.

Now all at once he heard voices in the distance.

Two men seemed to be coming down the track.

Not wishing to show himself until he knew with whom he had to deal, Old King Brady crossed the track and stood in among the bushes which grew under the little hill.

A moment more and the man Nick Ryan came into view.

Close behind him, to the old detective's immense relief, walked Harry!

"Help at last!" he thought. "I'll give them a moment, though, just to see what they have to say for themselves."

They came forward with quick steps.

"There they are!" cried Ryan. "Now you see the trunks."

"There are six of them here, just as you said!" replied Young King Brady, looking about.

"That's what," said Ryan. "If they were only the valuable ones now. In this one there are some pretty good clothes, which I think I'll swipe now, for mine are about done for. I dropped my coat overboard last night, and —"

He had seized hold of one of the trunks and was lifting it up by the handle when the old detective stepped into view.

Harry gave an exclamation of joyful amazement.

"Well, well! So you have got your trunks!" exclaimed

Old King Brady, looking around. "This is very satisfactory."

"Look out!" shouted Harry.

Suddenly a masked man rose up beside the old detective, and thrust a revolver in his face.

It was Old King Brady's mysterious visitor, of course. Not a word was spoken.

Behind the hat there was a low, chuckling laugh.

Harry drew his own revolver and covered the man.

Nick Ryan dropped the trunk, and did the same.

"Drop that or you're a dead one!" shouted Young King Brady.

The man burst out into wild laughter.

Flourishing the revolver he ran around behind the hill, and disappeared.

"Don't fire! Don't chase him! He's crazy!" cried Old King Brady.

Ryan had already started after the fellow, but he now halted.

"Cut me loose, one of you," said the old detective. "We will look that fellow up later on."

Again and again the laugh was heard.

Then came the cry:

"I've got the diamonds! I'm the richest man on earth! Ha, ha, ha! I'm worth ten billion dollars! Ha, ha, ha!"

Harry rushed across the tracks and cut the cords about Old King Brady's wrists.

"Thanks for that much!" gasped the old detective.

"Governor!" cried Harry. "I thought you were a goner then!"

"Oh, I don't believe he would have shot me," replied the old detective. "It is not my first experience with him. I have a lot to tell, but let me talk to this man first. Keep a sharp eye out for that lunatic, my boy!"

The cries were still heard, but now the words spoken were in German.

After a few moments, while they continued to talk, the sounds died away.

"So you have come back at last," said Old King Brady, turning to Ryan. "Where are your partners. This is a shabby way you have treated me!"

Ryan was staring first at one of the detectives, and then at the other, with a look of disgust upon his face.

"Ah, ha! So you two are acquainted, it would seem," he said.

Harry in his excitement had given himself away.

Just how Old King Brady would take it he did not know, but the old detective immediately came to his relief.

"Acquainted!" he exclaimed. "We are partners—that's all."

"Gee! Young King Brady!" cried Ryan.

"Sure," said Harry.

"Well, I'll be blowed!"

"But it don't interfere with the fact that I saved your life just the same, and it don't make it necessary for you to get excited."

Ryan gave a disgusted grunt.

"I guess I am up against it all right," he growled. "Well, I cave. Anyhow, let's be friends."

"You know this man, Governor?" asked Harry.

"I know him—yes. He's one of three who captured me and left me here to starve. Ryan, I ask you again where are your pals?"

"Dead, and a good job, too, for they tried to kill me."

"So? Did you kill them?"

"I did not."

"Who then, Harry? We want to come to an understanding."

"We don't know," replied Harry. "We found them lying dead on their raft."

"Well, then, you don't have to look far for their murderer. So much for playing double with that red-headed swamp rat, Ryan."

"Gee! Do you tink he done it?" cried Ryan.

"I haven't the least doubt of it," replied the old detective. "And what's more, I tell you that we all want to look sharp, or we will get a dose of the same medicine. Now, then, I am starving to death. If there is anything to eat around this place trot it out, or you will have a dying man on your hands!"

CHAPTER IX.

NICK RYAN FALLS INTO TROUBLE.

Fortunately for the starving detective, Nick Ryan was able to produce some bread, ham, and other eatables.

The three treasure hunters had provided themselves with a good supply of food when they first came into the swamp.

Ryan and Harry were ready for breakfast also.

So a fire was built, and a substantial meal made.

While their respective stories were told.

No secret was made of the fact that they were working for the Wabash road by the Bradys.

On the other hand, Ryan seemed to think that it was going to pay him best to be equally frank.

He told his story over again, and wound up by saying:

"Of course, you fellers will collar de hull business now. Don't s'pose I shall get a blame ting."

"Ryan," said Old King Brady, "let us come to an understanding. Of course, we can't turn these trunks over to you if we get them. We have, however, got to have help. Help us, and you shall come in on the reward. Fight us and there's no telling where you will land."

"Oh, I hain't got no notion of fighting youse," replied Ryan. "Nothin' of ther sort. I'm wit youse, because I see blamed well it won't pay me to be agin youse. So thar you are."

"Wise man," said Old King Brady. "Now, listen, boys. The whole thing hangs upon our tracing this lunatic to his holdout. There he has unquestionably got the four valuable trunks concealed."

"Can you be sure of that?" questioned Harry.

"I have the best of reason for being sure. When you

saw that man he was not rigged out as he was when I saw him first. Then he wore as many as twenty pieces of diamond jewelry pinned to his clothes. These he had removed when he appeared the second time."

"You actually saw that?" cried Ryan.

"I actually saw it," replied the old detective. "There can be no doubt of the truth of what I say."

"Good! We'll get him yet."

"But who do you think he can be?" demanded Harry.

"Impossible to say."

"But what is to be done?"

"We must hunt over every inch of this island for the first move. Ryan, has that already been done?"

"Pretty well," replied Ryan. "I don't believe you will find him here."

"He is in the swamp somewhere, then?"

"But why don't he show his face?" demanded Harry.

"Oh, that is one of his crazy notions," replied the old detective. "Who can tell what a crazy man will do once he gets started? But come, let's get to work."

"He don't seem to have been at the grub," said Ryan; "but, anyhow, before we start in to do anything I had better hide what dere is left, or we may go hungry yet."

"A good scheme," replied Old King Brady. "Do it now; in the meantime, Harry and I will examine these trunks."

"You won't find nothing to amount to much, den. Not but what's into 'em could be hocked pretty good in New York, but what's dat amount to here in dis blamed swamp?"

"They are all open?"

"Every blamed one of 'em, and were so when we fust found 'em."

Ryan departed then, and the Bradys went to work on the trunks.

"If we could get that fellow's revolver away from him it would be a good scheme," Old King Brady remarked. "I don't trust him for a cent."

"He has got three," replied Harry. "You never could do it without having a row."

"I suppose not. We want to keep a sharp eye on him, however."

"How are we ever going to get the trunks out of this hole even if we find them?"

"That is an after-consideration, of course. We shall have to have help."

"And I don't suppose it would take long to get it?"

"Not at all. The first thing is to locate that lunatic and capture him. The next to attend to that murderous swamp rat. That done, a telegram to Mr. Moorhouse will bring us all the help we want."

"It seems to me it would almost pay to send that telegram in advance. We need help here."

But Old King Brady instantly rejected the suggestion.

Harry had not learned the ways of his great chief as fully then as he learned them later.

If there is one thing Old King Brady will not stand for it is interference in his work.

The six trunks were now examined.

Enough to say that they contained mostly wearing apparel.

Their contents had evidently been gone over by somebody before them.

Nothing of any real value was found.

Long before they had finished their examination Ryan returned and lent a hand.

"Blame tough for a feller to get as far as I did on a job and den be balked," he growled, after the examination was completed.

"That's the way it goes sometimes," answered Old King Brady. "But don't you care! Come with us now, and we will see what can be done. You don't want to forget that you owe your life to my partner here."

"And I don't," replied Ryan. "Only for dat, you wouldn't find me taking it easy like I am."

"We go now," said the old detective. The first step must be to follow around behind that hill where the fellow disappeared."

"How is it you didn't notice him there in the bushes alongside of you, Governor?" Harry demanded as they walked along.

"I hadn't the faintest idea he was there," said Old King Brady. "By the way, let us get back there a minute."

"What for?" demanded Ryan. "I say let's be going on."

But Old King Brady is boss when it comes to an undertaking like this, and he took pains to let Ryan know it, too.

They returned to the foot of the hill.

"Here's where he hid," said the old detective, pointing to a small hollow among the bushes, which looked as if a stone might have been pried out of it at some time. "Ha! Just as it came to my mind. Look here!"

He stooped and picked out of the grass a magnificent diamond sunburst.

Then it was another brooch in the shape of a half-moon, blazing with diamonds.

Others followed.

Harry made no move to help.

He stood watching Nick Ryan, whose face was a study.

"Well, well, well!" he finally broke out with. "Say, Mr. Brady, youse is workin' a regular jewelry mine! Wouldn't it jar you if you was in my shoes?"

Old King Brady calmly pocketed his valuable find before he made any reply.

"It is the way of the world," my friend," he then said. "I am working for the Wabash road."

There was an ugly look on Ryan's face which Harry did not like.

"Not for a minute must I let that fellow get out from under my eye until we are safe through with this job," he said to himself.

"Now we will go around the hill," declared Old King Brady. "The lunatic question is settled, at all events."

"Of course de geezer must have been bughouse, or he wouldn't chuck de stuff about like dat," said Ryan as they walked along.

"Not a doubt of it," replied the old detective.

"How much do you tink dat stuff is wurt?"

"Oh, I don't know. Those stones may not all be genuine. Perhaps none of them are. One can't tell at a glance."

"Lemme look, an' I'll blame soon tell you den."

"We will wait until we have the chance to let some expert pass on them," said Old King Brady, quietly. "Come on, now."

They pushed on around the hill, coming to a place where the trees grew very thick.

It was a hopeless task.

The Bradys and their undesirable companion prowled about this bit of woodland for a good two hours.

Everywhere it sloped down to the swamp, except at the narrow space where the embankment for the railroad was.

Harry looked longingly at the useless telegraph wires.

He would have liked to send a message to Mr. Moorhouse calling for help right then.

They covered about one-half of the island on the east side of the track that morning, and then laid off for an hour or so.

In the afternoon they did the other side, where the land was more open. Budd's Island proved to be about three miles in circumference, and one across at the widest point.

Not a trace of the madman could they find anywhere.

"It looks as though it was going to be a long job, Governor," remarked Harry, when the Bradys found themselves sitting together on the boarding-house steps after supper.

They were alone, Ryan having taken himself off.

Where he had gone they did not know.

"To-night will bring the madman around again sure," replied Old King Brady. "We must capture him—that's all."

"You don't seem to be a bit afraid of him."

"Well, I can't say I am very much. I have an idea that his revolver is not loaded, and that he has nothing to load it with."

"It would seem as if he would have shot you if it had been."

"Exactly."

"I must say, Governor, I'm more worried about Ryan than I am about him."

"I look for trouble in that quarter; but don't talk too loud while you are discussing the fellow."

"If we could only shake him!"

"Ha! That is not so easy. My opinion is that at the present moment he could be found down by the hill where I found that jewelry."

"Looking for more?"

"Exactly."

"Shouldn't wonder a blamed bit. Shall we go that way?"

"Suppose we do. But don't say a word if you see him there. Let him keep whatever he finds."

Lighting cigars, the Bradys strolled down by the trunk pile.

They saw nothing of Ryan, however.

But just as they reached the pile there was an alarm.

Suddenly a shot rang out behind the hill.

It was followed by three fiendish yells coming in quick succession.

Then there was another shot.

"Help! Help! Save me!" Ryan's voice was heard shouting.

Yell after yell came then.

"Heavens! He has been attacked either by the madman or the swamp-rat!" cried Old King Brady. "Come on! We want to save his life if we can."

It was growing dusk as they went dashing around the hill.

To go prowling about in the woods was not a pleasant prospect by any means.

"Listen!" said Old King Brady. "Can you hear anything?"

"Not a sound," replied Harry. "By jove, I guess Ryan is done for all right."

"Come on! We will make a try at it, anyhow."

They pushed in among the trees, covering a distance of about a hundred yards, when once more they stopped and listened:

"Ryan! Ryan! Oh, Ryan!" shouted Old King Brady suddenly.

The answer came promptly enough.

"Ryan is dead! Come on, you, and get killed!"

"Heavens! Can that be your swamp-rat?" gasped Harry.

"No," replied the old detective. "He don't talk that kind of talk. I guess it is the madman, all right."

"What shall we do?"

"Get back. The game isn't worth the candle. Left to himself, I have no doubt Ryan would have tried to put us out of business before daylight. Anyhow, his fate is upon his own head."

Bidding Harry follow him, Old King Brady returned to the house.

CHAPTER X.

THE VANISHING OF OLD KING BRADY.

"If it wasn't that I believe you are dead right, and that he would have tried to do us before daylight I'd be for trying again to help that man," exclaimed Harry, pacing the floor.

"Upon my word, I think we have enough to do to think of ourselves," replied the old detective. "If the madman didn't have a loaded revolver before he has certainly got one now. No sleep for ours this night, my boy."

For a good two hours they remained on the doorstep, listening to every sound.

Talk lagged.

The horrible loneliness of their situation got upon the nerves of both of them.

About ten o'clock Old King Brady began to doze.

"Dear me, Harry, I think I shall have to lie down for a few minutes," he said, after pulling himself up for the third time.

"Of course you will," replied Young King Brady. "Get upstairs and lie on one of those beds."

"Not at all. I'll draw one of the mattresses down here into the hall and lie on that."

"I'll get it, Governor. I'll get you a pillow, too."

"Well, I wish you would. The fact is, I am about played out."

Harry ran upstairs, lighting his way with a little electric dark lantern which in common with his partner he always carries.

In a moment he sent the mattress tumbling down the stairs.

Then, returning to get a couple of pillows, he hurried down himself.

"There! Won't that do better?" he called cheerfully.

There was no answer.

Flashing his lantern Harry saw that the mattress lay at the foot of the stairs where it had fallen.

His heart sank.

"More trouble!" he thought, and at the top of his voice he shouted the old detective's name.

There was no answer.

"Great Scott! Can that fiend have got him in that one instant?" thought Harry, "or has he just stepped outside for something?"

Drawing his revolver, he rushed out into the open, shouting "Governor! Governor!"

The only answer was the sighing of the wind among the trees behind the house.

Again and again he called, but all to no purpose.

He then ran down to the track and on to the little hill.

Discovery failing him there, he retraced his steps, and looked inside of the different buildings of the abandoned mine.

But it was all to no purpose.

After prowling about in every direction, and that for over half an hour, Harry was reluctantly forced to give up the search.

To venture into the woods would have been mere madness.

Besides that was the hopelessness of the undertaking.

The whole island except by the railroad was overgrown.

It was impossible to forget their tedious morning's search.

It would be difficult to describe Young King Brady's feelings now, but they bordered upon despair.

He tried to calm himself sufficiently to think.

"I'll wait quiet for a while," he finally said to him-

self. "That fiend has got two of us, and the chances are he will be coming after the third before very long."

Again he took up his place on the doorstep.

Such another wretched session Harry put in.

Two hours passed, and every instant he expected to be called upon to defend his life.

Now at last came the cries and hootings which had disturbed the old detective the night before.

Then the cries came in German, which Harry knows something about.

Where the old detective was at sea in this Harry caught on to a certain extent.

What was being said was much the same as when it was called in English.

Now, as the sound seemed to be drawing nearer Young King Brady began to feel that his time for business had come.

He slipped behind the door, leaving it half open, and stood ready with his revolver.

For a few minutes the cries continued, but the madman appeared to be moving off down the track.

At last they ceased altogether, and Harry was just about coming out from behind the door when all at once he heard hurried footsteps approaching the house.

"Heavens! I'm up against it now!" he thought. "But it has got to be done."

He waited breathlessly.

Nearer and nearer the footsteps approached.

When directly in front of the house the sounds ceased.

Suddenly someone sprang into the hall.

Young King Brady was ready for him.

Darting out from behind the door, he thrust the revolver in the fellow's face.

But now came the surprise.

It was not the madman!

Instead, Harry found himself confronting a tall, gaunt individual with long hair, fiery-red, hanging down over his shoulders.

The man was dressed after the manner of his kind, and carried in his hand an ancient shotgun.

"Hello! You'll be the swamp-rat!" cried Young King Brady. "Throw down that gun! Up-hands or you're a dead man!"

The gun dropped to the floor.

With a smothered exclamation the man raised his hands above his head.

"Don't shoot, pard," he whined. "Yew'll regret it if yew dew!"

"I'm inclined to think I'll regret it if I don't," retorted Harry. "Is that the gun you shot those two men with last night?"

"Now, looker hyar, pard, yew are barkin' up ther wrong tree. I never killed a man in my life."

"Don't lie to me! The two men on the raft. I know."

"Thar ye're wrong. They shot each other. I seen 'em dew it with my own eyes."

"Now I know that I am right," replied Harry, kicking

the shotgun to one side. "Step outside there, and stand by the door! Attempt to fool with me if you dare! I'm an officer of the law."

Bim, for it was, of course, no one else, backed out.

Waiting only to toss the shotgun to the end of the passage, Harry went out after him.

"What's your name, man?" demanded Young King Brady, lowering his revolver.

"Waal, I reckon hit's Ben Bim. Be yew with the other detective, neow?"

"He is my partner—yes."

"Waal, him an' me's friends. We stood in together against them other fellers. Call him. "He'll tell yew."

"You dirty hound! You betrayed him into their hands! He has already told me."

"Waal, I won't dew it agin, I reckon," retorted Bim, with a sickly smile.

"Enough of this," said Harry, sternly. "Why are you here?"

"Waal, I was jest a coon-huntin'. I've got a family to support. Gotter live, yew know."

"Look here, Mr. Bim," said Young King Brady, suddenly changing his tone, "are you on the make at all?"

Bim gave a queer cackle.

"On the make!" he cried. "Why, of course I'm on the make! Who hain't in these days?"

"Then listen to me, and perhaps I can put you in the way of making twenty-five dollars. I suppose you wouldn't object to that?"

"Not at all!" cried Bim.

"You did some work for three men who were at this place and they went back on you?"

"That's right."

"You have been here before?"

"Never."

"Sure? If you expect to earn that money you will have to be honest with me."

"Hit's so. If I telled yew, why, yew wouldn't believe me."

"Tell it. Try me. I believe a lot."

Bim gave him a searching look.

"Come neow," he drawled. "I've tuk a big liking to yew. Yew are sharp. Yew hain't like them other fellers. Yes, they skinned me, all right. Waal, I come in sight of this hyar place once, but I was druv back."

"Back by who? By what?"

"Well, that's the point. If I was to tell yew then yew wouldn't believe me."

"Tell it; tell it!"

"By a ghost, then. So there!"

"Did the ghost have a big white hat pulled down over his eyes? Did he look at you through two holes cut in the hat?"

"Yes, he did."

"I thought so!"

"You have seen him?"

"Yes. It is no ghost. It is a crazy man."

"Sho!"

"But if you have lived about here long——"

"Thar yer wrong. I haven't. I only just located in this here swamp a couple of months ago."

"Then that's different. You know the old man you led in here."

"The detective?"

"Yes. He is my partner. He has just been carried off by your ghost. If you can help me to find him that's where the twenty-five dollars come in."

Bim drew a long breath.

"That's all very well," he said, "but how do I know I get the money?"

"You'll have to trust me for it. You'll get it, all right."

"S'pos'n' what I tell yew don't amount tew much? S'pos'n' hit's jest a steer."

"If it steers me right then you get the money."

"Waal, then I'll go yew. Thar's a wild man in this hyar swamp what I've been a-supplyin' with grub. Mebbe he's the ghost."

"Ha! I believe you! You have seen his face?"

"Oh, yes."

"And talked with him?"

"Sure; many a time. He told me that the ghost was hyar, an' if anybody come into this place he'd sure get ketched by him."

"He is the ghost himself. Show me where you take this man provisions."

"Come on then," said Bim, and he started back along the track in the direction of the Wabash road.

CHAPTER XI.

OUT OF THE FRYING-PAN INTO THE FIRE.

Old King Brady was taken entirely unawares.

He was seated on the step calmly smoking when a slight noise around the corner of the house attracted his attention.

It was more like the stealthy tread of some animal than the footfall of a man.

Without his usual caution Old King Brady arose and turned the corner of the house.

Here there was a thick clump of bushes, and out of the bushes came the thing which decided the old detective's fate.

It was the madman again, with his face still concealed.

With lightning quickness he threw himself upon Old King Brady, seized him about the waist, and threw him over his shoulder as a man might throw a sack of meal.

The old detective did not even have time to draw his revolver.

It was all the work of an instant.

The next, and head downward, with that fearful grip around his middle, Old King Brady was carried off into the forest.

The strength of the creature was enormous.

Old King Brady is a pretty good weight, but for a short distance this madman actually ran with him.

On they went through the gloom.

Not a word was uttered, but the hard breathing of the creature sounded like the breathing of some wild animal.

The blood was now in Old King Brady's head.

His arms were pinioned, and to get at his revolver impossible.

"I shall die if this keeps up much longer," thought the old detective. "Oh, what shall I do? What shall I do?"

It was a fearful experience.

Worse was to come!

Suddenly the madman paused, and with a loud howl he flung Old King Brady over his shoulder and let him go.

Feet downward, he dropped into some sort of pit.

And he landed on his feet!

This alone saved his life.

That the madman had any intention of sparing him is not to be supposed.

Dizzy and weak, Old King Brady dropped all in a heap.

"Oh! Ouch! Oh, oh!" a voice cried beneath him.

He had fallen upon someone there in the hole.

Meanwhile the madman was making off, calling out as Harry heard him:

"I'm worth a billion in diamonds! I'm the king of the world!"

"Get off of me! Oh, for heaven sake get off of me!" cried the man in the pit. "Me leg is broke!"

The appeal brought Old King Brady to himself.

He crawled away and managed to gain his feet, standing upright in one corner of the pit.

"Is that you, Ryan?" he gasped.

"Yair; it's me, and I'm a dead one sure."

"Oh!"

"Are you hurted, Mr. Brady?"

"I—I hardly know."

"Dat crazy feller caught youse?"

"He did."

"Blame him! He got me. I had tree shots at him. I know dey muster hit him. He's bullet-proof, I tink."

"This must be an old prospecting shaft sunk by the lead miners," said Old King Brady, producing his dark lantern, and flashing it about.

It was indeed a shallow shaft.

The depth was not more than fifteen feet, but it might as well have been a hundred so far as any chance of getting out of it was concerned.

Bending down Old King Brady made a hasty examination of Ryan's leg.

The old detective is something of a surgeon.

He saw at once that the fracture was a bad one.

"Your leg is broken all right," he said. "You are in a bad way. Your position is worse than mine."

"How did he get you?" demanded Ryan. "Dere's no use kicking. We have got to face de music. Let's talk of smeting else."

"I was caught there at the boarding-house. It was my own fault."

"An' de young feller?"

"He was upstairs at the time."

"It will be his turn next. Wait a minute, an' he'll come tumbling down."

"Heaven forbid! If we don't get help from him where shall we get it. Pity you had not stayed with us, Ryan. You would have done better so."

"You're right dere, old man. It's me own fault."

"You went to the hill to hunt for diamonds."

"Dat's wot!"

"See how it turns out. Did you find any?"

"I found wan breast-pin."

"You have it now?"

"Yes."

"And I have the others upon me. That jewelry will be the death of us yet."

"It will so. Can't yer do someting? Dey say dat Old King Brady always knows de right ting to do."

"But what can I do when I can't reach the top of this infernal hole?"

"Dere you are! If I could only get on me feet an' let you stand on me back."

"Yes, yes! It is not to be thought of. It is as much as you can do to take care of yourself."

"More. I'm done fer. I see it plain."

And so the conversation ran.

An hour passed, and there was no relief.

To Old King Brady it seemed probable then that they had been permanently abandoned.

Relief might come with the morning through Harry, but in the meantime he saw very little to hope for.

Such was the situation when suddenly the old detective caught a flash of light.

Ryan was talking, bemoaning their fate.

"Hush!" said Old King Brady. "Somebody is coming with a lantern. It may be the boy at last."

"Little good it will do me," growled Ryan. "He can't never get me out of here."

They waited.

The light grew brighter. Presently quick footsteps began to be heard.

For the moment it seemed to Old King Brady that whoever the person was he was going to pass the pit.

"Hello! Hello up there! Help!" he called

The sounds suddenly ceased.

"There are two of us here in a pit!" cried Old King Brady. "It is right ahead of you! Be careful how you go!"

No answer.

"It's that infernal madman again," muttered the old detective. "There is nothing in it for us but trouble, I'm afraid."

He did not call again.

It seemed to be useless.

In a few minutes the footsteps were again heard.

This time Old King Brady kept silent.

On came the unknown, and in a minute a lantern was flashed into the shaft, and a man looked down upon them.

His was a broad German countenance, with a scrubby black beard.

But for this Old King Brady could not have recognized him, for the man no longer wore the rough suit in which he had previously appeared, and upon his head was a black Derby hat.

But the beard was the same.

"Good-evening, friends!" he called. "You seem to be in trouble down there."

"We are," replied the old detective. "Can you help us out?"

He was determined to humor the man.

Better to be on the ground with a chance to fight than penned up at the bottom of that pit.

"Help you out! Why certainly," replied the man. "That's what I am here for. What is your name?"

"My name is Brady."

"So? And your friend?"

"Is Ryan. He has broken his leg."

"So? You must be victims of the madman who roams these woods."

"We are."

"He is a fierce creature. I have had several experiences with him myself."

"Can I be mistaken?" thought Old King Brady. "But there is the beard."

"Just a minute," said the man. "I'll throw down a rope."

He turned away, but in a minute was back again.

He now held a coil of rope in his hand.

Unwinding one end, he threw it down into the shaft.

"Just catch hold there, and I will lift you up!" he exclaimed.

"It's de same feller," whispered Ryan. "Don't go."

"Must," replied Old King Brady, calmly. "I'm not staying here."

"You will help me if you can?"

"Certainly. I promise you."

"Come, come!" called the man. "We are wasting time, and there is much to be done."

"Can you lift me up? I'm a pretty heavy man," replied Old King Brady.

"Catch hold of the rope. I'll soon show you what I can do."

Old King Brady seized the rope.

"This is the madman, all right," he thought as he went up out of the hole.

The man lifted him without the least difficulty.

Old King Brady clutched the edge of the pit when he came to it, and finished the job.

He fully expected an attack, and it came.

The instant he scrambled to his feet he found himself facing a revolver.

"March!" cried the man, dropping the rope. "March! I'll tell you how to go."

He picked up an ordinary stable lantern which stood on the ground, and started toward the detective.

But for the wonderful strength the fellow had displayed Old King Brady might have been tempted to turn on him.

As it was the case seemed hopeless.

"Don't we try to help that man down there?" he asked.

"March!" cried the madman. "I want only you. That is what the doctor says."

"Doctor who?"

"Do you march or do I shoot you?" bellowed the man, his eyes blazing with the light of madness now.

It was a desperate case.

Feeling that he was taking his life in his hand by so doing, Old King Brady wheeled about and started ahead.

"Right!" cried the man.

"All right! All right, friend! I'm going," replied Old King Brady, toddling along faster.

"Stupid idiot!" roared the lunatic. "File right! Don't you hear? Can't you understand?"

Old King Brady sheered off to the right in a hurry.

And thus he walked for about ten minutes, the man flashing the light ahead of him.

"File left!" was shouted then.

And so it went.

The walk was a long one, longer than was necessary to reach the limit of the island on that side, as Old King Brady knew.

He was able to form some idea of direction, dark as it was.

He knew that they were rounding the edge of the swamp on the easterly side, and gradually working toward the end of the mine railroad.

Suddenly the order came to file right again, and turning the old detective came to the edge of the swamp.

Here there was a rude log bridge crossing a slew.

Beyond was a thick clump of tamarack trees, as the larch is called in the West.

"Cross the bridge!" came the order.

Old King Brady hobbled over

He was beginning to know that his fall had shaken him up more than he had at first supposed.

Beyond the bridge he came upon a path leading in among the tamaracks.

This he got the order to follow, and he passed along about an eighth of a mile.

But before leaving the slew the man pulled the logs over on the path, thus cutting off approach.

"Halt!" he called suddenly, and now he came up alongside, still clutching his revolver.

"You will enter my house, professor!" he cried.

"But the house! Where is it?" demanded Old King Brady.

"Blind man! Look ahead of you!" was the answer.

He flashed the lantern forward, and Old King Brady saw that what he had taken for bushes was in reality a

rude hut made of boughs built between the tamarack trees.

He was just about to start when the man, angered by his delay, gave a frightful yell, and discharged his revolver.

With an answering yell Old King Brady fell flat upon the ground.

CHAPTER XII.

CONCLUSION.

Old King Brady is nothing if not diplomatic, and he has taught his partner to be the same.

With the average swamp-rats of Missouri and Arkansas money is everything.

They will not work, consequently money is something they seldom see.

Thus, when Ben Bim got what may be termed to the half-way house on his mission, Harry thought it a good time to cash in a partial payment.

They had come to the end of the track, and here Bim's dug-out lay.

"We go in my boat now," he said.

"Oh, we do, eh?" cried Harry. "Now, look here, Bim, it will be close quarters in that boat. Do you intend to try any tricks on me?"

Bim, in the most earnest fashion, assured him that he did not.

"Very well," replied Young King Brady. "Since you seem disposed to do the right thing by me I will do the same by you. When I told you that I was going to give you \$25 I named about all the money I've got. So as to make a friendly feeling between us I think I will give you half now and the balance when we have finished our job. What do you say?"

"I should like that," said Bim, a broad smile coming over his face.

"Very good. I'm tired of keeping you covered. I don't believe you will go back on me."

"Oh, I won't mister. I swar I won't."

"We'll try it. Just remember, though, that I'm lightning when it comes to the draw."

Harry pocketed his revolver.

He had some gold with him, Old King Brady knowing its power in the West.

He drew out two five-dollar and one two-dollars-and-a-half gold pieces, and passed them over to Bim.

The swamp rat clutched them eagerly.

"They're goot uns, I s'pose," he growled.

"You bet they are good! If you only had enough of them you would be the richest man in Missouri."

"Say, you're all right. It's a long time sence I fingered a gold piece."

"You would have a pocket full of them by this time if you had only used my partner right, instead of betraying him to those men."

"It was blame foolish on my part. I know it now."

"You bet it was. But come, what's our next move?"

"Oh, we go up the slew to the place where I carry the grub."

"All right. Shall I get in?"

"Yas. Yew sit forward. I'll paddle astarn."

It was not exactly the arrangement Young King Brady liked.

He had to sit facing Bim, of course, for he could not trust himself any other way.

This prevented him from seeing how they went, which did not suit very well.

Still he had to take it as it came, and now, as Bim paddled away, he began to talk, his tongue having been loosened by a dose of aurum mettalicum, otherwise known as gold.

"Say," he drawled, "yer dead right. I made a blame fool of myself. That's what I did."

"Sure," replied Harry. "That's what everybody does who stands out against the Bradys. We are bound to win out in the end."

"I s'pose you are after them missing trunks?"

"Of course."

"Whar I was a fool was in never going in to the island before. But I went wunst and got scared off. The trunks is there all right."

"You saw them, Bim. Was that really the first time?"

"Honest it wuz. I never went that far before."

"What's the name of this man you have been feeding?"

"Don't know. He came to my house about two months ago, and hired me to bring him in vittles. I won't deny he's paid well. We-uns are awful scart at him. My wife thinks ez heow he is standing in with the Old Scratch, but I say he's looney."

"That's what he is, no doubt."

"Yew think he's got them trunks, mebbe?"

"I thought you saw the trunks."

"Oh, I'm no fool. I only seen six. The detectives what kim around here said there wuz ten on 'em. Whar's de other four ef he hain't took 'em? That's what I want to know?"

"Probably he could tell you if he would."

"Likely. Say."

"Well?"

"Ef yew-uns git them thar trunks there'll be a reward comin', I suppose."

"What then?"

"Then I shall expect to be remembered."

"So?"

"Yas! One detective promised me five hundred if I'd help him. I didn't know nothing about it then."

"Didn't any of them get to the island?"

"Not one. They all seemed to think the car had been run down the road or floated down Finister crik at high water. I didn't take much interest in the matter, anyhow. It happened before I came hyar, and yew see I didn't know nothin' erbout it."

"Well, we shall surely give you something if you help us out to the end, Bim."

"Oh, I will. I've made up my mind to do it. But say, hyar we be."

Bim had passed up the slew to the point where Old King Brady had crossed the bridge.

There was no bridge there now, however, but the logs could be seen lying on the left-hand shore.

"It's in back thar somewhere's that he hangs out," said Bim. "I allus leaves the grub hyar by them logs—see?"

"Make your boat fast," said Harry, flashing his lantern for a second. "I see there is a path here. We must follow it."

"It would have been a blame sight better ef yew had let me brung my shotgun along."

"Perhaps it would. It is too late to think of that now."

"Yer bound to go in?"

"I am."

"Waal, I won't go, then. I didn't agree tew do more'n pilot yew to the place."

"Will you stay where you are till I come back?"

"Yas."

"See that you do it, then. Here goes!"

Harry sprang ashore.

Scarce had his foot touched the ground when from back among the dark tamaracks there came a horrible yell.

Instantly it was followed by the cry:

"Kill 'em! Kill 'em! Kill 'em! **I am the king** of t' earth! Who dares to interfere with me!" and so on the cries came.

Someone was dashing down the path.

Drawing his revolver, Young King Brady stepped back among the bushes, and waited for what was to come.

* * * * *

Old King Brady was simply playing possum when he dropped flat at the door of the madman's hut.

He thought he saw a chance to get the fellow into his clutches.

As for the bullet, that went wild.

Doubtless it was so intended.

Some lunatics display a strange intelligence which is akin to second sight.

It was so with this man.

Instead of firing again he burst into a roar of laughter and jumped back.

"Oh, I see through your tricks!" he cried. "You mean to jump on me. That's your game! The doctor is telling me all about it. Don't you try it! Don't you try it! If you do I'll shoot to kill, and I've got the drop on you, old man!"

Old King Brady had expected that he would bend down over him to see if he was actually dead, and then he meant to seize him by the legs and throw him.

But under the circumstances the risk was too great.

"Get up!" called the madman. "Stand on your feet, or I'll shoot you dead! Shamming don't go down with me!"

Old King Brady arose and faced his dangerous foe.

"Why did you fire at me if you did not mean to kill me?" he asked.

"Just to start you going. Step into my house."

"But why?"

"Don't question me! Obey!"

Old King Brady stepped inside the enclosure.

It was much larger than he had expected to find it.

The walls were formed of upright boughs, with leafy branches interwoven.

At the back of the hut four large trunks were piled up.

On the walls were many small oil paintings, some in really expensive frames.

Besides all this was a still more remarkable display.

To every twig, as it seemed, was hung a piece of jewelry.

Rings, pins, brooches, necklaces, etc.

Diamonds real and diamonds false glittered in the light of the lantern which the lunatic now brought in.

Furniture there was none.

In one corner a heap of boughs had been thrown down which formed the madman's bed.

"Here's where I live, professor," he shouted. "Now, why do you suppose I have brought you here?"

"I can't imagine," replied Old King Brady. "Suppose you tell me now."

"I am going to. It is because the doctor told me to go back and get you. He says that you are a wonderful chemist. You see my diamonds? Some of them are the real goods. Others are merely fakes. The doctor tells me that you can make the fake stones real. Is this the truth?"

"I guess it is," replied Old King Brady, seizing upon any straw to gain time. "But who is this doctor, then? I don't see anyone here but ourselves."

"Exactly. There is no one here but me that you can see. All the same, the doctor is my dearest friend."

"Well?"

"Oh, he is here! He stands right between us now. You can't see, though. Only I have that power. Ha, ha, ha!"

"And why does he keep himself invisible, then?"

"Oh, that's his way. I meant to kill you when I caught you. But when I got home the doctor said no. 'Tom,' he said to me, 'you are making a big mistake. That man is a learned professor. He is one of the best chemists on earth. He alone possesses the secret of changing phoney diamonds into the real goods. You go back and get him right away.'"

"Wise man, that doctor of yours."

"Yqu bet he is. I just wish you could see him; but he won't show himself to anybody but me. It's true, then?"

"That I can turn glass diamonds into the real goods?"

"Yes."

"Oh, it's true enough. But I can't do it to-day."

"Why not?"

"Because I only have that power on Mondays."

"Is that so? What day is this?"

"Saturday."

"Ah, ha! I've lost all run of time since that dreadful night when I hit my head."

"You mean the night of the railroad wreck?"

"Yes, yes. But don't speak of it unless you want to drive me wild."

"By the way, my friend, what is your name?"

"My name?"

"Yes."

"Let's see? Do you know, I forget. I can tell you the name of my firm, though."

"Well?"

"Hahn & Putzell, 66 Maiden Lane, New York."

"I see. You'll be Tom Grossman, then."

The madman gave a wild shout.

"Wonderful!" he cried. "The doctor was right. You're a wonderful man! Do you know, I have been trying for months to remember my name, and I could never get any further than Tom."

"Oh, I can help you. I am sure of it. But you must place yourself in my hands and let me do just as I please."

"I will."

"Now tell me——"

"Hark!"

"What now?"

"Be quiet! The doctor is speaking. Don't interrupt!" There was something uncanny about it all.

Grossman put his hand to his ear, and seemed to be listening.

"Try it again, doctor!" he exclaimed. "My head is confused. I can't hear what you say."

Then there was silence for a minute.

Suddenly the mad jewelry salesman gave an awful yell.

"Somebody coming!" he shouted. "Kill 'em! Kill 'em! Kill 'em!"

And with this he rushed wildly out of the hut.

He left his lantern behind him, and flourished his revolver as he ran.

"Kill 'em! Kill 'em! Kill 'em!" he yelled.

"Heavens! What if it should be Harry?" gasped Old King Brady, and he started up in the madman's wake.

And Harry it was, sure enough.

Figure it out as you please, but this was the moment of the arrival of the dug-out.

Just in time did Young King Brady step aside.

Tom Grossman flew past him like the wind.

Bim saw him coming and jumped ashore.

"It's only me, cap!" he cried, throwing up his hands. "Don't shoot! I'm yer friend!"

"You fiend! How dare you intrude upon me at such a time!" yelled Grossman.

Before Harry could make a move he flung himself upon Bim and clutched him in his powerful arms.

The force of the contact was tremendous.

Over went Bim backward into the slaw, and the madman with him.

They sunk together into the slimy ooze as Old King Brady came dashing up.

"Governor!" gasped Harry. "What shall we do?"

"Wait!" said the old detective. "They will rise in a moment."

But they never rose again!

What the explanation of it was the Bradys could only guess.

And with this tragedy our story ends.

Locked in each other's arms Bim and the mad salesman went down in the muddy water to their death.

When all chance of seeing them had passed the Bradys went back to the pit.

Ryan was dragged out, taken to the boarding-house and left there.

The Bradys, as soon as daylight came, went to Carrollton, telephoned Mr. Moorhouse, and in due time had all the help they needed.

The ten trunks were recovered and taken to Kansas City by special train.

The money trunk was almost intact.

Some of the jewelry was afterwards reported missing by the New York firm, but the majority of it was recovered, and the Chicago pictures were all there.

Ryan was taken to Kansas City and his leg set.

He still lives. The Bradys made no charge against him.

The bodies of Bim and the madman were found in the slaw locked in each other's arms.

This was after the Bradys left.

The story of the escape of the madman from the wreck was never learned.

Grossman's remains were forwarded to New York. Bim was buried in the swamp.

From the Wabash road the detectives pulled in a fairly good reward.

And they deserved it.

Where others had failed these keen detectives had succeeded in the puzzling case which we have named the Bradys' Ten Trunk Mystery.

THE END.

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