

The Bradys and the Girl Smuggler; Or, Working for the Custom House

Francis Worcester Doughty



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*** START OF THIS PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE BRADYS AND THE GIRL SMUGGLER ***

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SECRET SERVICE.

OLD AND YOUNG KING BRADY DETECTIVES.

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The Bradys and the Girl Smuggler

OR,

Working for the Custom House.

BY A NEW YORK DETECTIVE.

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CHAPTER I.

THE BRADYS AS CUSTOM HOUSE DETECTIVES.

The Collector of the Port of New York sat in his office in the Custom House with a look of annoyance upon his face.

Several of his chief inspectors were standing about the room with the most uneasy expressions, for they were being censured unmercifully.

"I tell you, gentlemen," the Collector was saying, angrily, "I am very much disgusted with the poor service your department is giving. I am determined to stop this wholesale smuggling. If none of you are capable of doing the work for which you are liberally paid, I'll have to get somebody to do the work for you. Do you understand?"

"But, sir," began one of the inspectors, humbly, "we've done our best—"

"And accomplished nothing!" snapped the Collector.

"How could we, sir? The smuggler you want us to catch does not resort to the usual tricks such people adopt to avoid paying duty on the diamonds and other precious stones, which you say are smuggled into this country. It's because he's such a sly and clever rogue, that we can't locate him. We've resorted to every known method to discover the villain, but can't make any headway."

"Then you admit you are beaten?"

"Yes," was the hesitating reply.

"Hum!" grunted the Collector, in tones of contempt. "A nice lot of government detectives you fellows are to admit such a defeat. However, I've taken the matter into my own hands now."

"Yours?"

"Yes! I've engaged two of the most skillful men in the Secret Service to run down this smuggler. I refer to Old and Young King Brady."

"Indeed!" sneered the inspector, whose pride was wounded. "I'm sure if we can't find that smuggler, they can't."

"They can't, eh?" grimly demanded the Collector. "Well, you'll find out whether they can or not, Andrew Gibson, for they'll be here presently to take your work right out of your hands. Do you hear me?"

With glum looks the inspectors glanced at each other.

It was a bitter pill for them to swallow, to have an outsider come in to do the work they found themselves unable to cope with.

Finally Gibson affected a mocking laugh, and said, derisively:

"What can a Secret Service man do in a Custom House case, if we men, educated for it, can't finish a job we find too hard for us?"

"They'll find the smuggler I'm after," replied the Collector, banging his fist on the desk to emphasize his remark. "I've got every faith in that remarkable man and boy. They are the most skillful detectives in the profession. There's nothing they can't do in their own line, and you'll find it out soon."

"On police and criminal cases—"

"On *any* work!" roared the Collector, excitedly.

"They must be marvels, indeed!" sneered Gibson.

"So they are, sir—so they are."

"I'd like to see these wonders!"

Just then two men in uniform standing apart from the rest, advanced.

They wore the costume of boarding officers, the dark-blue uniforms being garnished with brass buttons and on their heads were caps with bands across the front bearing the word in gilt letters, "Inspector."

One of these men was tall and muscular, with a bushy black beard, deep gray eyes and a heavy mass of dark-brown hair.

His companion looked like a mere boy, with a handsome face, a pair of keen eyes and a dashing, aggressive air that showed he was of a bold, intrepid character. He walked right up to the inspector.

"So you want to see the Bradys, do you?" he asked Gibson, quietly.

"Yes, I would," asserted the inspector, glaring at him in surprise.

"Then look, for we are the Bradys!" exclaimed the boy.

He took off his cap and his companion stripped off a wig and false beard.

Every one in the room glanced at them in amazement.

No one suspected their identity before.

Old King Brady was now seen to have white hair and a clean-shaven face, in which a daring, determined character was shown.

Even the Collector was astonished.

When he recovered his composure, a smile crossed his face, and he rose and warmly shook hands with the pair, saying:

"Well, this is an agreeable surprise."

Old King Brady smiled, took a chew of tobacco and replied:

"You got our chief to assign us on this case and requested us to be here at two o'clock, and here we are."

"Ready for work?"

"Yes, sir. Instruct us."

"Well, all I can tell you is that this country is being flooded with precious stones upon which no duty is being paid, and I want you to find the party who is doing the crooked work."

"Have you any clues upon which we can work?"

"None, whatever. You'll have to get them yourselves from the importers in John street, Broadway and Maiden Lane. They may give you some points."

"We shall follow your suggestion."

The two detectives started for the door, then paused.

Harry Brady, the boy, then said:

"Mr. Gibson has some doubts about our ability to work for the Custom House. Since he has flung defiance at us, we'll accept his challenge."

"How?" growled the inspector, in ugly tones.

"Well, we'll meet you officers and the Collector on board the steamer Campania, of the Cunard line, in one hour, when she reaches her pier from Quarantine. If we don't show up more smugglers than you do, we'll give up this assignment."

"I'll go you!" eagerly exclaimed the jealous inspector.

"And I'll be there to see that you get fair play," grimly said the Collector.

The Bradys silently bowed and withdrew.

When they reached the street, Old King Brady laughed and said:

"They're all jealous of us. But we'll show them a trick or two, Harry."

"They'll be a surprised lot," laughed the boy. "We have them beaten already."

They headed for the jewelry district and called upon several of the most prominent importers and lapidaries, from whom they gained some very valuable information. The last importer they spoke to said:

"Paul La Croix, a French-Canadian, was just in here with his daughter, trying to sell us some smuggled diamonds. See—there he goes now."

He pointed out the window at a tall, thin, stylishly-clad man of forty in light trousers, a black frock coat and high hat.

The detectives observed that he now did not have his daughter with him.

From where they were, they could see that La Croix had a thin, sallow face, a long, sharp nose and a closely-trimmed dark moustache.

He turned into Broadway and disappeared in the crowd.

"Who is he?" asked Old King Brady, of the dealer in precious stones.

"A mystery. No one knows. He makes many trips between New York and Havre to smuggle diamonds which he sells here. Every jeweler in the Lane knows him. Some deal with him."

"Where does he live?"

"At the Fifth Avenue Hotel."

"Thank you."

And a moment later the detectives were gone.

Reaching Broadway they hurried ahead intending to find La Croix and arrest him with contraband diamonds in his possession.

But the man disappeared and they found no trace of him.

The Bradys gave up the hunt, temporarily, for they were determined to find the man again.

They crossed the city, going to the west side.

People who saw the pair paid no heed to them now, for they had made some changes in their apparel, in a sheltering doorway, and by turning their coats inside out, pocketing their uniform hats and putting on soft felt hats, they transformed their appearance.

They now looked like ordinary citizens.

Each one adjusted a false moustache and a wig to hide his identity.

They had their clothing so made that they could change to several characters with but little trouble.

This fact was well known to most of the crooks at large, and they feared the Bradys more than any other detectives on the force.

Although they bore the same name, there was no relationship between them, for Harry was merely an apt pupil the old detective had chanced to meet, and was educating in his profession.

As a team, they made themselves famous.

When they drew near the Cunard steamship dock, Old King Brady carried his handkerchief in his hand as a signal.

A man was on the lookout and ran up to him.

Handing the detective a letter he exclaimed:

"I followed your order, Mr. Brady and went down to Quarantine to-day with the

port doctor. He took me aboard the Campania, and I found out a great deal. It's all written in that letter. I wrote it coming up on the Custom House tug."

"Has the steamer reached her dock yet?"

"She's swinging in now. I beat her up on the tug."

"Very well. You may go."

The spotter hastened away and the detectives eagerly read his letter.

It was full of valuable information for which they sent the man and having read the letter they hastened to the pier.

The big trans-Atlantic steamer was just tying up to her dock and the detectives saw the Collector and his inspectors standing on the pier waiting for the passengers to land.



CHAPTER II.

NINE SMUGGLERS.

A scene of great animation and excitement was soon transpiring on the pier.

Passengers were swarming down the gangplank of the big steamer, crowds of friends were waiting to greet them, porters and waiters were landing the baggage on the dock and stevedores were preparing to discharge the cargo.

The two Bradys took up a favorable position and calling the purser of the steamer, they induced him to point out several people whose names they mentioned.

These people were the ones whom they had spotted as smugglers.

Presently the owners of the baggage began opening their trunks and valises so the inspectors could examine their effects.

While this was going on the Bradys joined the Collector and spoke to him. He was startled to discover their identity and remarked:

"Well, you certainly have the faculty of hiding your identity in the most complete manner. Have you found any smugglers yet?"

"Several," replied Harry, quickly.

"Indeed! Who are they?"

"We'll show you when your men get through."

They chatted together until the inspection was finished and all the luggage had been marked and received the pasters to show they were passed.

"Now call your men and get their report, sir," said Harry.

The Collector did as he was requested.

Out of several hundred passengers only a lace shawl had been captured.

"Is that all you managed to find that was dutiable?" asked Harry, in surprise, as the searchers gathered round them.

They recognized him by his voice and Gibson growled sarcastically:

"Do you think you can do any better?"

"Oh, my—yes."

"Well, I'd like to see you do it."

"So we shall. Let us begin with Mrs. Harvey. Open her trunk again."

Despite the lady's protests this was done.

Pointing at the tray, Harry said, coolly:

"Pick up that cake of toilet soap, cut it in two and you'll find a very valuable gentleman's ruby ring and scarf pin buried inside of it."

Gibson complied with a poor grace.

As Harry said, he disclosed the articles mentioned.

"My!" said the lady, innocently, "I wonder how they got there?"

"Madam," replied Harry, politely, "you put them there yourself. As a lady don't wear such things and you've been traveling alone, it's clear you were trying to smuggle those things. Seize them, Gibson, and they'll be appraised in the Custom House. If the lady then wishes to pay the full duty charged on them she can get back her ornaments."

The Collector burst out laughing.

"Any more?" he asked Old King Brady.

"Yes. See that short fat man? He is Mr. Jacobs, a stock broker. I guess we'll have to pull off the gentleman's left boot. Hey, Mr. Jacobs!"

"Vell?" growled the fat broker, glancing at the detective in some surprise.

"Sit down on your trunk, please," said Old King Brady.

"Vot for?"

"I'll show you in a moment."

The broker sat down and Harry seized him and held him there.

At the same moment Old King Brady grabbed him by the left foot, gave it a tug and the struggling man gave a yell, and demanded, excitedly, as the boot slipped off and remained in the detective's hand:

"Py shiminey, vot yer mean py dot outrages alretty?"

"We think you are cheating the government," replied Old King Brady.

"Vot? Me? You vas grazy!"

"Am I?" blandly asked Old King Brady.

"Sure you are! Vot mein boot vas got mit it ter do?"

"I'll show you, my innocent friend," grimly replied the old detective, as he drew out his pocket knife.

With the large blade he removed the first layer of leather from the heel and showed that the heel was hollow.

Lying within this neat little opening was a small paper package which the detective drew out. Opening the paper he showed its contents.

It consisted of five magnificent diamonds.

The broker gave a gasp of horror and Old King Brady said to him sweetly:

"You forgot to put these on the manifest, Mr. Jacobs, didn't you?"

"*Och, Gott!*" groaned the unlucky broker, in deep anguish of spirit, "I vas ruint vunct. Vot vill I do? Vot vill I do?"

"Pay the duty and redeem them from the Custom House," replied the detective, and the gems were seized on the spot.

All the inspectors looked envious of the two detectives.

The Collector regarded them with a cold glance and finally asked:

"Why didn't you find these things?"

"Didn't know they had 'em," sheepishly replied Gibson.

"We ain't half through yet," said Harry at this juncture.

"What else have you discovered?" demanded the Collector, curiously.

"Several hundred yards of fine point lace."

"Where is it?"

"In a false bottom under Miss Daisy Linden's trunk. See—there she stands—that handsome big actress there. Do you think she's as fat as she looks? Well, just notice how big around her body is, and how thin her arms and neck are. If you'll get one of the lady inspectors to examine her privately, you'll find she's got several valuable oil paintings wrapped around her body, under her clothes."

The woman made a great fuss when they insisted upon rummaging in her trunk a second time and reluctantly opened it again.

Harry threw everything out and the woman shrieked, scolded and protested. But when the boy opened the false bottom of the trunk and withdrew the lace he mentioned, she fainted.

When the actress came to, she found that a lady inspector had disrobed her in a stateroom on the steamer and taken five very costly paintings away, which she was smuggling under her clothes.

By the time the Bradys finished, they had nine smugglers exposed, and fully quarter of a million dollars' worth of valuables were seized.

The Collector had been watching these proceedings with deep interest.

When his own men reached him, he said to them:

"I'm ashamed of you. Here you let two absolutely green men step in and do the work you've been at for years, much better than you do it yourselves."

"Well," grimly admitted Gibson, "they've kept their boast and beaten us badly, I'm sorry to say. I don't need to wish them luck for they've got either a large amount of it, or else they had some inside information."

"Your latter surmise is the correct one," said Harry. "We sent a man down the bay to meet the steamer. People who are going to smuggle anything rarely take pains to conceal their contraband goods till they are nearing port. We know

something about the matter, you see. Moreover, we know would-be smugglers who don't make a profession of it are very careless, talkative about what they are going to smuggle, and apt to give themselves away. By sending a good, smart spotter ahead we learned all about the people we've exposed."

"That game may work very nicely with amateurs. But it would not go with a professional smuggler by any means."

"I quite agree with you," assented Harry.

"Well," said the Collector, "I'm quite satisfied with your performance, Mr. Brady, and am convinced that you are the very men to run down the big smuggler I am so anxious to see arrested."

"We'll do our best," said Old King Brady.

The Collector and the inspectors then went away.

As they were leaving the pier, the quick, keen eyes of Harry observed a young girl on the steamer acting in a mysterious manner.

She was standing in the gangway, peering out one of the port holes and sharply watching the departing officials.

Every time one of them chanced to glance back, she suddenly dodged down behind the bulwark out of sight.

She was a beautiful girl of about sixteen, handsomely clad in a short dress and zouave waist of fine silk, while a stylish big Gainsborough hat with black ostrich plumes crowned her short, yellow, curly hair.

Her skin was as white as milk and she had a pair of big brown eyes, a pretty little Grecian nose and rosebud lips.

Young King Brady was charmed with her beauty, yet his suspicions of her actions were aroused to the fever point.

He touched his partner on the arm and pointed at her.

"See there!" he exclaimed. "What can she be up to?"

"We'd better keep an eye on her, Harry," returned the old detective, after a careful survey. "It looks to me as if she were up to some trick. She wouldn't be watching those inspectors' departure that way unless it was of vital importance to

her."

"But surely she can't be so silly as to think there are no officers left here. Everyone knows that a couple remain constantly on the watch in their office at the entrance to the dock."

"Ha! What's that? She's waving her handkerchief to that man who is coming out on the pier from West street."

Young King Brady gazed keenly at the person in question and suddenly recognizing him he exclaimed in excited tones:

"Why, it's Paul La Croix, the diamond smuggler!"

"So it is, by thunder!"

"And this beautiful girl must be his daughter, for she greatly resembles him."

"Harry, I believe that pair are up to some crooked work!"

"We can find out by watching them."

La Croix now went aboard the steamer and joined the girl in the gangway.



CHAPTER III.

CAUGHT IN AN ELEVATOR.

The Bradys felt convinced that the smuggler and his daughter were working some scheme to take some valuables ashore, duty free.

Closely watching the pair they saw them enter the cabin.

Following them in, the Bradys observed the pair gliding swiftly down a passage, out on which opened the doors of several staterooms.

La Croix and his daughter entered one of these rooms.

Rushing forward, the Bradys listened outside the partition and heard the man ask:

"Did you geet eet, Clara?"

"Yes, papa," replied the girl in a low, pleasant tone of voice. "After I left you on Maiden Lane, I came right here and mingled with the throng waiting to meet the various passengers. As soon as the gangplank was down, I slipped aboard and met the steward. He had the parcel and gave it to me."

"Open eet so we can distribute ze jewelry about our pairsons. Zen we geet ze sings ashore ver' easy, an' no wong weel see ze package bulge out our clothing. *Mon Dieu*, but I vas ver'—vot you call—ze—ze—worried."

The crackling of paper was heard.

For a few moments afterward there ensued a deep silence.

Old King Brady silently beckoned to Harry and they retreated a few paces.

"I'm going right in after La Croix," he whispered.

"We've got him dead to rights," replied the boy.

"Are you prepared for a fight?"

"Oh, yes. I've got a powerful persuader in my hip pocket."

"Then come on with me."

He strode forward and pushed the stateroom door open.

It opened inward and as the room was very small, it pushed La Croix against the two bunks and wrung the startled cry from his lips:

"Look out, Clara!"

The girl glared at the detectives and demanded:

"What do you want in here?"

"That man!" said Harry, pointing at her father.

"What for?"

"Smuggling!"

"He isn't!"

"We'll search him and see."

The Bradys grasped the excited Frenchman.

His clothing in the region of his stomach was bulging suspiciously and Old King Brady slapped the spot and demanded:

"What have you got there?"

"Nosing!" protested La Croix. "Zees ees an outrage, sair!"

"Oh, I don't know!" laughed Harry.

"Clara!" roared the man. "Go tell ze captaine, quick, to come 'ere."

The girl slipped out the door and vanished.

Left alone with the man, the detectives laughed and Harry said:

"Unbutton your coat and vest."

"*Sacre!* For why?" growled La Croix.

"We want to see what you've got stuffed in there."

"Gentlemen, you wrong me!"

"Bosh! Open up quick, or we'll do it for you."

La Croix reluctantly opened his vest and a package dropped out.

He then was of normal size.

"This is what we are after!" laughed Harry, picking up the parcel.

"But, Monsieur, eet ees only a worthless—"

"Silence, sir!"

And Harry opened the mysterious parcel.

It was filled with sawdust.

The man laughed, shrugged his shoulders, and asked:

"Veil, sair, you ees satisfied?"

There was a look of disgust on Harry's face and he cried:

"He has cleverly duped us and the girl got away with the valuables."

Old King Brady was furious.

"Confound her!" he roared. "Come—search this man thoroughly, and if he has not got any contraband stuff, we'll search the ship and arrest the girl."

Harry turned La Croix's pockets inside out.

Nothing was found upon his person.

Then they searched the room.

Still nothing came to light and Harry said:

"He has nothing with him."

"Very well. The girl has, then."

"Now, Monsieur, I hope you see zat you wrong me?" said La Croix.

Old King Brady gave him a peculiar look, shook his finger at the Frenchman and replied in angry tones:

"We know you, La Croix. You are the worst smuggler in this port. It won't be long before we run you in for your crooked work."

"Ah—how you can say zat?" innocently asked the man.

"We have no time to discuss the matter now, for we are very anxious to nab your daughter Clara," said the old detective. "But you will meet us again very soon. Then look out!"

They hastened out of the stateroom.

Once outside Harry whispered hastily:

"You go ahead and I'll fool him."

He thereupon slipped into an adjoining room.

Old King Brady knew at once what the boy wanted to do, and he left the cabin and began to search the ship for the girl.

La Croix was peering cautiously from the room he was in and seeing the old detective disappearing out the door, he emerged.

Watching Old King Brady to see that his own actions were not observed, the smuggler finally left the steamer with Harry at his heels in a change of appearance which even his keen eyes failed to penetrate.

Old King Brady saw them depart.

He transformed his own appearance.

Both he and Harry now had assumed their natural looks.

There was a big white felt hat on the old detective's head, his frock coat of dark-blue was buttoned up to the neck, around which there now was a standing collar and an old-fashioned stock and on his hands were cotton gloves.

The boy's suit of brown plaid, and a bicycle cap on his head, were much different from the reverse side of his clothing and the other hat he had worn.

In the street Harry saw the man hail a cab and get in.

He saw his partner and beckoned to him.

When they met, Harry asked eagerly:

"Did you find the girl?"

"No. She must have hurried from the steamer."

"Well, La Croix is bound to meet her now."

"Of course."

"Our plan is to keep him shadowed."

"See if we can't get a cab, too."

They pursued the carriage on foot as far as Eighth avenue before they encountered a public hack and got in.

Instructing the driver to pursue the other vehicle, they were carried up to Fourteenth street, across town to Broadway and thence up to Twenty-third street.

La Croix's vehicle paused before the Fifth Avenue Hotel and he alighted.

"We were not misinformed about his address," commented Harry.

"No. He is probably going in there to meet the girl."

"Let's get out here at the Arch so as not to attract his attention."

"Very well. Be careful now."

They dismissed the cab and hurried into the hotel.

La Croix had disappeared from view and the detectives hastened to the office and said to the clerk:

"Got a party here named La Croix?"

"Yes, sir. They're in room 678. Wish to send up your name?"

"No," replied Old King Brady, with a smile, as he exhibited his badge.

"Oh," said the clerk, "detective, eh?"

"We're after La Croix. He's a crook."

"He is? What has he done?"

"Smuggler."

"I see. How about his wife and daughter?"

"They must be in his game too."

"Going to pull them in?"

"Probably. Is he in his room?"

"He just went up the stairs."

"I wish we could reach his apartments ahead of him."

"So you can by going up in the elevator. It's on the top floor."

"Well try it."

They hastened over to the elevators and found that the only one down was one which had no conductor in it. As they did not wish to lose time, they both got in, shut the door and pulled the wire cable.

Up they glided, story after story, without seeing him ascending the stairs.

He had gone up in an elevator from the floor above.

Above on the beams over the elevator shaft La Croix was crouching with a big hatchet in his hand, as he peered down at the people ascending in the cars.

He had detected them in pursuit and expecting trouble, he was waiting to give the detectives a warm reception. He evidently recognized them without their disguises.

As he caught view of his pursuers coming up in the car, he picked up the hatchet he had found lying on the beam.

Raising it above his head, he brought it down upon the cable by which the car was suspended, with all his strength.

The shock caused the Bradys to look up and they saw what he was doing.

Bang! went the keen blade upon the cable again where it crossed the wheel.

The weight of the car caused the wire rope to part where he cut it, and the elevator's ascent was checked.

It began to fall with the detectives in it.



CHAPTER IV.

THE CLEW IN THE BASIN.

A cry of alarm escaped Old King Brady when he saw the Frenchman.

"Harry," he gasped, "he is trying to kill us."

"There goes the cable!" muttered the boy, and a cold chill darted through him as he heard the ominous snap of the parting strands.

"The safety-clutch may save us, Harry."

"No! It don't work," groaned the boy as the car shot down.

A sickening sensation passed through the pair as the falling car went plunging down at lightning speed.

They expected to get dashed to death at the bottom as they went flying down past the different floors, and heard a fiendish chuckle from the Frenchman above their heads.

Like rats in a trap, the two detectives were held so they could do nothing to aid themselves.

All they could do was to wait for the final crash, and visions of the wrecked car and their bodies crushed to a pulp flashed across their minds.

The desperation of their situation was appalling.

The speed of their fall took their breath away and both instinctively grasped the sides of the car and clung to it tenaciously.

Down three stories they plunged.

Then there suddenly sounded a sharp "click."

The car paused, slid a few feet, then came to a sudden stop.

At the last moment the clutches flew out and tightened on the pilot rods, holding the falling car in midair.

The sudden stopping hurled the detectives to the floor, but they quickly scrambled to their feet, overjoyed at their salvation.

For an instant neither could speak.

To be so suddenly snatched from the very jaws of death was such a strain upon their nerves that they could hardly stand it.

Old King Brady was the first to recover, and glancing upward he saw that their enemy had disappeared from the beam overhead.

"By thunder!" he exclaimed. "La Croix is baffled!"

"I never expected such good luck," replied Harry, delightedly.

"The car is holding, all right."

"Yes, but how are we to get out of it?"

They were caught midway between the second and third floors.

But the parting of the cable had been detected by the engineer and the conductor of an ascending car in the next shaft as the falling elevator flew down past him, and help was coming.

As the news spread, people flocked out in the hall, filled with dread lest the two officers had been killed.

They peered down the shafts through the grill work and when some saw the car, a shout of relief went up, and a man yelled at the Bradys:

"Were you hurt?"

"No. We are all right, so far."

"Wait, and we'll have the car lowered."

Up came men with ropes, and the end of a line was passed down from the floor above the car and Old King Brady made it fast.

When the danger of the car falling was obviated, another gang secured the cut cable, passed it over the drum, brought it down to the roof of the car and spliced

it to the piece remaining there.

The elevator was then lowered to the ground floor and opening the door the detectives passed out, none the worse for their adventure.

A crowd of anxious people surrounded them, but they quickly avoided them by dodging into another car and saying to the conductor:

"Top floor—quick!"

Bang! went the gate and up they shot.

Reaching the upper story the detectives made a rush for the room La Croix had been occupying and found it empty.

"The birds have flown!" muttered Old King Brady in disgust.

"No wonder. We were caged up in the elevator so long they had ample time."

"They may have left some clew behind. Let us search the room."

This was done, and in the slop basin they found a letter torn up in small pieces.

Harry carefully gathered up the fragments and put them in his pocketbook.

"It's written in French," he commented, "but it may be of some use. I'll put the pieces together and we'll have it translated."

They failed to find anything else and went downstairs.

Returning to the clerk, they asked if La Croix had been seen.

"He did not come out this way," replied the man, shaking his head.

"Sure?"

"Positive!"

"Well, he and his family are gone."

"Ain't they up in their room?"

"No."

"That's queer."

"Not at all. You heard how the elevator fell with us?"

"Yes."

"Well, La Croix saw us and cut the cable."

"Good Lord! Tried to kill you?"

"Exactly. That's why they fled."

"What a villain that fellow must be."

"Is there any other exit from here?"

"Yes, indeed. I'll have a boy show you."

He rang a hand-bell and a uniformed boy approached, to whom he gave an order and the Bradys were escorted away.

By questioning the help they soon found that the smuggler, his wife and his daughter had left the hotel by another exit.

A policeman in the street had seen them hire a cab and drive away through Broadway at a rapid pace.

Unable to learn anything else, the detectives went home. They had very comfortable apartments and spent the day there piecing out the torn letter so it could be read.

On the following day they had it translated, and read the following startling piece of information:

"Paris, France, May 19.

"My dear La Croix: In reply to yours of the 5th inst., I beg to say that I can easily meet your daughter at Havre, if she comes over on the Champagne. I shall then take her to Amsterdam, Holland, and procure the fifty packages of diamonds. She can then assume a fictitious name and take passage on the steamer Labrador, to Canada. You can meet her in Montreal, and the stones can be taken across the border at Niagara Falls, as you suggest. Should you follow this plan, wire me at once, and I shall so arrange matters that the American spies for the Customs officials who are on the lookout here shall know nothing about the transaction. Everything depends upon keeping this a secret from them, or they will cable back to the U.S. inspectors to keep a watch for Clara when she returns to Canada—"

The letter ended abruptly here, for the rest was missing.

But there was enough to expose the whole plan of smuggling a huge amount of diamonds into the United States.

The Bradys were astonished and Harry said at once:

"This letter proves that La Croix must be the gigantic smuggler whom the Customs department want run down."

"No question about it," replied Old King Brady. "And as we have the details of a scheme he intends to operate, we had better make preparations to nip the plan in the bud, or else to capture the girl smuggler when she makes her attempt to beat the Custom House."

"Are you aware that the steamer Champagne sails for Havre to-day?"

"Does she?" muttered Old King Brady, glancing at his watch. "Well, we'll barely have time to reach her if we go at once. Get a cab and we'll see if we can catch her before she departs."

"Even if we miss her," said Harry, consolingly, "we will be pretty sure to see La Croix on the pier, seeing his daughter off."

"I don't want to arrest him in that case," said Old King Brady, "for if the girl gets

away, we'll have to keep the man watched in order to let him lead us to his daughter when she returns. As she's pretty sure to have all those diamonds with her, we can nab them with evidence on their persons, of their smuggling enterprise."

Harry nodded and they hurried out together.

A hack was engaged and they rode over to the French Trans-Atlantic Company's pier on the North river.

By the time the cab reached the dock, however, the steamship's mooring lines had been cast off, the gangplank was down and the vessel was being pulled out into the stream.

The detectives were disappointed.

Eagerly scanning the throng of passengers on the upper deck, they suddenly caught view of Clara La Croix.

The girl was standing in the stern waving her handkerchief and shouting to a stylishly-dressed middle-aged woman on the stringpiece:

"Good-by, mamma!"

"Farewell, Clara—be very careful of yourself, my child!" replied the woman, as she waved her handkerchief back at the girl.

Harry nudged Old King Brady.

"There's her mother," he muttered, "but La Croix has not shown up. He fears arrest now, as he knows we are after him."

"So much the better," replied the old detective, drily. "This woman won't know us. It will therefore be all the easier to follow her undetected."

The steamship soon went down the river and the friends and relatives of the departing passengers began to leave the pier.

Mrs. La Croix was one of the last to go. She did not know that the Bradys were close behind her.



CHAPTER V.

AT A VILLAIN'S MERCY.

The smuggler's wife leisurely left the pier, crossed the street and went in the direction of Sixth avenue, on foot.

It did not seem to occur to her that she might be followed, for she never once glanced back in the direction she came from.

Old King Brady and his partner did not know much about the woman.

Whether she was actually concerned in La Croix's smuggling games or not, they had not the faintest idea.

She was a fine-looking woman, tall and stately, with brown hair, blue eyes and handsome features. But she seldom laughed.

Hers was one of those set, inscrutable faces, hard to read, for she seldom showed the emotions preying upon her mind.

"She don't seem to fear detection," commented Harry, as they walked along. "She hasn't made the slightest effort to conceal her actions."

"Well," replied the old detective, as he thoughtfully took a fresh quid of tobacco, "you must not forget that the woman isn't aware of the fact that we are on her trail."

"She certainly must be interested in her husband's crooked work or she would not see her daughter off to Europe in this manner. In fact, if she were not so greatly interested, I doubt if she would allow her child to make such a long, dangerous trip alone."

"Your reasoning is very sensible," commented Old King Brady, "but you must recollect that the girl smuggler is very smart. She is used to danger. This may not be her first voyage abroad alone. In fact, she has probably been making many trips to the other side, bringing back jewels to be smuggled ashore."

"Judging by what that letter said," remarked Harry, "the man and his wife are likely to go to Canada now and wait there for the girl's return with that large consignment of precious stones. We shall be obliged to follow them there. We can't arrest them now on suspicion, nor can we pull La Croix in for trying to murder us in the Fifth Avenue Hotel elevator. If we do, it will interfere with our capturing the girl when she returns with those jewels."

"I'm sorry to say your view of the matter is correct, Harry."

"There goes the woman up Sixth avenue. She's a good walker. It looks to me as if she were heading for the French district in the neighborhood of Third street. Queer she didn't ride."

They tracked her to West Broadway.

Here she suddenly turned into the hall of a very old house across the front of which hung the sign of an artificial flower maker.

Old King Brady passed into the hall after her and Harry remained on guard at the door.

Going up a flight of stairs, the woman knocked at a door and when it was opened, she passed into a room, closing the door after her.

The detective glided over to the door and listened.

Voices were heard inside, a man crying out eagerly:

"Well, Lena, ees ze child gone?"

"Yes, Paul," Mrs. La Croix replied, in sad tones. "The Champagne just departed with our daughter. We shall not see her for a month."

"Ah, but when she return we make ze largest stake of our lives."

"I wish this risky business was ended, Paul. I'm getting sick of it. We do not lead the peaceful lives of other people. It is a constant excitement and fear of police interference."

"Do not complain, Lena. Zees ees ze last treep ze child make. Eef eet ees wong success, we make so much dollaires zat we can retiaire an' leeve ze life of ease for ze rest of our days, by gar!"

He laughed and the woman replied, resignedly:

"Well, I hope your dream will come true, Paul."

"Take zees seat an' 'ave your suppair, my dear. You need ze rest, for to-night we leave New York by rail for Canada, for I have sold all ze stones I had, an' mail my draft to Paris."

Old King Brady smiled and muttered:

"I'm glad you've told me your business, old fellow."

The shadows of twilight had fallen by this time and the hall was getting dark.

Hearing some one coming downstairs from an upper floor, the old detective retreated along the hall and crouched back in a doorway.

He pressed himself back flat against the door hoping the person who was coming would pass him in the gloom without observing his presence.

Unfortunately the door behind him was not shut tight.

As he pressed his back against it, it flew inward all of a sudden and pitching over backward, the detective fell sprawling upon the floor of a small room adjoining the one occupied by La Croix and his wife.

He heard the Frenchman utter a startled cry.

Like a tiger he sprang into the room and saw the detective.

"*Parbleu!*" he hissed, a look of rage and hate upon his dark face. "Ze secret police. Watching me, eh? I show you, Monsieur."

He seized an iron bar standing in the corner and as the old detective was upon the point of scrambling to his feet, he dealt the officer a fearful blow that knocked him senseless.

He just had time to bang the door shut to prevent the person who was coming from upstairs from seeing what was going on.

Just then his wife rushed in.

"What is the matter, Paul?" she demanded.

"Old King Brady!" he replied, pointing at the old detective excitedly.

"Ah;" was her cool reply. "He has found our refuge, eh?"

"Yes. An' probable he has been listen to our talk."

"That is very dangerous for us, Paul."

"Not since I 'ave him at my mercy. *Sacriste!* When I geet through wiz heem now, he not weel trouble us again een wong hurry."

Fearing the detective might recover he got a piece of rope and bound and gagged Old King Brady.

When this was done an idea suddenly flashed across his mind, and he bounded to his feet and exclaimed, hoarsely:

"Where ees ze othair?"

"I don't understand you," his wife replied.

"Young King Brady."

"Do they always travel together?"

"Sairtainly."

"Then the boy must be lurking near here."

"Wait. I find heem eef I can."

He hastened from the room and made a search of the hall. Then he quietly passed downstairs and there caught view of the young detective keeping guard outside the street door.

The Frenchman was greatly excited.

He retreated into the hall and went upstairs again, muttering:

"I must geet zat boy een my powair just as queek as possible. So long as ze Bradys ees on my track, I may go to ze preeson at any moment. It makes me nairvous, by gar!"

He took up a position at the head of the stairs, wondering how he could get the best of the detectives.

Convinced that they knew all about his smuggling business and would arrest him

at the first opportunity, it made him so desperate that he would not have hesitated to kill both of them.

He had not been standing at the head of the stairs long before he saw Harry glide into the hall as quietly as a shadow.

The boy was becoming impatient over his partner's long absence and made up his mind to find him.

Searching the lower hall, he failed to see anything of Old King Brady and then cautiously made his way upstairs.

The Frenchman saw him coming.

He slipped into the room where the old detective lay.

Raising his finger to his wife, he hissed:

"Hush! He coming up ze stair! Put out ze light—hurry!"

Keeping the door open on a crack when darkness fell upon the room, he peered out and listened intently.

It was too dark to see anything.

But he heard the young detective's soft footfalls passing the door and he stepped out into the hall behind Harry.

Slight as the noise was which he made, the boy heard him and turned around, striving to pierce the gloom with his sight.

La Croix had the boy located.

He suddenly sprang forward with both hands extended, struck against the boy, clutched him by the throat and knocked him over backward.

A stifled cry escaped Harry.

He was knocked down and struck the floor with a crash.

As his head went back, with the Frenchman's grip on his windpipe, his skull banged against the door-casing.

He was stunned.

"Lena! Lena!" roared La Croix.

"What is it, Paul?" asked the woman, appearing in the doorway.

"Breeng a light—queek!" he panted.

She struck a match and he saw that Harry was senseless.

With a look of evil triumph on his dark face, the man seized the boy, dragged him into the room and his wife locked the door.

La Croix bound and gagged Harry.

"Got zem both!" he chuckled.

"What are you going to do with them, Paul?" demanded his wife.

"Do wiz zem? Put zem out of ze way, my dear. Dispose of zem so effectually zat we not weel be trouble wiz zem again."

The woman met his evil glance and shuddered.

She saw what murderous thoughts were filling his mind.



CHAPTER VI.

TWO MEN IN A BOX.

On the following morning Paul La Croix went upstairs to the man who made artificial flowers and said to him:

"Monsieur Reynard, to-day ve go away to Europe. I 'ave some sings een ze rooms ve occupy zat I weesh to send to a friend een Sacramento. To do so, I must 'ave wong beeg packing case. I see an empty wong standing over zere near ze hatchway. Can I buy him from you?"

"I'll make you a present of the big case, and be glad to get rid of it, as it takes up valuable space," replied Mr. Reynard, pleasantly. "Come, I'll help you to get it downstairs to your floor by means of the fall."

He opened the hatchway while La Croix was profusely thanking him, put a sling around the box and lowered it.

La Croix pulled the box into his front room through a door in the partition which surrounded the hatchway.

This done and Reynard out of the way, the smuggler turned to his wife, pointed at the box and asked her, with a grim smile:

"You know what zat ees for, my dear?"

"No. I have no idea. What?"

"To pack ze detectives in."

"What for?"

"So I can ship zem away."

"Won't it kill them?"

"I don't know," he replied, indifferently, shrugging his shoulders.

"Well," she remarked, after a moment's reflection, "it will give us time to get away to Canada without them knowing our destination."

"*Ma foi!* Zat ees my object."

He was provided with a hammer and some nails, and taking the lid off the box, he saw that it was amply big to hold the detectives' bodies.

Some of the joints were shrunk open, he noticed, which would admit air for the officers to breathe. This would keep them alive some time if they were not killed some other way in transit.

He did not care much about that, however.

Calling his wife to aid him, he went into the next room where the two bound and gagged detectives laid upon the floor side by side.

Neither could move or speak.

They were wondering what their fate was to be.

It filled them with chagrin to reflect that this Frenchman had alone overpowered them without the slightest trouble.

La Croix seized Old King Brady first and dragged him into the next room.

"Now, Lena," he remarked, "help me to leeft him in ze box."

He took the detective by the head and she grasped his ankles and they quickly dropped their prisoner in the case.

Harry was served the same way.

There was just room enough to hold them.

When La Croix nailed on the lid, they realized what he intended to do with them and it made them feel very downhearted.

"Going to ship us away," thought Old King Brady.

La Croix then borrowed Reynard's brush and marking pot and they heard him chuckle and say to his wife:

"I weel direct ze box to wong fictitious address in Sacramento, California. By ze time ze secret police arrive zere, *par Dieu*, zey weel be zez dead mans!"

He then addressed the case and went after a truckman.

This done, between them they lowered the case through the hatchway into the street, and it was banged with a hook, turned over and over and pushed up a pair of rungs on the truck.

The Bradys were badly bumped and bruised.

But being gagged they had to suffer in silence.

Finally the truck was driven away with them, and reaching the Erie freight depot, the driver got a receipt for the box and dumped it off his truck.

The shock upon the imprisoned detectives was awful.

They heard the driver say:

"Collect de charges. Dat box goes via Buffalo, don't it?"

"Yes," replied the freight agent.

"Well, yer'd better handle it wid care, as I tink it's got artificial flowers in it, an' yer might smash de stuffins out o' dem."

"Mighty heavy artificial flowers," growled the agent.

Then the truck drove away.

The detectives laid in the freight building for some time, and the interior of the box became hot and stifling.

Fortunately the box stood as they were lying on their sides.

About noontime their troubles began again, for the freight handlers got hold of the box to send it over the river to Jersey with other freight. The detectives were tumbled and slammed about roughly, at one moment resting on their heads, at another on their faces, then they were picked up by a hand-truck and banged upon their backs on the boat. For a while they had a rest.

No one heard the groans of pain they uttered as they were bumped, bruised and cut, and they were carried over the river.

Here the rough handling began again until they were laden on a freight car due to go out that night.

The box now rested so that they were standing up.

It was such a painful attitude in those cramped quarters that they were in misery, for they were face to face, with their bodies bent over on account of the box being too short for the length of their bodies.

Both had made the most desperate efforts to get rid of their bonds and gags, but found it impossible to do so.

Some hours later they felt the train get in motion and knew they were on their way to Buffalo.

The time dragged very slowly.

Hour after hour passed by and the night passed and another day came.

Hunger and thirst were now added to the miseries they already endured and the strain they were under brought them to the verge of fainting.

Toward noontime the train paused at a way station to take on some freight and the box in which the detectives were packed was thrown over to make room for it.

As it struck the floor, Old King Brady struck his face forcibly against the side of the box and made his nose bleed.

He gave a deep groan and one of the freight handlers heard it.

"Good Lor'!" he exclaimed in startled tones, as he glared around. "What's that? Sounded like a man's voice."

Another groan from the old detective attracted his attention to the packing case, and he saw a tiny stream of blood trickling out of it through one of the cracks, upon the floor.

A thrill of horror darted through the man.

He began to suspect a corpse was in the box, and visions of a dreadful murder mystery floated through his mind.

"Hey, Tom! Hey, Bill! Come here, quick!" he yelled at his companions.

"What's the matter?"

"What do you want?"

"Bring a hammer here!"

"Did you bust open a box?"

"No. But I'm going to."

"What for?"

"I heard a man groaning in that—ha! Hear it?"

A third groan from Old King Brady reached their ears and seeing the blood, they quickly realized that there was some one in the case.

Procuring a hammer, they pulled off the lid.

The two detectives were revealed.

Harry was senseless.

Cries of astonishment escaped the men, and observing that the pair were still alive, they pulled them out of the box and laid them on the floor.

Removing the gags and bonds, the trainmen brought water and bathed the bruised and swollen faces of the detectives.

This treatment revived Harry.

Both were very weak, and they ached all over.

"Give us a drink," Old King Brady implored.

When this was done they asked for something to eat.

The trainmen got some food at the station and a big crowd gathered round when the news spread.

After eating and drinking and rubbing their legs and arms, the Bradys recovered rapidly and told who they were and what befell them.

In a short time they were able to walk.

"Are you going back to New York to arrest the rascal who did this?" asked the man who discovered them.

"No, indeed!" replied Harry, quickly. "We wouldn't find them there if we did. They are probably on their way to Canada now."

"Going after them?"

"Yes."

"Then you'd better stay with us until we arrive in Buffalo and you won't have so far to go to reach Montreal."

"We'll do that," said Old King Brady. "But don't let on about our escape. If the newspapers get hold of the story and publish it, our enemy may learn how we baffled his design and he will be on his guard against an attack from us."

"I'll keep mum, Mr. Brady. We'll reach Buffalo to-night and you can then attend properly to your injuries."

The train then moved on, and the detectives finally reached their destination and put up in a hotel, where a physician attended to their injuries.



CHAPTER VII.

A MYSTERIOUS WOMAN IN BLACK.

"Old King Brady, your life is in danger."

"From what?"

"The man you are persecuting."

"You mean Paul La Croix, I presume?"

"I do. Go back to New York at once."

"Madam, I shall do nothing of the kind."

"Then you must suffer for your obstinacy."

"I am prepared for anything, madam."

"Remember, I have given you fair warning. You cannot arrest La Croix on Canadian soil for smuggling."

And the veiled woman in deep mourning, who accosted the old detective in a dark street in Toronto, turned as if to walk away.

This happened several weeks after the Bradys reached Buffalo.

They had been vainly searching for La Croix and his wife.

On the night in question, Old King Brady had gone out from his hotel alone, when the woman in mourning met him in the street.

The light of a street lamp fell upon them.

She gave a slight start and began to follow him.

When he discovered this and turned around, asking why she was dogging his footsteps, she gave the above recorded answer.

By her mentioning his name, he realized that she knew him, and he at once suspected she was La Croix's wife.

He resolved to fathom the mystery of her identity.

Seizing her arm, he exclaimed:

"Hold on a moment."

"Well?" she asked, pausing obediently.

"I want to know who you are that takes such a deep interest in my welfare. I want to know who it is that knows me—who knows all about the private business which has brought me to this city. Speak out. Who are you?"

"Your friend," replied the mysterious unknown.

"What is your name?" he persisted.

"I must decline to tell you."

"But I won't take a refusal. You must speak."

"No. Allow me to retain my incognito. It were best for us both."

Old King Brady was determined to know her, however, and he seized her long crepe veil and attempted to remove it from her face.

A subdued cry of anger escaped her.

"Let that be!" she exclaimed, imperiously.

"Madam, I must see who you are!" he persisted.

"Is this the gratitude you show for the favor I have done you?"

"You have aroused my curiosity."

"Stand back, sir. Don't you dare lay a hand on me again."

"Why," he laughed, "is it dangerous?"

"Very!"

"How?"

She drew a slender dagger from the folds of her dark dress, and as the lamplight glanced upon the blade, it flashed as she drew it back.

Old King Brady was startled.

He did not expect to see anything like this.

Raising the dagger, the mysterious woman hissed:

"If you attempt to penetrate my identity, I shall stab you!"

There was a ring of intense earnestness to her voice, and it froze the smile that rose to the old detective's face.

He regarded her with a puzzled look.

It now began to dawn upon his mind that she was not Mrs. La Croix after all. The voice was different. She was shorter and stouter than the smuggler's wife. Her actions were different.

To gain time to form a different tactic he exclaimed:

"How can you be a friend of mine if you are going to stab me?"

"I am bound to keep my identity a secret," she replied, firmly.

"What object have you in befriending me?"

"You are a brave man and a dutiful officer. I know you are only following up this case because you were ordered to do so. I therefore don't wish to see you perish."

"How do you know I'm doomed to get killed?"

"Because I heard your enemies plot your destruction."

"In that case they know we are here on their trail?"

"Yes. Every move you make is being keenly watched by spies."

"Our enemies must be well-disguised and keep well under cover."

"You haven't thus far detected them, have you?"

"No," admitted Old King Brady.

"Then that shows how secure they are. A number of times they have been as

close to you as I am. Yet you did not know it. By this you can realize how easy it would be for them to attack you unexpectedly, kill you, and escape."

"Even that thought won't scare me off the case."

"You are very obstinate and persevering."

"Those two elements will yet make me win this fight."

"Foolish man. Don't delude yourself. Your enemies are very powerful people. They will beat you in the end."

"I don't agree with your idea."

"Is my warning in vain?"

"Entirely so."

The veiled woman sighed and bowed her head in thought. Finally she strode away, saying in impatient tones:

"Very well. Since I can't dissuade you from your set purpose, I shall not bother myself any further about the matter."

She seemed to be very angry at the old detective.

He strode after her.

"Wait a moment longer!" he exclaimed.

"No. I have no more to say," she replied, sharply. "Don't attempt to follow me. If you do, it will be as much as your life is worth."

"Humbug!" he replied.

"So you doubt me, eh? Well, look behind you."

He glanced over his shoulder and caught view of the shadowy figures of several men lurking about the trees lining the street.

Old King Brady was astonished.

She evidently had a body-guard of watchful men.

"Who are those people?" he demanded.

"My friends," she replied, quietly. "If they saw you attack or follow me, they would put a sudden end to your career at long range."

"By firing?"

"Yes."

"Let me walk as far as the corner with you."

"Very well, Mr. Brady. I have no objection to that."

The journey was made in utter silence, and the old detective noticed that the shadowy men were following them.

When they reached the corner, Old King Brady glanced around, looking for Harry, who agreed to meet him there.

The boy was nowhere in sight.

Old King Brady then coughed and dropped his handkerchief as a signal.

For a moment there was no notice paid to it, but presently he heard a distant hissing sound of singular penetration.

It was an answer to his signal and meant that he was seen and understood.

With a satisfied feeling the old detective now said to the veiled woman:

"I shall leave you here. Don't think I am ungrateful for your kindness. On the contrary, I appreciate it very much. But my duty compels me to pay no heed to your valuable warning. I must run down my quarry. Good-night, madam."

"Good-night, sir."

He tipped his hat and strode away to the Walker House, where he was staying.

She stood watching him until he was several blocks distant and then gave vent to a low, peculiar whistle.

Instantly four men came gliding from the shadows, and grouped around her, as she started to walk away.

She was heading for the railroad depot.

When she was gone, Harry Brady slid down from the dense foliage of a nearby

tree where he had been a hidden watcher.

The boy had seen the woman and her body-guard, and knew that his partner wanted him to shadow her from that point.

Accordingly he glided along after them.

Dodging from tree to tree, slinking along in the densest shadows and never exposing himself for an instant in a ray of light which would betray him, Harry dogged them to the railroad station.

He saw them purchase tickets and board a train.

Gliding over to the ticket office he asked the agent:

"Where did those five people buy tickets for?"

"Montreal," replied the man, "on the Grand Trunk road."

"Thank you," said Harry, politely.

And the boy ran behind a freight car to shelter him from the gaze of the passengers in the waiting train.

Finding an opening between two of the cars he peered through.

Directly opposite him sat the woman in black, with two of her male companions in the seat ahead and two behind her.

She was close to the window.

Just then she drew her veil aside and Harry saw her face.

A startled cry escaped the boy.

"By jove!" he gasped. "She's Clara La Croix, the girl smuggler!"

And so she was!

CHAPTER VIII.

GAINING A FEW POINTS.

Young King Brady, of course, knew nothing about the dialogue which passed between his partner and the girl. But he felt pretty confident that Old King Brady did not know who the girl was.

Without the slightest hesitation Harry made his way unseen to the rear car, and boarded the train just as it pulled out of the station.

The boy wore a bicycle suit and a false beard.

He felt pretty sure he would not be known in this outfit, and passing inside the car, he took a seat.

The distance between Toronto and Montreal was about 350 miles along the Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence river.

"I don't believe La Croix or his wife are in Toronto," the boy muttered, "for we've gone over the city with a fine-toothed comb, and failed to find the slightest sign of them. They must be either in Montreal or Quebec, for the girl is going to the former place. Miss Clara made a quick trip. She could not have been here long from Holland. And I presume she is laden with those diamonds she went after. La Croix is now doubtless scheming to smuggle them over the border into the United States. We've got to watch these people closely now. That Frenchman is a desperate man. We have seen that he would not stop at murder to attain his purposes. When I reach Montreal, I must telegraph Old King Brady to come on and meet me. He will be wondering what has become of me now."

When the conductor came through, Harry paid his fare in cash.

A short time afterward one of the girl's male companions made a trip from one end of the train to the other.

He sharply eyed every passenger on the cars and favored Harry with a particularly keen and searching stare.

It made the boy imagine for an instant that his identity was known, but he never flinched.

The man passed on, however, without making any remark.

It took fifteen hours to make the run, and it was three o'clock on the following afternoon before the train pulled into Montreal.

Shadowing the girl smuggler and her companions, Harry saw them go to a hotel, where the men left her.

While they went down to the Dominion Line dock, the girl passed into the hotel and Harry saw her go upstairs.

The hotel clerk, a dudish young fellow, was staring after her when Harry approached him and said:

"Deuced pretty girl that."

"Very," assented the clerk. "A widow, too!"

"Rather young to be a widow, don't you think?"

"Yes, indeed."

"What's her name?"

"Mrs. Marie P. Savoy."

"Been here long?"

"A week."

"Alone?"

"She came in on the steamer Dominion from Havre alone, but her mother and father soon joined her here. She went down to Toronto a few days ago leaving the old folks here. She's just returned."

"I see. I'd like to get acquainted with her."

"You may if you stop here."

"That's what I'm going to do. Give me a good room."

"Very well, sir. Got any baggage?"

"None, whatever. I came from Niagara in a hurry."

"You can have No. 37. That's right next to the one occupied by the beautiful young widow. Perhaps it may lead to your becoming acquainted with her as you wish."

"I hope so," laughed Harry, who was delighted at his good luck. "Got a telegraph station here?"

"No. But there's one across the street."

Harry went out and telegraphed to Old King Brady to come and meet him in Montreal and then went to his room.

While washing, he heard the hum of voices in Clara La Croix's room, and gliding over to the wall, pressed his ear against the partition.

It was a hollow wall and nearly every word was quite audible.

The first thing he heard was a man's voice which he did not recognize, but presumed was La Croix, asking:

"Well, how did you make out in Toronto, Clara?"

"All right," the girl replied. "I found your four spies there. They report that the Custom House inspectors at Niagara Falls are on the alert. There has been a shaking up of the department. The Collector of the Port of New York is dissatisfied with the amount of smuggling that is being carried on, and made it very hot for everybody."

"That ees bad for us."

"Very. We'll either have to keep shady a while or play a trick on them to pass the diamonds I brought over from Holland. As there are \$250,000 worth of the gems, you can't afford to have them seized for duty and run chances on going to prison for the job, papa."

"That ees a fact. It would ruin me. I'll have to think of some—vat you call—plan to beat ze Custom House."

"I've got some bad news for you, too."

"Vat ees zat?" asked La Croix, nervously.

"The Bradys are in Toronto looking for you."

The smuggler started as if he were stung and turned deathly pale.

A look of blank dismay settled upon his sallow face, his dark eyes sparkled angrily and he exclaimed:

"*Parbleu!* I thought zey was done for!"

"You told me how you had shipped them in a box."

"Zen zey have escape, eh?"

"So it seems. One of your men discovered them. Before I came here, I met Old King Brady in the street and warned him of the danger of following you up. He refused to quit."

"Zat man ees a demon! I weel keel heem yet!" raved La Croix.

"Look out he don't kill you," replied his daughter.

"What wiz him deed you do?"

"Left him in Toronto."

"An' he not know we ees here?"

"No. I'm sure he don't."

"But eet puzzle me to know how he learn we ees in Canada."

"He may have had some method of finding out those things."

"I wondair how from ze box zey escape?"

"I'm sure I don't know."

"Where ees ze four men?"

"Gone down to the steamship dock for my trunk."

"Zen zey come back here soon, eh?"

"Yes. I presumed you wished to consult with them and therefore ordered them to

report here to you."

"So I do. We must watch for ze detectives ver' sharp now."

"Where is mother?"

"Een my room."

"I'll go in and see her. I'm going to get rid of these uncomfortable widow's weeds. They were all very well as a disguise in which to travel in Europe and come back here, but I am heartily sick of wearing them. They make me feel so old."

"Suit yourself, my dear."

The girl then left her room and as there was no more to hear, Harry resumed his ablutions and put on his false beard again.

He kept a strict watch upon the smuggler all that day and saw La Croix hold a meeting with his spies in his own room.

The boy failed to overhear what they had to say, but that did not worry him, as long as he had his quarry under observation.

On the following afternoon an old farmer with a homespun suit, an old felt hat, and gray whiskers, arrived at the hotel.

Harry was standing in the lobby when he came in and recognized him at once as Old King Brady, but made no sign.

The old detective recognized the boy at the same moment, and calling for a room, he seized his carpet bag and umbrella, and followed the bell-boy upstairs.

Harry considered it safest to keep apart from his partner in public, and for that reason failed to speak to him.

When he afterward learned which room Old King Brady occupied, he quietly went up there and was admitted.

In whispers they explained to each other all that transpired and the old detective was delighted over the boy's success.

"So the mysterious woman in black was the girl smuggler, eh?" asked the old detective. "Well, I'm surprised."

"Her warning you, shows that she has some regard for us and don't wish to see us come to grief," replied Harry, sentimentally.

"On the other hand, it may have been a diplomatic move on her part to bluff us off until they smuggle that big consignment of diamonds over the border," replied Old King Brady, practically.

"Well, she didn't succeed."

"By no means."

"Have you formed any plan of action?"

"Only one."

"And that is?"

"To catch them smuggling those diamonds and arrest them with the evidence in their possession, which will send them to prison for many years," replied Old King Brady.



CHAPTER IX.

CROSSING THE BORDER.

As La Croix's party did not seem to be in any hurry to leave Montreal, the Bradys had plenty of time to arrange their plans.

On the following day they went to the telegraph office and sent two messages, the first being couched in the following terms:

"Collector of Port, N.Y.: Swear out warrant for arrest of Clara La Croix, charge of smuggling, and mail at once to International, Niagara Falls. Brady."

The second was addressed to the Customs department at Suspension Bridge, saying:

"Keep watch for La Croix, wife and daughter with four spies. Are going to attempt to pass \$250,000 worth of diamonds."

As La Croix was well known, details were useless.

The Bradys watched their quarry closely.

Knowing they had those diamonds with them, and that they would very likely play a sharp trick to evade the inspectors, the Bradys were very careful.

Scarcely a move made by the family escaped them.

It soon became apparent to the detectives that an important move was soon to be made, for the four spies were in frequent consultation with the Frenchman and his family.

"They are evidently arranging a plan of action," Harry commented, as he and his partner traced the men to La Croix's room for the fourth time.

"I wish there was some way of getting a clew to their design," Old King Brady replied, in wistful tones. "We are completely in the dark."

"That's a sheer impossibility," Harry answered. "They are taking the most extraordinary care not to let anyone hear a word they are saying or see a thing they are doing. I've tried several times, and failed."

"We've got a sharp gang to deal with, my boy. And the worst of it is that \$250,000 worth of diamonds makes such a small package that they won't have the slightest trouble to conceal it."

"As they are not likely to allow so valuable a parcel to leave their hands, by arresting the whole gang the moment they reach the American side, we are likely to find the jewels on the person of one or the other."

"And I quite agree with that plan," said Harry. "In fact, it's the only safe method of securing them for a certainty."

"Have you noticed whether they made friends with any outsiders here?"

"No, they haven't. They keep strictly aloof from everybody. I made an attempt to speak to each one of the party in a friendly way at the table, but they gave me such a cold reception, I had to withdraw in a hurry."

That day, La Croix and his party left Montreal.

Boarding a train for Toronto, they went away.

The Bradys were on the same train.

Once more their disguises were changed, for they did not want the smugglers to see them in Toronto in the same characters, as it might arouse their suspicions.

They were now rigged out as two regular army soldiers, and pretended to be sightseeing, as most Americans are up in that region.

La Croix and his party only remained a day in Toronto.

The detectives now discovered that two of the spies had disappeared and a swift search was made to find them.

Harry did the investigating.

He finally discovered that one of them had gone to get married, and the other acted as best man at the ceremony.

The spy married a pretty French-Canadian girl.

His companion returned to La Croix's party and the bride and groom started off on a short wedding trip.

Young King Brady dropped them.

"They'll be so busy spooning and lally-gagging that he won't have any time to attend to this smuggling game," thought the boy detective, as he went back to his partner to report the occurrence.

Old King Brady was watching the Frenchman's party.

Next day the smugglers boarded the cars for Niagara, and the Bradys felt that their work would soon be at an end.

As the Custom House officers of Niagara had been specially warned against these people, they made a very careful search of their baggage and persons.

Every one underwent a most rigid examination.

Not a thing or place was overlooked in which there was the faintest chance of concealing precious stones.

But despite the keenness of the scrutiny—despite the extraordinary watchfulness—despite every care—not a diamond was found.

The Bradys looked on eagerly.

Each one expected a remarkable disclosure.

But when they saw the officers baffled, it worried them.

They could not understand this want of success, except by thinking that the La Croix party were playing some deep, shrewd game.

The Frenchman laughed sardonically at the officers and said:

"Ah, Messieurs, zis ees ze time I fool you! *Comprong?*"

"If any of your party have anything contraband," grimly answered the officer, in disappointed tones, "you must have swallowed it."

"Zen why you not examine us wiz ze X-ray?" chuckled La Croix.

"I'd like to take you at your invitation, you are such a slippery customer," growled the officer, who had had some experience with him before.

The party were permitted to go.

They headed for the International hotel and as the Bradys had already arranged to go there, they followed the Frenchman's party.

Upon the arrival of the officers, a legal envelope was handed to Old King Brady, and he opened it and withdrew a warrant for Clara La Croix.

"No need of this, yet," he grumbled, holding it up.

"We may want it very soon," replied Harry. "They had the diamonds, and if they've eluded our vigilance, or given them to anyone else to smuggle over, they'll have to get the jewels away from the smuggler and that will be the time

for us to grab them."

Several days passed by, during which La Croix's three spies returned to Canada, as they were then of no further service.

The day after they had gone, the fourth spy, who had got married, suddenly came over from Canada with his bride, and the detectives saw them go to the hotel where the La Croix party was stopping.

With their suspicions aroused, the Bradys watched them.

They went up to the clerk, sent their card to La Croix's room, and Clara presently came down and greeted them warmly.

"Papa is shaving," she remarked. "Can't you come to my room? I'll try to entertain you until he is disengaged."

She had abandoned her widow's weeds and resumed her wonted attire in which she looked very young and charming.

The bride smiled, patted her on the head and said:

"I like you. Nothing would please me better."

The moment she assented, the Bradys hastened upstairs.

Clara's room was open and they entered and glanced around.

It was a magnificently-furnished apartment and the trunk she brought over from France stood in the middle of the room.

At one side was a closet.

The Bradys dodged into it and closed the door.

No sooner were they concealed when Clara and her two guests came in and at her invitation, seated themselves.

"Well?" said the girl smuggler, in eager tones, "how did you make out?"

"Fine," laughed the spy, producing a package from his pocket. "We kept the diamonds and remained in Canada, spending our honeymoon. When we started for the American side, my wife had the package of diamonds fastened under the lining of her skirt. No one suspected us, of course. The officers only made a

careless examination of our satchel and valise. We had no trouble whatever."

"How lucky!"

"Is there any use for us to remain here to see your father? We are in a hurry, and can come back in the course of an hour."

"That will do."

"We will go, then."

And they left the room.

A few moments later there came a knock at the door.

"Come in," cried the girl.

Her mother entered the room.

"Where are the bridal couple, Clara?" she asked, glancing around.

"Just gone. They'll return in an hour."

"Did they leave the package of diamonds?"

"Yes. And here it is."

Another knock came at the door.

"Hide the parcel!" gasped Mrs. La Croix, nervously.

The girl thrust it in her pocket.

"Enter!" she cried.

The door opened and a hall-boy came in.

"Did you ring, Miss La Croix?" he asked.

"Yes," she replied. "I want you to do something for me."

Rising to her feet she drew the boy aside and held a whispered talk with him for several moments.

In the course of their conversation he said to her:

"I saw two men enter this room just before you came in with that lady and gentleman, and they didn't go out again, either."

The girl looked startled.

She spoke to him rapidly a moment, and he started for the door.

Before he could depart, however, the closet door flew open with a bang and the Bradys sprang from their place of concealment.

"Hold on, there!" cried Harry. "Let no one leave this room!"

The hall-boy paused, an alarmed look on his face.



CHAPTER X.

SERVING THE WARRANT.

Mrs. La Croix and her daughter were possessed of good nerves, for the dramatic entrance of the Bradys did not seem to startle them in the least.

They glanced coolly at the detectives and Mrs. La Croix asked, haughtily:

"Who are these men?"

"Detectives, madam," replied Old King Brady, politely.

"Indeed! What were you sneaking in that closet for?"

"To learn the true inwardness of your gigantic smuggling scheme."

"You must be mad."

"No, indeed. We are quite sane, I assure you."

"What do you mean by our smuggling?"

"Simply this: We know all about your daughter's trip to Holland and we've been watching her since she landed at Montreal."

"Oh," said the lady, icily, "you have, eh?"

"Yes, we have."

"Well, what do you want, now?"

"Madam," said Old King Brady, "here is a warrant for the arrest of your daughter. The charge is smuggling!"

Calmly taking the document, the lady read it.

Harry opened the door and let the hall-boy go.

The young detective did not want the boy to hear all that transpired and the hall-

boy hastened away.

Rushing to Paul La Croix's room, he pounded on the door, entered and found the smuggler shaving himself.

"There's two detectives in your daughter's room!" he gasped.

"*Sacre!*" roared La Croix in startled tones.

"They've got a warrant for your daughter's arrest."

"Who zey are?" groaned La Croix.

"The Bradys."

"We are lost!"

"Your daughter slipped me this package and told me to give it to you."

He handed over the parcel of diamonds, and with a glad cry, La Croix eagerly seized it and thrust it in the bosom of his shirt.

"Here—five dollaire for you!" he panted, giving the boy a bill. "Keep ze still tongue about our affairs. Now go!"

The boy shot out of the room and the man wrote a note and left it on the bureau.

La Croix hastily dressed and rushed out of the hotel.

He was fearfully excited.

Reaching the street, he called a cab, doubled the driver's fare and was driven furiously to the railroad depot.

Here he caught a departing train.

Meantime, the Bradys imagined they had Clara La Croix with the package of diamonds in her possession.

Harry placed his hand on the girl smuggler's arm.

"I hate to do it, Miss," said he, half apologetically, "but you are my prisoner."

She took her arrest with exasperating coolness.

Smiling up at him, she said in low, sweet tones:

"I'm charged with smuggling, ain't I?"

"Yes."

"What?"

"About \$250,000 worth of diamonds."

"How ridiculous!"

"No, it isn't. We've got all the facts."

"Please name them."

"You went to Amsterdam and came back on the Dominion with the jewels I mentioned. In Toronto you gave them to one of your father's spies who got married. Your party crossed the border and were searched. Of course, no jewels were found on you. A short time ago the spy and his bride followed you; they smuggled the diamonds over the Suspension Bridge for you. A few minutes ago they were here and delivered the package to you. You've got it now, so hand it over."

"I haven't got any package of diamonds," protested the girl.

"Now, don't try to lie out of it. We've got the evidence against you which you can't deny. Be sensible and save yourself further trouble by handing over the gems. If you don't we'll take them by force."

"I am telling you the truth."

"Further concealment is useless."

"Then search us and convince yourself."

Harry accepted her offer and failed to find the stones.

While he was so employed, Old King Brady searched her mother with equal non-success, and a surprised look spread over their faces.

"The girl hasn't got them!" exclaimed Harry, in disgust.

"Nor has her mother," added Old King Brady.

"They must have hidden them."

"Search the room."

"Don't move, ladies, or we'll handcuff you."

"No need of that ignominy," said the girl.

They made a thorough and painstaking search of the place, but failed to meet with any success and finally gave it up.

The diamonds remained missing.

Both were greatly puzzled.

Suddenly an idea occurred to Harry and he cried:

"The hall-boy!"

"What about him?" asked his partner.

"He may have carried off the parcel."

"See!"

"You guard them."

"All right."

Harry rushed out of the room.

Finding the boy down in the office, Harry seized him.

"Where did you put the package that girl gave you?" he roared.

The boy turned pale with fright, and a panic seized him as he suddenly thought his share in the matter was known.

With bulging eyes and chattering teeth, he gasped:

"For mercy's sake don't arrest me, and I'll tell you, sir."

"Well? Speak out—quick!"

"The young lady told me to give it to her father."

"And you did?"

"Yes, sir."

"Where was he?"

"In his room."

"Is he there yet?"

"I don't know."

Harry rushed upstairs again.

Pushing open the door of Paul La Croix's room he entered.

None of the man's possessions was disturbed, but Harry caught view of the note he had written and placed on his bureau.

The boy picked it up and read the following lines:

"Monsieur Brady: By the time you get this letter I will be far away. You are duped. Do as you please with my innocent wife and daughter. You can prove nothing against them. An outsider did the smuggling. That lets us out. I defy you. Do your worst. La Croix."

Young King Brady smiled at the note.

"The raving of a madman!" he muttered scornfully. "If he imagines he has beaten us, we will soon relieve him of that notion."

He carried the note to Old King Brady and exclaimed:

"La Croix has escaped with the diamonds."

"How did he get them?" asked the old detective, curiously.

"Clara sent them to him by the hall-boy."

"As I feared!"

"We can't convict these women."

"No. Release them."

"Ladies, you are free."

"Thank you," said Clara, with a pleasant smile.

"Go your way. We can't secure anything but revenge by prosecuting you, and that isn't what we are after. I must say, though, Mrs. La Croix, that was an inhuman thing for you and your husband to do, boxing us up and shipping us to California. We are more merciful to you when it lies in our power to put you in prison."

The woman's face reddened with shame.

She hung her head, but made no reply.

Old King Brady then said to Harry in hurried tones:

"Come. We must get on La Croix's trail. We'll run him down if it takes a year to do it!"

They rushed from the room.

Harry, however, paused outside the door and listened.

The woman and her daughter uttered a merry peal of laughter.

"Good for papa!" cried the girl. "He'll save the gems yet."

"Those detectives have gone on a wild goose chase," contemptuously replied her mother. "Paul will outwit them. To-morrow you and I will go back to New York, and put up at the Waldorf. When your father has safely disposed of those gems he will go there to look for us. It's a rendezvous we had arranged beforehand in case trouble came up."

Harry nodded and smiled.

"Glad you've posted me," he muttered. "I won't lose sight of you two charming creatures. It wasn't good policy to pull you in without the diamonds if you only knew it, and that's the only reason you are at liberty now. We'll play with you as a cat plays with a mouse."

And he walked away from the door feeling well satisfied with the shape the case was taking.



CHAPTER XI.

SUBDUING A TARTAR.

Old King Brady had gone ahead in an effort to find out what had become of Paul La Croix.

Reaching the street he accosted a man at the door with the question:

"Did you see a thin man with a black moustache, a high hat, and frock coat come out of here in a hurry a few moments ago?"

"Yes, sir. He got in a cab and rode away."

"Did you notice the sort of cab it was?"

"I did. Do you know Pork Chops, the negro hackman?"

"Oh, yes."

"Well, it was his rig."

"Which way did they go?"

"In the direction of the railroad depot."

Thanking his informant, the old detective hastened away convinced that the fugitive was going out of Niagara by rail.

When he reached the depot he described La Croix and asked where he had gone.

"That's none of your business," growled the surly ticket agent.

"Oh, isn't it?" queried the detective, blandly.

"No!" shouted the man, "and I'll not tell you."

"It wouldn't hurt you to be polite and accommodating, would it?"

"I ain't here to keep inquisitive people posted about our passengers."

"That's a fact," assented Old King Brady, "but I have an urgent reason for wishing to know where that man went."

"I don't care anything about your private reasons. If you don't want to buy a ticket, get away from that window and don't annoy me."

"Very well," meekly answered the detective.

He thereupon stepped through the door into the agent's office, and the man scowled, and glared at him and roared:

"What in thunder do you want in here, anyway?"

"I've come in to arrest you," quietly answered the old detective, as he showed his badge. "I'm a detective, as you can plainly see, and the man I inquired about is a fugitive smuggler. As you are aiding him to escape, by withholding the information I want, you must be an accessory of his. As such, you'll have to go to jail!"

The man wilted.

All his lordly, overbearing manners vanished.

Turning as pale as death and trembling like an aspen, he gasped tremulously:

"For pity's sake don't lock me up. I didn't know the circumstances."

"You're an unmannerly dog."

"I know it, sir. I'm sorry if I offended you."

"Promise me to act more civilly in future."

"Yes. Yes. Certainly I shall."

"Then I'll let you go. Let this be a lesson to you. Now, where did he go?"

"He bought a ticket to New York."

"Why didn't you save all this bother by saying so in the first place?"

"I—I—I don't know," stammered the fellow in subdued tones.

Giving him a look of contempt, Old King Brady purchased a ticket for New York, and said in angry tones:

"For two pins I'd notify the company what a brute you are, and have a gentleman put here in your place."

And with this rebuke he departed.

He went to a telegraph office and flashed a message to the authorities of various stations along the line to New York, asking them to hold La Croix if they caught him on the cars.

He had to wait an hour for a train to Buffalo, and sent Harry a message telling where he was going.

Finally he was carried away in his train.

The old detective stopped off at every station to which he telegraphed, but in every instance he received the same answer, that nothing was seen of a man answering La Croix's description.

That set the detective thinking.

"La Croix was probably keen-witted enough to suspect that we would find his trail and pursue him. In order to conceal his identity he has doubtless disguised himself and thus passed through unrecognized. He has got to dispose of that big lot of diamonds yet. Carrying such a huge amount will of course attract a great deal of attention. Therefore it should be an easy matter to find out where he is operating when he reaches New York."

On the following day Old King Brady reached the city.

He instituted inquiries about La Croix at once in the jewelry district, but no one seemed to have seen him yet.

That did not worry Old King Brady.

He was too astute a man to be discouraged by a trifling rebuff.

"The villain is keeping shady," was the conclusion he arrived at. "He is going to let the fuss blow over before he exposes his stock. Very foxy, no doubt, but I'm bound to land on him sooner or later."

He did not relax his hunt.

Nor did he let on to the authorities that he was in town again.

He believed in the golden principle of keeping his business to himself until it became absolutely necessary to disclose it.

Two days later Harry joined him at their joint lodgings.

Young King Brady told how he had tracked Mrs. La Croix and her daughter to swell apartments in the luxurious Waldorf.

Here the pair had taken up their abode under the fictitious name of Mrs. Marie P. Savoy and daughter.

The Bradys conjectured that it would not take them long to let La Croix know of their whereabouts.

They therefore carefully shadowed the big hotel.

Nearly a week passed by and one rainy night while Harry was on watch, under an umbrella, across the street from the hotel, he saw a hansom cab dash up to the door, and a man looking like La Croix alighted and hastily made his way into the building on the Thirty-fourth street side.

"La Croix, as sure as fate!" the boy muttered, hastily crossing the street.

He was heading for the glass portico, when he happened to glance into the spacious dining-room and saw the girl smuggler at supper.

Young King Brady paused and watched her.

Presently a waiter approached her with a card on a salver.

She glanced at it, said something to the man, and while he hastened away, she resumed her supper in a leisurely manner.

There were many fashionable guests in the room.

In a few moments Harry saw her father approach her smilingly, and sit down at the same table with her.

"Now is my time to nab him!" muttered Harry.

He ran into the hotel without ceremony, and making his way to the door of the dining-room, he paid no heed to the servants who offered to take his hat, mackintosh and umbrella.

In he dashed, his queer actions causing the guests to look up at him in astonishment, and he headed for La Croix.

The Frenchman had a big carving knife in his hand with which he was going to cut a steak instead of allowing the waiter to do it.

Harry's hand fell upon his shoulder.

"La Croix, you are my prisoner!" he exclaimed.

A hoarse cry escaped the smuggler and he became excited as he noticed that most every one in the room overheard the remark.

Clara gave a suppressed shriek and sprang to her feet.

Quick to recover his composure the Frenchman put on his eyeglasses, stared at Harry coolly from head to foot, and exclaimed:

"Young man, haf you not mek a meestake?"

"No, indeed!" replied the boy, resolutely. "You are my man all right."

"Why, sair, I don't know you. I nevair saw you before een my life."

"Come—come. You can't cheek it out that way, La Croix."

"Monsieur, please let go my arm or I have ze vatairs throw you out of here!"

Harry's patience became exhausted.

He did not intend to mince matters, so he said:

"You stop your humbug and come with me, or I'll pull you out of here by the neck, do you understand me?"

He took a firm grip on his man with one hand and drew a pair of handcuffs out of his pocket with the other.

Seeing he could not brave the matter out, and fearing lest the boy would attempt to handcuff him, the Frenchman wrenched himself free.

"You geet away!" he hissed.

"Not without you!" retorted Harry, pluckily.

And he rushed forward to grasp the villain again.

By this time La Croix had become frantic with desperation.

Seeing the boy coming, he drew back the big carving knife with a quick motion and aimed a blow at the boy, shouting in the meantime:

"Zen take zat!"

The deadly blade leaped toward Harry's breast.

He tried to avoid it by leaping back, but was too late.

The knife struck him and the point pierced his side.

A sudden cry of agony escaped Young King Brady, and he flung up his hands and pitched over upon the floor.

Nearly every one in the room having had their attention attracted toward the pair had witnessed the tragedy.

Men turned pale and leaped to their feet, women shrieked and fainted, and some of the bolder waiters rushed at the Frenchman to disarm and capture him.

La Croix brandished the knife.

"I keel ze fairst man who touch me!" he yelled.

Dashing out of the room, he rushed upstairs and flourished the knife at his pursuers. He swore at every step and threatened to run the blade into the first man who got within his reach.

That cowed the crowd and he disappeared on the floor above.



CHAPTER XII.

RUN TO COVER.

There was a scene of furious excitement in the hotel dining-room, and during the confusion, Clara La Croix made her escape.

Among the guests who had been dining was a physician who ran to Harry's aid and made a rapid examination of his wound.

To the many anxious, pale-faced spectators who gathered round, he said:

"Don't be alarmed. It's a mere flesh wound and will soon heal up."

"Isn't he dead?" demanded a gentleman in a dress-suit, anxiously.

"No. Simply fainted from the shock on his system."

"He's evidently a detective."

"Yes, sir, and his assailant is a criminal. Waiter, get me some water—a sponge—bandages, and some linament. I'll bandage this wound and stop the bleeding."

While the doctor was busy working over the unconscious boy, the hotel detective and a policeman came running in and got the details.

They hastened away and scoured the hotel in quest of La Croix.

That worthy had gone to his wife's room.

Garbed in one of her bonnets, veils and dresses, he descended in the elevator and swiftly got away from the Waldorf, undetected.

His wife and daughter followed as rapidly as possible.

Meantime Harry recovered.

The doctor brought him home in a carriage.

Old King Brady was at home and got the particulars.

His rage knew no bounds when Harry explained all, after the doctor's departure, and he cried bitterly:

"That villain has caused us more trouble than any other criminal we ever attempted to run down. I'll even matters up with him. Had you not retreated just when you did, that knife would surely have killed you."

"I'll be laid up a few days, the doctor said," replied Harry, "but I'll soon get over it. If I ever meet La Croix again, I won't have any mercy on him. He's a bad man."

The boy then went to bed.

A week afterward, Old King Brady met Harry at police headquarters, and the boy saw by the look of triumph on his face that he had good news.

"How are you feeling to-day?" he asked the boy.

"Fine. My wound don't bother me at all."

"I've been working hard, Harry."

"So I imagine, as I haven't seen anything of you since yesterday."

"La Croix's four spies have arrived in town."

"What! Come from Canada?"

"Yes. I saw them going up Broadway in a bunch, to-day."

"Why didn't you arrest them?"

"Couldn't. Had my hands full at the time."

"Of what?"

"Mrs. La Croix."

"Did you catch her?"

"Yes. Shopping in Twenty-third street."

"Good enough."

"She's locked up now. I've changed my plans."

"How?"

"Well, I think we've made a great mistake in allowing those women their liberty, hoping they would lead us to Paul La Croix's hiding place. My new plan is this: To yank every one of them in, the moment we catch them."

Harry pondered over the proposition a few moments.

As a fact, he did not fancy such a summary proceeding. He firmly believed that using the different members of the gang as a bait to trap the others was the most efficient method of acting.

However, Old King Brady was getting impatient over the slow progress they were making to arrest the smugglers. His plan would show a quick result. That's what he wanted.

The boy, therefore, did not contradict him.

"Any way you say," he replied, presently.

"I'm following out my idea now," said the old detective, as he took a chew of tobacco. "The moment I saw Mrs. La Croix, I grabbed her."

"She protested, of course?"

"Vigorously. But I locked her up just the same."

"Couldn't you get any information out of her about the rest?"

"No. She wouldn't say a word."

"Acts like an old offender."

"Exactly. Her husband and daughter must be somewhere about the city. I suppose La Croix sent for the spies. He may have use for them, else they wouldn't be here. I only hope he hasn't disposed of any of those stones yet."

"And I've sent a warning to all jewelers, pawnbrokers and dealers in gems, not to handle La Croix's gems under penalty of the law. I've offered them a reward for the smuggler's arrest. The villain is bound to keep shady now. He must know the danger he is in. He's a very foxy Frenchman," said Harry.

"I wish I could find out where the woman lives."

"Nothing easier," said Harry.

"Don't you fool yourself. She won't confess."

"I don't expect she will."

"Then how am I to find out?"

"You said she was shopping in Twenty-third street?"

"I caught her coming out of Sterns' store."

"What's more likely than that she made some purchases and ordered the things sent home?"

Old King Brady's face brightened.

He had not thought of her leaving her address.

"Your idea is all right!" he exclaimed.

"Of course it is. It only has one drawback."

"And what's that?"

"She may have given a fictitious name."

"True. But she favors the name of Marie Savoy."

"It wouldn't do any harm to try asking for it."

"Come with me and see what we can do."

They left headquarters and hastened to the big dry goods store.

Going to the delivery department they asked the head clerk if he had anything on his books to be delivered to either Mrs. La Croix or Savoy.

A short search of the record elicited this response:

"I've got twenty yards of dress goods to be delivered to Mrs. M.P. Savoy."

"Bought a couple of hours ago?" asked Old King Brady.

"About that."

"Where are you going to deliver it?"

"At No. 160 Bleecker street."

"That's all."

"Anything wrong about it?"

"No. It's paid for, ain't it?"

"Yes."

"What time are you going to deliver the parcel?"

"Our wagon ought to reach there about five o'clock."

Old King Brady thanked him and they departed, leaving the clerk looking very much mystified over their peculiar actions.

The Bradys went to the Bleecker street address and saw that it was one of a row of old-fashioned brick houses with green blinds.

There was an ornamental iron stoop in front, and a furnished room sign hanging in one of the windows.

"Shall we go in?" asked Harry, hesitatingly.

"No. Wait for the wagon. We can then see who comes to the door. I presume they only have furnished rooms here."

"It's a poor neighborhood."

"So much the better for their purpose, perhaps."

They entered a saloon on the corner and took up a position where they could watch the house over the window screen.

They had not been there long before Harry caught view of two familiar figures coming down the street and called his partner's attention to them.

"Here comes two of La Croix's spies!" he exclaimed.

"Yes, and they are going into the house," muttered Old King Brady.

"That clinches our doubts. He surely must live there."

"No doubt of it. It's a strange servant admitting them. She's a mulatto."

The men disappeared in the house.

An hour passed by uneventfully.

Then Sterns' wagon came along and Old King Brady said hastily:

"When that driver rings, we must force our way in."

"Hurry up, then!"

Running across the street they arrived just in time to go up the stoop with the driver, and when he rang, the colored girl answered the bell.

"Mrs. Savoy live here?" demanded the driver, who had a bundle.

"Yes," replied the girl. "Parcel for her?"

"Here it is."

He handed it over and went away.

"Is the lady in?" Old King Brady asked the girl.

"No, sir. But her daughter is."

"We'd like to see her on important business."

"Come inside, if you please."

She ushered them into the parlor and asked:

"What name?"

"The Bradys."

"Wait here, sir."

She left the room and they silently followed her.

Pushing open the door of the back parlor the girl said:

"Miss Savoy—the Bradys—"

"At your service!" added Harry.

And they strode into the room where Clara La Croix sat.



CHAPTER XIII.

A HUMAN SHIELD.

It was a beautifully furnished bedroom and the girl smuggler sat by the window reading a novel when the detectives rushed in at her.

She was a cool, level-headed girl, and seemed to possess a remarkable set of nerves for she did not look at all startled by their entrance.

Meeting the detectives' look with a cool stare, she asked, quietly:

"Well, gentlemen, what can I do for you?"

Then seeing the astonished servant lingering at the door, she added:

"You may go, Hattie."

The servant closed the door and vanished.

Old King Brady strode over to her and exclaimed:

"We want those smuggled diamonds."

"Really, you are provoking. I have no smuggled diamonds."

"But you know where they are!"

"Do I?"

"Yes. You fooled us once, very cleverly, by passing them to the hotel hall-boy, but you shan't do so again, I can tell you."

She laughed as if enjoying a good joke.

"Well," she said, finally, "evasions are useless I see."

"Perfectly!"

"Do you want me to be frank with you?"

"My dear young lady, lies ain't going to do you any earthly good."

"The gems you are after are in my father's possession."

"We know that much already."

"To get them you must first get him."

"That's manifest."

"As for smuggling them onto American soil, none of us did that."

"But you caused one of your spies to do so for you."

"Admitted."

"And you have them now."

"So we have."

"That makes you as guilty as if you did the work of smuggling yourself."

"So I presume. We connived the trick, for our own benefit, to cheat the Custom House. We ain't denying that. In fact, it's going to be a big thing for us. Now, we don't wish to be pestered with your persecutions any longer."

"I don't see how you can help yourself."

"We do."

"How?"

"Name your price to quit."

"You mean to bribe us off, eh?"

"That's about the size of it."

"We are not to be bought."

"Humbug! I never knew a Custom House officer to refuse."

"We ain't of that stamp, young lady."

She looked at him incredulously a moment, and saw by the stern look in his deep gray eyes that he meant what he said.

It seemed to unnerve her for a moment.

She reflected and finally asked:

"Are you determined?"

"Absolutely!"

"You are bound to hound us?"

"We are, until we gain our point."

"This is astonishing."

"Are you aware that we have your mother in jail?"

A look of alarm swept over her face, the color fled from her cheeks and she slowly rose to her feet and asked in strained tones:

"What! My mother in prison?"

"Yes, and you are going to join her in a few moments."

"Mr. Brady, you are very much mistaken."

"Why am I?"

"I'll show you, sir."

She gave utterance to a cough. It was a signal. Instantly the door of an ante-room flew open. In the opening stood four men. They were the spies.

Each one was armed with a revolver.

These weapons were aimed at the Bradys and the girl laughed outright when she saw the involuntary expressions of astonishment that swept over their features.

"Quite a surprise, isn't it?" she asked in grim tones.

"We are in a trap!" Harry muttered.

"That's the situation!" said the girl, quietly. "If you move hand or foot, you'll get shot. Those men never miss their mark. At such short range they could kill you even if they were not expert shots."

The Bradys saw the force of her reasoning.

In a word, they were helpless.

Neither attempted to draw a weapon in self-defense.

To do so would be to seal their doom.

An awkward silence ensued.

Old King Brady finally asked in gruff tones:

"Well, what are you going to do about it?"

"Make prisoners of you and hold you until we have disposed of the diamonds," quickly replied Clara.

The detectives looked disgusted.

"Shall we resist?" muttered Harry, desperately.

"No. It would be folly to attempt it," his partner replied.

Old King Brady was not so fiery and impetuous as the boy; he was more slow, deliberate and cool in the face of danger.

He saw that the smugglers had concluded to throw off the mask and make no further pretenses.

That meant bitter warfare.

He had no plan to suggest, and the girl exclaimed:

"Come in and bind them, Jean."

One of the men entered.

He was the man who had done the smuggling.

Walking over to the detectives, he said to them in low tones:

"If you resist, my friends will fire."

"We don't intend to," replied Old King Brady.

"Then I'll relieve you of your own handcuffs to secure you."

He felt in the old detective's pocket, brought out the steel bracelets and snapped

them on the detective.

Young King Brady was very restless.

To submit without a fight was more than he could bear.

His obstinacy suddenly got the best of his good judgment, and he made up his mind to give them a tussle.

Leaping beside the girl he seized her, swung her around between himself and the other men and cried:

"If you fire, you'll hit this girl!"

Clara gave a shriek.

"Harry!" roared Old King Brady in some dismay.

The men in the doorway dared not fire.

Jean, fearing an attack, plunged across the room in tending to get out of danger in the hall.

"Let me go!" gasped the girl.

"Give up my advantage? Never!" panted the boy, a reckless, daring light gleaming in his eyes.

He was close to the open window.

At a glance he saw a way to escape.

Unaided, he could not expect to arrest these men and the girl, for Old King Brady was rendered powerless.

The yard was only eight feet below.

"Can you jump out the window?" he asked his partner.

"They'll fire if I budge."

This remark was certainly true.

While Harry had the advantage of using the girl as a shield, the four Canadians held the old detective at their mercy.

Harry drew his pistol.

The girl began to struggle to get free.

"Keep still!" said the boy in threatening tones. "If any harm befalls my partner, I'll put a bullet in you, young woman!"

The terrible earnestness of his voice alarmed her.

"You wouldn't injure a lady, would you?" she asked, appealing to his manhood. "No gentleman would do that."

"You are only a criminal," he replied coldly, "and as it's a case of our lives or yours, I wouldn't hesitate to shoot you to save ourselves."

Detectives are not sentimental.

On the contrary, their work makes them harsh.

Harry wanted to scare the girl and he succeeded well, for she remained passive, and burst into tears.

The boy quickly saw his advantage and cried:

"Now, if any of your gang attempts to injure us, I'll kill you!"

As he spoke, he placed the muzzle of his pistol against her head, turned her around and backed over to Old King Brady.

"Come!" he whispered. "We'll use her as a shield and back over to the door. They'll bitterly rue it if they fire!"

The four spies looked desperate and one of them spoke to the girl in French as the detectives retreated, holding her between them and their enemies. The girl replied in English, saying:

"Never mind me. We must not let them escape. Tackle them."

Obedying her, they rushed toward the officers.

Harry aimed his pistol at them and fired twice.

"Go for the door!" he yelled.

And hurling the girl against the four Canadians, he and his partner rushed out

into the hall. The door was locked.



CHAPTER XIV.

ON HARLEM BRIDGE.

"Upstairs with you!" gasped Harry. "We can't get out the front door."

Old King Brady saw that the girl had collided with the four smugglers and they all fell in a heap upon the parlor floor.

The detective rushed up the stairs.

On the top landing Old King Brady panted:

"Unlock these handcuffs!"

Harry obeyed in an instant.

Just then the gang came rushing from the parlor, and were about to ascend the stairs when Harry opened fire on them.

Bang! Bang! Bang! went three shots.

He was a dead shot and could have killed those desperadoes had he been inclined to. But he merely shot to wound them.

The yells of pain that followed showed how true his aim was.

Two of the Canadians were hit.

A stampede among them ensued.

Back to the parlor they rushed, swearing and groaning, and the detectives laughed at them, for the tables were now turned.

The Bradys had the advantage.

At the head of those stairs they could have held an army at bay.

Old King Brady got his handcuffs from his wrists, put them in his pocket and withdrew his own revolver.

"By thunder!" he muttered. "I'm glad you made that dash, Harry."

"We would now be helpless prisoners if I hadn't."

Just then several lodgers stuck their heads out of the doors of their rooms, alarmed at the shots and yells.

Seeing the two armed detectives, they shouted with alarm, withdrew into the rooms, banged their doors shut and some rushed to the windows, flung them open and screamed:

"Murder! Murder! Help! Police!"

The cries startled the neighborhood.

For a moment everyone was in an uproar. A big crowd gathered before the house and several policemen came running to the scene from different directions, looking for trouble.

A suspicious silence ensued down on the parlor floor.

"Do you suppose they've skipped?" asked Harry.

"I'm going to venture down and see," replied his partner.

They dashed down the stairs, holding their pistols in readiness for use, and ran into the parlor.

It was empty.

Passing back into Clara's room, they found it vacant.

"Gone!" exclaimed Harry.

"Not by the front," replied his partner. "The door and windows are locked."

"Let's try the basement."

Down they ran, nervous over the disappearance of the smugglers and in the dining-room found the mulatto girl Hattie.

She sat in terror, with her face buried in her hands, and when she saw them rush in with drawn pistols, she shrieked:

"Oh, don't kill me! Don't kill me!"

"Where did that Savoy girl and the four men go?" sternly asked Old King Brady, glancing around the room.

"Out the back door."

"Into the yard?"

"Yes, sir."

The police began pounding on the front doors just as the Bradys rushed out into the rear yard.

Just as they emerged. Harry saw the figure of Jean disappearing over the back fence and pointing at it, he cried excitedly:

"There they go!"

"After them!" roared Old King Brady.

They rushed across the yard.

Over the fence they climbed like a couple of cats, and leaping into the yard of an adjoining tenement, they ran for the hall.

Blood spots on the flags left a plain trail.

The wounded men had dropped it in their flight, and the detectives easily traced the stains through the hall into the street.

Hearing wild yells, they saw a baker's wagon dashing along at a furious gallop, and saw Clara and her friends in it.

The owner of the wagon was racing out of his store.

A small boy had told him that a gang had stolen his horse and wagon and it was his yells the detectives heard.

He was a fat German and he paused in the middle of the street, wildly waving his arms and crying in despairing tones:

"*Ach Gott!* I vos robbed! Dey shtole mein horse und vagon!"

The Bradys started off on a run after the vehicle.

Block after block was covered until the wagon, far in advance of the detectives,

swung around the corner into West Broadway.

Here, panting and foam-covered, the horse was reined in.

The fugitives alighted.

"We are going to lose them now," groaned Old King Brady.

"I don't see why," returned Harry, breathlessly.

"Don't you see they're going for the elevated?"

"Oh, gee, so they are!"

The five rushed up the stairs on the downtown side, just as a train pulled into the station.

After them ran the Bradys, hoping fervently that they would miss the train. But they were doomed to disappointment.

When the detectives reached the platform, the train was steaming away and they saw their enemies in the last car.

"That's the end of them!" said Old King Brady.

"Can't we have them headed off by telephoning down to the Battery station?" eagerly asked the boy.

"Might try."

Down the street they went and as there was a public telephone near by, they sent the message down.

Then they took the next train down.

The train on which the fugitives stopped was yet at the Battery station and they found the gateman of the last car and Harry asked him:

"Did you notice where the four men in black, and a hatless girl of sixteen who got on at the Bleecker street station alighted?"

"Oh, yes. I remember them. They only rode one station and got off at Grand street."

This reply gave the Bradys a shock.

"We are baffled!" exclaimed Old King Brady in disgust.

"They're a shrewd set," Harry added.

They spoke to the stationmaster too, but he said they had not come down to the Battery and repeated what the gateman said.

The Bradys rode back to Grand street.

Here they made careful and endless inquiries.

All the information they could get came from the boy who had the news-stand on the corner.

He had seen the fugitives.

They had boarded a Grand street car going eastward.

He did not notice the number of the car, but thought the officers would find it down at the ferry.

Hiring a cab they were driven fast.

Reaching the ferry, several blue cars were found.

Inquiry among the conductors followed, and they presently discovered the one on whose car Clara and the spies had ridden.

He informed them that the fugitives alighted at the Bowery with transfer tickets on the uptown side.

Back went the Bradys to the Bowery.

"If we stick to their trail long enough," commented Harry, "we may finally locate them. But it's going to be a hard job."

"We'll beat the car they're in by taking the elevated," said the old detective as he dismissed the cab. "Up at the stables we may learn which car passed Grand street quarter of an hour ago."

"It's worth while trying."

So up they went.

When they reached the stable, they were disgusted to find that the cars which

passed the corner of Grand and the Bowery about the time the smugglers boarded one, were all gone ten minutes before.

But one more course was open to the detectives.

That was to proceed to Harlem bridge on the elevated and make another effort to head off the fugitives at the terminal of the road.

Once more they started.

Each defeat whetted their appetite more to capture the fugitives.

The elevated cars passed many of the surface cars, and when the 129th street station was reached, they went down to the street.

Just as they were about to start for the surface cars, to begin making inquiries, Harry glanced over at the Harlem bridge.

To his surprise and joy he saw Clara and the four spies hurrying over the structure on foot.

"There they are at last!" he cried, pointing at the party.

Old King Brady was startled.

He saw them the next moment.

"Come on!" he cried.

Off on a run they went, and passed out on the bridge.

The fugitives were half way over the structure and two of the men who were wounded in the legs were limping painfully.

Rushing up behind them noiselessly, Harry and his partner each grasped a man by the neck.



CHAPTER XV.

PUMPING A PRISONER.

"Gentlemen, you are our prisoners!" cried Harry.

The bursting of a bomb could not have startled the smugglers more.

With cries of affright, they glanced around and seeing who was attacking them, they were more startled than ever.

The detectives had grasped the wounded men.

Seeing their peril, the two uninjured Canadians rushed to the rescue.

With one accord, the detectives hurled their prisoners to the planks of the bridge and sprang forward eagerly to meet their foes.

The next moment the smugglers drew their pistols.

Before they could fire a shot, the detectives let their fists fly, and in a moment more a terrific fight was going on.

During the fracas Clara escaped.

Bang! went Old King Brady's powerful fist against the jaw of one of the villains, and it knocked the man flat on his back.

He was stunned.

As he fell close to the wounded man whom Harry had flung down, the old officer whipped out his handcuffs and linked the pair together.

Harry had kicked the pistol out of his opponent's hand.

The man now had to depend upon his fists.

Both he and Young King Brady met with a crash and were punching each other furiously when the old detective arose.

It was Jean, the one who had smuggled the diamonds over the border, and Harry was delighted over the discovery.

The young detective was a scientific boxer.

He warded off several heavy swings and gave Jean an upper cut on the mouth that split his lips open.

The man recoiled, but Harry followed him up like a bull dog.

He received a painful blow in the stomach, and caught Jean's foot as he aimed a swinging kick at the boy.

Harry clung to the man's ankle.

Giving it a jerk, he upset the Canadian's balance and Jean fell with a crash, and rolled over.

He was just going to rise when the boy pounced on him, and a fierce struggle began for the mastery.

Old King Brady would have gone to his pupil's aid had not the other wounded man drawn a pistol and opened fire on him.

A bullet whistled past the old detective's head.

He sprang at the man just as he was about to fire a second shot and grasping him by the wrist, turned the pistol aside.

The ball was spent harmlessly in the air.

Jabbering in French, the man made an effort to wrench the weapon free, but Old King Brady was too quick for him.

He brought down his fist on the rascal's arm.

The force of that blow was awful.

It numbed the arm and the pistol fell from his nerveless fingers.

The next moment Old King Brady's fist caught him on the nose, almost smashing that organ flat, and as the Canadian bit the dust, the detective landed on top of him like a tiger seizing its prey.

"I've got you now!" exclaimed the old detective, fiercely.

"Mercy!" groaned the man.

"Roll over."

"Yes—yes."

"Place your hands behind your back."

"Yes."

"Now keep still, or I'll strangle you."

Old King Brady tied the man with his handkerchief and rose.

By the time he got upon his feet, Harry had overpowered Jean and had the bracelets on his wrists.

"Victory!" chuckled the boy.

"Four," said the old detective. "That ain't a bad haul!"

"But the girl has escaped."

"Never mind, Harry. We are well paid for our work."

The shots, noise, fight and general excitement, had brought a crowd rushing to the spot. There was a policeman among them.

But they arrived too late to be of any assistance.

Rushing up to the Bradys officiously, the panting policeman asked:

"What's the matter here?"

"Nothing," replied Harry.

"Do you call that nothing?" asked the policeman, grabbing the boy.

"Here—you!" exclaimed Old King Brady, showing his badge. "Let go that detective and ring up the wagon so we can run in these prisoners. Step lively now, and don't try to be too smart."

"Detective?" asked the policeman.

Harry showed his badge.

The policeman wilted, and the crowd laughed at him.

Without a word he hurried away to order the patrol wagon.

It soon arrived.

The prisoners were lifted aboard and accompanied by the Bradys, were driven to the nearest police station.

Formal complaints were entered against the four Canadians and when they were locked up, the detectives departed.

In the street Harry said to his partner:

"After all, we haven't accomplished such a lot."

"Why not?" demanded Old King Brady, in surprise.

"Because we've only got Mrs. La Croix and the four spies."

"Well, ain't they valuable?"

"Of course. But they are of the least consequence in this case. We don't know where the diamonds are, and both La Croix and his daughter are yet at large."

"Oh, we'll find them before long. As for the diamonds, why, La Croix can't offer them to any big dealer in this city, Boston, Philadelphia, or Chicago, but what we will be informed of the fact."

"He hasn't made any effort to dispose of them yet, then."

"No. We would have heard of it, if he had."

"There are plenty of unscrupulous people who would buy them in small lots, and thus he'd gradually get rid of the whole lot."

"That ain't La Croix's game. He expects to save \$35,000 duty on those gems, besides about \$15,000 profit which he expects to make. He's got to do his work quick to gain his money. With a stake of \$50,000 to work for, he's going to give us a hard fight."

"Of course. Can't you put the screws on the prisoners?"

"Make them confess?"

"One of the bunch might squeal."

"Perhaps, if we give them the Third Degree."

"Try it. They must know where the Frenchman and his daughter are."

"I shall. It's our only chance to locate the diamonds."

They went home and laid out a plan.

Before the prisoners were brought to court next morning, the Bradys appeared at the police station and had a talk with the captain.

He fell in with their views and said:

"You are at liberty to pump the prisoners here, if you can."

Accompanied by the doorkeeper, the detectives went back to the cell occupied by Jean.

The man was nervously pacing to and fro and glanced at the detectives with an ugly scowl, when they entered.

Pausing before them he demanded:

"Have you come to gloat over my misery?"

"No. We are not so cruel. All we want is some information."

"What about, Old King Brady?"

"The smuggled diamonds."

"And if I refuse?"

"We'll arrest your bride!"

The man turned pale, for the detective had touched his weakest point.

Grasping Old King Brady's arm, he said in appealing tones:

"Don't do that. She is innocent. Why drag her into my trouble?"

"She was with you when the diamonds were smuggled."

"True. But she didn't know anything about it. She didn't have anything to do with

the work. I alone am the guilty party."

"That don't make any difference to us. If you don't make a clean breast of the matter, I'll pull her in. That settles it!"

The Canadian pondered a few moments.

Then he said with a sigh:

"Well, I may as well tell you La Croix has got them. You'd find it out anyway, the way you are following up this case."

"Of course I will. And what's more, we know he's got them. But what I want to know most of all, is, where is La Croix?"

"At the Astor House."

"Under what name?"

"His wife's maiden name: Savoy."

"Does Clara know it?"

"Certainly."

"Are any of the diamonds sold yet?"

"Not that I know. But they will be."

"When?"

"To-day."

"He has found a purchaser for the lot?"

"Exactly. They are to meet in the Astor House to-day at twelve and end the sale."

Old King Brady glanced hastily at his watch.

It was then half-past eleven and to reach the Astor House would take three-quarters of an hour!



CHAPTER XVI.

THE CAPTURE OF LA CROIX.

Leaving the prisoner's cell, the Bradys hastened from the police station and hastily getting aboard a City Hall train on the elevated road, they went downtown.

"As it takes about three-quarters of an hour to get down to the bridge," said Harry, in anxious tones, "I'm afraid we will reach the Astor House too late to prevent the consummation of that diamond sale."

"Well, that depends upon how long it is going to take La Croix and his customer to arrive at a bargain," said Old King Brady, quietly.

He was not very nervous over the matter.

Taking a chew of plug tobacco, he settled back comfortably in his seat, drew a newspaper from his pocket and began to read the news.

Harry watched him restlessly.

The boy was very impatient.

"I can't understand how you can take it so cool," he muttered.

"What's the good of fuming and fretting? It isn't going to hurry us, is it?"

"No. But La Croix may beat us."

"Keep cool. The more you worry, the warmer you'll get."

That ride downtown was torture to Young King Brady, and there wasn't a minute he did not have his watch in his hand and kept counting the minutes as they slipped by.

It was with a deep sense of relief that he saw the train stop at the bridge and he was the first one off the cars.

"Quarter past twelve," he growled, feverishly, "and it will take us five or ten minutes longer to reach the hotel."

"Have patience—" began Old King Brady.

"Can't do it. Let's run, or I'll get wild!"

They made rapid time down Park Row and crossing past the post-office, they hastened into the hotel.

Going to the desk, they asked the clerk:

"Is Mr. Savoy here?"

"Yes. Room 76. Name, please."

"He's a friend. We wish to surprise him. Is he in?"

"Oh, yes. I'll send a boy up with you."

"Anyone call on him to-day?"

"Not a soul."

"Not a soul?" blankly asked Harry.

"Except yourselves," laughed the clerk.

Old King Brady burst into a hearty peal of laughter, but not at what the clerk said, for he was laughing at Harry for being so impatient.

The boy drew a deep breath and wiped the sweat from his forehead.

"Thank fortune, we're in time!" he muttered.

"You've had all your stewing for nothing."

"I'm mighty glad of it. His customer must be late."

"All the better for us. This experience will teach you a good lesson in our profession—namely, never to get excited."

"I'll try to profit by it," said Harry, quietly.

Just then a boy came running up and the clerk said:

"Show these gentlemen up to 76—Mr. Savoy's room."

Just as they were about to follow the boy, a tall, thin man, without whiskers, came along and seeing the Bradys, gave a slight start.

The Bradys got a good look at him before he turned his back to them and Harry clutched his companion's arm and whispered:

"By jove, that's Andrew Gibson, the Custom House inspector, in disguise."

"Yes," assented Old King Brady, nodding, "I recognized him. He knew us, too, I could tell at a glance. That man hates us. I wonder what he is doing here. Can he be after La Croix, too?"

Harry was startled at the very suggestion.

"He knows La Croix is a professional smuggler," he remarked, "and I wouldn't be surprised if he got on to the man living here. He may be trying to nab him as we are doing."

"He won't cheat us out of our prey this way, Harry."

Just then they heard the inspector say to the clerk:

"Send up my card to Mr. Savoy. He expects me. I was to meet him at twelve o'clock on some business, but was detained."

The Bradys darted startled glances at each other.

Gibson's remark exposed his hand.

He was the supposed jeweler with whom La Croix had been negotiating to sell the contraband diamonds.

The Bradys had arrived just in time to prevent this man from cheating them out of their legitimate prey.

Had they been delayed a few minutes longer Gibson would have had La Croix under arrest and the smuggled diamonds in his possession.

After all their arduous work, he would have stepped in at the last moment and gained the credit for the arrest.

It made the Bradys shiver to think of it.

Harry said to the hall-boy:

"Go ahead, as fast as you can!"

They hastened upstairs while the hotel clerk was writing Gibson's name on a card, and the boy knocked at the door of No. 76.

"Who ees zat?" demanded La Croix's voice from within.

"Boy, sir."

"Ah! An' vat you vant?"

"Gentlemen to see you, sir."

"Yes. I expect him. Wait, I open ze door."

"Go!" whispered Harry to the boy.

The little fellow ran downstairs.

La Croix unlocked the door and stuck out his head.

"Come in, Meestair Geebson—" he began.

And the Bradys interrupted him by rushing against the door; it hit La Croix on the shoulder, sending him reeling back into the room, and he gave a yell as the detectives dashed in.

"*Par Dieu! Ze detectives!*" he screamed.

Then he began to yell, swear, and rave in French, as he scrambled to his feet, and the officers made a rush for him.

"Ze Bradys! Ze Bradys!" he shrieked.

At first they imagined these cries were due to his excitement. But when he backed up against a door opening into an adjoining room with his arms stretched out, they saw through his purpose.

"Harry!"

"Well?"

"He's warning some one in the next room."

"I'll see!"

The boy dashed out into the hall.

Old King Brady had his pistol in his hand.

Taking aim at the man's head, he roared in stern tones:

"Drop on your knees!"

"Oh, don't fiair!" yelled La Croix, obeying.

"Raise your hands!"

"Sairtainly, Monsieur."

"Now don't budge, or—"

He made a threatening gesture with the pistol at the wild-eyed Frenchman, from whose face all vestige of color had fled.

"No! No!" gasped La Croix, imploringly.

Reaching his side, the detective handcuffed him.

Just then a boy knocked at the hall door.

"Who's there?" cried the old detective.

"Boy, sir."

"What do you want?"

"Mr. Gibson wants to see you, sir."

"Send him up."

"Yes, sir."

Just then the door between the two rooms was flung open and Harry strode through with a puzzled look upon his face.

"No one in here," he announced.

A pleased smile crossed La Croix's face.

Observing it, Old King Brady exclaimed:

"Your daughter was in that room, wasn't she?"

"She was," admitted La Croix, "but she hear ze attack and escape."

"You warned her by yelling our names?"

"I deed, Monsieur."

"Confound you! Where are those diamonds?"

"Clara has got zem."

"Don't lie."

"Sairch ze place an' you see."

The Bradys complied, but failed to find the missing diamonds.

"I'll go after her!" cried Harry, hastily, and he rushed out.

A few moments after he had gone, Gibson came in, and a look of mingled surprise, rage and jealousy crossed his face when he saw the situation of affairs.

"How are you, Gibson?" laughed Old King Brady. "I've got La Croix!"

"You've cheated me!" snarled the inspector, furiously.

"Bless your heart, you've got the matter twisted. It was you interfering with our game. We've been after this man two months. And you ain't going to skim the cream off our hard work, I can tell you."

"You lie, Brady—"

An angry light sparkled in the old detective's eyes at this insult and he doubled up his fist, strode over to the inspector and struck him in the face.

"Don't you dare insult me, you cur!" he exclaimed.

Gibson reeled back swearing, and seeing the old detective coming at him again, he rushed from the room shouting wildly:

"I'll pay you off for that blow!"



CHAPTER XVII.

RECOVERING THE DIAMONDS.

When Harry ran from La Croix's room, he passed Andrew Gibson in the hall, and smiled when he thought of the man's coming surprise.

Racing downstairs, the boy made inquiries at the different entrances to the hotel, for information about the girl smuggler.

A man had seen her go out the Vesey street door.

As he was interested in her pretty face, he watched her a few moments and had seen her go hurrying over to Broadway.

She had kept on the west side of the street and was evidently going downtown on foot in the dense crowd thronging the street.

With this meagre clew to follow, Harry hurried away.

"She had the gems," he muttered. "Perhaps she had an idea of selling them quick to raise money to aid her parents, both of whom she now knows are in trouble. She's a wise girl, and must certainly know that she would be helpless to aid them without money. Money will give her power. It's possible, therefore, that she's heading for the jewelry district, which is near by. As the street is crowded with vehicles and she'd have to cross to reach Maiden Lane or John street, she must have gone over under the protection of a policeman. He would remember her and might post me. I'll try all the big cops from here down to Wall street, if necessary."

Harry knew that the largest part of the time of these officers was spent at escorting people across the crowded street.

He therefore began with the policeman at Fulton street, giving him an accurate description of Clara, but the officer had not seen her.

On the corner of Dey street he met with the same result.

At Cortlandt street he gained a clew.

The officer there had piloted a girl over who answered her description and said she had gone down the Lane on the north side.

Harry hastened down the great jewelry center.

He scrutinized every one he met.

As a general rule, excepting girls who are employed in the business houses of the downtown section of the city, but few females frequent the side streets.

In fact, so few pass through these streets, that when they do, they are noticed by the numerous boys and business men thereabouts.

Harry was relying upon this curious, but true fact, to gain some news of the girl he was pursuing.

He therefore did not hesitate to ask everyone with whom he came in contact if they had seen such a girl as Clara was.

In some cases he received a negative answer, while in others, not a few people admitted they had noticed her.

According to the latter information, he traced her to Nassau street, and an Italian apple vender with a push-cart near the corner, said he had seen her turn the corner and proceed toward John street.

Following up this clew, Harry met a man standing near the window of a haberdasher's store who asserted that he had seen such a person go through John street toward Broadway.

He averred that she had gone into a building near the corner and pointed out the place to the young detective.

When Harry reached the building in question, he paused and studied the business men's signs in the doorway.

One in particular attracted his attention, worded this way:

"Cliquot & Co., Diamonds, Second Floor Front."

A curious smile flitted over the young detective's face and he passed into the narrow hall and ascended the stairs muttering:

"I wonder if she's in there?"

In the upper hall he saw the name of the dealer in precious stones, painted on the ground-glass window.

Harry opened the door and strode in.

He found himself in a small office containing two huge Herring safes, guarded with burglar alarm cabinets. A long table covered with blue cloth served as a counter. Near the front windows was a bookkeeper working at his desk. At the rear a small compartment was partitioned off to serve as a private office.

A fat little Frenchman was behind the counter, but Harry did not see any signs of Clara La Croix.

A feeling of disappointment overcame him.

The salesman bowed, looked at him inquiringly, and asked politely:

"Well, sir, what can I do for you to-day?"

"Is Mr. Cliquot in?" asked Harry, in low tones.

The salesman smiled and shook his head.

"No," he replied. "He is dead."

"Dead? But the name on your sign—"

"Is only kept as a firm name. His partner is in."

"Are you the gentleman?"

"No. His name is Decker. But he is engaged at present."

"I wish to see him personally."

"Won't you sit down?"

"Thank you. I am in a great hurry."

"In that case, perhaps I can arrange an interview."

"I won't detain him a minute."

The clerk passed into the little private office, and Harry heard the low hum of

voices. Then the proprietor said:

"Send him in."

The salesman reappeared, nodded, smiled and said:

"Go right in, sir, through that door in the partition."

Harry pushed the door open.

It was a small room containing a desk at which sat a bald-headed, little, old man with a mass of diamonds spread before him on the desk.

He had a magnifying glass in his eye, a pair of tweezers in his hand, and a small delicate scale in front of him.

Evidently he had been weighing and sizing up the stones.

In a chair beside him sat Clara La Croix!

As Harry stepped forward with a smile on his face, their glances met.

She half started from her chair, uttering a smothered cry of intense dismay, and her face turned as pale as death.

"Young King Brady!" she gasped, faintly.

"Clara, I've run you down at last!"

She fairly groaned.

Her defeat was hard to bear.

"This is terrible!" she muttered.

Harry pointed at the diamonds in front of the astonished dealer.

"Ain't those the smuggled diamonds?" he asked.

Before she could reply, Mr. Decker sprang to his feet, crying in alarm:

"Good heavens! Are these smuggled diamonds?"

"Yes," replied Harry, with a nod.

"No wonder she wanted to sell them so cheap!"

"Mr. Decker, I am a Custom House officer."

"Ah!"

"This girl is a smuggler."

"I see!"

"We've been on her trail since she brought those gems from Holland to Canada, and thence over the border without paying duty on them."

"The little wretch!"

"Are you a party to this deal?"

"No, indeed!" emphatically replied the dealer. "I'm a victim. She came in a while ago and said her father died, leaving a stock of diamonds to her as he had been an importer. As she offered to sell them very cheap, I was selecting a lot to buy, when you came in."

"I believe you, sir."

"I am a respectable business man."

"Oh, there can't be any doubt of that. This girl is developing into one of the most expert crooks in the country. For her own good it's a blessing that I've caught her before she gets any worse."

"That's a fact."

"Kindly gather up those gems in a package for me."

"Certainly. I'm glad you arrived in time to save me from buying goods of this kind. I have no desire to do any crooked business."

He made a package of the diamonds.

Harry then turned his attention to Clara who was weeping bitterly and said to her in low tones:

"There's no use playing the baby act. We've got your father, mother and the four spies. You and the diamonds are the last of the bunch."

"But I don't want to go to prison," she sobbed.

"I can't help that. You've broken the law and now you have got to take the consequence of your evildoing."

"Can't you let me go?"

"No."

"I'll give you all those diamonds if you do."

"My dear girl, I'm going to take them anyway."

"But I mean for keeps. They're worth \$250,000."

"I wouldn't let you go for ten times that amount."

"Very well," she replied, despairingly, "take me."

"If you'll go along peacefully I won't handcuff you and I'll take you in a cab so people won't be staring."

"You are very kind. I'll do anything you ask."

Harry took the diamonds from Mr. Decker and ranging himself alongside of the girl he led her down to the street.

A cab was procured and they drove away.

CHAPTER XVIII.

CONCLUSION.

After Andrew Gibson rushed from the room in the Astor House, Old King Brady walked over to Paul La Croix and asked him:

"Were you going to sell him your diamonds?"

"Yes, sair," admitted the terrified prisoner, "but, by gar, I deed not know zat he was wong Custom House inspectair."

"Well, that's exactly what he was."

"Hark! What eez zat?"

"Gibson in the hall, yelling bloody murder."

"Ze man ees crazy!"

Old King Brady was puzzled by the defeated inspector's actions. But he soon was destined to learn what the man meant by it.

His yells brought up a policeman at the head of a crowd.

"What's the fuss about?" demanded the patrolman.

"See this badge?" demanded Gibson.

"Yes. You're a Custom House officer."

"That's what I am. I'm after a smuggler."

"Well, what of it?"

"He's in that room. Just as I was going to arrest him a friend of his rushed in, armed with a gun and gave me a punch in the eye."

"I see he did."

"Well, I want you to arrest that fellow, so I can take in the smuggler."

"Very well. Come and point him out to me."

Gibson rushed to the door and flung it open.

Striking a dramatic attitude and pointing at Old King Brady, he shouted in ferocious tones:

"There stands the man. Arrest him!"

Old King Brady was astonished to hear this, and bristling up with just indignation, he demanded:

"Of what does this man accuse me?"

"Interfering with an officer in the discharge of his duty."

Instantly comprehending Gibson's game, the old detective burst out laughing, and finally asked:

"How did I interfere with him?"

"He was arresting yonder man, he says."

"Lock him up, officer!" shouted the inspector. "Lock him up!"

The policeman took a firmer grip on his club and made a rush at Old King Brady, whom he grasped by the collar.

"You're my prisoner!" he exclaimed. "If you resist, I'll club you!"

While this was going on, Gibson grabbed La Croix and dragged him over to the door, exclaiming:

"You come with me!"

He designed to arrest the man and get the credit for it, while Old King Brady was fighting with the policeman.

But his plot was doomed to dismal failure.

Old King Brady flung back the lapel of his vest, and exclaimed:

"Do you know I'm Old King Brady, the Secret Service detective?"

"What!" gasped the policeman, glaring at his badge.

"If you don't believe it, you can come to the station when I pull in my prisoner. That fellow is a Custom House inspector all right, but he's sailing under false colors. We were both after the same man, as I am working for the Custom House. I caught the man, and now he wants to take the glory of the capture. See through his game?"

The policeman did.

He released the detective.

Then he made a rush at the spiteful inspector, and poking and jabbing him with his club, he put Gibson out of the hotel.

The inspector finding himself baffled, departed in a fury for the whole crowd was laughing and jeering at him, and one of the spectators threatened to report his meanness to the Collector.

Old King Brady now seized La Croix.

Accompanied by the policeman he went to the Church street station and there met Harry, who had just brought in Clara.

The prisoners were put in cells and the Bradys departed.

Going straight to the Custom House, they were ushered into the Collector's room and gave him the details of their work from start to finish.

When Harry handed over the seized diamonds he was delighted, and praised the pair in the most glowing terms for their efficient work.

He declared that they had broken up the most dangerous gang of smugglers who ever infested the United States, and expressed his regret that he was unable to keep them permanently on his staff.

Gibson, he declared, would be dismissed in disgrace.

The detectives then went to Secret Service headquarters and reported to their own chief, saying their work for the Custom House was finished.

Soon after that the trial and conviction of the La Croixs and their accomplices took place.

It is safe to assume that they got the extreme penalty of the law upon the evidence furnished by the Bradys.

When they were disposed of, the Secret Service detectives returned to their regular duties on the force.

It was not long after that, when one of the most startling events in their lives occurred. This happened when they were detailed upon a Secret Service case. The adventures they met with were of the most thrilling description. Their lives were threatened by dangers, and they did some of the most marvellous work ever known in the department. But want of space here prohibits our giving the details in this story. We have reserved it for a new tale which will be issued in our next number.



THE END.

Read "THE BRADYS AND THE RUNAWAY BOYS; OR, SHADOWING THE CIRCUS SHARPERS," which will be the next number (80) of "Secret Service."

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