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THE SPRUCE STREET TRAGEDY:

OR,

Old Spicer Handles a Double Mystery

BY THE AUTHOR OF "OLD SPICER."



WHEN AT LAST HE RELEASED HIS HOLD
HER SPIRIT HAD GONE TO JOIN THAT OF
HER MURDERED HUSBAND.

The Spruce Street Tragedy;

OR,

OLD SPICER HANDLES A DOUBLE MYSTERY.

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CONTENTS

- [CHAPTER I. THE SPRUCE STREET MURDER.](#)
- [CHAPTER II. OLD SPICER VISITS THE SCENE OF THE MURDER.](#)
- [CHAPTER III. OLD SPICER BEGINS AN INVESTIGATION.](#)
- [CHAPTER IV. OLD SPICER CONTINUES HIS INVESTIGATIONS.—THE SECRET VAULT.](#)
- [CHAPTER V. SETH STRICKET MAKES HIS REPORT.](#)
- [CHAPTER VI. HORRIFIED WATCHERS—IN THE TUNNELS AND VAULT.](#)
- [CHAPTER VII. TWO IMPORTANT AND INTERESTING CHARACTERS.](#)
- [CHAPTER VIII. BARNEY HAWKS REVEALS A TERRIBLE SECRET—TRAPPED.](#)
- [CHAPTER IX. THE SITUATION CHANGED—OLD SPICER STARTS FOR NEW YORK.](#)
- [CHAPTER X. ON THE EVE OF A TERRIBLE CRIME.](#)
- [CHAPTER XI. A DOUBLE MURDER—AN UNCEREMONIOUS VISIT.](#)
- [CHAPTER XII. BARNEY AND JAKE START FOR NEW YORK.](#)
- [CHAPTER XIII. OLD SPICER AND KILLETT IN TAYLOR'S SALOON.](#)
- [CHAPTER XIV. JIM TAYLOR MAKES HIS APPEARANCE.](#)
- [CHAPTER XV. THE TRUE STORY OF THE MURDER.](#)
- [CHAPTER XVI. OLD SPICER INTERVIEWS CORA BELL.](#)
- [CHAPTER XVII. JIM TAYLOR IS ARRESTED.](#)
- [CHAPTER XVIII. OLD SPICER'S SPEAKING-TUBE.](#)
- [CHAPTER XIX. DETECTIVES IN A TIGHT SPOT.](#)
- [CHAPTER XX. JAKE KLINKHAMMER'S POCKETBOOK—OLD SPICER SURPRISED.](#)
- [CHAPTER XXI. CHAMBERLAIN'S MYSTERIOUS FRIEND—A STRANGE DISAPPEARANCE.](#)
- [CHAPTER XXII. CHAMBERLAIN'S CAPTURE.](#)
- [CHAPTER XXIII. ON BOARD THE BOUNCING BETSEY.](#)
- [CHAPTER XXIV. IN NO MAN'S BAY—MAG'S HOVEL.](#)

CHAPTER I.

THE SPRUCE STREET MURDER.

"Hark! I thought I heard the outside door open and shut."

"No, it was nothing."

"Are you sure?"

"Quite sure, Seth."

"What time is it now, Spicer?"

"Half-past seven."

"Half-past seven, and George not here yet!"

"He don't seem to have shown up, that's a fact."

"What can be keeping the fellow?"

"There you've got me, Seth. He's usually prompt enough, you know."

"That's so, old man; but I tell you what, if we're going to take hold of this case at all, we ought to be getting to work."

"I fully agree with you, and am most anxious not to lose the next Eastern-bound train."

"Confound it. I wish George would come. I don't want the regular men to get in ahead of us."

"It isn't that that I care so much about," said Old Spicer, quietly; "but I *do* hate to see a good case all muddled up."

"And so do I," exclaimed Stricket. "It makes me mad even now when I think of the way they managed such splendid cases as the Jennie Cramer, Rose Ambler, and half a dozen others like them."

"Did you hear who was going over to Stony Creek this morning?"

"Only Willett, so far as I could learn; and perhaps Medical Examiner Gaylord, of Branford."

"Well, I——"

"Hark! what's that? The outside door this time, eh?"

"You're right; he's come at last. Yes, that's George Morgan's footstep." Then, as some one knocked at the door of the room, "Come in, George," and a young man of some twenty-six or twenty-seven years entered.

"I'm glad to see you, George," continued the old detective, as the new-comer sank wearily into an arm-chair; "but I should have been better pleased to have welcomed you half an hour earlier."

"Yes," exclaimed Seth Stricket, quickly; "for goodness' sake, what's kept you, George?"

"My excuse for not being on time is a good one," responded George Morgan, gravely. "If it were not so, I think you both know me well enough to believe I wouldn't have occasion to offer any."

"I am sure of that," nodded Old Spicer.

"And so am I," added Seth; "but let's hear it all the same."

"Well, you know it was agreed among us, before we parted last night, that I should see Chief Bollmann before joining you this morning."

"Yes, that was the arrangement," assented Old Spicer.

"Of course, he wouldn't be at his office in the police building as early as six o'clock."

"Not likely," laughed Stricket.

"So, knowing that," continued George, "I started at once for his residence, No. 40 Sylvan Avenue."

His two listeners nodded.

"I went out George Street, expecting to turn off either before, or at least when, I reached York, but was so busy with my own thoughts that I had crossed York and was well on toward Spruce before I knew it."

"Well?"

"When I came to myself and saw where I was, I turned into Spruce Street, and walked toward Oak."

"For Heaven's sake, George," exclaimed Stricket, impatiently, "where are you driving to? Do get to Sylvan Avenue some time this morning."

"I'm afraid I can't do that, Seth," replied the young man, with a grave smile; "but I am getting to

the meat of my story, and to my excuse, pretty fast now."

"Let's have it then."

"Do you remember what used to be, and what is still called by some, the Turn Hall, on Spruce Street?"

"I do, very well," said Stricket. "The property belongs to old Mother Ernst, and she keeps a saloon—a fearfully low place—in the basement."

"You're right in one particular, Seth; it's low enough, in all conscience—clean under ground."

"I've heard of the woman," said Old Spicer. "She lives and sleeps in that low basement; in fact, it is said, she hardly ever shows herself above ground nowadays."

"That's true," affirmed Stricket; "she's seventy-two or -three years old, and she's lived in that damp basement so long, she's got the rheumatism the worst way, so that she can hardly waddle—has to use a cane."

"Well," continued George, "a milk-wagon was standing in front of the house, and just as I arrived abreast of the place, the milkman, Julius Smith, of East Haven, came rushing up the outside basement steps, his face as white as a sheet, his eyes bulging from their sockets, and his hair, so far as I could see it, fairly standing on end."

"I say, my man, what's the matter with you?' I demanded, seizing him by the arm, and giving him a shake to start up his ideas a little."

"'Matter? matter?' he gasped; 'matter enough—murder's the matter!'"

"'What's that?' I demanded, sternly; 'what's that you say, sir?'"

"'I say the old woman lies murdered on a lounge, in her saloon down there,' and he pointed down the stone steps."

"'What! Mrs. Ernst murdered?' exclaimed a voice at my side."

"I looked round, and saw that we had been joined by Henry M. Cohen, the watchmaker; and in less than a minute more there were at least a dozen people about us."

"You went into the house, of course, George?" said Old Spicer, inquiringly.

"Yes; the milkman, Cohen, and I entered the room where the dead body was stretched on the sofa."

"You got a good look at it, then, before it was disturbed?"

"Yes, when we first entered the old woman was lying on her left side, with her face to the wall."

"Had she been dead long, do you think?"

"Some hours, I should say—five or six, at least."

"Why do you think so?"

"I felt of her limbs; they were as cold as a stone."

"Had she been shot or stabbed?"

"Neither. Suffocated or chloroformed, it seemed to me."

"Was she bound and gagged?"

"Yes, sir; her hands were tied together at the wrists with an ordinary pocket handkerchief. Her heavy woolen-stockinged feet were also tied together; another handkerchief encircled her shins. Around her throat and head was wrapped a sheet. That part of it which encircled the neck made a bandage so tight that it must have stopped her breathing soon after it was put into use. Her mouth was partially filled with another handkerchief."

"Hum," mused Old Spicer, "the murderers were well supplied with handkerchiefs, it seems."

"Yes, sir; and of this last one—the gag—I shall have more to say by and by. The ends of it so fell across her breast that, I should think, in her desperate struggle to breathe, she had probably forced the larger part of the handkerchief from her mouth."

"Were there no signs of blood?"

"There were a few drops on this very handkerchief, evidently from her nose; and I thought I discovered a bruise and a little blood on the back of her head."

"Then there had been something of a scuffle?"

"Well, as to that I can't exactly say. A superficial examination of the hands and head of the dead woman revealed no other signs indicative of a struggle or blows. Even at her throat, where generally, you know, finger-nail imprints are to be found on a person who has been strangled to death, there were no such confirmatory evidences of a struggle."

"How was she dressed, George?" asked Stricket.

"The clothes she had on," Cohen said, "were those she usually appeared in when at home."

"Were they disarranged in any way?"

"That portion of her attire that covered her breast had been torn apart, and a search made presumably for a pocket-book or a roll of bank bills which was believed to be secreted there."

"Ah-ha!" exclaimed Stricket, "the job must have been done by some one who knew the old woman, for there's where she always carried a good share of her money."

"That's not conclusive," said Old Spicer, with a shake of the head. "It's a well-known fact that many women carry their purses under the bosom of their dress."

"Yes," said George, "I've had occasion to notice that myself."

"Well," said Stricket, who was very much interested, "go on. What else did you notice?"

"I saw one of her great heavy black slippers on the floor at the foot of the sofa; the mate was on the right foot. On the sofa, alongside the dead body, was a black walking-stick."

"Ah!" said Stricket, "that has been her constant companion for the past fifteen years. Without it she couldn't have hobbled across her saloon."

"Were the rooms themselves very much disturbed?" asked Old Spicer.

"If the whole basement and its contents had been lifted right up and then scattered by a cyclone it could not have been in a more confused condition. I tell you, gentlemen, a house and its contents were never more thoroughly ransacked. Why, the solitary bedroom, where Cohen said Mrs. Ernst had slept for the past quarter of a century, was actually turned inside out. The bedtick was ripped open, and what it inclosed had been very industriously examined.

"The murderer or murderers made pretty thorough work of it, eh?" said Stricket, inquiringly.

"Of the bed?"

"Yes."

"From the way they went through it, Seth, I have precious little doubt they had good reason to believe the old woman had a big pile of money hid in the stuffing of that ticking."

"Oh-ho! and do you think they found it?"

"They may have found some, but not enough to satisfy them."

"How do you know that?"

"From the way they went at the rest of the furniture. For instance, one of those queer, old-fashioned bureaus, such as the hunter for the antique delights to discover, stood in the bedroom. Every drawer of it had been rifled, and the various articles, none of which appeared to be very valuable, strewed the floor.

"Any other piece of furniture that seemed to be a receptacle for hidden wealth of the occupant of the basement was completely overhauled. In the front room not a box, or a bundle, or a drawer, or a pail, or a corner was overlooked by the greedy eyes of the criminals. They meant business, I can tell you."

"Were any of the regular authorities on the ground before you came away?" asked Old Spicer, suddenly.

"Yes, the coroner, a police captain, and two or three detectives were there."

"Have they any idea who did the deed?"

"Not the slightest; they are completely at sea."

"Have you formed any theory yourself, George?"

"Well, to confess the truth, I have, sir."

"Let's hear it."

"I beg your pardon, sir, but I should like to hear your opinion before I venture to express mine."

Old Spicer was silent for a moment, then he abruptly exclaimed:

"I should like to visit the scene of this tragedy. Suppose we go to Spruce Street at once, gentlemen."

"What! and give up the Stony Creek affair?" exclaimed Stricket, in astonishment.

"Not necessarily," was the reply.

"But I don't understand, Mark."

"I have an idea," rejoined Old Spicer, quietly, "that in this instance, the shortest road to Stony Creek lies through Spruce Street."

"Thunder!" ejaculated George Morgan, "I believe you are right."

"Come, then, let us be off at once," and a moment later the three detectives left the house.

CHAPTER II.

OLD SPICER VISITS THE SCENE OF THE MURDER.

The conversation related in the preceding chapter had occurred in the back parlor of Old Spicer's residence in Home Place.

The great detective, who had now owned and occupied this house for some time, had fitted it up to suit his own fancy and convenience.

He resided there alone—that is, so far as family was concerned, for Mrs. Hettie Catlin, the widow of Frederic Catlin, was still his housekeeper, and they kept one servant-of-all-work, a middle-aged woman, upon whom the detective could thoroughly rely.

The back parlor looked out upon a small garden, and this room Old Spicer had chosen for his *sanctum sanctorum*, and furnished it accordingly.

It would have been a feast, even for the great Lecoq, to have been able to pay a visit to this retreat. The wonders and trophies it contained were legion, and furnished a history in epitome of all the cases Old Spicer had ever had a hand in.

Naturally the old man loved this room, and spent as much of his time in it as possible.

He had many friends, but few intimates. Those few, however, he delighted to receive within the sacred precincts of the back parlor, and for this reason George Morgan, his adopted son, had recently purchased a beautiful residence on Academy Street, the garden of which ran down to and adjoined the old detective's little yard, and between which the means of communication was a gate in the garden fence.

Seth Stricket, too, had taken up his residence in the neighborhood, having moved into a pretty cottage on Green Street, and thus Old Spicer had his two most reliable assistants close at hand.

On reaching the sidewalk the trio passed out of Home Place, crossed Olive Street, entered Court, and keeping on, soon arrived at the police building.

Here they stopped, and entering the office, made such inquiries of the officer in charge as Spicer deemed expedient.

Chief Bollmann was not there, neither were any of the prominent members of the detective force; they were over in Spruce Street and otherwheres, working on the new murder case.

Old Spicer determined to lose no more time; so, leaving the headquarters of the police, he and his friends walked to Church Street, where they hailed a carriage, and were swiftly driven to the dead woman's house.

George Morgan led the way down the blue stone steps to the basement, where the murder had been committed, and Old Spicer at once began to examine the place where the widow had made her home for so many years.

The building was quite a large one, and, as he knew, had been, in the early history of the Turn Verein in the city, a meeting place for that body.

It was two stories high above the basement, and divided into six tenements, all of which were occupied.

But it was the basement itself that interested Old Spicer most, and as he wandered about it he was forced to admit that it was a veritable Chinese puzzle.

The main apartment was, of course, the barroom, where for years Mrs. Ernst, and two of her three husbands before her, had sold beer and liquor.

The chief informed Spicer that up to the present year the widow had carried on the saloon business there under the usual authority. She had not, however, he said, renewed her license for the present year, although she expected to do so before the summer season set in. She was a dispenser, since her license expired, of temperance drinks ostensibly.

Old Spicer and those with him, in looking over the premises, soon discovered conclusive proof that she did not strictly interpret the license law. Ale barrels, beer kegs, and demijohns for whisky and other fiery liquors were scattered through the basement.

In the rear of the barroom was the bedroom. There were many more rooms in the basement. Fourteen inside doors led into the little rooms, each of which was furnished with one or two chairs, a lounge, table, and a stove. Most of these rooms could be reached from two or three different sides.

In the rear were two doors leading to the back yard, and a covered passage leading to a little alley through which York Street could be reached. Four doors opened out of the room where the body of Mrs. Ernst was discovered by the milkman.

No one who was unfamiliar with the premises had any idea that there were more than two rooms in the basement. The officials, Chief Bollmann, Coroner Mix, and all the detectives, including Spicer, Stricket and Morgan, who had a pretty good knowledge of the various haunts of vice in the city, were surprised to find such a thoroughly mixed-up piece of underground architecture.

Old Spicer, while inspecting the apartments and the several dark passages by which the rooms were reached, compared the surroundings, because of the abrupt and unexpected halls and turns, the scanty furnishings, and the like, to some of the celebrated structures that carried notoriety to the old Five Points in New York years ago.

In the southeast corner of the basement, where the uninitiated might expect to find a coal bin or a hole in the ground to store away wood, they discovered a room with three or four chairs and a lounge. Even the tenants on the floor above had no idea that there was such a room in existence.

One of the passages from the bedroom opened into what must have been a sort of social apartment for the patrons of the widow. It might also answer the purpose of a card or smoking-

room. A cheap stove, a couple of tables, and three or four chairs comprised the furniture of this room.

Then there was discovered another apartment which was probably used as a storehouse for ale and beer barrels. Besides these there were found a woodshed and tool-room, and a suspicious looking trap-door that covered what Old Spicer was privately informed was a secret underground tunnel that extended far in the rear of the building.

He raised the heavy door and looked in; the entrance was nearly choked up with ashes.

He removed some of the rubbish with his foot, and peered eagerly into the black darkness. The hole had a mysterious look about it, and he could not but regard it with strong suspicion.

One of the tenants of the house approached, pointed to the black opening, mysteriously shrugged his shoulders, shook his head, and then mumbled, in what he meant to be a confidential tone:

"That there underground passage leads clear across the back-yard, Mister Detective; and just let me tell you it'll be a mighty interesting thoroughfare for you to inspect."

"Thoroughfare, eh?" questioned Old Spicer, thoughtfully.

"That's what I said, sir."

"Thank you for the hint, my friend; most likely I shall act upon it later." Then he closed the trap-door, and once more turned toward the bar-room.

This apartment was of comfortable dimensions, and was the principal room in the basement. It was furnished on the same scale of poverty as the rest, and the first glimpse into it would not have been very reassuring to the spectator. The bar resembled those that bloom in cheap groggeries.

There was an evident purpose on the part of the owner to keep the public from sharing the brilliancy of the interior, for a paper screen two and a half feet high and two feet wide stood at the end of the bar as a barrier to the glow of an oil lamp that shed its exclusive light through the gloomy apartment.

A dilapidated, small-sized looking-glass adorned the partition wall back of the bar. In the tool-room were a hatchet and a butcher's knife, besides a bunch of rusty keys.

Suspended from the bar-room wall and right over the dead woman's head, was a picture of Napoleon Bonaparte surveying a battlefield with his generals. A picture of Richard Wagner looked down on the corpse from another part of the interior.

"When I first came in here this morning with the milkman," said Morgan, "there were bottles and half-filled glasses on the bar."

"What was in the glasses?" asked Stricket.

"In one there was nothing but soda-water. The other contained claret."

"How long was it after you got here before the police arrived?" asked Old Spicer.

"I had had hardly time enough to take a good look at the murdered woman when Policeman Cannon, who resides in the brick block next south of this, came in. He had only just returned from his night patrol and lain down. His wife heard the outcry in the street and aroused him."

"I suppose he assumed authority at once?"

"Why, he found the place pretty well filled by an excited throng, and men, women and boys making excursions through the several apartments; but before he could clear out the people, Detective Reilly arrived."

"Ah! somebody telephoned to headquarters, I suppose?"

"I suppose so, for very soon the coroner came rushing in, then Detective Brewer made his appearance in hot haste; and finally Chief Bollmann, Policeman Hyde and other officers."

"By that time there was a scattering, I fancy," said Stricket, with a smile.

"Yes," assented George, "everybody was hunted from the basement except those you see here now."

At this moment Coroner Mix joined them.

"Going to look into this case a little, Old Spicer?" he asked.

"I have some thoughts of doing so," was the reply.

"I hope you will," said the coroner. "If there is any information I can give you, I will impart it gladly."

"Are there any clues to work on as yet?" asked Old Spicer.

"Very few, so far as I have been able to learn."

"What do you know about the woman, anyway?"

"Very little indeed. The fact is, Spicer, there seems to be a blissful ignorance on every hand, even regarding the history of the victim and her family affairs."

"Ah-ha! she kept her family affairs to herself, did she?"

"It seems so. A mystery looms up at the very outset of the case. But of that hereafter."

"All right, the mystery can wait, if you say so. But with regard to her relatives, surely something is known about them. What have you been able to find out?"

"In the first place, I have ascertained that Mrs. Ernst had been in this country between thirty and forty years, coming from Germany; and that her financial manager, for a long time past, was Maier Zunder."

"She was a widow, I believe?"

"Yes, a good deal of a widow. She had been married three times, and her three husbands are dead."

"Indeed?"

"Yes; the first died in Germany."

"What was his name?"

"George Pfaff. After his death she came to the United States and met her second husband, Franz Natolph, in New York."

"He came to New Haven with her, didn't he?" asked Stricket.

"Yes," was the reply, "and they started in the saloon-business in this very place."

"There was a pretty serious row, wasn't there, in which Natolph got hurt?"

"Yes, one night, in this very room, Natolph was struck in the head with a bottle, nearly cracking his skull. Typhoid fever set in, and that and the injuries from the bottle soon after caused his death."

"How long is it since Ernst, her third husband, died?" asked Old Spicer.

"Less than ten years," was the reply.

"She left no children, I believe?"

"No—never had any, so far as I have been able to learn."

"She has kept up the business, married or single?"

"Yes: to the very hour of her death."

Old Spicer glanced at the dead body on the sofa.

"She was a very stout woman," he remarked, "but, I believe, was not in good health."

"No," answered the coroner, "she has been troubled of late years with a severe asthmatic attack. She was rarely seen outside of this basement, for a flight of stairs was a terror to her."

"She suffered from rheumatism, I have been told."

"Yes, fearfully; it settled in her limbs, and caused a lameness, which was relieved somewhat by the assistance of the black walking-stick you see by her side."

"But she did go out sometimes?"

"Only at rare intervals, and then always in a carriage."

"She was quite well off—rich, in fact?"

"Of late years she has been increasing her wealth pretty fast. She owns this house, and the large brick block directly back of it, which fronts on York Street."

"She was mighty close-fisted," observed Stricket.

"Yes," assented the coroner, "she was of a parsimonious disposition, and by some in this neighborhood was called very grasping and miserly."

"It seems to me the chief ought to know something about her affairs," remarked Stricket, in a musing tone; "for, if I remember rightly, he was employed by her years ago, when he was practicing law."

"You are right, Mr. Stricket," assented the coroner, "years ago he was her counsel, but only, as he informs me, on two or three occasions."

At that moment the chief and several other officials joined them. As they seemed very willing to talk, Old Spicer determined to be a listener, and very sparing of his own words.

CHAPTER III.

OLD SPICER BEGINS AN INVESTIGATION.

"What do you think of the case, Spicer?" asked the chief, carelessly.

"I have formed no decided opinion as yet," was the reply, "have you?"

"Well," rejoined the chief, "I am beginning to map out a theory."

"I should like to hear it," said Spicer.

"I have no objection to giving you my ideas," returned Bollmann, "you see of late, the old woman

had become more grasping than ever. She didn't care who came here so long as they left plenty of money behind them, and there's no doubt of it, the greater part of those who frequented the place were a pretty tough set."

"That's evident, I think."

"Yes, young men and young women have been frequently seen in this basement, whose hilarity was so violent at times during the night that the upper tenants were more or less disturbed. We infer, too, from what we have seen of the series of rooms we have stumbled upon, that they were not for the accommodation of the most law-abiding of our citizens."

"You think, then, this murder was committed by some of the dead woman's patrons?"

"I think that may be the case."

"And you will shape your investigation accordingly?"

"Yes; and our first move will be to find out who was here last night."

"Have you made any progress in that direction?"

"One of the tenants of the house—Otto Webber—who will remove from here in a day or two, came into the basement last night, about 8.30, to tell Mrs. Ernst he was about to vacate his apartments. He had with him Alexander Lane and Andrew Lane, brothers, who live on Congress Avenue. Andrew is to rent the tenement to be vacated by Webber. The latter introduced the widow to him. While they were talking, the sound of female voices and those of a couple of men reached them, from one of the little back rooms."

"Ah-ha! did Webber catch a glimpse of them?"

"No, he did not see any of the party; neither did his companions. But, Spicer, my men are hunting for that quartet."

"So?"

"Yes, just so."

"What else have you to go by?"

"A woman in the brick block which the widow owned, just back of this and fronting on York Street, looked from a rear window, last night, and saw a light burning here until nearly eleven o'clock."

"The quartet probably kept it up pretty late."

"Then Mrs. John Newstrum, who lives directly over this room, just told me that she heard persons down here as late as ten o'clock, and after."

"Did she hear anything like a quarrel?"

"Nobody in the house heard any quarreling or loud words during the night."

"Is it thought the murderers got away with much wealth?"

"When we searched the house, a little while ago, and talked with Mr. Zunder here, we concluded that they probably got away with between four and five hundred dollars. She was known to have about that amount by her, as she was intending to pay certain bills that were due."

"Not a very big haul, if that's all they got."

"I am confident they got no more than five hundred dollars at the most," said Mr. Zunder, emphatically.

"I'll bet they had good reasons for believing that they were going to get more," observed Detective Reilly, confidently.

"There's no doubt about that," said the chief, quickly; "they supposed the old woman kept her pile right here in this basement."

"My theory," remarked Brewer, "is that the murderer or murderers were very familiar with the premises, and that they came here with the intention of robbing the old woman of a big stake. In order to carry out their villainous work, they first bound and gagged her, and then got her onto the sofa there."

"You don't think, then, Phil, that they intended to murder her?" said Old Spicer, inquiringly.

"I do not," was the reply. "You see, after they got that gag in her mouth, they probably began to go through the several rooms, and left her tied where she is now lying. The fact that she was such a sufferer from asthma may not have been known to the criminals. With a handkerchief stuck in her mouth, and her asthmatic difficulty, you can readily see that an old woman like her could not live long."

"I believe you're right, Phil," said one of the other detectives. "I don't believe they intended to kill her."

"Have you questioned everybody in the house?" asked Old Spicer of the chief.

"Yes," was the answer, "we have had something to say to every one who lives here."

"You learned nothing more, I suppose?"

"Nothing more of any consequence."

"Have you heard what this young man has to say, chief?" asked Officer Cannon, indicating a person of about twenty-five who was standing by his side.

"No," answered the chief; "what is it?"

"Speak up for yourself, young man," said the officer, encouragingly.

The young man, thus admonished, advanced and said:

"I was returning from a whist party with a friend about one o'clock this morning. Just before we reached Spruce Street, on Oak, we heard the loud talk of three men in a buggy. They acted as if they might be partially intoxicated. The team was going as rapidly as it could. Just before they came up to where we were they spied us, and we heard one of them say, 'hush!' Not a word more came from their lips until long after they had passed us, then we could hear them talking again."

"Hum! Did they come from this way?" asked the chief.

"Yes, sir; they were not far from this house when we first saw them."

"Which way did they go after they had passed you?"

"Toward Howe Street."

"Did you notice anything in the buggy?"

"Yes, sir; we both noticed it."

"What was it?"

"An ordinary packing box."

"In front?"

"No, sir; fastened in the rear, behind the seat."

"You are sure they didn't drive out Oak Street?"

"I am not quite sure; but I think they turned into Howe."

"I have heard something of this story before," said the chief, aside to Old Spicer.

"It may be worth while looking those fellows up," returned the old detective.

"I think so."

"What was it you had heard before?"

"Why, one of the women in the house here peered from her front window down on the sidewalk, somewhere about midnight, she thinks, and saw three suspicious-looking characters talking in subdued tones, near the steps leading to the saloon below."

"Ah, I see; and joining our young friend's story of the three men dashing toward Howe Street at one o'clock, or through Oak Street, as *you* think, with the woman's story of the whispering trio on the sidewalk, you think there may be a clew that will lead to important revelations?"

"It seems so to me—— Well, what is it, Woodford?"

"I've just found this handkerchief, sir," and Officer Woodford handed a very fine embroidered handkerchief to the chief.

"Where did you find it?" asked Bollmann, curiously, as he carefully examined the delicate piece of cambric.

"By the side of a chair in the next room. I fancy it may have belonged to some one who was with the murderer or murderers."

"S. S." mused the chief, as he caught sight of those initials in one corner of the handkerchief; "I'd give something handsome to know what those two letters stand for."

Old Spicer took the handkerchief from him, and after a moment's inspection, said:

"Yes, this may prove a valuable clew. It may be well to cultivate the acquaintance of S. S."

Chief Bollmann seized the cambric clew and hurried away.

The old detective turned to Maier Zunder and abruptly said:

"You have had charge of the dead woman's financial affairs for a long time, I believe, sir?"

"Yes," was the reply, "for a good many years. In fact, I have looked after her money matters and kept charge of her bank books of deposit ever since she came to this city."

"You think she did not have a very large sum by her last night?"

"I am pretty sure she did not."

"Not more than four or five hundred dollars, I think you said?"

"Last Sunday she had one hundred and fifty dollars by her. She wanted to paint her several houses, and I let her have four hundred more."

"Had she paid the painters, do you think?"

"I don't know. If she had, she must still have had some two or three hundred dollars left."

"Has any money been found here by the police?"

"Not a great deal, I believe."

"Only one dollar and seventy-five cents has been found, either on her person or about the premises," said George Morgan.

"How much had she in the banks, Mr. Zunder?"

"Her bank books show credits to the amount of \$1500, and I have them safe in my care."

"Have you any idea who the criminals may be?"

"I think I could make a pretty close guess, Mr. Spicer."

"I should like to know which way your suspicions point."

"Well, sir, it is my decided opinion that Margaret Ernst was murdered by parties in this house."

"Oh-ho! that's it, eh? Well, I think I see your line of argument, sir, and I must say you reason shrewdly."

"I am confident that when the truth is known you will find I am right."

"I shouldn't at all wonder."

"At least," added the financial manager, "you will find that some one in this house is seriously implicated, mark that, Mr. Spicer."

"I will remember what you say." Then in another tone:

"Let's see, how old was she?"

"Her age has been stated as seventy-two. I think she was nearer seventy-four or seventy-five."

"She was from Germany?"

"Yes, from Oxburg, in Bavaria."

"She had made a will?"

"Yes."

"To whom did she leave her property?"

"One half to her own relatives in the old country, and the rest to the relatives of her last husband."

"He died about ten years ago?"

"Who, John Ernst?"

"Yes."

"Nearer twelve, I should say."

"He had been in this country some time?"

"Yes; he served in the Union army through the late war."

"What was her maiden name?"

"Margaret Tepley."

"You heard what Bollmann's detectives said. Do you think as they do, that there was no intention to kill her?"

"Nonsense! She was deliberately murdered. The back of her head was pounded against the arm of that sofa, and afterward she was smothered with a pillow. No intention to kill her? Pshaw! the poor old lame woman attempted to make a fight of it. Why, sir, she called out as loud as she could. Her voice was heard distinctly by people in the house."

"So? You are quite sure of what you say?"

"Believe me. I know what I am talking about, Mr. Spicer."

"I must see some of the people of the house."

"Do so. Go into the matter thoroughly."

"I generally do, Mr. Zunder."

"I know that; hence, I have faith in you. And a word in your ear, Mr. Spicer. Your work shall be well paid for. *I* will see to that. As you can easily understand, I feel more than an ordinary interest in this case."

"I understand. And you can depend on me, and those associated with me, to do our level best to get at the exact truth in this cold-blooded and cowardly affair." And a moment later, after whispering to Stricket and George Morgan, Old Spicer left the basement.

CHAPTER IV.

OLD SPICER CONTINUES HIS INVESTIGATIONS.—THE SECRET VAULT.

After a word or two with Coroner Mix, who was standing in the outer hall, Old Spicer ascended to the main floor of the house, where he questioned Otto Webber and his wife, and then climbing another flight of stairs, knocked at the door of John Neustrom's apartments.

The door was opened by a young woman of perhaps twenty summers, and the caller was invited to enter.

There was another person in the room—a woman—who was seated by the window.

"Mrs. Neustrom, if I am not mistaken?" said the detective, in an inquiring tone, as his eyes rested on this lady.

"Yes; I am Mrs. Neustrom," she said.

"And this is your charming niece, Miss Minnie?"

"Yes, the girl is my niece."

"I have called, Mrs. Neustrom, to put a few questions to Miss Minnie with regard to what she saw and heard last night at, I think, somewhere between eleven and twelve o'clock;" and as he had not been asked to sit down, Old Spicer now quietly seated himself on his own accord.

"I am sorry, sir," said Mrs. Neustrom, in a tone of decision; "but it will be impossible for her to answer your questions."

"Why so?"

"She has been cautioned not to speak on the subject to any one."

"By whom has she been cautioned?"

"By two, or more, of the officers of the law."

"Which ones?"

"Well, the chief, for one."

"And who else?"

"A detective."

"I suppose you know something of the law governing such cases, Mrs. Neustrom?"

"I know very little about the matter, sir."

"I am sorry to hear that."

"If Mr. Neustrom were home, he might know. He's pretty well posted."

"Then he's not in the house at present?"

"No, sir; he went out a little while ago with one of the detectives."

"That's very unfortunate. But as it happens, I also am pretty well posted in the law."

"You are?"

"Yes, ma'am, and I assure you, in such cases, the law places unlimited authority in the hands of the coroner."

"It does?"

"Yes, ma'am, and he has ordered me to get Miss Minnie's testimony. I have also the authority of the late Mrs. Ernst's executor to back me. In short, I am employed by these two gentlemen."

"And who may you be, sir?"

"My name is Spicer—Mark Spicer," answered the detective with a polite bow. "It's just possible you may have heard of me before."

"Oh!" exclaimed Minnie Neustrom, eagerly. "Old Spicer! Of course, auntie, I shall tell him everything."

"Why, certainly, my dear," answered her aunt, "especially as it's the law."

Old Spicer smiled quietly, and turning to the young lady, said:

"You saw three strange men hovering round the premises until nearly midnight, I believe?"

"Two, not three, sir," answered Minnie.

"Only two? I understood you said three."

"No, sir; there were only two."

"What first attracted your attention to them, Miss Neustrom?"

"Their loud talking, sir."

"Loud talking, eh? Where were they when you first heard them?"

"In Mrs. Ernst's kitchen, I think."

"How did it happen that you were up so late last night?"

"I had been down-town, and did not reach home until after half-past ten o'clock."

"And you did not go to bed at once when you did reach home?"

"No, sir. Before I retired, auntie, here, asked me to lock the woodshed door."

"Where is your woodshed?"

"In the yard, in the rear of the house; and in order to reach it I was obliged to go down two flights

of stairs. You may think it strange, sir, but even while I was obeying the instructions of my aunt a horrible dread that something awful was soon to occur came over me, and my trip to the woodshed was made literally in fear and trembling."

"Then, I take it, you were not long in accomplishing your purpose?"

"No, indeed, it took but a second to bolt the woodshed door, and an additional minute or two for me to retrace my steps."

"And then you went to your window?"

"Yes, sir; for, you see, from the window of my room, a person can look down on the rear apartment windows of the basement. I raised the window, but could not hear the words used in the basement below, although the parties there seemed to be still quarreling with their tongues."

"Were they Germans?" asked Old Spicer.

"No, sir; I am quite positive they were not."

"What makes you so sure about it?"

"Because the indistinct utterances I overheard did not sound at all like those coming from a Teutonic tongue."

"You caught sight of these parties at last, did you not?"

"Yes, sir; just before I went to bed I saw from my window the forms of two men issuing from the basement and prowling in the yard."

"Would you know those men again?"

"Good gracious! no, sir."

"Why not?"

"A heavy fog had settled in the neighborhood, making it impossible for me to obtain a clear view of them, or, indeed, of any objects forty feet away."

"When you found you couldn't make out who they were, what did you do?"

"I went to bed."

"A very wise proceeding, I must confess." Then abruptly:

"Miss Neustrom, I would like to see you alone for a few minutes."

The girl started and looked at her aunt.

That good woman seemed bewildered, and didn't know what to say.

"I shall not detain you for more than a few minutes," said the detective in a reassuring tone. "This room will do," and he pointed to what might have been the dining-room.

"Come, then," said Minnie, and, opening the door, she led the way into the next apartment.

They remained together for more than a quarter of an hour, and then Old Spicer took his leave.

Where he spent the rest of the day is not positively known; but that night, at nine o'clock, he sat in his own back parlor, calmly waiting the coming of Seth Stricket and George Morgan.

At length, within a few minutes of each other, they both arrived, and as soon as they were seated, Old Spicer impatiently asked:

"Well, what have you to tell me? I suppose you have found out something of importance?"

"Who shall speak first?" asked George, with a smile.

"Let's hear from you," said the old detective.

"Very well," was the reply. "The first thing of importance I have to mention is the traces of footprints I found in the yard just north of the Ernst homestead."

"Ah! footprints, eh? Were they plain—distinct?"

"Some of them were quite so. You see, the parties, whoever they were, that went through this yard, walked over ground that has been recently planted with vegetables, and the tracks of their boots or shoes are still discernible."

"But have you any good reason for supposing these tracks were made by the parties we are looking for?"

"It is quite evident, from the direction they take, that those who made them came from the Ernst back yard, and proceeded to the fence on the north boundary-line of the property next beyond. There are also what I regard as unmistakable signs on the high board fence where some one tried to climb that fence very recently."

"You measured the footprints?"

"Yes, sir."

"Could you get casts of them?"

"I managed to get two or three, but none that are quite perfect."

"That's all well enough, George," said Old Spicer, after a moment's reflection; "and yet what I can't quite understand is why the murderers should have taken the trouble to climb that fence

and go across that yard, when it would have been much more convenient for them to have walked right out the front door of the barroom, for no one, so far as I can learn, was on the street at that hour. Then, too, such a course would have taken them clear of high fences, back yards, and a possible watch-dog."

"I can't explain the matter," smiled George; "but there are the marks on the fence, and there are the footprints."

"Well, they shall have due consideration, of course. And now what next?"

"The next piece of information I have to offer is—there's a woman in the case!"

"So? Well, there generally is. What evidence have you got on this point?"

"You know how many handkerchiefs were used in binding the poor old woman's limbs and in gagging her?"

"Yes, five, at least, I should say."

"And then, you remember, Woodford found another?"

"Yes, marked 'S. S.'"

"And now I have found still another, which is certainly the property of a woman."

"Is there any mark upon it?"

"Yes. I have found the initials 'E. B.,' or 'C. B.,' in one corner, and there yet lingers in it the scent of a cheap perfume."

"Let me see the handkerchief."

Morgan took it from his pocket and handed it to Old Spicer.

He carefully examined the two letters in the corner.

"It's hard to say whether they are 'E. B.' or 'C. B.," he said at last; "but I am inclined to think the latter."

Then he put the handkerchief to his nose.

"Hum. Cheap perfume, eh?" he said.

"Yes; can't you detect it?" asked George.

"I certainly detect an odor—a peculiar odor; but *I* don't call it perfume."

"What do you call it, then?"

"If I were to give it a name, I should call it——"

"Well, what?"

"Chloroform."

"Chloroform!"

"Certainly."

"By Jove! I believe you're right."

"I know I am right. Where did you find this handkerchief?"

"Just behind the head of the sofa, where it had fallen; and why some one hadn't found it before is more than I can understand."

"I suppose because they didn't like to disturb the resting-place of the body."

"That must be it; for I had to move the sofa out a little to get at it."

"And you think, from the fact of having found this handkerchief, that there was a woman with the murderers?"

"I think there may have been. The male portion of humanity, as a general thing, do not go to the extremity of initialing their pocket-handkerchiefs, and few men carry a piece of cambric so fine as this. Then, too, ordinarily, a man is not armed with more than one handkerchief at a time—especially those of the class of citizens that made the Ernst saloon their headquarters. So, speculating on such a basis and also on the fact that all of the seven handkerchiefs might reasonably be called those of females, I think there is little doubt but one woman at least, assisted materially in this murderous work."

"I am inclined to agree with you, George. By the way, did you manage to learn anything more about that trap-door and secret tunnel?"

"Very little. As you didn't want me to explore it when any of the regular force were about, I was obliged to confine myself to questioning such of the widow's patrons and neighbors as I thought might have some information on the subject to impart."

"Well, you found out something from them?"

"Yes, one fellow had a somewhat romantic story to tell. Years ago, he said, when the Sunday liquor-law was so strictly enforced in this city, Mrs. Ernst and her second husband, who was then living, built an immense underground vault in the back-yard, at some distance from the house, and that trap-door opens into a tunnel leading to this vault, which, by the way, is capable of accommodating quite a number of persons."

"The thing was a grand success. There were, of course, strong suspicions that the woman and her last two husbands were violating the law by selling liquor and beer on Sunday, but no evidence of a positive character could be obtained, and the reason was that this great underground chamber was so secluded and so vigilantly guarded that the entrance to it was known to only the best and most reliable customers.

"The thirsty, on a Sunday afternoon or evening, were seen to enter the basement, but all traces of them thereafter for hours were lost. A close watch, and even a personal inspection of the premises, were unavailing, inasmuch as the patrons could not be seen anywhere. They were secreted in the underground vault, indulging in all the liquid nourishment they wanted, while the searchers were vainly peering into this room and that of the basement. A cart-load of ashes, you remember, now partially fills up the entrance to the vault."

"Yes, I remember the ashes, and I have no doubt there is exactly such a vault as your informant describes, and that it was used for the purpose he names; but I am inclined to believe it has been used for other purposes since. Of that, however, hereafter. What more have you to tell me, George?"

"I understand that quite a number of the tenants over there are going to move within the next few days."

"Is that so? Did you learn which ones?"

"No; but the Neustrom family are among them."

"Ah, indeed! Well, on the whole, I am not surprised to hear it," and the old detective became very thoughtful.

CHAPTER V.

SETH STRICKET MAKES HIS REPORT.

At length, rousing himself, Old Spicer turned to Stricket, and said:

"Well, Seth, I suppose you have something interesting to tell us?"

"I have managed to pick up a little information," was the modest reply.

"Very good; let's have it."

"George has been talking about the seven handkerchiefs. He has told you that some, if not all of them, belong to women. I can tell you what woman one of them, at least, belongs to."

"The deuce you can! Who is she?"

"Mrs. Otto Webber."

"What! the wife of the cigar-maker who lives directly over the barroom?"

"The same."

"You are sure you are right?"

"I have positively identified one of the handkerchiefs as belonging to her. And more than that, I have discovered parties who are ready to swear that they have seen the cloth found about Mrs. Ernst's head in the possession of the Webbers within the past forty-eight hours."

"You are getting on fast, Seth."

"I am not through yet."

"Well, what next?"

"Stairs, you know, lead directly from the apartments occupied by Mrs. Ernst to those occupied by the Webbers."

"Yes, I remember."

"Well, Monday night Mr. Webber called on the murdered woman and informed her that he was going to leave her house, but had found another tenant for her."

"I know he did."

"He admits now that he stayed in the saloon for some time, and drank liquor with the old lady; but he claims that she was in the best of spirits when he left her, which, he says, was before ten o'clock."

"Does Bollmann, or any of the regular force suspect Webber?"

"Yes."

"Have they let him find it out?"

"Yes."

"Thunder! how far have they gone in the matter?"

"Both Webber and his wife were brought to the police office by Detective Brewer early this evening."

"Do you know what followed?"

"Chief Bollmann, Coroner Mix, and the detectives questioned Webber for over an hour, and then subjected Mrs. Weber to a similar examination."

"Hum! What did it all amount to?"

"Not much. One of the officials informed me that when Webber was brought to the police office the expectation was that he would not be allowed to depart again until a jury had pronounced him guilty or not guilty of the crime of murder; but after the rigid examination was over, the coroner decided that it would not be best to place him under arrest at present."

"Webber was allowed to go home, then?"

"Yes; but policemen were detailed to watch his house all night."

"Do the authorities know all that you know?"

"No. I thought it wasn't best to give anything away just yet."

"Right; but I hope you also established a watch on his movements?"

"You may be sure I have the right man looking after him. And he isn't the only one I am having shadowed either."

"Is that so? Who is the other party?"

"August Strouse, a German Anarchist, who, until last week lived in the house occupied by the murdered woman."

"And you have good reasons for suspecting this fellow, you think?"

"Yes. I think so. You see, Strouse did not pay the rent of the rooms he occupied, and was told to move by Mrs. Ernst. He moved, but swore he would make trouble for the old woman before he was many weeks older."

"Is he a single man?"

"No, he has a wife and two children, but is considered a pretty tough character."

"Has he a police record?"

"Yes; a few months ago he was arrested for theft and was found guilty. I have no doubt that a more careful search would show that he has been up for other crimes."

"What put you on his track?"

"I came across a reliable party who, after giving me other valuable information, told me that he saw Strouse enter Mrs. Ernst's apartments shortly before nine o'clock last night. He further said that Strouse entered the basement by way of one of the rear doors—sneaked in, as it were—and probably hid himself in the old woman's bedroom."

"Have you seen this fellow yourself?"

"Yes, I started out after him, and after a long search, found him in Fred Siebold's saloon on State Street."

"How did he act?"

"He seemed to have plenty of money and was slightly under the influence of liquor."

"Did you speak with him?"

"Yes, I questioned him a little, in a careless sort of way."

"What did he have to say for himself?"

"He denied that he was in Mrs. Ernst's place last night, and said he had not been there since last week when he moved."

"He said that, did he?"

"He did."

"And the man who claims to have seen him enter one of her back doors is perfectly reliable, is he?"

"He is; I'll vouch for him myself."

"It looks bad for Mr. Strouse then, it seems to me."

"That's the way I look at it. Indeed, I am confident that he knows something about the murder."

"You are having him shadowed, you say?"

"Yes, Ned Nugent, properly disguised, is on his track."

"Don't let him lose sight of him. This worthy anarchist may lead us to something."

"I've no doubt he will; and he may lead us to a point that will surprise you."

"What do you mean by that?"

"Simply this: Not long ago Mrs. Ernst was visited by her brother, August Tepley, of Oxburg, Bavaria. Of course he was hard up and looking out for number one, otherwise he wouldn't have come. By keeping at her, he at last succeeded in inducing his sister to loan him three hundred dollars, and he obtained a good knowledge of her financial affairs."

"It was commonly reported that Mrs. Ernst was worth at least \$50,000, and that most of her money was kept hidden about her apartments. Her brother believed this. He knew exactly how she had left her property, and he tried to induce her to change her will in his favor. She did not do so, though I think in time she might.

"But the man was greedy and anxious. As I have just said, he believed the greater part of that \$50,000 was in the house. August Strouse was also in the house. Naturally these two met."

"It is *said* that August Tepley went back to Bavaria, but I have had it hinted to me that he was seen only a few days ago in New York, and, indeed, even nearer than that.

"The other August, the anarchist, went down the road a few evenings since. You can put this and that together as well as I can."

Stricket ceased to speak, and there was profound silence in the little back parlor for some minutes.

At length George Morgan exclaimed:

"Thunder! gentlemen, this case begins to wear a mighty ugly look."

"There does appear to be something pretty black about it," mused Old Spicer, "yes, there does, for a fact." Then abruptly:

"What are you going to do for the next hour or so, Seth?"

"Get a little rest, if the thing is possible."

"By all means, my dear fellow. And you, George?"

"Can I be of any service to you, sir?" asked George, quickly.

"It is quite possible you can."

"Then I am going with you."

"All right. Seth, you lie down on this lounge. George and I will be gone about two hours. After that we will see what it is best to do."

"Very well, sir," and throwing himself upon the lounge, in less than a minute Seth Stricket was fast asleep.

A moment later Old Spicer and George Morgan left the house, and hurried out of Home Place.

CHAPTER VI.

HORRIFIED WATCHERS—IN THE TUNNELS AND VAULT.

"Where are we going, sir, if it's a fair question?" asked George, as they hastened up Court Street.

"To the Ernst House," was the brief reply.

"You expect to find out something there?"

"Yes, I expect to find out something about August Strouse, and I expect to learn something about that tunnel and vault from personal observation."

"Ah! you are going into it to-night, then?"

"Yes."

"But Bollmann's men are in the house."

"We must manage to hoodwink them."

"I don't see how it can be done."

"Nor do I; but we shall find a way."

At length they arrived in York Street.

"Now, then," said Old Spicer, "you have been over this ground."

"Yes," was the answer, "I think I know it pretty well."

"Then conduct me through the passage into the backyard of the Ernst House."

"This way, sir," and George led him through a narrow passage at the end of the brick block.

Presently they found themselves in the yard back of the basement saloon.

Old Spicer tried one of the basement doors.

It was locked.

He tried the next.

It yielded, and he entered, closely followed by George.

He led the way toward the room in which the trap door was situated. But in passing the bar-room, he saw, through the open door, three men grouped together in chairs, while a coffin, containing all that was mortal of Margaret Ernst, occupied the center of the apartment.

The darkness of the place was only dissipated in a small degree by an oil lamp, which burned dimly on the bar.

"Who are they?" asked Old Spicer, with his lips close to Morgan's ear.

"One's Cohen," was the answer; "another is——"

"Webber, isn't it?"

"By Jove! I believe it is."

"And who is the third?"

"I don't know; I can't see his face."

"Well, hark, then; let's hear what they have to say."

"Yes," the unknown was saying at this point, "it was the worst experience I ever had. I never want to be frightened so badly as that again."

"Tell us all about it, old fellow," urged Cohen.

"Well, you see, we had got the body in the way I hinted a moment ago; and in order not to attract too much attention, we laid it over on the back seat of the carriage, and my friend Jim and I took the front seat and drove off.

"By and by we came to a lonely road, leading through a piece of woods. As we entered the woods I thought I heard a slight sound just back of me, as of some one moving.

"Jim heard it too, and we looked back simultaneously.

"One glance was enough; then we gave a yell of horror and sprung from the carriage, Jim on his side and I on mine; and the way we legged it for the open country was a caution."

"Why," exclaimed Webber, "what the deuce was it that frightened you so?"

"Yes," added Cohen, "what did you see when you looked back?"

"See? We saw that confounded corpse sitting bolt upright on the rear seat, like any live man. And at the very moment our eyes rested upon him, he started forward, placing one hand on the front seat by my side, and the other on Jim's back, while his great wide-open eyes stared fixedly into mine."

"Good Lord! I should have thought you would have been frightened," exclaimed Webber.

"How did it all turn out?" asked Cohen.

"Why, this way," was the reply. "After running some distance, we stopped to consult. While we stood there, a man with a heavily-loaded wagon drove up and asked us what we were doing on such a lonely road at that time of night.

"I told him we were taking a dead body to the city for Dr. White, and that it had suddenly started up and driven us from our carriage.

"He said he couldn't swallow that story. We swore it was true. Then he asked where we had left the carriage. We told him about half a mile ahead. 'Come on and show me, then,' he said. 'I have a rifle and two revolvers here; I guess with those we are enough for one dead man, at least;' so we went forward with him.

"At length we came to our carriage; the horse had merely gone to one side of the road, and was quietly cropping the grass.

"The man took a lantern from his wagon, lighted it, and approached the carriage. Then we heard him laugh.

"'Come here,' he cried, 'and see what started your corpse to life.'

"We hastened forward, and saw at once that the dead man had not altered his position since we had so abruptly left him.

"Our new friend then pointed out to us how the wind had carried the ends of the loose robe in which the corpse was dressed on to the wheels. The motion of the wheels had then pulled the robe so that the corpse which it enveloped was raised to a sitting position, and at last drawn forward in the way I have described."

"And so—and so," murmured Webber, in a voice trembling with emotion, "and so you don't believe the fellow had come to life at all?"

"Of course not."

"I—I don't know. I've often thought—— Good Lord! what's that?"

The three men were seated near the foot of the casket, Webber having his back turned to it.

At the head of the casket was a window, and this was raised to permit the circulation of fresh air in the interior of the basement.

A lemon-colored curtain was dropped over the window to regulate the force of the wind that came through the aperture.

A sudden and powerful gust came through, and the curtain rustled against the window, making a noise as if somebody's dress was rubbing against the side of a wall. The sound had landed on the sensitive ears of Mr. Webber as if it had come from the coffin.

There was not a soul in the room at the time but the three individuals, and they had been whispering in low tones. It is no wonder, then, that Mr. Webber promptly concluded, from the direction of the noise, that it came from the interior of the coffin, or that the pale glamour which one sees on the faces of painted women under an electric light quickly drove the flush of health from his face.

Then he suddenly turned, half in despair at the thought of seeing some movement in the casket.

He noticed nothing unusual, but for a minute he kept his eyes fastened on the face of the murdered woman, and his imagination, wrought upon by the story he had just heard, led him to believe that her eyes were fixed upon him with a steady and stern expression.

He grasped the arms of the chair, and half-way started up.

At that moment a deep, hollow groan, which was distinctly heard by all, came apparently from the lips of the corpse.

Webber gave a yell of horror, and dashing out of the bar-room, flew up the area steps into the street.

The other two, after one startled glance at the corpse, darted after their fleeing companion, and never even so much as stopped to breathe until they were far down George Street.

"Now, George," said Old Spicer, quietly, "I think we shall be able to get into the tunnel and vault without being seen."

"No doubt," responded young Morgan; "but how about getting out again? In ten minutes those fools will have a crowd here to see the murdered woman's ghost."

"I shouldn't at all wonder, my boy. But never mind the getting out. If necessary, you know, we can wait in there till the crowd is gone."

"Yes, and all that time Stricket will be waiting for us."

"I fancy he'll sleep till we get back, even if it isn't till morning."

"All right, then, I'm ready to dive into the bowels of the earth."

"I'm glad to hear it. Come on. But, by Jove! I've forgotten my dark-lantern. What shall we do?"

"There's that light on the bar there."

"That'll do, bring it along."

"But what'll they say when they come back and find it gone?"

"No matter what they say. Most likely they'll think Mrs. Ernst's ghost has hidden it."

"By Jove! I shouldn't at all wonder," and, with a laugh, George entered the barroom, and securing the oil lamp, returned to the so-called reception-room.

Old Spicer now raised the trap-door.

With some little difficulty he climbed over the ash-heap, and taking the lamp from George, waited until he had closed the trap and joined him.

Then together they moved forward through the tunnel, which they found much wider and higher than the opening had given them any reason to expect.

At length, after walking some distance, they came to a door that closed up the end of the tunnel.

"Great Jove!" exclaimed Morgan, "suppose it should be locked!"

"I don't think it is," replied Old Spicer quietly, and taking hold of the knob he pulled it open.

The door was of iron and quite heavy, but it moved on its hinges with the utmost ease.

"Oh, ho!" said Old Spicer, "those hinges have been oiled, and that quite recently."

He then examined them, and found he was right.

The key—a large one—was found in the lock.

The two detectives now entered the vault, which they found, as Morgan had already been informed, was a very large one.

It was plainly to be seen that the place had once been fitted up for a barroom; but it was also quite evident that it had more recently been used as a secret rendezvous, and to some extent as a sleeping-room; indeed, there were sleeping accommodations for at least half a dozen men.

Old Spicer looked about him with a thoughtful expression of countenance.

"What are you thinking of?" suddenly asked Morgan.

"This place is deep down under ground," answered Old Spicer, "and yet men have assembled here and slept here. That they could not do without plenty of fresh air. Now the question is, how is the place ventilated?"

Morgan hesitated a moment, then he exclaimed:

"Why, by means of the tunnel, of course."

"What tunnel?"

"The one through which we reached this vault."

"Wrong, George; the trap-door closes tightly, and the tunnel has no aperture in all its length."

"Then I give it up."

"That won't do, my boy, we must find the opening."

"All right, sir," and George immediately began the search in earnest.

But Old Spicer had already started with the same end in view, and rightly judging that the most likely place would be about opposite the door through which they had entered, he began his examination there, and almost immediately found what he was in search of.

It proved to be an opening about a foot square, close to the ground, and was concealed by a fixed table.

On searching further, Old Spicer found, just in front of this aperture, a trap-door, which opened under the table, and could be fastened to it.

On lifting the trap a flight of five steps was revealed. These the two detectives descended, and immediately found themselves in another tunnel, leading toward York Street.

This they followed, and presently came to another door, which, with some difficulty, they opened, and found themselves in the sub-cellar of a spacious house.

"Ah, ha!" exclaimed Old Spicer, in a tone of great satisfaction, "I thought it would turn out something like this. Now let us make certain of the way out, and then return and examine the big vault more at our leisure."

"What's this?" asked Morgan, pointing to a small sheet-iron door.

"That must open into a coal vault, I should think," returned Spicer; "but let's see," and he opened the door.

A glance showed that the place had in fact been built for a coal vault, but it was quite evident it had not been used as such for a long time. It contained only a very high step-ladder, which was standing directly under the coal-hole, which was closed with an iron cover and fastened on the under side.

"That's our way out," said Old Spicer, pointing to the hole.

"But where will we find ourselves when we get out?" asked George.

"In the narrow passageway you led me through less than an hour ago, if I am not greatly mistaken," was the answer.

"I believe you're right, by Jove!"

"Yes, I think I am."

"Then that matter is settled."

"Yes. But hold up a moment, George."

CHAPTER VII.

TWO IMPORTANT AND INTERESTING CHARACTERS.

"What's the matter?" asked George Morgan, wonderingly.

"It strikes me," replied Old Spicer, "that there must be some other means of entrance and exit to this sub-cellar known to and controlled by the frequenters of the great vault."

"What makes you think so?"

"Look up there. What do you see?"

"Why, the coal-hole and its iron cover."

"Is the cover fastened over the hole?"

"Certainly."

"If any one has gone out by that way lately could they have fastened down the cover after them as we see it now?"

"Of course not."

"If any one expects to visit the great vault to-night, for instance, could they do so by way of this coal-hole?"

"Certainly not."

"Then isn't it evident that there must be some other way to reach the sub-cellar known to the frequenters of the vault?"

"It would seem so. And yet, if no one has visited the place since the murder the thing is easily explained."

"How do you explain it?"

"Why, the murderers possibly entered through this coal-hole, and fastened the cover after them."

If so, they went on to Margaret Ernst's basement, through the vault and the other tunnel. They killed the old woman, and, as a blind, filled up the entrance to the tunnel with ashes, which they found close by, and then escaped, probably through her back-yard."

"That's all very well so far as it goes, George; but, unfortunately for your theory, some one has visited that vault since the murder, and they have neither entered nor departed through Mrs. Ernst's basement."

"Thunder! how do you know that?"

"By means of a piece of to-day's newspaper, which I picked up in the vault."

"Well, sir, you've got me this time, sure."

"You admit, then, that there must be another entrance from this side?"

"Of course."

"Let us find it, then."

"I'm with you, sir," and the search began.

It lasted close on to half an hour, when Old Spicer suddenly uttered a low exclamation of satisfaction, and Morgan at once knew he had found what he was looking for.

He at once joined the old detective, who silently pointed to a dark opening in the front foundation wall, below the level of the cellar bottom, and partially concealed by some empty barrels.

"What is it?" asked George, eagerly.

"Don't you understand?"

"By Jove, I do not."

"Well," said Old Spicer, "I can see it all as plain as day. That opening leads into an abandoned sewer, which is connected with a catch-basin at the next corner, where, undoubtedly, there is a ladder, or iron spikes are driven into the walls, by means of which those making use of this peculiar passage, enter the cellar, or reach the street."

"By thunder! this is a shrewder thing than the other."

"That's a fact; but unless we are driven to it, I prefer to use the other exit."

"So do I."

"Well, now that we know exactly how the land lies, let us return to the vault."

"All right, sir," and they hastened back.

On crawling out from under the table that concealed the trap, they began a regular and systematic search of the place. Not a bunk, not a drawer, not a box, not a corner was neglected, and before the search was well over, Old Spicer was abundantly satisfied with his success.

He had found several bits of evidence that were likely to prove important in more than one great criminal case; and behind a tier of bunks he found a door leading into a smaller vault, originally intended, no doubt, for the storage of liquors, but which for some time had been abandoned, and possibly forgotten.

"Ah!" exclaimed Old Spicer, as he surveyed the smaller vault, "this may prove useful, George, before very long."

"I don't see how," replied the younger detective, in a tone of surprise.

"If I am not very much mistaken, you will see, and that very soon. Hark!"

Morgan listened and distinctly heard the sound of footsteps in the tunnel leading from York Street.

"Go in there," whispered Old Spicer, pointing toward the smaller vault.

Then, hastily closing the trap-door under the table, he squeezed his way behind the tier of bunks, moved them back to their place, and joined George in the inner vault, leaving the door slightly ajar, and so was prepared to both see and listen.

Hardly were his preparations completed, when the trap-door under the table was raised up and a man, of no very prepossessing appearance, showed his head.

No sooner had he crawled out from under the table than another and younger man appeared.

"Shust help me out, Parney," said this last. "I've got my goat caught mit this hook here."

Barney unhooked his companion's coat and helped him to his feet.

"You thundering fool," he growled, "why will you persist in wearing that great, heavy, conspicuous-looking coat at all times and seasons of the year? It will get you into some cursed trouble yet."

"Ah, my tear Parney, dot vos a goot goats—it vos a perfect goats; shust think uf all der bockets, und vot er lot uf shwag I vos able ter garry away mit 'em."

"Well, well, I see you're stuck on the blamed coat, and so I'll say no more about the outlandish-looking thing just now. But come, sit down there, and let's get to business."

"Vate a minute, Parney. Let's make sure der bolice hain't struck der blace since ve vos here," and the young Hebrew picked up the dark-lantern Barney had placed on the table, and disappeared in

the tunnel, in the direction of the Ernst basement.

He was gone some minutes. When he returned he exclaimed, somewhat excitedly:

"So 'elp me gracious, Parney, dere vos somepody peen in der tunnels since ve vos 'ere pefore!"

"How do you know that, Jake?"

"Dot ashes; you remember?"

"Yes."

"Vell, it vos kicked apout like anything."

"Hum! then they've found the trap-door for certain; but they may not have come very far into the tunnel."

"Dey vos comed a leetle vays anyhow; I see der tracks."

"The deuce you say! Then they may come further next time."

"Dot's vot I vos dinking, Parney."

"Well, it isn't at all likely they'll come to-night, so let's get ahead with our business and then dig out."

"All right. You got somedings to trink, Parney? I don't feel shust right."

"Confound you, Jake Klinghammer, you are always sponging on somebody—if you can. Where's that flask of whisky I saw you take from behind McCarthy's bar to-night?"

"I didn't dake no vhiskey at McCarthy's, Parney. I didn't, so 'elp me gracious."

"Well, you took something. What was it?"

"Oh! I remember now, Parney. It vos shust a leetle drop uv prandy—nodding more. I bledge you my word."

"By heavens, Jake, you're a pretty fellow."

"Dot vos vot my girl dinks."

"She's an excellent judge, no doubt."

"You shust pet she vos, Parney."

"Well, pass the brandy, and let me see if it is fit for a gentleman to drink. If it is, I may be induced to take some."

"All right, I give you a daste," said Jake, handing him the flask. "I vosn't so mean as you, Parney."

"Oh! you ain't, eh? Well, that's all right. Here's good luck to your *liberal* soul," and placing the flask to his lips, he poured about half its contents down his throat.

"Ah!" he exclaimed, as he set down the flask, "that's pretty good; must be some of McCarthy's best. Better get some more of it when you're there again. Don't forget, Jake."

"So 'elp me gracious, Parney, dot vos an awful cheek you've got."

"Think so?"

"Think so!" echoed Jake, as he put up the half-emptied flask. "Holy Moses! if I have dot cheek, I vos rich. I vould always have blenty ov 'prass' apout me, you see—ha! ha!"

"Well, I admit it has been of some service to me, and I fancy it will assist me through the remainder of my life—to a considerable extent."

"Dere vos no doubt of dot, you pet."

"Not much, I guess. But then, you know, Jake, I need a little cheek to travel with you!"

"By Father Abraham!" muttered Jake, meaningly, "I pet you need somedings after this, my poy, so it vas pest you look out."

"What are you growling about now?" demanded Barney, sharply.

"Noddings, Parney—shust noddings at all. Now vot you got to told me apout dot leetle schob down pelow?"

"A good deal, so prepare yourself to listen."

"Vill it dake a goot vwhile, Parney?"

"Some little time. Why?"

"Pecause, I vosn't anxious to stay in this hole any longer than vos necessary."

"Well, the fact is, in order to act intelligently in the future, you have got to know exactly how matters stand at present."

"Dot fellow vos dead fast enough, eh?"

"Great Cæsar! yes."

"Und I subbose dot rich young duffer vos ready to bay vot he agreed like an honest man, eh?"

"Of course."

"Vell, what more do I vont to know apout it, then?"

"A good deal—if you have any desire to keep your neck from a hempen collar."

"Holy Moses! what do you mean, Parney, my tear poy?"

"Listen quietly, and I will tell you."

"Go on, Parney, I will pe dumb."

CHAPTER VIII.

BARNEY HAWKS REVEALS A TERRIBLE SECRET—TRAPPED.

Old Spicer put out his hand and drew his young companion close to his side, in order that he might not lose a single word of what was about to be spoken.

He felt, and so did George Morgan, that they were about to hear revelations of the utmost importance.

Barney Hawks' first words, however, seemed a little foreign to the subject.

"Hand me that flask again, Jake," he said, in a tone of authority. "I must wet my whistle before I begin."

Jake took out the flask and passed it across the table without a word.

Barney took a liberal drink, and handing it back, said:

"Take a drop yourself, Jake, you may feel the need of it before I am through."

"So 'elp me gracious," muttered Jake, as he glanced at the flask: "it vos only a drop I could dake any how; dot vos all you hafe left me."

Barney seemed not to hear him, but hastened to say:

"You know the little trick we played down the road didn't work?"

"You mean putting der young station agent's pody on der track?"

"Yes; we hoped it would be supposed he had committed suicide, but as I say, our little game didn't work."

"How vos dot?"

"The engineer and fireman of the freight train both saw the body before they got to it; and while they couldn't slow up in time to escape running over it, they saw plainly enough that the man was dead, or at least drugged, before he was placed on the track."

"Dot vos pad."

"Yes; not only bad for us, but bad all around."

"What! do they suspect us, Parney?"

"No; but they are preparing to follow up certain clews that may, in the end, lead to us."

"Holy Moses! Do they suspect der rich young duffer?"

"Not yet. Just at present their suspicions point to another rich fellow; but they may come round to our man."

"Who's vorkin' up der case, Parney?"

"Nobody but Willett and Gaylord and a few common detectives are at it as yet; but I understand Old Spicer's going to take it up, and that's what makes me feel uncomfortable."

"Old Spicer! Father Abraham help us!"

"We shall need his help, or the help of some powerful saint, before we're through, I take it."

"I never quite understood the matter, any way," said Jake, in a thoughtful tone. "You asked me to help you with the job, and I did it. What did they want the young fellow put out of the way for, eh?"

"That's just what I was going to tell you."

"Well, Parney, drive on, without any more breface."

"All right! In the first place, then, you must know that several years ago a certain family, named Goddard, moved to Madison from New York. The father was engaged in mining operations in the Far West, and his family remained in the East.

"He had a beautiful daughter named Genevieve, who used to be rather wild, and furnished delectable gossip to Madison's staid matrons. She was not only beautiful, but vivacious, and when some young Hartford men camped out there, about six years ago, two of them—one a wealthy young fellow named Beach, and the other a rich gentleman whom we will call—Emory—fell in love with her.

"Now the Way family lived in Madison, and Charles Ives Way, who was then a romantic youth of sixteen or seventeen, had seen Miss Goddard, and, naturally, loved her—perhaps quite as much as either of the other gentlemen I have named.

"Genevieve had played her cards well, and had given both Beach and Emory, separately, cause to think that he, and he alone, was all the world to her.

"In carrying on her little game, she did her best to make them both jealous; but, strange to say, she never played them off against each other. For this purpose she always used to encourage Charley Way.

"Finally she carried things with such a high hand that, inside of two days, she had had fearful rows with both Beach and Emory; and in the heat of her anger she eloped with Way, and married him in New York.

"Just what Beach did I don't pretend to know. Emory went to her father and had a long private talk with him. The result was, her parents made her leave her husband, which, as I have an idea she never really cared anything about him, I suppose she did willingly enough.

"They took her out to Hot Springs, and while, no doubt, Way loved her devotedly, he never attempted to enforce his legal rights, and, so far as I know, never saw his wife again.

"Agents from her father, agents from Beach, and agents from our man, all in turn pestered him, and tried to induce him to get a divorce, as the woman had no grounds upon which to apply for one; but nothing they could do or say would induce him to procure a legal separation from her.

"At length our man became desperate. Mind! I'm not saying now that Genevieve ever promised, in case she should become free, to marry him; but I fancy he had encouragement enough to satisfy him, and he determined that she should be free.

"He sent another man to Way to reason with him. He tried other means, and when everything else failed, he sent for me."

"Und right away, pooty quick, you sent for me."

"Yes; as soon as I had completed my bargain with him I sent for you."

"Und ve did de leetle schob."

"You're getting along too fast, Jake. First, we looked over the ground. Since his wife had left him, Way had gone into the railway business, and was now station-agent at Stony Creek.

"It so happened that I knew a party over at Leete's Island, close by."

"Peter Coffey, you mean?"

"Yes; and through him, without letting him suspect too much, we were able to learn a good deal. But, confound it, Jake, we have got Peter into the hottest kind of hot water."

"Vos dot so?"

"It's just so; and if we can't get at him, and fix matters right, he may let out something—tell of our frequent visits to his place, and all that."

"Py gracious! I hope he von't pe so careless. Put why do they susbeet Peter?"

"For several reasons."

"Vell, vot vos one uv them?"

"A fellow named Howd claims to have been drugged, and robbed of forty dollars in money at Coffey's place, near the depot, several months ago. And then, as even you and I must admit, Jake, he is a pretty rough customer, any way."

"Yes, Parney; put all dot vosn't any evidence in this case."

"No; but you see we put the body on the track just at the point where a little path leads to Coffey's house. We ought to have known better."

"Dot vos so. I'm surprised at you, Parney."

"Then it seems that he left a package of sugar in the depot, when we sent him there that night in order to make sure of Way's movements. And the morning after the murder, he was fool enough to go and claim it."

"Holy Moses! vot an innocent!"

"But that isn't the worst."

"Father Abraham! what else?"

"He came to the city after he had sent home his sugar, and he was heard to remark by two or three persons that he was with Way three minutes before the freight train went through, but that he would not tell anything more about it for a clean thousand dollars."

"Did he say dot, Parney?"

"So I understand."

"So 'elp me gracious! I will kill him before I am a tay older."

"Hum! perhaps that wouldn't be such a bad idea, Jake."

"I dell you, Parney Hawks, I will do it."

"I am perfectly willing, my dear boy."

"Dot settles it, then."

"All right. Do you remember that Clark that we saw with Peter two or three times?"

"Yes."

"Well, they think he had a hand in the affair. One woman, Mrs. Tyron, claims she saw him running down the street just after the freight train passed."

"Perhaps she did."

"Yes, and perhaps she didn't."

"Vell, let 'em think so, anyway. They may hang him if they want to: I sha'n't stop 'em, Parney."

"Nor I, either; but I reckon he'll get out of it easy enough."

"Has anything been said apout der money ve found?"

"Yes; it is claimed that the murderers got away with one hundred and fifty dollars."

"Dot vos a mean lie; it vos only one hundred und forty-nine tollars und seventy-eight cents. Vere vos dot odder twenty-two cents?"

"You'd better ask 'em, Jake."

"No, thank you."

"By the way, where did you get the bottle of whisky you had with you that night?"

"Hum—I ton't remember, Parney."

"Think."

"I can't think."

"You must."

"Vhy?"

"They have picked up the broken pieces of the bottle, which, like a blasted fool, you left on the track near the dead body, and now they're trying to find the man who sold the whisky."

"They von't find him, then."

"Why not?"

"Pecause nopody never sold dot visky."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean dot I don't vos puy a tollar's worth uv visky in den years."

"Thunder! I might have known that."

"Of course."

"But where did you steal it, then?"

"I can't dell. In Shake Mann's, may pe."

"Can't you be sure?"

"Yes, Parney, it vos there. I remember now."

"All right, then. The place was crowded when we were in there, and among so many he'll never remember you."

"I'm villin' to pe forgotten, Parney."

"I should say so! And now about Way's revolver: you got that, didn't you?"

"Yes, Parney, I got dot."

"Where is it?"

"Right here in this vault."

"Where?"

"In my punk."

"Well, then, when we leave, you'd better take it away and hide it in a safer place."

"Why so, Parney?"

"Because, they're hunting for that weapon sharp, and it wouldn't do to have it found here, or on your person."

"All right, I'll dake it vith me, und hide it as soon as I get home."

"See that you do, Jake."

"I vill, Parney, so 'elp me gracious."

"Now, one thing more," said Barney, after a moment's pause, "and then we must be off. Have you seen Sadie Seaton since we parted last?"

"Yes," admitted Jake, somewhat reluctantly.

"She sent word to Hen about the old woman's money, didn't she?"

"Yes."

"How much does she claim the old gal had by her?"

Jake Klinkhammer hesitated.

Barney regarded him for a moment with stern displeasure, and then, in a threatening voice, said:

"None of that, Jake. It won't do, you know. You remember who first put us on the track of this affair, and it don't make any difference if Hen and his pal did get in ahead of us, they've got to divide; and you and I are going to divide whatever they pay us, mind that, my boy."

"Vell, vell, Parney, dot vos all right; we'll divy."

"Then answer my question. How much of a haul is it likely they made?"

"Sixteen t'ousand, sure, and maybe twenty t'ousand."

"Hum, well, say sixteen thousand, that ain't so very bad."

"No, dot vos not so wery pad."

"It'll be four thousand a piece, you know."

"Und if it vos twenty t'ousand, vot then?"

"Why, then, I suppose we ought to give each of them an extra thousand, as they've had all the risk."

"Vell, dot vos all right, for then they would hav' five t'ousand, und ve would hav' each five t'ousand, too."

"Hum, that's so; and five thousand ought to satisfy them."

"Py gracious, yes!"

"Where can we find 'em, Jake?"

Again the Hebrew hesitated. But a threatening look from Barney speedily brought him to his senses.

"Hen vos sthoppin' somewhere on Sixth Avenue, mit a girl," he said, hastily. "I don't vos remember her name. I vill ask Sadie."

"She wrote to him there, did she?"

"Yes, I dink so."

"Ain't you sure?"

"Not quite."

"How's that?"

"Dere vos von odder blace he had letters sent to somedimes. I vill find out dot blace."

"See that you do. And look you, Jake, may be it will be as well for us to pay New York a visit in company to-morrow. This town is getting a little hot for us, and we want money—want it badly; and we can see Hen and his pal, and make Emory meet us there at the same time—kill two birds with one stone, you understand."

"Yes, Parney, I dink ve petter go to New York."

"Well, then, that's settled. Now get your little gun and come along."

Jake started to his feet, crossed to the tier of bunks behind which the detectives were concealed, and began searching under the pillow of the middle bunk.

Presently he became greatly excited, and pulling up the bed itself, felt eagerly all over the bottom of the bunk.

"What in thunder's the matter?" demanded Barney, at last, impatiently.

"Py Father Abraham! dot pistols vos gone!" gasped Jake. "Dot vos vhat vos der matter."

"Gone? The devil!"

"Yes; und some uv my bapers vos gone, too."

"Papers? What papers?"

"Noddings put some leetle memorandums."

"Memorandums of what?"

"Of some moneys und jewels I hid in der leetle vault beyond."

"Have you got any wealth concealed in the little vault?"

"Schust a leetle, Parney—not much. It vos schust my share in der last boodle und der von pefore dot."

"Well, whatever it is, you'd better go and get it at once. If that revolver is gone, it isn't at all likely we'll want to visit this place again in a hurry."

"Dot vos so, Parney."

"Come on, then. Move the bunks aside. That's right—go ahead. I'll hold the light."

Jake squeezed his way behind the bunks, and throwing open the door, entered the inner vault, closely followed by Barney, bearing the light.

They took a step forward; but only to have the muzzles of two revolvers thrust into their faces, and to hear a voice, in stern and threatening tones, exclaim:

"You were looking for poor Charley Way's revolver a moment ago. Here it is! Will you have the contents now? You have only to move hand or foot, and they are yours, I swear it!"

"Old Spicer, by Jove!" ejaculated Barney, in a tone of chagrin.

"It vos, so 'elp me gracious!" groaned Jake, in a voice of despair.

CHAPTER IX.

THE SITUATION CHANGED—OLD SPICER STARTS FOR NEW YORK.

Barney Hawks stood just behind Jake Klinkhammer, and a little to the right of him.

As he uttered the great detective's name, the light he carried dropped from his hand and almost instantly expired, leaving the place in total darkness.

The next moment he grasped Jake by the arm, and whispering the single word "burrow" in his ear, slipped around the bunks and disappeared.

Old Spicer fired two shots and Morgan one.

At the second shot, Jake Klinkhammer fell, with a dismal groan. And hastily calling upon George to light their own lamp, the old detective stooped down to raise up the supposed wounded man.

To his surprise, he could not find him, and the lamp which George by this time succeeded in lighting, revealed the fact that he too had disappeared.

An earnest and vigorous search for the murderers was now begun; but after a quarter of an hour had passed, not the slightest signs of them had been discovered.

"Where can they have escaped to so suddenly?" exclaimed George, impatiently. "Surely they did not get through the Ernst basement."

"No, nor by the other tunnel either," returned Spicer. "There must be a secret passage we have not found yet."

"Well, what shall we do? They're gone clean enough by this time, that's certain."

"I'm not so sure of that," said Spicer; "but whether or no, there's one thing we'd better do while we're here."

"What's that, sir?"

"Find the Hebrew's stolen treasure, and in fact, everything else we may have overlooked in our previous search. Now that they have got away from us, and know we have discovered their secret, they won't leave anything here that we may pass over."

"That's true enough. But do you really think they may yet be in one or the other of these vaults?"

"I think it's quite possible."

"Then suppose only one of us hunts for the treasure, while the other searches for the murderers."

"Very good, which task do you prefer?"

"To hunt for the villains."

"Very good again. Only let me warn you, don't let them get a shot at you from some dark recess."

"I'll look out for that;" and Morgan recommenced his search for the fugitives, while Old Spicer began looking for Jake Klinkhammer's treasure.

He soon found it, and, to his utmost astonishment, found that it consisted of \$13,782 in gold and national bank notes, and watches, diamonds and jewelry to the value of at least \$5,000 more.

"A big haul!" he exclaimed, "and with the memoranda I found, I shall be enabled to return by far the greater portion of it to its rightful owners."

He then went over the two vaults, inch by inch, but discovered very little more of importance.

Then, as Morgan had found no traces of the murderers, he decided to return to the outer world, and, after a conference with Stricket, and perhaps with the coroner, to put in operation a plan that he had been maturing in his mind for the past half hour.

Morgan followed the old detective with some reluctance. He could not bear to think that such consummate villains as the two who had so cleverly eluded them, should be allowed to make their escape. But he was forced to admit that he could give no good reason why they should remain longer under ground, and so, slowly, he followed Old Spicer through the tunnel into the sub-cellar, and from thence into the coal-vault and through the coal-hole, and so into the upper world.

On emerging from the passageway into York Street, they saw a cab passing. Old Spicer immediately hailed it, and, when they were seated inside, requested the jehu to drive as fast as his horse could go down Chapel Street.

"Where to?" asked Jehu, curiously.

"Go till I tell you to stop," was the reply, and the horse started.

In front of the Western Union Telegraph Company's office, Old Spicer gave the signal to stop; and, springing from the cab, he rushed into the office, scratched thirteen words on a blank, and, handing it to the operator, said:

"Get that off at once. It's on a matter of life and death."

The operator took the dispatch, and this is what he read:

"Adam Killett, 300 Mulberry Street, New York:

"Meet me at Grand Central depot on arrival of four-eleven morning train.

"SPICER."

"All right, sir," said the operator, "it shall go this minute."

"And mind!" said Old Spicer, "if he isn't at the office, as it's hardly likely he will be at this hour, have it taken to him wherever he may be; understand?"

"All right, sir; but I shall have to charge for sending the instructions."

"Charge what you have a mind to, but see to it that Mr. Killett gets that dispatch, that's all I care about it."

"He shall surely get it, sir."

"Thanks. It will greatly oblige me. Good-night," and hurrying from the office, he leaped into the cab, and calling out "Home Place," sank into his corner, and never spoke again till they arrived before his door.

"Wait," he said to the driver, as they alighted, "I shall want you to take me to the depot in ten minutes—come in, George, I want to talk with you and Seth," and he led the way straight to the back parlor.

Seth Stricket was still fast asleep on the lounge.

"Wake up, Seth!" said Old Spicer, giving him a vigorous shake. "You've had a long nap."

"What! back already?" demanded Seth, slowly raising himself to a sitting posture.

"Already? Why, man, it's all of three hours and a half since we left you."

"Is it possible!"

"It is indeed. And now, Seth, I want to talk to you. I have only time to say a few words, for I take the next train for New York—must start in ten minutes."

"The deuce! What's up?"

"We have learned that Mrs. Ernst's murderers came up from New York. Doubtless they have returned to the city again, and I must find them before they receive warning of my coming from two of their friends, whom George and I disturbed to-night."

"But did not capture?"

"As to that, George will explain when I am gone. But listen: While I am away, you are to bend all your energies toward retaking Barney Hawks and Jake Klinkhammer, and to find out who a certain Beach and a certain Emory may be, who camped out on the Madison sea-shore six summers ago. George will explain the rest."

"All right, sir."

"This treasure, George," continued Old Spicer, producing the Jew's boodle, "I wish you would place in the vaults of the Safe Deposit Company, as soon as they open in the morning."

"I'll attend to it, sir."

"Thanks. And now I must be off," and he started for the door.

"Stay!" exclaimed Stricket. "Supposing we should want to communicate with you, where will a letter or dispatch reach you?"

"Care of Inspector Byrnes, 300 Mulberry Street. If you want to get word to me, use the wires, and use them freely. Time is everything to us, you know. And now good-bye."

"Good-bye, sir, and good luck."

"Thanks, the same to you," and Old Spicer hurried from the house.

"Now, then, driver," he said, as he sprung into the cab, "I can ride as fast as your horse can go."

"All right, sir," and they were off.

Eight minutes later the indefatigable detective had taken his seat in the train, which was moving from the Union depot on its way to New York.

CHAPTER X.

Old Spicer and Morgan had hardly passed out of the tunnel into the sub-cellar, when the little flight of five steps, leading from the trap under the table to the entrance of the tunnel, was thrown forward, revealing a hole about two and one-half feet high by nearly three feet wide—a veritable burrow.

Out of this hole first crawled Jake Klinkhammer, and when he had raised himself to the floor of the vault, Barney Hawks followed him, carefully restoring the steps to their place, however, before he crawled out from under the table.

"Where is there another light, Jake?" asked Barney, "I broke the one we had, you know."

"Lemme see," mused Jake. "Oh! dere vos some candles in der lower punk, on dot side. You find 'em?"

"Yes," answered Barney, after feeling in the place indicated, "here they are. Now, have you a match?"

"Yes," and, lighting one, the Jew came forward and communicated the flame to the candle.

"Now," said Barney, "let's see if they have found your little boodle," and the two hurried into the inner vault.

A single glance was sufficient to inform Jake of his heavy loss, and a more unhappy Jew never cut a throat or relieved a poor widow of her hard earnings.

"Oh, Father Abraham!" he groaned, "I vos a ruined man. Vot schall I do? Oh, holy Moses! schust help me to catch dot tammed Old Spicer, und I vill not ask uv you one odder favor so long as I live.

"Great Aaron! all der hard earnings uv a life-time gone. I vos schust ready to lay me town und die. Yes, dere vos no use living any more."

"It is mighty hard, Jake, to lose all your *honest* earnings in this way," said Barney. "But cheer up, my boy; you've escaped with a whole skin, and we may live to get even with Old Spicer yet."

"I would schust like to r-r-r-ring his tammed neck!" hissed Jake. "I would schust like to trink his l-l-l-life blood!"

"You would like that, eh?"

"So 'elp me gracious, dot would make me feel happy."

"Well, we will lay low for him one of these days, but just now we must see Sadie, and after we have seen her we must be off to New York."

"I vos ready for anyting now," sighed Jake; "I vos desperate!"

"That won't do, old fellow; brace up! There are plenty more yellow boys to be had where those came from. Pshaw! in another week we shall both be rotten with wealth."

"Maype so; I don't care."

"But you want to get even with that long, thin church-spire of a detective, don't you?"

"Yes, yes; und with der odder von, too."

"All right. Come on, then."

They descended into the tunnel, carefully closing the trap-door after them.

Just before reaching the sub-cellar, Barney came to an abrupt halt.

"Suppose," said he, "they have placed a watch at both of the outlets?"

"Dot vos schust vhat dey hav' done, ov course," responded Jake, in a matter-of-fact tone.

"Then, in the demon's name, how are we going to get out?"

"Give it op," returned Jake, indifferently.

Barney regarded his companion with a look of surprise.

"Thunder!" he exclaimed, "do you let the loss of a little money affect you in that way? Are you willing to die—to be hanged, just because a little bad luck has overtaken you?"

"Might schust as vell die as to pe vidout gold," answered Jake, doggedly.

"Well," said Barney, resignedly, "I see I've got the thinking to do for both of us, and I take it I can put you in the way of getting at least a part of your wealth back again in short order."

Jake pricked up his ears.

"How vos dot, Parney?" he asked, with some show of interest.

"You've got your shooting-irons about you, I suppose?"

"Yes."

"And that bloody knife of yours?"

"Yes."

"Then follow me and keep your eye open."

"I'm vith you, Parney, wherever you lead, so long as dere vos gold at der end uv der journey."

To this Barney did not reply; but starting on, he opened the door into the sub-cellar, and instead of turning either toward the coal vault or opening into the disused sewer, conducted his companion to the stairs leading to the basement of the house.

These stairs they ascended, but found the door at the top locked.

Barney at once took a pair of key-nippers from his pocket, and fastening them to the key which was in the lock, turned it, and immediately opened the door.

They then, cautiously, ascended to the principal floor, and from thence to the second floor, and so on, to the roof of the house.

Crouching down, they crawled along the roof until they had reached the particular house Barney had in mind, and here they stopped before the scuttle and attempted to raise it.

It was firmly fastened on the under side.

Barney promptly took two jimmies from an inside pocket of his coat, and passing one to Jake, directed him to insert it under one corner of the scuttle door, while he did the same at the opposite corner.

"Ready?" he presently asked.

"All ready," was the answer.

"Up with her then!" and both bearing down on the jimmies at the same time, the staples underneath gave way with the utmost ease, and the scuttle-door flew open.

"Dot vos all right," exclaimed Jake. "Now what next?"

"Listen," said Barney, "I have learned that in the room I am going to take you to there is a strong safe, containing at this present moment \$33,500."

"Dhirty-dree t'ousand and 'vive hundred tollars! Vos der really so much as dot, Parney?"

"Possibly there is a little more or a little less; but you'll find I am not very far out of the way."

"Whose money vos it?"

"It belongs to the Eastern stock-holders of the Eagle Gold Mining Company, of Arizona, and has been sent on here to their treasurer and agent, Mr. John Marsden, to be used by him in paying their next quarterly dividend."

"So 'elp me gracious! I dink dey vill hav' to pass dot next dividend, Parney, eh?"

"It strikes me that way."

"Vhere vos dot safe?"

"Ah! there's the rub, and that's what I must fully explain."

"Of course."

"Well, you see Marsden and his wife occupy a sleeping-apartment on the second floor. Beyond this sleeping-room is another and smaller apartment, which is used by Marsden as a sort of study and private office, the only means of access to which is through the sleeping-room."

"Und in this inner room vos der safe, eh, Parney?"

"Exactly."

"Then ve hav' to go right py Mr. Marsden's ped, and run der risk uv wakin' him und his wife?"

"Yes."

"Vell, dot vos all right, if ve vos *sure* dere vos dhirty dousand tollars in dot safes."

"There's not the shadow of a doubt of it. The money was paid to Marsden at noon to-day, or rather yesterday, as it is now past midnight."

"Put vhy didn't he put it in der pank?"

"He's a queer fellow—rich and very eccentric; has had a row with every bank president in the city, and swears that not one of them shall ever handle another dollar that he controls. He expects to take the greater part of the money to Meriden and Hartford to-morrow."

"Py gracious, Parney! ve vill safe him dot trouples, ha, ha!"

"We will try to, at any rate. And now come on."

"One moment, Parney. Suppose they should vake up."

"Hum, I wish we had a little chloroform with us."

"Yes, put ve ha'n't got von trop."

"No, and so——"

"Und so if either uv dem underdake to make trouples, vhy——"

"Why, you must silence them in the easiest way you can."

"Dot vos all right Parney—you shust leave dot to me."

"Very good. And now come on. I'm mighty glad to see you in a more cheerful mood, Jake."

"Ha! ha! Der brospekts uv handling dhirty-dree dousand tollars vas enough to make any man

cheerful. Vosn't dot so, my tear Parney?"

"Well, there *is* a cheering sound in the clinking of gold, I must confess. Now, then, I'll go ahead, and you keep close to my heels."

"All right."

"Better close the scuttle, Jake."

"Dot's schust vot I am a-doin'," and Jake closed and fastened the scuttle while Barney waited for him on the attic floor below.

Not having a lantern, Barney now lighted a piece of candle he had brought with him, and the two burglars descended the attic stairs to the third story.

Treading cautiously and lightly, they traversed the hall and descended to the second floor.

Here Barney paused before a closed door and listened intently.

Then, after a rapid signal to Jake, he put out the light and turned the knob.

The door was locked on the inside.

Once more he had recourse to his nippers, and speedily the door was opened.

Evidently Barney knew exactly where the door to the inner room was situated; for, without the slightest hesitation, he started across the sleeping-apartment in a diagonal direction.

Jake essayed to follow him, but mistaking the course, brought up against the foot of the bed, which he struck with such force as to startle the sleepers from their dreams, and cause a red-hot oath to burst from his own lips.

"Who's there?" came in a stern and determined voice from the bed. "Speak! or by the great Eternal! I'll fire!"

CHAPTER XI.

A DOUBLE MURDER—AN UNCEREMONIOUS VISIT.

There was the slightest possible movement at the foot of the bed, and then, just as the mining company's treasurer was about to pull the trigger, a blow descended on his breast, and he fell over dead, bathed in his own heart's blood.

His wife heard the blow, heard the revolver drop from his hand, and felt the jar as her husband fell dead by her side.

A cry of fear and agony arose to her lips; but ere she could give it utterance, a hand closed about her throat, and speedily she lost all consciousness.

"It vos all right now, Parney. You can sthrike a light as soon as you vant to," whispered Jake cheerfully. "These two von't give us no more trouple."

Barney hastened to light a candle, and then, having cautioned Jake to lock the bedroom door, entered the inner room, and began a careful examination of the safe.

It had not a combination lock, and he had only to find the key to be able to open it with the greatest ease.

An instant's reflection satisfied him that the key would most probably be in one of the dead man's trousers pockets.

Hurrying back, therefore, into the bedroom, he looked around for that useful article of wearing apparel.

He soon found it, and in the right-hand pocket found the key on a bunch with a dozen others.

In another moment he was back to the safe, and had the door open.

By this time Jake was at his side, and as Barney opened drawer after drawer, and brought forth packages of bank-notes and bags of specie, his excitement was intense and his happiness almost complete.

At length the safe was stripped, and the treasure had been carefully stowed away in the capacious pockets of the two burglars.

Barney was just shutting the safe door, and Jake was making sure that not a single gold piece had been dropped upon the floor, when a deep and hollow groan from the next room startled them both.

"Great Cæsar! what was that?" gasped Barney.

"Father Abraham! but it vos der dead man's ghost," muttered Jake, with a shiver.

"Did—did you kill the woman?" Barney at length managed to stammer forth.

"No, Parney; I only schust choked her a leetle."

"Oh, ah! *that's* it, then," exclaimed the other, greatly relieved. "Go back and gag her, or she'll be coming to and having the whole house roused before we can get out of it, confound her!"

Jake readily undertook this mission, and seizing a bed-sheet, endeavored to stuff it into the woman's mouth.

But she had already recovered consciousness; and clinching her teeth tight together, resisted all his efforts to gag her.

At length, growing impatient and desperate, he once more grasped her by the throat, and when at last he released his hold, there was no longer any necessity for filling her mouth with the sheet. Her spirit had gone to join that of her murdered husband.

"Have you fixed her, Jake?" asked Barney, approaching the bed.

"Schust hold der light here till ve see."

Barney advanced with the candle.

"Yes, dot vos all right," said the Jew, complacently. "She von't make no more noise ter-night, I pet you."

"By Jove, Jake," exclaimed Barney, with some show of compunction, "I'm afraid we've carried this thing a little too far—further, in fact, than there was any necessity for."

"Schust look you, Parney. If I hadn't done for der man, he would have finished me, you pet, pesides rousing der boliche vid his tamned bistols. Und as for der old gal, she wouldn't open her mouth, und so, as it vos growin' light, and ve hadn't no time to tarry here, vy, I schust choked her a leetle und dot vos der last uv her. How vos I to know dot she would schlip her vind so easy?"

"Well, well, we've no time to dispute about the matter now. Let's get to Sadie's place the easiest way we can, and then settle how we shall get down to New York."

"All right, I'm villing," and unlocking the bedroom door, and locking it again from the outside, they hurried down to the main hall, taking the key with them.

Cautiously Barney unlocked the outside door and peered into the street. There was not a living soul in sight.

"Vos it safe to venture out?" asked Jake in a whisper.

"I don't know; I see no one," was the answer.

"Vait a minute!" exclaimed Jake, approaching the hat-rack. "Schust you put on dot great coat and blug hat, and I vill put on dese."

"The very thing!" cried Barney, in a tone of satisfaction; and seizing the murdered man's overcoat and hat, he put them on, while Jake appropriated a smaller coat and a Derby.

Their own soft hats they thrust into their pockets, knowing too much to leave them behind.

"Now," said Barney, "we may venture forth," and noiselessly opening the door, they stepped outside, closing the door behind them.

After listening for a moment in the shadow of the porch, they glided down the steps, and hurried up the street, Jake a dozen feet or so in advance of Barney.

They met no one; and in less than ten minutes were before Sadie Seaton's door.

Jake rang the bell, but was quickly satisfied that the peal had not roused the slumbering Sadie.

He was about to ring again, when Barney exclaimed, warningly:

"Hold up! here comes some one. We'd better not be seen here."

"Dot vos so," assented Jake. "Come round to der pack door."

"Good, we'll do that. There's only a lock there—no bolts, and if the door's fastened, I'll soon open it."

"Put ve'd petter know who's coming," suggested Jake.

"You're right, my boy; we'll hide round the corner of the house here, and see who passes."

They had hardly concealed themselves, when two men arrived in front of the place and slowly passed.

"Seth Stricket!" exclaimed Barney, as soon as they were out of hearing.

"Und dot meddlin' George Morgan, confound him!" added his companion.

"Well, let 'em go," said Barney. "If they are looking for us, I fancy they won't find us."

"No, not schust yet, anyvay. Come," and they hurried round to the back door.

This time they did not wait to ring or knock, but using his nippers, Barney speedily opened the way for them to enter the house, and they entered accordingly, closing and locking the door after them.

Jake, as one familiar with the premises, led the way to the second story; and entering a sitting-room, lighted the gas, and then approaching a bedroom door, knocked.

After the knocking was repeated, a little more impatiently, a voice demanded in no very pleasant tone:

"Who's there, and what do you want?"

"It vos me, my tear," answered Jake; "und I vont your own sweet self, und dot tamned quick, too."

"What! is it you, Jake? How did you get in?"

"Yes, it vos me, I told you, und I valked in."

"I'll be out in a minute," and sure enough in less than a minute a very pretty girl, not more than nineteen years of age, clothed in a dressing-gown and slippers, made her appearance.

"Ah! you are not alone!" she exclaimed, starting back at sight of Barney.

"No, my tear, dis vos my friend, Parney Hawks; you know him, I believe?"

"Yes, I have seen him before, and am very glad to see him now. What can I do for you, gentlemen?"

"Vos dere any whiskey in der house, my tear?"

"I think there is a little. I will go and see. Take seats, please."

"Vid der greatest bleasure, I assure you. Put first, my tear, how vos der vinders?"

"All right, the blinds are tightly closed, and, as you see, the curtains are drawn."

"Dot vos goot. Now hurry up vid der whiskey."

The girl went out, and soon returned with a bottle and three glasses on a salver.

"Dot vos right, my tear, you will trink vid us."

"Of course;" and setting the salver down on a center-table, she took a chair near the Jew.

He filled the three glasses, and handed her one.

"Your health, my tear," he said, taking a swallow of his own.

"And yours," she replied. Then in another tone:

"What's the news, Jake? What brings you here at this time of night?"

"Vhat should pring me here put der desire to see your own sweet face."

"Get out, I know better than that. Besides, if you had only come to see me, you wouldn't have brought your friend with you."

"Vell, dot vos apout so, Sadie."

"Then what's up? Why don't you tell me?"

"You vos still feelin' a leetle interest in your old lover, I suppose?"

"Do you mean Hen?"

"Yes, I mean Hen."

The girl blushed slightly.

"Of course I feel some interest in his welfare," she said; "that's but natural."

"Quite natural, my tear—quite so. Und you would like to see him broswer, eh?"

"What do you mean? What are you driving at, Jake?"

"You know you dold me you gave him some hint of der old voman's gold."

Sadie started, and cast a glance of apprehension toward Barney.

"Oh, dot vos all right, Sadie. Parney was Hen's barticular friend, und he schust heard to-night dot der boliche hav' tumbled to his leetle racket, und are goin' ter arrest him in New York, so he vos awful anxious to see him und put him on his guard."

"Why don't he see him, then?"

"For a very goot reason; he ain't quite certain where to find him."

Sadie became very thoughtful.

At length she turned to Barney, and asked:

"What do you want—what do you expect of me?"

"You know where Hen is most likely to be found?" he said.

"I suppose so."

"Tell us, then; it may be the means of saving him from the gallows."

The girl started.

"Is there any danger of that?" she asked.

"Danger?" exclaimed Jake. "I should schust say so!"

"Do *you* think so?" she demanded, turning once more to Barney.

"I reckon Old Spicer's on his track," he answered; "and if that's so, his only chance is my getting to him before that old rat can find him."

The girl looked distressed.

"I don't know what to do," she said. "Hen made me take an oath that I would give his address to no one, and that I would not let even his best friend know the places he frequents in New York."

"Well, my dear, of course you can do exactly as you have a mind to about it; but if you don't tell us, his chances of escaping the hangman are pretty slim, I can assure you that." Then turning to his friend, with a solemn air:

"Come, Jake, we must be going; it won't do to linger here any longer."

"Dot vos so!" exclaimed the wily Jew, starting to his feet.

CHAPTER XII.

BARNEY AND JAKE START FOR NEW YORK.

"Oh, dear! oh, dear! What shall I do? What shall I do?" moaned the poor girl in great distress.

"Do?" exclaimed Jake. "Why, put us on der fellow's drack, und so, if you care anything apout him, save his life."

"I will tell," she exclaimed, taking a sudden resolution—"at least I will put you in the way of finding him."

"All right, my tear, drive on, und pe quick apout it, for ve must get out of this pefore tay-light."

"That's so," said Barney.

"Do you know where Hudson Street is?" asked Sadie.

Barney nodded.

"Yes," said Jake, "ve know."

"Well," continued Sadie, "at No. 515 there is a saloon."

"Who keeps it?"

"A fellow named Taylor."

"Hain't been there long, I reckon?"

"Not so very long, I believe."

"Is he a young fellow?"

"Yes, not more than twenty-one or twenty-two."

"Is he Hen's pal?"

"And we can hear of him at this saloon?"

"Yes."

"He's got a lady friend in New York, hasn't he?"

"I—I believe so," faltered poor Sadie.

"Know her name?"

"I believe it's Bell."

"Bell what?"

"No! no! Bell is her last name."

"Oh! is it Cora Bell?"

"Yes, that's it."

"Does she live on Sixth Avenue?"

"I believe so."

"Know the number?"

"I—I—there! I mustn't tell you any more."

"No matter, I can find her if I should happen to want to see her. But one question more: Hen isn't Hen when he travels in New York, I'm told?"

"No, not always, I believe."

"How do you address your letters when you write to him?"

She considered for a moment.

"Of course you are really his friends," she said at last, "and I will tell you."

"Well, we are somewhat anxious to know."

"In New York he goes by the name of Frank Clark."

"Frank Clark! Ah! of course. I ought to have remembered that. Come, Jake, one more drink, and then we must really tear ourselves away from this lovely young lady."

They filled their glasses, drained them, and prepared to go.

"What! are you both going?" asked Sadie, regarding them with a look of disappointment.

"We must go," said Barney. But understanding her look, he quickly turned to his companion and added:

"Come, Jake, you wouldn't drink the lady's liquor and leave nothing in its place, I hope. Come! come! old fellow, be generous for once in your life, and give her a yellow boy."

Jake looked annoyed; but with the best grace possible, pulled out one of the Eagle Gold Mining Company's ten-dollar gold pieces, and throwing it into Sadie's lap, said:

"There, my tear, don't never say I vos gif you noddings."

"And there, my beauty," added Barney, tossing another gold piece to her. "Please, hereafter set me down among your friends."

"Oh! thank you—thank you both," she exclaimed, fervently. "God knows I needed this," and bursting into tears, the poor girl fled from the room.

"Come," said Barney, hurriedly, "we'd better get away while we can," and slipping down-stairs, they went out at the side door.

"Vell, vich vay now?" asked Jake, as they hurried down the street.

"I've been thinking," responded Barney, "and if the thing can be managed, we ought not to take the train anywhere this side of Milford."

"I can manage it," said Jake, quietly.

"How?"

"I know a livery-stable keeper vot vos all right."

"Who is he?"

"Isaac Rosenwasser."

"Where's his place?"

"On George Street; und, so 'elp me gracious, dere vos vun uv his carriages now, on dot corner."

"Do you know the driver?"

"I vill run und see. He vos in dot saloon, I guess."

Jake hurried across the street and peered into the saloon.

The driver was there, and he knew him.

He called him out, beckoned to Barney, and sprung into the carriage.

"Where to, Jake?" asked the driver.

"Go out Congress Avenue, und then I vill told you."

The driver took the direction named, and in due time had crossed West Bridge and entered the town of Orange.

"Where now?" he asked.

"Old Milford," was the brief reply.

"The devil!" exclaimed the driver, "you're giving me a pretty job at this hour in the morning."

"Never mind, my tear fellow," said Jake, encouragingly, "ve vill make it all right vid you."

"All right it is, then," cried the driver, cheerfully, and he started his horses toward the Milford turnpike.

Slowly they ascended the long hill, passed the old toll-gate, and then were fairly on the way to the station from whence they hoped to start for New York.

In due time they reached the place, dismissed the driver with a liberal fee, and when the local express came along sprung aboard.

Two hours later they landed in the Grand Central Depot, and without loss of time started for Hudson Street.

CHAPTER XIII.

OLD SPICER AND KILLETT IN TAYLOR'S SALOON.

As Old Spicer stepped from the train in the Grand Central Depot, a hand closed about his arm and he was drawn out of the crowd and led by a roundabout way into Vanderbilt Avenue, and so into a quiet room of the hotel on the corner.

"That was very well done, Adam," said the old detective to his companion, when they were both comfortably seated. "I don't quite see how you managed it."

"Oh, it's easy enough when you know how," returned Detective Killett with a smile. "And now that we are here by ourselves, tell me what's up."

"You received my telegram all right?"

"Yes. I happened to be at the office, and so received it in less than a quarter of an hour after you sent it."

"That's better than the telegraph people usually do."

"You're right, Mark; but they're learning not to fool much time with our office. They're beginning to find out that it isn't healthy."

"I'm glad to hear it. And now tell me, my good friend, can you devote a little time to me for a day or so?"

"Most certainly. But let me ask again, what's up? Your message, you know, gave me no sort of idea."

"True. Well, I'll tell you. We've had a murder in our place—a most cowardly affair."

"That sort of thing happens pretty often up your way, doesn't it?"

"Well, we do seem to have more than our fair share of cowardly murders and kindred crimes; but this was a peculiar case—a most unnecessary killing."

"The victim was an old woman—a Jewess or a German, wasn't she?"

"Yes."

"Kept a low barroom or something of the sort?"

"You're right, the place was a regular dive, but had been carried on with so much secrecy that even the police never really knew what was going on there."

"Hum, have you any idea who the murderer or murderers were?"

"I know this much: they came up from New York—probably that very evening, and it's more than likely returned the same night."

"Hum, New York parties, eh?"

"Yes; but I think one of them must have been pretty well acquainted in our city, and particularly well acquainted with the murdered woman and her establishment."

"You have no idea who he is?"

"He is called Hen, and has a young lady friend, with whom he is pretty intimate, somewhere on Sixth Avenue, in this city. That's all I know."

Detective Killett became very thoughtful.

At length he asked:

"How did you gain this much information?"

Old Spicer informed him.

"Oho!" exclaimed Killett, when he had finished, "that was the way of it, eh? Then your men are as good as bagged."

"How's that?" asked Spicer, eagerly.

"It's plain enough," was the answer. "You will know Barney Hawks and Jake Klinkhammer whenever and wherever you see them again, I suppose?"

"Most decidedly, yes."

"Well, trust me, they will be making for this city as soon as they've had an interview with that Sadie Seaton. If you had gone to her, most likely she would have lied to you; but she will tell these villains just where Hen and his pal can be found. We must, therefore, be on hand to receive them when they arrive, and follow them wherever they go till they lead us to our game, then, at the right moment, we can bag the whole lot."

"Killett, you're a trump. I salute you!"

"Thanks, Mark. Such a compliment, from the very prince of detectives, is particularly agreeable."

"You are worthy of the best compliment I can pay, old friend. And now let's see: when does the next train arrive?"

"Seven o'clock."

"Seven o'clock; they won't be on that."

"Are you sure?"

"Yes, quite so."

"Couldn't they have caught it?"

"Hardly."

"Why not?"

"They would be detained some time with the girl; and then, I fancy, they would be too shrewd to take the train at New Haven."

"You're right, by Jove! Now what station would they be most likely to get on at?"

"Either Woodmont or Milford; and as Woodmont is a small place, and Milford quite a town, for obvious reasons, I think they would go to the latter."

"Doubtless. Well, the next train leaves Milford at 5.31, and arrives here at eight o'clock. Can they have caught that?"

"Quite easily, I should say."

"Then we must have a sharp eye on the passengers arriving by that train."

"But it is usually quite a long train, I believe; and there are so many ways of getting out of the Grand Central Depot—can we two manage the thing alone?"

"I was just thinking of that, and I fancy we had better have a little help. Do you remember Stark?"

"What—your old friend, Silas?"

"The same."

"Yes, I remember him well."

"Glad to hear it. You've no objection to my calling him in?"

"None in the world. I shall be glad to have his assistance."

"Then I'll send for him and Rouse. It so happens they are in this neighborhood. Excuse me a moment, and I'll telephone for them," and Detective Killett left the room.

In a few moments he returned, and ten minutes later Silas Stark and Reuben Rouse entered the apartment.

Old Spicer minutely described Barney and Jake, and both Silas and Reub thought they should recognize them without the slightest trouble.

But Killett suddenly started a possible difficulty.

"These fellows are cunning rascals," he said; "ten to one, when they land, they will be disguised."

"Right, by Jove!" exclaimed Old Spicer; "and if they are as cunning as I think they are, they'll separate, and reach their objective point from different directions."

"Just so; and we must be prepared for any such little game." Then, turning to the man he called his right bower:

"Silas," he asked, "do you think you can penetrate any disguise they may assume?"

"I fancy I shall know that Hawks, sir," was the answer; "for, if I am not greatly mistaken, I have seen the villain more than once already."

"And you, Rouse?"

"I reckon I can get on to the Jew, sir," replied Reub.

"How'll you know him?"

"I shall know him by his nose, sir. He can't disguise that, I take it."

Both Killett and Old Spicer laughed.

"A good ear-mark to go by," observed the latter.

"Ear-mark, eh? I shouldn't have thought to call it by that name."

"It's about time for the seven o'clock train to arrive," said Killett, suddenly; "any use in going over, think?"

"It will do no harm," returned Old Spicer; "but, as I said before, it's hardly possible for them to have caught it."

"No matter, let's go across any way," and the quartet of detectives went over to the depot, and planting themselves at different points, waited for the train.

Very soon it came rolling in, and every passenger was brought under the eye of one or the other of the quartet.

At length the last had gone, and neither Barney nor Jake had been seen.

They went back to the hotel and held another consultation, which lasted for nearly an hour.

Again, as the pointers of Old Spicer's faithful watch indicated that the hour of eight had almost arrived, they crossed over to the depot and stationed themselves as before.

Presently the train came in, and the passengers began to crowd their way out of it and hasten toward the street.

Soon Barney and Jake made their appearance, disguised in the overcoats and hats "borrowed" from the rack in the hall of the murdered Marsden's house.

Old Spicer, who, during the past hour had carefully disguised himself, and Silas Stark caught sight of them at the same time.

The precious pair walked for some distance toward the exit, conversing together in low and hurried tones. Then they separated, Jake pressing on ahead, and ascending to the elevated railway station, while Barney passed out on to Forty-second Street, and hurried toward Sixth Avenue.

Old Spicer made a signal to Killett, and the two followed Barney.

Seeing this, Silas Stark motioned to Reub, and together they hurried up-stairs after Jake.

Barney kept on toward Sixth Avenue, little suspecting who was behind him.

He ascended to the elevated station at the corner of the avenue and Forty-second Street, on the down-town side, and was the first to board a train that stopped just as he reached the platform.

A moment later the two famous detectives were in the same car.

Barney paid no attention to the other passengers, but turning his head, gazed steadfastly out of the window.

At the station nearest to Christopher Street, he got off, and hurrying down that street, turned into Hudson. Then he began looking for No. 515, the two detectives still close behind him.

At length he found the saloon, and after one hasty glance, entered it.

Old Spicer and Killett approached the door. A hard-looking bummer was loafing on the outside, waiting for some one, or any one, out of whom he might beat a drink.

"Who runs this establishment?" asked Killett.

"Jimmie Taylor," was the prompt reply.

"Ah! Jimmie Taylor, eh? Guess this will do for us. Let's go in and have something."

"Thank ye, sir, I don't mind if I do," exclaimed the bum, with alacrity.

"I wasn't speaking to you, sir," laughed Killett. "However, come along; I don't mind planting another nail in your coffin."

They entered, and discovered Barney at a table in a corner, with a glass of whisky before him.

"Barkeeper," said Killett, "give this fellow what he calls for, and bring us two sours to the table over there;" and they took seats at some little distance from Barney, but within earshot, provided any one should speak to him.

The "bum" ordered a whisky straight, and when he had been supplied with his favorite fluid, the barkeeper built the sours and took them to his waiting customers.

While he was receiving his pay, Barney made a slight motion to him with his hand, which Old Spicer caught, and at once prepared to see what came of it.

The barkeeper turned and went over to the corner.

"Listen with all your ears now," said Old Spicer, in a low and rapid whisper, "for the time has come for us to learn something."

"I'm ready to drink it all in," replied his companion, quietly.

CHAPTER XIV.

JIM TAYLOR MAKES HIS APPEARANCE.

"Where's the proprietor?" asked Barney, as the barkeeper approached his table.

"Don't know," was the reply; "hasn't been around much for the past two or three days. Him and his chum are having a pretty loud time of it, I reckon."

"His chum? Do you mean Hen Chamberlain?"

"No, that ain't his name."

"No, of course not. What am I thinking of? Frank Clark's more like it, eh?"

"That's the man."

"So they're off together?"

"I suppose so; they're together most of the time—thicker than thieves, by Jove!"

"Damon and Pythias over again, eh?"

"I should say so."

"Taylor hasn't been in this morning?"

"No."

"Wasn't he here yesterday?"

"Only for a little while. Do you want to see him?"

"I jist do that."

"Anything up?"

"Nothing very alarming. I heard he wanted to sell this place. Do you know anything about it?"

"I hadn't heard that he wanted to sell it, but I reckon he'd be glad enough to."

"'Tain't paying very well, I reckon?"

"Not first-rate; but if a man had a little capital, and would make it a little more attractive, it could be made to pay first-class."

"That's exactly what I think. I've got an idea or two that I believe can be made to work here, and pay big."

"Shall you be alone?"

"No; I shall have a partner. Expect him here every moment."

"If you should make a trade you will want a barkeeper, I suppose?"

"Certainly; and if Taylor speaks well of you, there's no doubt but you can stay on if you want to."

"He ought to speak well of me. He trusts me with everything. You can see for yourself, he goes off for days together, and leaves me to run the establishment alone."

"I see, and I'm sure you're jist the man we shall want."

"Thank you, sir. Will you take something more, sir?"

"Don't mind if I do."

The barkeeper went behind the bar, placed a bottle and two glasses on a salver, and returned.

"This is on me," he said, seating himself opposite Barney, who, after he had taken a drink, asked:

"This Frank Clark, do you know him?"

"Only as I have seen him here," was the reply.

"He's from down East, isn't he?" asked Barney.

"Yes, Connecticut way, I believe," returned the other.

"Where does he board?"

"Don't think he has any regular boarding-place."

"He has a room, I suppose?"

"Yes; but I don't know just where it is."

"It's in this neighborhood?"

"Yes; but I can't give you the street and number."

"He visits a girl on Sixth Avenue pretty often, I hear."

"Yes, and a thundering pretty girl she is, too."

"What's her name?"

"Cora Bell."

"To be sure, I remember now. I suppose you don't know her number?"

"Yes, I've heard it often enough to know it."

"What is it, then?"

"Twenty-two. But I say, are you going to try to get her away from Clark?"

"Hardly, seeing I'm not much of a lady's man. But the fact is, my young friend, if we're going to do anything about this matter, we must do it to-day; and if Taylor don't show up pretty soon after my partner arrives, we must try to find him, and I thought, seeing he was with Clark so much, that it might be well for us to pay a visit to Clark's girl."

"You're right, sir, they do go there a good deal."

"Of course, and here's my man at last. Mr. Klinkhammer, permit me to introduce you to Mr. Taylor's representative; I have had quite a talk with him while waiting for you, and have promised that he shall keep his place, in case we succeed in buying out the establishment."

Jake took the cue in an instant.

"Glad to see you, sir," he said. "Like your looks, sir. Shall pe wery glad to 'ave you vid us."

Then seating himself, and coolly appropriating the barkeeper's glass, and filling it from the bottle, he asked, after taking a good swallow:

"Where vos Mesther Taylor?"

"That I don't know," answered the barkeeper. "I have just been explaining to Mr. —, your friend here, how it is that I have seen very little of him for the past few days."

"Has he been out uv town?" asked Jake, carelessly.

"Not that I know of," was the answer. "But he might have gone to Boston or Halifax, and I be none the wiser."

"I see, I see. He goes und comes schust when he bleases, und leaves you here to run der shebang."

"Exactly so, sir."

"Vell, dot vos all right."

"It's all right, provided we find him," said Barney.

"Dot vos schust vot I meant. Und if ve don't—"

At that moment a not bad-looking young man, of some twenty-one or twenty-two years of age,

with the evident marks of recent dissipation upon him, entered the saloon.

He cast a hasty glance about him, and ended with an inquiring look directed toward the barkeeper, who started hastily to his feet.

"These gentlemen are anxious to see you on private business," he explained. Then turning to the two burglars: "This is Mr. Taylor," he said.

"You want to see me, do you?" asked Taylor, coming up to the table and looking them squarely in the face.

"That's exactly what we want, sir," answered Barney, quietly.

"What's your business?"

"You own this establishment?"

"I own the lease and the business."

"Got a license, I suppose?"

"Of course."

"We want to buy the business."

"The devil you do!"

This was said with a good deal of energy, and with some show of interest.

"That's what we want," said Barney.

"You will sell, eh?" put in Jake.

"I shall be blamed glad to sell, provided I don't have to give the place away."

"All right, we're the men to talk with you," said Barney, confidently.

"Come with me, then," and he led the way into a back room.

"Can you get near enough to them to hear what is said?" asked Old Spicer, hurriedly.

"I think so," answered Killelt, with a confident nod.

"Then suppose I go to Miss Bell's and see what I can make out of her?"

"The very thing!"

"I suppose Stark and Rouse are somewhere outside?"

"Without doubt."

"They'd better stick to you, eh?"

"Yes, for the present, I think."

"Where'll I meet you?"

Killelt reflected.

"If you don't find some one in front of Miss Bell's when you leave her," he presently said, "why, come back here. One of us will be around waiting for you."

"All right. And now I'm off," and, starting up from the table, Old Spicer sauntered from the saloon.

CHAPTER XV.

THE TRUE STORY OF THE MURDER.

Detective Killelt also arose from the table, and, approaching the bar, asked:

"Have you got a quiet little room handy, where I can drink one or two whisky punches by myself, and do a little writing?"

"Why—yes, there's a room in there that's vacant," answered the barkeeper; "but we haven't any writing materials."

"Don't let that trouble you," returned Killelt, cheerfully, as he exhibited a pad of paper and a stylographic pen; "you see I carry my tools with me."

"All right then. I'll show you to the room, and bring you a punch as soon as I can get it ready."

"Thanks, my friend," and Killelt followed him through the door by which Taylor and the couple with him had disappeared a few moments before.

On passing the door the detective found himself in a narrow hall, on one side of which was a black walnut partition, reaching about half way to the ceiling.

In this partition were two doors, leading to two small rooms, fitted up for card-playing.

The first of these rooms was now occupied by Taylor's party.

Killelt was shown into the other.

He was in an agony of apprehension for fear those in the next room would hear the door open, or catch the sound of the barkeeper's voice.

But nothing of the kind happened. The door was opened noiselessly, and the barkeeper merely said:

"Here you are, sir. I'll bring the punch presently."

Killett nodded, and the dispenser of liquid refreshments went away.

The detective now seated himself close to the partition between the two rooms, took out his pad of paper and his pen, and prepared to listen with all his ears to what might be going on in the other apartment.

The first words that reached him were spoken by Taylor.

"So you ain't so blamed anxious to buy after all?" he was saying.

"That depends upon circumstances," returned Barney, quickly.

"What circumstances?"

Barney seemed to hesitate for a moment, then he abruptly asked:

"When did you see Hen Chamberlain last?"

"Who?" demanded Taylor, in a tone of surprise.

"Oh, pshaw! You know well enough who I mean. Call him Frank Clark, if you like."

Taylor started slightly, but presently said, calmly enough:

"You know Clark, do you?"

"Yes, old fellow, we know him from 'way back," was the reply, "but up our way he is Henry Burton Chamberlain."

"Hum," muttered Taylor; "I suppose that *is* his name."

"Of course it is; and it seems to me that there need be no more mystery among friends."

"Ah! but remember, gentlemen, you are both strangers to me."

"That's true enough; but we are not strangers to Hen Chamberlain."

"Let's see—did you mention your names?"

"I don't know that we have to you. But that's an omission readily corrected. Mine is Barney Hawks, and this is my pal, Jake Klinkhammer."

"Ah, yes, I have heard Chamberlain speak of you. If I remember rightly, you have been in two or three little affairs with him?"

"I should say we had! and a good many more than two or three."

"You are pretty good friends of his, then?"

"We have proved that to his satisfaction a good many times, I believe."

"Well, that's all right. And now why can't we talk business?"

"Why, the fact is, Mr. Taylor, before we go any further in this matter, we would like to see Hen."

"What do you expect to gain by seeing him?"

"Something in the way of funds, if you must know."

"Ha, ha! I'm afraid you'll find there isn't much in that mine worth working."

"There ought to be, considering the rich vein you and he opened the other night."

"What do you mean?" demanded Taylor, now fairly startled.

"Oh, come, my boy," said Barney, quietly, "we know all about it, and can name pretty nearly the sum you brought away with you."

"You can?"

"Yes."

"Where did you get your information, in the fiend's name?"

"We have seen Sadie Seaton."

"The deuce you have! Are you detectives?"

"Detectives? Thunder! What are you talking about? I told you a moment ago who we were."

"I know, but——"

"But you don't believe us. Why, man, we had planned to do that little job ourselves. You only got in ahead of us, that's all."

"Then what's the matter—what do you want of us?"

"Well, the fact is, there was a little treachery practiced on us by Mr. Henry Chamberlain. It was our job; he knew it, and now we claim our fair share of the spoils."

Taylor lay back and laughed a bitter, ironical laugh.

"What the deuce is the matter with you?" demanded Barney, almost savagely.

"May I ask you one question?" inquired Taylor politely.

"Of course; what is it?"

"How much do you think we got out of that little job?"

"Close on to twenty thousand dollars."

Again came the bitter, ironical laugh.

"Twenty thousand dollars, eh?"

"Yes, close on to that."

"You feel pretty sure of it?"

"Yes; I tell you Sadie was pretty well posted. She knew what the old woman had by her that night; and the place shows for itself that you went through it thoroughly."

"Well, how much will you give me for my share of the boodle?"

"Mind, Taylor, we claim one half of all you brought away as ours by rights."

"Well, well, whatever you claim, what will you give me for all I brought away?"

"Four thousand dollars."

"Done! Ha! ha! that's the best bargain I ever made."

"In the devil's name, what's the matter with you, man? Are you trying to come some game over us?"

"Petter not!" growled Jake, warningly.

"There's been a pretty game played by some one," said Taylor, gloomily; "but it's been a bitter one for me. You think I brought away ten thousand dollars, don't you?"

"About that, yes."

"Well, the exact sum I got out of the job was—twenty-three dollars and seventy-one cents."

"Twenty-three dollars and seventy-one cents! Young man, what are you giving us?"

"I am giving it to you straight. That's all I got."

"And Chamberlain, how much did he get?"

"Twenty-two dollars."

"He made you believe that, did he?"

"That's all he had. We divided in the cars, coming home."

"Hum, there's something I don't understand here somewhere. Either Chamberlain has cheated you, or— But suppose you tell us about the affair from the time you left this city."

"Well, I don't mind. We left the Grand Central Depot at 6:45 Monday night, and arrived in New Haven at 9:30.

"We had some drinks in a saloon near the depot, and about ten o'clock went to the Ernst place on Spruce Street.

"Passing through a narrow alley alongside of her blamed old rookery, we looked through the rear window and saw a certain young woman talking to Mrs. Ernst."

"Ah! did you know that young woman?"

"I did not."

"But Chamberlain did, eh?"

"Yes."

"And he told you who she was?"

"Yes."

"Well, was it Sadie?"

"Yes, it was Sadie."

"And you waited till she came out?"

"Yes."

"Did you speak to her?"

"Chamberlain spoke to her."

"What did he say?"

"I don't know. He led her a little one side and they had considerable jaw together, then she hurried away—crying, I thought."

"Humph; and what happened then?"

"Why, as soon as Sadie had left the basement, the old woman locked the front door, and then came round and fastened the back door with an iron bar."

"About what time was that?"

"It wanted just a quarter to ten."

"What did you do then?"

"We went softly down the area steps from the yard, and Chamberlain rapped on the door."

"Did it fetch the old gal at once?"

"Almost instantly. 'Who's there?' she asked.

"'It vos me, ma'am,' answered Chamberlain, disguising his voice, and talking with a German accent. 'Open, I got a letter for you.'

"'Who's it from?' asked the old woman.

"'August Tepley,' was the reply, 'and it's of special importance, I can tell you.'"

"I know that August Tepley," interrupted Barney, at this point. "He's a relative of the old woman, and came over from Bavaria awhile ago."

"Und I know him too," grunted Jake. "But go on, Mr. Taylor."

"Well," continued Taylor, "Mrs. Ernst took off the heavy bar and we stepped inside, I closing and locking the door myself.

"'Let's go into the saloon,' suggested Hen. 'You've got a light there, haven't you, old gal?'

"'Yes,' she said, and led the way to the bar-room.

"As soon as we got there Chamberlain called for drinks, and we soon managed to draw the old woman into conversation.

"She asked Hen if he had ever been in her place before.

"'Lord, yes!' he replied, 'more than a thousand times.' Then with a laugh, 'why, Mrs. Ernst, I have known you for years.'

"After that she appeared to recognize him, and really seemed glad to see him.

"Shortly after eleven o'clock the old woman asked for the letter we had brought. Chamberlain took an envelope from his pocket, and just as she started to come around the corner of the bar, he seized her by the neck and hurled her to the floor, while I threw a cloak over her head and face, and assisted him to bind and gag her.

"Hen then pressed a handkerchief, saturated with chloroform, over her mouth and nostrils, and gripped her throat until she was unconscious.

"We used handkerchiefs in binding her. Chamberlain tied her hands together, while I made her feet fast. We then picked her up, and laid her on the lounge in front of the bar."

"Your story is getting interesting," said Barney. "Well, after you'd got the old gal made fast, I suppose you began your search for the boodle?"

"Yes, I lost no time in opening the till, and took out four dollars in change—all the money in it."

"Not a big haul that," observed Barney.

"That's what we thought.

"'Must be more money somewhere,' said Chamberlain, and he began tearing up the carpets and ripping open the mattresses in the room, looking for it.

"'Let's try the other rooms,' he said, presently; and we took off our shoes, turned out the gas, lit a candle, and went into the old woman's bedroom.

"Chamberlain had bought a chisel in this city, for forty cents, and I tried to pry open a bureau drawer, that was tightly locked, with it.

"'You're making too much noise,' said Chamberlain; 'let me try it;' and he opened the drawer in a jiffy."

"Vos dere anyting in dot drawer?" asked Jake, curiously.

"Yes, by Jove! \$41.10; and Chamberlain pocketed it quicker than you could say Jack Robinson."

"He did, eh? Vell, dot vos wrong."

"But he divided afterward, I suppose?" said Barney.

"Yes, on the cars, as I told you."

"All right; go on."

"Well, while we were ransacking closets and drawers, and looking under the carpets and between the bedding, the old woman came to, and yelled murder.

"Chamberlain ran into the room where she lay, and, seizing her by the throat, dashed her head against the woodwork of the lounge until she again became unconscious. I then wrapped a sheet around her neck, while Chamberlain put a fresh gag in her mouth.

"We then went on with our search, but not finding any more money about the rooms, Hen returned to the lounge and began searching the woman's clothes.

"As he took the sheet from her face he turned coolly around to me and said:

"Jim, she's dead."

"So she is," I answered, looking at her face.

"Well, did you find anything of value on the old woman?" asked Barney. "I believe she used to carry a pretty fat roll of bills in her bosom."

"No; we found nothing in her bosom or in her pockets."

"Vell, vhat did you do then?" asked Jake.

"Chamberlain sat down on the sofa at the feet of the corpse and put on his shoes. I leaned against the bar and drew on my gaiters. Then we helped ourselves to several drinks of the old woman's whisky, and filled our pockets with her cigars."

"Dot vos right; dot vos vhat I should hav' done. Then you vent off, eh?"

"Not at once. First Chamberlain walked over to the sofa, and took a closer look at the face of the dead woman, and looking up, he said:

"She's dead, sure, Jim," and so he took the handkerchief out of her mouth."

"He's a pretty cool hand," observed Barney.

"He's just that, as his next move shows."

"And what was his next move?"

"He took his revolver from his pocket, and coolly cocking it, said:

"Somebody may have heard us, Jim. Take off the bar and draw your gun. We may have to kill somebody else."

"Und, so 'elp me gracious! he vould hav' done it, too, if you had met somepody."

"You bet your life he would. Well, with cocked revolvers in our hands, we walked into the street, and made our way toward the railway station. In a saloon near the depot we had a couple of glasses of beer, and bought a pint of whisky. Then we took the 11.50 train for New York, and, as I told you, in the cars we divided the old woman's money."

"And got less than twenty-five dollars apiece?"

"Yes."

"Where did you leave the cars?"

"We got off the train on the other side of the bridge, and rode to Fourteenth Street and Third Avenue on the Third Avenue Elevated Road."

"Then you ought to have tried to establish an *alibi*."

"That's just what we did."

"How did you manage it?"

"Let's go where we're known," said Chamberlain, so in case of trouble we'll have an *alibi*."

"All right," said I. "Where shall we go?"

"Come with me," he replied; and we went to Ryan & Coopers' saloon, on the north-west corner of Hudson and West Twelfth Streets, and had several drinks.

"Chamberlain smiled as we came out.

"Cooper can't forget us," he said, "for we treated him twice."

"That's so," I assented; "and I shouldn't wonder if that was a wise dodge."

"And what did you do then?"

"We separated."

"You've seen him since, I suppose?"

"Oh, yes, once or twice; but I don't know where he is now."

"You'd better find him, then, and at once."

"Why so?"

"Old Spicer, the sharpest detective on top of this earth, is on his track and yours."

"The deuce he is!"

"I'm giving it to you straight, young man."

"What in thunder shall I do?"

"Warn Chamberlain in some way, and then dig—that's my advice."

Killett waited to hear no more; but, quietly slipping out of the little room, he went to the bar, paid for his punch and left the saloon.

Outside he found Stark and Rouse, and after a few hurried words with them and a rapid glance around, he hastened away.

CHAPTER XVI.

OLD SPICER INTERVIEWS CORA BELL.

Old Spicer had no difficulty in finding No. 22 Sixth Avenue; and having gained an entrance to the house, he rapidly ascended to the third floor.

One glance satisfied him as to which were Miss Bell's apartments, and he knocked at the door of her reception-room.

After a moment's waiting, he heard light footsteps approaching from an inner room; then the door opened, and a young woman about twenty-two years of age, with a fine form and a very pretty face, stood before him.

She seemed struck with amazement as her eyes rested on the tall, spare form and somewhat aged face of the famous detective. Then his eyes—those wonderful eyes which had searched so many hearts and made so many criminals tremble—troubled her.

"Who—who did you wish to see?" she at length managed to stammer forth.

"Your own sweet self, and no one else," returned Old Spicer, with his most winning smile and in his most pleasing tones.

"Do you know me, sir?" asked the young woman, in surprise. "I don't remember ever having seen you before."

"Oh, yes; I know you very well, my dear. There are young ladies and young ladies, but there *can* be but one Cora Bell."

"Oh, sir, I fear you are a flatterer," exclaimed the pleased girl. "Will you walk in?"

"Perhaps it will be as well," and he entered the young lady's reception-room.

"Take a seat, sir," said Cora, sweetly.

"Thank you, my dear," and Old Spicer seated himself in an easy-chair.

Cora was about to sit down at some little distance from him, but pointing to another chair much nearer, he said:

"That is the place for you," and smiling pleasantly, she took it.

For a moment neither spoke. At length Cora, whose curiosity was greatly excited, asked:

"Where have I seen you before, sir?"

"Don't you remember, my dear?" returned the old man.

"No, I confess that I do not."

"Ah! how humiliating that is! To think that while I have had you so constantly in my mind, you have not given to me even so much as a passing thought."

"Good gracious! how could I, when I don't know you from Adam?"

"There! now that's an unkind thrust at my age. True, I *am* somewhat older than yourself, but if you only have a little patience, and don't get drawn into any serious scrapes—like murder, for instance—you may see the time when you will be as old-looking as I am."

Cora's face suddenly blanched, and she stared helplessly at her visitor. But he looked so innocent and unconscious that she at length mustered courage to ask:

"Why do you take the trouble to allude to serious scrapes? Do you think I am likely to be drawn into anything of the kind?"

"You lead a somewhat irregular life, do you not, my dear?" said Old Spicer.

"What do you mean by that?" asked the girl, quickly.

"You go to theaters, balls and parties, eat late suppers, and see a good deal of gentlemen's society, don't you?"

"Why—yes."

"The gentlemen of your acquaintance are not all saints, I take it?"

Cora gave a somewhat boisterous laugh.

"Anything but that," she said.

"Well, there it is. Haven't you ever heard the old saw, that you can't handle pitch without being defiled?"

"Yes, I have heard something like that."

"Well, probably you've never thought much about it, but I assure you it's true—both of pitch and persons."

"I hope you haven't come to preach me a sermon."

"Do I look like a preacher?"

"I hadn't thought much about it before, but I'm blessed if you don't. But then, you might be anything else that's grave and terrible. A judge, or a—a—"

"Well, a what?"

"Oh, never mind. Who are you, any way?"

"Let me ask you a question first."

"Drive on. What is it?"

Old Spicer took a pocket-handkerchief from his pocket and quietly spread it on her lap.

"Did you ever see that before?" he asked.

Cora Bell's face instantly became ashy pale, and had she not clutched at the table by her side, she must have sunk to the floor.

"Ah! I see you know it," said the detective, in his quiet, matter-of-fact tones.

"I knew it! I knew it!" she murmured, excitedly.

"I saw you did," he repeated.

But without paying any attention to his remark, she went on:

"I knew I was right the moment I thought of it. You're a detective."

Then, with a reckless—an almost despairing air:

"Well, what do you want of me, any way?"

Old Spicer regarded her in silence for a moment; and then, as if communing with himself, he murmured aloud:

"So pretty! and so young! Not above twenty-one or twenty-two, I should say. Sad, very sad. Enough to make a strong man weep."

"Oh! what is it—what is it that's so horrible?" gasped Cora, in an agony of terror.

"Ah! my poor girl, your own heart—your own conscience must tell you."

Cora started to her feet.

"Hear me, sir!" she cried. "I know nothing at all about it. I had nothing whatever to do with it."

Old Spicer quietly picked up the handkerchief, which had fallen to the floor, and holding it in one hand, while he pointed to it significantly with the other, said:

"That tells a different story, my dear."

"I know what you mean—yes, that's my handkerchief," she said, "but he took it that evening without my permission—that, and at least half a dozen others that I bought for him that day."

"And you didn't know what he was going to do with them?"

"Of course not. I never dreamed of what was going to happen."

"He said nothing at all to you about it then?"

"Yes, on the Saturday before he told me that he knew an old woman in the place he came from who had between thirty and forty thousand dollars in her house, and that he was going to get it."

"Ah, indeed? And what did you say to that, my dear?"

"I told him that he had much better go to work."

"But he wouldn't take your good advice?"

"No, he just laughed, and said he didn't propose to work all summer."

"Did you believe he would go up to New Haven and rob the old woman?"

"No, to tell the truth, I didn't believe he had the nerve to do it."

"He has, I believe, a good deal of what is called brute courage."

"Yes, but I hadn't discovered it before."

"How long have you known Chamberlain?"

"I can't tell that exactly."

"How long have you been intimate with him?"

"Some seven or eight months."

"Did you know, Monday night, that he had gone to commit this robbery?"

"No, I only knew that he had gone out of town."

"Did he tell you about it when he came back?"

"The way of it was this: Tuesday evening I was reading an account of the murder, when Chamberlain came in. Then the truth flashed upon me at once. I accused him of killing the old woman, and he admitted it."

"He had plenty of money then, I suppose?"

"Yes; he had a big roll of bills in his pocket."

"No doubt he made you a handsome present?"

"There you're off, mister. Now, what do you really think he gave me?"

"At least one hundred dollars—perhaps two hundred."

"The mean wretch only gave me a paltry five dollar bill! What do you think of that?"

"If he got the big stake he is credited with having carried off, you have fixed the right name on him—he's a mean wretch."

"Big stake! my word for it, it was a big stake. He got all he went for, you can bet high on that."

"No idea what he has done with it, I suppose?" This was said carelessly.

"I have something of an idea," was the reply; "but I don't know for a dead certainty."

"Well, what's your idea?"

"He's got a secret friend somewhere here in town, but who that friend is I don't know, or whether it's male or female I don't know. All I can say is, find that friend and you'll find Margaret Ernst's money!"

"You think, then, he's placed the plunder in the hands of this friend to keep for him?"

"I'm sure of it."

A silence of some moments' duration followed.

At length the old detective turned to Cora and abruptly asked:

"Did you ever hear of such a person as Old Spicer?"

The girl started.

"Good Lord! yes, sir!" she exclaimed. "I—I hope you are not he?"

"Fortunately for you, my dear child, I am he," was the grave reply. "Now are you willing to take some good advice from me?"

"I'll do anything in the world you tell me."

"In the first place, then, if Chamberlain should visit you again, which I hardly think he will do, by the way, you are not to mention my being here."

"I will not—I swear it."

The old man raised his finger impressively.

"That's enough! I believe you," he said.

"I'm glad you do."

"In the second place, then, if any other detective comes here it will not be necessary for you to tell him all you have told me."

"I won't tell him anything at all, if you say so."

"Well, my dear, manage that the best you can."

"I think I can manage to hold my tongue."

"I hope so, my dear. By the way, are you acquainted with any members of the detective force?"

"Yes, sir; I know one or two."

"Who are they?"

"Sergeant Cosgrove, for one."

"And McGuire, perhaps?"

"Yes, sir. I know who he is."

"Well, if they, or either of them, make you a call, you needn't volunteer any information, you understand."

"I understand. And—and if I do just as you tell me, will you get me out of this awful scrape?"

"You have told me the worst—so far as you are concerned?"

"Indeed I have, sir."

"Then I emphatically promise to see you through it."

"Oh! thank you, sir."

"You're heartily welcome to all I can do for you, my dear. And now I must leave you."

"I am sorry to have you go. When shall I see you again?"

"That I cannot tell; but if you are threatened with any danger, you may be sure I shall be on hand."

"You are very good, sir."

"I am glad you think so."

Then Old Spicer arose and walked to the door.

As he turned the knob he looked back and said:

"By the way, where does Chamberlain make it his home in the city?"

"He boards at 305 West Twelfth Street, and rooms at Hudson and Morton streets," was the

answer.

"Thank you, my dear. And now I must really say good-day," and almost before the girl could repeat the words of leave-taking the great detective was gone.

CHAPTER XVII.

JIM TAYLOR IS ARRESTED.

Old Spicer had hardly left the building when he was joined by Killett.

"Thank fortune you are here!" he exclaimed in a tone of relief. "There are three places that must be shadowed instantly.

"What places are they?" asked his friend.

"The house I have just left, where Cora Bell makes it her home, the boarding-house No. 305 West Twelfth Street, and the building at the corner of Hudson and Morton streets."

"What is the last?"

"The place where Chamberlain lodges."

"Good! Slip into this saloon, and I will see to the matter at once."

Old Spicer went into the place designated, and Killett hurried down the street.

In a few moments he returned, and after giving Old Spicer an account of what had passed between Taylor and the two burglars, he listened to the other's account of his interview with Cora.

"Ah!" he exclaimed, when the old man had finished, "there's just one thing for us to do to make this the neatest and most perfect job ever handled by detectives."

"Yes," nodded Old Spicer, "just one thing."

"And that is to discover Chamberlain's unknown friend."

"Exactly."

"It can be done."

"Of course."

"And we'll do it."

"To be sure we will."

"We must manage to drive Chamberlain to him, I suppose?"

"Perhaps he will go without driving."

"Right! the moment he is out of funds he will go to him for more."

"That's it."

"We ought to have Stark and Rouse looking after him."

"Where are they now?"

"They are busy with Taylor and those precious worthies, Hawks and Klinkhammer. By the way, when had we better gather them in?"

"The moment they have led us to the scoundrel who hired them to murder poor Charley Way."

"They have made an appointment with him to meet them in the city to-day, eh?"

"Yes."

"Well, then, we won't have long to wait."

"I hope not. Do your men know where to look for you, Adam?"

"Yes; and, by Jove! here comes one of them now."

"That's so; and it's Stark himself."

"Right. Well, Silas, what is it?"

"I have a suggestion to make, sir."

"Out with it, then."

"I would recommend taking Taylor before he can see Chamberlain. They'll give us trouble if they get together."

"You're right. And so far as I can see, there's no reason why Taylor shouldn't be arrested at once."

"It must be managed quietly, then," suggested Old Spicer. "It mustn't be known that he's taken."

"Correct, old friend, I see the point. Is he still in the saloon, Silas?"

"Yes, sir; but getting ready to leave."

"Well, send a policeman in uniform in there, and have him tell Taylor that he is wanted at the excise commissioners' office."

"All right sir; and what then?"

"Why, follow and arrest him; say somewhere in the vicinity of Bond Street and Broadway."

"Very good, sir."

"Who's looking after the other scoundrels?"

"Quackenbush and Crowley."

"That's all right. And so, when Taylor is safe under lock and key, I wish you'd be on the lookout for Chamberlain," and Killett explained the situation.

"Oho! he has a secret friend, eh?" exclaimed Stark, when he had finished. "I should like nothing better than to hunt down that man."

"Why so?" asked Old Spicer, curiously.

"Because I believe it will turn out that he, whoever he is, has encouraged this crime."

"Very likely," returned Spicer, in a musing tone.

"Well," exclaimed Killett, abruptly, "we shall see by and by, and now be off with you, my good friend," and Stark hurried away.

He soon fell in with a policeman.

"How are you, Tompkins?" he cried, slapping the officer on the back. "Fine day."

"Hallo!" returned the man in blue, looking round. "What the deuce— Oh, is it you, Stark?"

"Yes, it's me, old boy, and I have a little job for you."

"What is it?"

"Walk along with me and I'll tell you."

The policeman fell into step with the detective, and after a moment, said:

"Well, drive ahead."

"Know Jimmie Taylor's place, down Hudson Street?" asked Stark.

"Know it? Well, I should say so!"

"All right; he's in there now. I want you to go in and just say to him that he's wanted up at the excise commissioners' office right away; and then, in as unconcerned a manner as possible, come out."

"I understand. But, I say, Stark, what's the row?"

"Nobody knows that yet, but you'll hear, I fancy, before you're much older."

"All right. Here we are, and I'll do your little job for you," and Tompkins entered the saloon.

Taylor was in earnest conversation with his barkeeper.

He looked up on hearing footsteps, and when he saw the policeman, he started.

Tompkins appeared not to notice this, but walking up to where he was standing, said, carelessly:

"What's the matter, Jemmie? What's the hitch between you and the folks at the excise office?"

"Didn't know there was any," was the quick reply. "I run this saloon on the square; and so far as I know, there's no chance for any one to find fault."

"You're all right, for anything I've ever seen to the contrary, but something's up and you're wanted at the excise office at once."

"At once, eh?"

"Yes, they want to question you, I suppose, and if you'll take my advice, you'll get around there with the least possible delay."

"I'll go this very minute. Jerry, give Mr. Tompkins whatever he calls for," and snatching up his hat, which was lying on the bar, Taylor left the saloon.

"What is it to be, sir?" asked Jerry, when they were alone.

"Whisky straight, if you please," was the prompt reply, "and, Jerry, I'll just step inside this door to drink it," and pushing open the door which led to the little stall-like rooms, he waited for Jerry to bring him his whisky there.

Mr. Tompkins was a cautious policeman, you see. He was careful—indeed, most anxious, not to bring reproach on the excellent body of men to which he belonged.

Jerry soon made his appearance with a liberal dose of "poison," which Tompkins swallowed as if he loved it, and then, with a cheerful good-day, he went out.

Neither Taylor nor Stark was in sight. The first, on emerging from the saloon, had hurried down the street. The other had let him get some distance ahead and then had followed him.

They kept on in this way until they had reached the vicinity of Bond Street and Broadway, when quickening his pace, Stark came up with Taylor, and slapping him on the back, said in a matter-

of-fact tone:

"Mr. Taylor, I should be pleased with the favor of your company for a short distance."

"Who the devil are you?" exclaimed Taylor, turning upon him with a start.

"I am an officer of the law and you are my prisoner," was the stern reply.

"I don't know about that."

"I do. And let me tell you, Jimmie, it will be best for you to go along with me quietly, understand?"

"Where are you going to take me to?"

"The central office."

"What for?"

"Mr. Byrnes is anxious to have a good look at you."

"He won't get much out of me."

"That's all right. Every man has a right to keep his mouth shut and his tongue still if he can."

"Well, I can."

"It's nice to have a good opinion of one's self, Jimmie. And now step off a little faster, if you please."

Taylor apparently had given up all thoughts of resisting, and walked on by the detective's side without another word.

On arriving at the central office he was locked up, and a letter purporting to be signed by him, was sent to his saloon, informing Jerry that he had suddenly been called out of town on business and would not be back that night.

All this having been accomplished, Stark hastened back to the place where Old Spicer and Killett had established their headquarters, and reported.

He then went out to make the rounds between the three points at which it was suspected Chamberlain would be most likely to show up, namely, Cora Bell's rooms, his own boarding-place, and his lodging-house.

Shortly after he had gone out Crowley made his appearance, and a single glance at his face convinced both Killett and Old Spicer that something of importance had happened.

"Ah, sir, you're welcome," said Old Spicer; "take a seat at the table here."

"Thank you, sir," and stepping forward, the new-comer sat down.

CHAPTER XVIII.

OLD SPICER'S SPEAKING-TUBE.

"Well, Crowley, what have you to offer?" asked Killett, with a great show of interest.

"We have tracked Hawks and Klinkhammer, by different routes, to the same hotel—a quiet affair uptown," was the answer.

"And are they there now?"

"Yes; closeted in No. 24 with a guest."

"Is the guest a new arrival?" asked Old Spicer.

"I was told not—that is, he has occupied his room, off and on, for several months."

"Off and on, eh? That is, he goes and comes as he pleases."

"Exactly."

"Humph! What's his name?"

"Bissell—E. E. Bissell he signs himself."

"Young or old?"

"Young—that is, under thirty."

"Who's on duty there?" asked Killett.

"Rouse and Quackenbush."

"Well, Old Spicer, one of us ought to look after this matter, while the other waits for news of Chamberlain here."

"I believe I'd better go up to the hotel," said Old Spicer, after a moment's reflection.

"Very good, then, I'll stay here."

"We can keep each other posted as to our movements, eh?"

"Certainly, and we should be careful to do so."

"All right; I will go with Crowley, then, unless you want him here."

"I was just going to suggest that I might want him."

"All right, you keep him, and I'll find my way to the hotel alone;" and Old Spicer went out.

He took the elevated road up town and soon arrived at the hotel.

He found Quackenbush on the lookout, and learned from him that Rouse was endeavoring to catch some fragments of the conversation that was going on in No. 24.

"What!" he exclaimed, "isn't he in the next room?"

"No," was the reply, "there is no chance for that. On one side there is a short hall, a passageway, and on the other a room that is occupied by a gentleman and his wife."

"Hum. Well, there must be a room overhead."

"Lord, yes. I never thought of that."

Old Spicer hurried to the landlord, who happened to be in the office.

After a moment's conversation, he asked:

"What's the number of the room over twenty-four?"

The landlord considered the question for a moment and then said:

"Thirty-six."

"Good! give me the key to thirty-six."

"What do you want of it, sir?"

Old Spicer gave him a hurried but plausible explanation.

The key was at once handed to him.

He went back to Quackenbush.

"Come with me," he said. "I shall take Rouse up to thirty-six with me, and I want you to remain in the vicinity of twenty-four, so that, in case they leave the room, you can follow them."

"All right, sir," and the two went upstairs.

They found Rouse in the little passage at the side of the room. He had been at work boring a hole through the plastering, but unfortunately had chosen the wrong spot, and so his hole had come out in a closet on the other side.

"Come with me, Reub," said Old Spicer; "Quackenbush will remain here."

"It would be worth big money to know just what is being said in there," returned Rouse regretfully.

"Of course, and that's what I am bound to find out."

"How do you propose to do it?" asked Rouse, in surprise.

"There is a room overhead."

"Undoubtedly."

"And in that room is a ventilating flue, which runs down through the room below and out through the roof above."

"I see! I see!" exclaimed Rouse, in high glee. "We have only to reach the ventilator to hear all that is going on in Bissell's room."

"Right, provided the ventilator in twenty-four is not closed."

"I've no fear of that—they're never closed."

"Very good; then we are likely to hear something to our advantage."

By this time they had reached room No. 36, and, thrusting the key into the lock, Old Spicer opened the door.

His eyes at once sought the ventilator.

It was over the mantel-piece and at a considerable distance from the floor.

"How can we get at it?" asked Rouse.

Old Spicer cast a rapid glance about the room.

"Nothing here that will answer the purpose," he muttered. Then catching Rouse by the sleeve, he exclaimed:

"Come with me," and he conducted him to a private sitting-room opposite, the door of which was open.

A strong and fair-sized table stood in the center of the room.

"Take hold of it," said Old Spicer, and within one minute that table was standing in front of the mantel-piece in Room 36.

"Now, then," continued the old detective, "bring a couple of stout chairs, these in this room are too frail to stand on."

Rouse vanished, but soon returned with the chairs, which he placed upon the table.

Old Spicer then locked the door, and the two men mounted on to the elevated chairs and placed their ears to the ventilator.

The next instant a smile of satisfaction spread over both their faces.

"A regular speaking-tube," whispered Rouse.

"Remember that!" returned Old Spicer in his ear; "and on no account utter a word above the lowest whisper."

Rouse nodded, and both gave their undivided attention to what was being said in the room below.

It was Mr. E. E. Bissell who was speaking. There could be no doubt about that, and he was talking right to the point.

"There's no use continuing this interview a moment longer," he was saying. "The man's dead, I admit that fact; but such a bungling piece of work I never heard of before."

"It wasn't a job to be proud of," muttered Barney.

"I should say it wasn't! However, he *is* dead; and while Reed, of the Consolidated Road, has hit pretty near the mark, neither he nor any other live man suspects that I am mixed up in the affair; hence, so long as you two keep your mouths shut, I am satisfied."

"We're as dumb as oysters," asserted Barney.

"Dot's schust vhat ve are," chimed in Jake.

"I'm glad to hear it. And now I am going to pay you in full, and add a couple of thousand on one condition."

"Vhat vos dot condition, Mr. Pissell?" asked Jake eagerly.

"That you both solemnly swear never, as long as you live, to enter the State of Connecticut again."

"Hem, dot vos schust a leetle hard, Mr. Pissell."

"May be it is; but how can you earn a thousand dollars a piece so easily?"

"Dere vos somedings in dot, I confess."

"Of course, and so you swear do you?"

"Vell, vhat you say, Parney, schall ve swear?"

"Of course," answered Barney, impatiently, "you know as well as I do, there's nothing else for us to do."

"Ah-ha!" exclaimed Bissell, "you never intended to return to Connecticut."

"Not likely," responded Barney, dryly. "I fancy our necks are worth as much to us as yours is to you."

"Put," Jake hastened to ask, "you vill gif us der extra dousands all der same, eh?"

"You *bet* he will!" growled Barney.

"Oh, yes," exclaimed Bissell, with alacrity, "I don't care what motives keep you out of that state, or, better still, out of the country. I am only too willing to pay you, so long as you *do* keep out. And now here's your money. Adding the \$2000 it makes \$12,000, or \$6000 apiece. Pretty good pay for one night's work, eh, boys?"

"No more than we fairly earned, sir," retorted Barney; "though, as you say, there was a little bungling."

"I find no fault, you understand," said Bissell. "Indeed, it was I who set the price, and if it only leads to what I hope and expect it will, I am a good deal more than satisfied."

"The lady has heard of the—the *accident*?" said Barney inquiringly.

"Ye-yes, I believe she has."

"How did she take it?"

"Made a great fuss at first, but I hope that's over by this time."

"Oh, she'll come round, never fear. She had to make a little fuss, you know, for appearance sake."

"That's it, exactly."

"Well, we wish you luck, Mr. Bissell, and now, good day."

"Good-day, gentlemen—but stay! one word: When do you leave New York, and in what direction?"

"We leave this very day, and we're going to Mexico or Central America."

"You couldn't have chosen more wisely. I wish you the best of luck and continued prosperity."

"Thank you, sir."

"I shall always feel an interest in your welfare. Write to me, when you get settled down there."

"We'll do it, sir."

"You know my address?"

"Yes, Emory E. Bissell. But shall we direct to this hotel?"

"You may as well. But never mind the Emory; perhaps we've used that name too freely already among the wooden nutmegs, E. E. Bissell will do."

"All right, sir, we'll remember. And now is there anything more to say?"

"I wish you could tell me how Conductor Mason and Peter Coffey are coming out in this affair?"

"That's more than we know ourselves, sir. They were so closely connected with Way in the illicit liquor trade and otherwise, that it's more than likely to go hard with them."

"I'm sorry; but I see no help for it."

"There is no help for it—if we're to get off scot-free."

"Well, you'd better do that—if you can."

"We mean to. And now, once more, good day."

"Good day," and the two worthies were gone.

CHAPTER XIX.

DETECTIVES IN A TIGHT SPOT.

"Come," exclaimed Old Spicer, and, lightly springing from the table, he and Rouse hurried from the room.

They rushed down-stairs, through the office, and overtook Quackenbush just outside the hotel door.

"Where are they?" asked Old Spicer, breathlessly.

Quackenbush pointed them out just as they were turning the next corner above.

"Go back and watch Bissell," he whispered. "Rouse and I will follow them up."

Quackenbush returned to the hotel, while Old Spicer and Rouse followed the murderers.

They walked across town till they reached Third Avenue, then taking the elevated road, they proceeded to Grand Street, where they alighted.

Hurrying down Grand Street, they turned into a side street, and, after walking some distance, stopped before a dingy-looking building; then, with a hasty glance around, they entered the basement, which, to all appearances, was fitted up as a saloon.

"Come," said Old Spicer, starting to descend the steps.

"Hold up a minute!" exclaimed Rouse, "I know this place. It's about the worst in town."

"No matter, we must enter it."

"All right. But, if you're bound to go in, we'd better disguise ourselves, and we'd better have help."

"That's reasonable enough."

"Then come around the corner. There's a cop that'll keep an eye on the place till we get back."

"Beckon to him."

Rouse did so, and the policeman crossed the street to them.

An arrangement was soon made with him, and the two detectives hurried away.

In less than ten minutes they were back, thoroughly disguised as sailors, and accompanied by two friends—shipmates.

They now entered the saloon, and looked about them.

Not a soul did they see but a sleepy-looking boy sitting on a box behind the bar.

"Got a place where we can sit down, and have a social glass?" asked Old Spicer.

The boy looked up, considered for a moment, and then, pointing to a door, nodded.

Old Spicer at once opened the door, and, followed by his party, entered the inner room.

Here were about a dozen tables, each with four chairs about it.

Three of the tables were occupied; two of them with the full complement of four, the other with but three men.

Two of these three men at the third table were Barney and Jake; their companion was clearly the proprietor of the place.

Old Spicer selected the next table to that occupied by the trio, and placed himself where he could both see and hear what was going on among his nearest neighbors. His comrades quickly took the other seats.

The proprietor and his two friends at once ceased speaking, and regarded the quartet of sailors with looks of suspicion and surprise.

"Where's that sleepy boy we saw in the cabin, and who ordered us into this devil's hold?" demanded Old Spicer. "Is he going to keep us waiting all night for our grog?"

The proprietor slowly arose to his feet.

"You want grog, do you?" he asked, drawing near their table.

"That's just what we want," answered Old Spicer, emphatically—"rum, mind ye, cap'n, genuine St. Croix rum."

"That's it, shipmate," exclaimed Rouse; "no belly-wash for us."

"It's rum all around, is it?" asked the proprietor, eyeing each one of the party in turn.

"It is that," answered Rouse. "And say, skipper, you may as well bring a bottle."

"A bottle from which the cork has never been removed," added Old Spicer.

"All right, I have just what you want;" and the proprietor quietly left the room.

Barney and Jake watched the quartet narrowly, but hardly spoke while their friend was away.

Presently he returned with a bottle and four glasses on a good-sized waiter.

"What!" exclaimed Old Spicer, as he set down the waiter, "ain't you going to take a toothful with us for sociability's sake?"

"Why, of course, if you wish it," was the reply, and slipping over to the other table, he took up his own glass, which was still partially filled, and raised it to his lips.

"None of that!" cried Rouse, sharply. "Throw that stuff away and fill fair of this bottle."

"Stuff?" retorted the proprietor, "Why, this is good French brandy, man."

"The deuce it is! How cursed lonesome it must be!"

"Lonesome? Why?"

"Because it ain't likely there's another thimbleful in all America."

"What're givin' us? Do you mean to say that I haven't got plenty of French brandy in my establishment?"

"I mean to say just this: There is more brandy used in the one city of Paris alone than is manufactured in all France. How, then, is it likely that much of the pure stuff can pass our custom-houses."

"Ha! ha!" laughed Barney, "if any of the Simon Pure could get as far as the custom-houses, I'll warrant it wouldn't get any further. Our government officials know too well what's expected of them to let it slip through their fingers."

"Right, shipmate!" exclaimed Rouse, "they'd prefer to let it slip down their insatiable throats."

"Well," exclaimed Old Spicer, suddenly, "pure or impure, I see you've disposed of your brandy at last, landlord, and so now come over and help us out with our rum."

The landlord, drawing his chair after him, joined them at their table. Rouse filled his glass, gave a toast, and was careful to see that the old man drank it off. Then a suspicion that the liquor might have been tampered with was removed.

"What ship do you fellows belong to?" asked the proprietor, while Rouse was refilling his glass.

"No ship at all," was the answer.

"What craft, then?"

"The three-masted schooner Miranda, in the West Indian trade."

"Oh! ah! that's why you think so much of St. Croix rum, eh?"

"Exactly. We know the taste, and we know how much of the stuff we can stand, don't you see?"

"I see; but it seems to me you are confoundedly cautious for sailors."

"May be so; but they say a burnt child dreads the fire, and we've been caught a time or two."

"Been taken in and done for, eh?"

"Yes, but no matter, you're an honest-looking set here, and seeing that the grog's good, we'll throw caution to the wind and enjoy ourselves," and the bottle circulated freely, indeed, so freely that it was soon empty and another ordered.

The landlord being now convinced that the sailors were all right, and better, that they were getting very drunk, returned to Barney and Jake, who had remained all this time quietly at the other table.

At first they conversed in low tones, but soon almost all they said reached the ears of the detectives.

"Yes, old pal," were the first words Old Spicer distinctly heard, "I think I can manage the matter for you. I don't know the chap, but from the description you've given of him, and the directions as to where he may be found, I think I can get at him, and produce him in the place you name."

"And you will do it?"

"If you think it worth the sum I want."

"It's a tanned pig brice, Pill Punce," exclaimed Jake.

"Ay," was the reply: "but if we can manage to give the detective the slip, I'll warrant he'll be willing enough to pay it."

"Of course, of course," assented Barney; "we won't dispute your price, Bill."

"Then we understand each other, do we?"

"I suppose so; but to make certain just go over the programme, will you?"

"Well, after I've found this fellow, Chamberlain, I'm to get him over to the bay, where the Bouncing Betsy lies, and where you will meet us. In case we don't find you at old Flipper's, I am to take the lad on board the schooner at once, which, when you're all aboard, will sail for the quarries, eh?"

"Yes, for the island, so-called."

"Correct. And there, in Canter's Hole, all will be safe till the schooner sails for the Gulf, when you can all get out of the country without any one's dreaming how it was managed."

"Right, by Jove! that is——" And here Barney came to an abrupt pause.

At this time there were not less than a dozen men in the place, besides the four detectives, every one of them desperate characters, and warm friends of Bill Bunce, the proprietor.

At the moment Barney paused his eye happened to rest on the quartet at the next table, and he was struck by the eager interest depicted on one or two of the faces.

"What's the matter?" demanded Bunce, turning sharply round.

"The matter is," cried Barney, starting to his feet and drawing a couple of revolvers, "that these fellows are a pack of cursed spies, and I know it!"

"Spies!" echoed every man in the room. "Spies! Kill the bloody wretches! don't let one of 'em escape!"

"We're in for it, by Jove!" exclaimed Rouse. "Let us keep well together, and shoot to kill."

"Ay!" said Old Spicer, "but I should awfully hate to have the gallows cheated of its lawful prey. I wish I could take those two villains back with me unharmed."

By this time Bill Bunce and his friends had got between the detectives and the outlets, and were preparing for a deadly fight.

"Do you really mean to say that you will be so rash as to fire upon us?" asked Old Spicer. "You must know that sooner or later you will have to pay dearly for it if you do."

"We know mighty well that we shall have to pay for it devilish soon if we don't," retorted Bunce; "and that's enough for us to know. Let 'em have it, boys!" and at least half a dozen shots were fired, and one of the detectives was slightly wounded.

"Fire!" exclaimed Old Spicer, in a determined voice, and as each detective had two revolvers, eight shots rang out, and two of the enemy fell dead, while four more were wounded, Jake Klinkhammer being among the latter.

The firing now became general, and it was difficult to say who was getting the best of it, when the door from the saloon was suddenly thrown open and the boy's voice was heard to exclaim:

"Scatter! the cops are coming!"

Almost in an instant the place was cleared of Bunce's men, and a moment later a sergeant of police, followed by six men, entered.

CHAPTER XX.

JAKE KLINKHAMMER'S POCKETBOOK—OLD SPICER SURPRISED.

"Ah! sergeant, you never were more welcome," cried Rouse. "Grab that young whelp in the saloon, and then let's see who's hurt here."

"The boy's all right," returned the sergeant. "One of my men has him fast; but who the deuce are you?"

Rouse explained.

"Ah! And this gentleman?"

"Is Old Spicer. You've heard of him?"

"Heard of him? I should say so! Are you hurt, sir?"

"Slightly; nothing to speak of, though. But our comrades, I fear, have suffered."

"What! these two? Are these our men?"

"Yes."

"Who's this one?"

"Matt Quinn," answered Rouse.

"Well, poor fellow, he's as dead as a door-nail. And this?"

"Nat Skinner."

"He's badly hurt, but I reckon he'll come out all right in the end. Now let's look at this pile of carrion," and he turned to where the dead and wounded of the enemy were lying.

"Lord! gentlemen," he exclaimed, "you did mighty well for the time you were at it. How many were there against you?"

"Twelve."

"Twelve? And seven of them are here—four dead, and the rest badly wounded. Who's this one?"

"A Jew," said Rouse.

"A Jew, eh?"

"Yes," explained Old Spicer, "a noted rascal, Jake Klinkhammer by name."

"Oho! he's saved your state a trial. Do you know any of the rest?"

"Not one. The two greatest villains have got away."

"Who are they?"

"Barney Hawks, and Bill Bunce, the proprietor of this place."

"That's a pity. How did they manage it? Where did they go to?"

"Haven't the slightest idea. It seemed as though they vanished through that wall yonder."

"Probably they did. Bring an ax, Finch."

An ax was brought, and used with such reckless effect, that soon an opening into a passage leading into a building fronting on another street, was discovered.

"They're off for this time, sure," said the sergeant, when he had examined the passage; "but we'll take possession of this place, and if Bunce ever ventures back, we'll nab him anyhow."

"Well," exclaimed Old Spicer, suddenly, "as Hawks has got away from us, there are one or two others who must be looked after without an instant's delay and so we must be going."

"One moment!" exclaimed Rouse, "haven't you forgot something?"

"What?"

"The Jew—he ought to have something about his clothes."

"Ah, yes. Sergeant, help us search the Jew's body: there ought to be a big pile of money on him."

They searched the body, and a trifle over \$6000 was found.

"There must be more than that," said Old Spicer. "He had a very large sum of money before that \$6000 was paid to him—I am sure of it."

"How much?"

"About \$15,000, I should say."

"How'd he come by it?"

"If my suspicions are correct, he and Hawks were engaged, just before they left our city, in one of the boldest robberies, and in one of the most cowardly double murders ever perpetrated in this country."

"What! do you mean the Marsden affair?"

"I do."

"Great Jupiter! and so this is one of the villains?"

"Yes; from a private dispatch put into my hands only a little while ago, I am sure of it."

"What can he have done with his share of the plunder, then? There don't seem to be any of it about him."

"Hold up a moment!" exclaimed Rouse, suddenly thrusting his hand into an inside vest-pocket of the dead man, "let's see what we've got here," and he drew forth a pocket-book.

He opened it, and found within a few hundred dollars in gold and bank-notes, and a bill of exchange for fifteen thousand dollars.

"By Jove!" exclaimed Rouse, "this sharp fellow, while he was on his roundabout way to Hudson Street this morning, stopped at a brother Jew's in Bond Street; and he must have managed in the few minutes he was there to exchange his money for this bit of paper."

"That's it," nodded Old Spicer.

"Well," said the sergeant, "who shall take charge of his effects?"

"I wish you would, sergeant," returned Spicer, "and hand them over to the inspector for safe-keeping, for we have really got warm work before us."

"All right," and after a few friendly words, Old Spicer and Rouse went out.

"Now, then," said the former, in some perplexity, when they had reached the sidewalk, "the

question is, where to go to first?"

"I'll answer that," replied Rouse, quickly. "I'm for getting on to the track of Barney Hawks again. Go you to Killett, and with him hunt down Chamberlain."

"That will be best, I think," and so the two detectives parted.

Old Spicer hastened to the point where he had left Killett. He did not find him there, but he found one of his men, who informed him that he was to conduct him to his friend.

The old detective intimated that he was ready to start, and the two set out at once.

Old Spicer was so absorbed in his own thoughts that he did not think to ask his conductor where he was taking him, and so he was greatly surprised when he once more found himself before the hotel where he had listened to the conversation between Emory E. Bissell and Barney and Jake.

"What!" he exclaimed, "is Killett here?"

"Yes," was the reply.

"What is he doing here?"

"We followed Chamberlain to this hotel; we heard him ask for E. E. Bissell, and on his being informed that the gentleman was out, heard him say that he would go up to his room and wait for him there. We saw him enter room No. 24, and heard him lock the door. Then one of us remained here to watch, while the other went back to report to Killett."

"But Quackenbush—where's Quackenbush?"

"Here I am, sir," answered that detective, suddenly coming up.

"You were left here to watch Bissell?"

"Yes, sir."

"You haven't lost sight of him?"

"Hardly for a moment."

"He left the hotel soon after his visitors went away?"

"Yes, sir."

"You followed him?"

"Yes, sir."

"Where did he go to?"

"To several places of no great importance, and finally he fetched round to the hotel again."

"How long ago was that?"

"Just now; he has just gone up to his room."

Old Spicer turned to the other detective.

"Where is Killett?" he asked.

"In room 36," was the reply.

"Ah! he saw that was his best chance to learn what was passing in 24. I wonder how he happened to tumble to that racket."

"I suspect the landlord put him up to it."

"No doubt. I had forgotten I told him what I wanted of the key. I think I'll go up to 36 at once. And you gentlemen be on hand in the neighborhood of 24, in case we may want you."

"All right, sir," and the three detectives ascended the first flight of stairs in company.

At the landing Quackenbush and the other detective left Old Spicer and placed themselves in the vicinity of Bissell's room. The old man ascended to the third floor, and, hastening to No. 36, knocked on the door.

"Who's there?" came in a low whisper from the other side.

"It's me, Adam—Old Spicer."

"Thank goodness!" and the door was hastily opened and the old detective admitted.

"I'm mighty glad you've come," whispered Killett, "you're just in time. Chamberlain has been waiting in the room under this ever since I've been here; but the man he came to see was out and has only just returned."

"I am fortunate, then," said Old Spicer.

"Yes, jump up on the table and mount one of the chairs."

Old Spicer did so, while Killett took possession of the other chair.

In another moment they were listening at the ventilator.

"Of course, I'm making myself at home here," Chamberlain was saying. "Why shouldn't I, I'd like to know?"

"Well," returned another voice—Bissell's—"the fact is, when a gentleman goes out, he likes to feel that his private room is held sacred, even by his friends. I don't see what the landlord could have been thinking of to let you come up here."

"Why, he knew me—knew that whenever you were stopping here I had been in the habit of coming and going as I pleased; and so, when I told him I was tired and would like to come up here and rest while waiting for you, he made no objection. That's how it was."

"Well, I don't know that any great damage has been done this time, but I wish, Hen, as a general thing, you'd keep out of my room when I am not in it."

"Look here, Em Bissell, ain't you putting on more frills than your shirt front'll carry?"

"I fancy I know my business, sir. And now permit me to ask to what fortunate circumstance I am indebted for the pleasure of your company to-day?"

"Thunder! What's come over you, Em? Don't your food agree with you, man?"

"I'm all right; but to be plain with you, I should like to be alone."

"Oho! that's the way the wind sets, is it? Well, so far as I'm concerned, you'll be alone pretty blamed sudden. We've a little matter of business to transact first, however."

"What is it—if I may ask?"

"What is it! You know blamed well what it is. Just fork over that money I gave you the other day."

"Money? What money?"

"Look here, Em Bissell, don't you undertake to play any of your funny business on *me*. I gave you \$22,000 on Monday to keep for me. I want it now, and by the Eternal! I'll have it, if I have to cut your black heart out to get it!"

Old Spicer turned to Killett, and a look of deep meaning passed between them.

"Move from your tracks, or lift a finger, Hen Chamberlain, and I ring this bell," exclaimed Bissell hastily, "and as sure as I do, I give you up as a murderer!"

"Pshaw! what do I care for your cursed bell and your threats? There's a dozen ways out of this hotel, and before a man could get to the top of one flight of stairs, I'd be at the bottom of another, and lost in the crowd on the avenue."

"Well, sir, if you are not out of this room inside of two minutes, you will have a chance to try that experiment provided you're alive to try it."

"Oho! you threaten my life, do you? See here, Bissell, before we go any further, just tell me why you have pretended to take such an interest in me during all these years; why you have nursed all my evil inclinations; why you have tempted me to commit crime after crime, and why, now that I have, at your suggestion, committed one that puts a noose about my neck, you turn against me?"

"Why does any man do such things?"

"From self-interest, I suppose, or, perhaps more often, to revenge some wrong."

"Exactly, and those two are the motives that have influenced me."

"But great Scott! man—I never injured you."

"Personally, you have not."

"Then what do you want to bring me to ruin for?"

"I want to strike another through you."

"Who, in the fiend's name?"

"Who do you suppose?"

"I can't think. There are but two persons on earth who care a tinker's button what becomes of me."

"And who are those two?"

"My father and mother."

"Who do you mean when you say your father and mother?"

"Why, Henry A. Chamberlain and his wife."

"The worthy couple who live at No. 10 Franklin Street, New Haven?"

"Certainly."

"Do you really think they are your father and mother?"

"They are all the father and mother I have ever known."

"Ha! ha! Well, I might tell you that they are no more your parents than they are mine. I might tell you that your name is not Chamberlain, but Curtis. I might tell you that there are certain persons—one in particular—who are deeply interested in your welfare. But what's the use? I will only tell you that there is one person whom, for years, it has been my aim and purpose to crush; that I saw

I could best accomplish my end by striking at you; that, therefore, I sought you out when you were but a mere lad at Eton school; that I took you in hand and led you, step by step, to——"

"The devil! I see it all now, curse you!"

"Ah! you do see it at last, do you?"

"I do; and now give me my money before I tear you limb from limb."

"Nonsense, boy: don't you see that I wheedled the money out of you on purpose, so that you might not have the means to escape from justice? Why, my revenge wouldn't be complete if you escaped the gallows. And do you think I will deliberately give you the means to escape?"

"Look out, man. You'll drive me too far if you ain't careful."

"Why, Hen, I planned every move you made, and you never moved but to put the halter more surely about your neck. Can't you guess now why I introduced you to Cora Bell? Can't you see why I took you to Jim Taylor's place? A good fellow enough, Jim is; but I knew mighty well that if he worked with you all he'd want would be a little squeeze from somebody to give you away as quick as chain-lightning. See if I'm not right."

"You're an infernal villain!"

"Oh, may be so; but I can afford to be whatever I please. You nor no living soul on earth can touch me."

"Can't, eh?" and there was a rush forward, a yell, a loud ringing of bells, the sound of hurrying feet, and general confusion.

Old Spicer and Killett sprung from their chairs to the table, from the table to the floor, and rushing from the room, flew to the stairs, and descended without hardly touching a step. In another moment they were at the entrance to No. 24, where quite a little crowd had already gathered.

Quackenbush and two other detectives were in the room. Bissell was stretched upon the bed, to all appearance dangerously wounded.

Chamberlain was nowhere to be seen.

"Where's Chamberlain?" asked Old Spicer, eagerly.

"Got away," answered Quackenbush.

"Got away! In the name of the great Lecoq, how did he manage it?"

"Knocked me down, threw a hall-porter on top of me, and was gone before I could get the fool off."

"But these men, what were they doing?"

"Lord! I don't know."

"I was at the head of the stairs yonder. We were attracting too much attention standing here together," explained Crowley.

"And I," said the third detective, "was at the back stairs."

"Did he make off in that direction?"

"Yes, sir."

"You tried to stop him, of course?"

"I did."

"What did he do?"

"Why, just knocked me clean down the stairs, that's all."

"You were there, then, when he came down."

"Yes; but I didn't feel much like stopping him just then."

"I suppose not. Well, Quackenbush, clear the room, and let Crowley go for a doctor. Frank, you stay here. This man is quite as important a prisoner as either Chamberlain or Taylor."

The wounded man slightly raised his head and pricked up his ears, at this announcement.

It is a great pity that some of the detectives did not detect this movement.

Old Spicer and Killett drew a little to one side, and conversed in eager whispers.

"Chamberlain must be captured at once," said Old Spicer, emphatically.

"He shall be!" returned Killett, decidedly. "This man is badly wounded, no doubt; so we can spare two of the three we have with us, and I'll telephone to Byrnes to send out Maguire and Frank Mangin; they'll find him, if anybody can."

Quackenbush and Frank Starr were sent out on the hunt, and Killett went down to the office, to telephone to headquarters.

Crowley now came back, and announced that a surgeon had been summoned, and would shortly arrive.

Old Spicer, who had for some time been anxious to get a message to Stricket and Morgan, merely said:

"All right; stay here for a few moments, please," and hurried down-stairs.

Crowley stepped softly to the bed, and took a look at the wounded prisoner.

"Asleep, or unconscious," he said to himself; and then, taking up a newspaper and seating himself by the window, he prepared to take it easy, till Old Spicer and Killett should return.

Just then some one knocked on the door; and, not wishing to disturb Bissell, he quietly arose, crossed the room, and opened the door.

The caller was one of those society fiends yclept a reporter.

"Hello, officer!" he exclaimed, briskly; "I understand there's been something of a row up here. Let's know the merits of the case."

"I don't know them myself," returned Crowley, evasively, at the same time slipping out into the corridor and closing the door behind him.

"Oh, pshaw!" urged the reporter, "you must know something about it. Tell me what you do know."

"What little I know isn't worth telling. Just wait till Old Spicer and Killett come up, then you can question them all you've a mind to—if they'll let you."

"What! is Old Spicer in this hotel?"

"Yes."

"Where is he?"

"Down in the office, I believe."

"Did you say he was coming up here soon?"

"Yes; but if you want to see him, perhaps you'd better go down to the office."

"No, I reckon I'd better wait here till he comes up."

"Very well, then you'll excuse me for leaving you, for I must go in and look after my prisoner."

"Hold up a moment! What's his name?"

"Bissell."

"Emory E. Bissell—is that it?"

"Yes."

"Badly wounded, isn't he?"

"Yes."

"Who did it?"

"I'm not sure that I know."

"Who do you think?"

"I don't know that I am at liberty to tell you that."

"The landlord says he let a fellow named Chamberlain come up here while Bissell was out, and that he was still waiting for him when he returned. Was that the man?"

"It's possible."

"Don't you know he was the fellow?"

"How the deuce can I be certain about it? I never saw Chamberlain enter the room."

"But didn't you see him come out of it?"

"No, I did not."

"They say he burst out of the room like a mad bull, and knocked three of you fellows down."

"Well, if he did, I wasn't one of them."

"Where were you?"

"Standing over by the main staircase yonder."

"Then he didn't attempt to get away in that direction?"

"No."

"Where, then?"

"By the back stairs, I have heard."

"Know what the trouble was between Bissell and Chamberlain?"

"No."

"Is Bissell badly wounded?"

"I should suppose so."

"Is he unconscious?"

"Yes."

"Just let me take a look at him, will you?"

"I can't do that."

"For goodness' sake, why not? I won't eat the man."

"It's against orders to admit any one but the doctor."

"Well, is this the doctor coming?"

"Yes."

"Who's that with him?"

"Old Spicer."

"The deuce it is! But, yes; I would have known him by the descriptions I have seen of him. Queer looking cuss, ain't he?"

"He's—well, he's rather slender, to say the least."

"A sort of Wm. M. Evarts. Ah! good-day, Mr. Spicer. Good-day, doctor; glad to see you, gentlemen," and as the great detective and the surgeon entered the room with Crowley, the reporter followed after them, as a matter of course.

"Why, Crowley, where's your prisoner?" demanded Old Spicer, in startled tones, after a single glance at the blood-stained bed.

"He's—Great Scott! He's gone!"

"Gone?" exclaimed the reporter, in his usual brisk way. "How the devil did he manage to get away?"

CHAPTER XXII.

CHAMBERLAIN'S CAPTURE.

"How'd he manage to get away? confound you!" exclaimed Crowley, turning upon the reporter in the bitterness of his soul. "He managed it while my back was turned answering your nonsensical questions."

"Nonsensical! Look a-here, officer, I can prove to you in just one minute and a half that my questions were anything but nonsensical."

"Oh, don't bother me!"

"Well, but how *do* you suppose he got away? I'd really like to know that—good point—great sensation—man supposed to be fatally wounded finds he's a prisoner—the trusty officer left in charge merely steps to the door for a moment to consult and advise with a well-known gentleman of the press, when, on turning back, presto, change! the bird had flown!

"Yes, I can work it in that the greatest mystery hangs about his disappearance—that is, you know, unless we can find out just how he managed it."

"Well," said Old Spicer, suddenly turning upon the reporter, "I think we can satisfy your laudable curiosity upon that point."

"Ah! you do, eh! How so, pray?"

"See this closet?"

"Yes, of course."

"Well, step a little further this way. You see there's a door opening from it into the next room. The place has been so arranged that it can be used as a closet for either room, you perceive?"

"Ah, yes, to be sure, or so that it might be used as a passageway—as in the present case, eh?"

"Exactly. Now, then, the question is, has the wounded man, in his supposed weakly condition, been able to escape from the hotel? Crowley, please summons Killett. We must institute a thorough search."

"I'll take a hand in that," exclaimed the reporter, with alacrity, "and I hope I shall find him."

"Why are you so anxious on that point?" asked Old Spicer, curiously.

"Why, you see I want to make a little noise in the world before I start for New Haven to hunt out the murderer or murderers of Charley Way."

"Oh! you are going to do a little detective work up there, are you?"

"Yes, sir; I'm jist going to pipe that mystery, you bet."

"Well, sir, I wish you all the success possible—all the glory there is left to gain."

"Are you speaking sarcastically, sir?"

"By no means."

"I thought I detected something of the kind in the tone of your voice."

By this time Killett had made his appearance, and the detectives, the reporter, and nearly every one connected with the hotel, spread themselves through the house in search of the missing man.

After an hour they returned to the point from whence they had started, and were obliged to confess that their efforts had been in vain. Emory E. Bissell had utterly vanished, and left no trace behind!

"Well," said Killett, drawing Old Spicer aside, and speaking in a low tone, "there can be no question about it, the fellow was playing 'possum, and he's got clean away. What had we better do now?"

"He must be found," said Old Spicer, decidedly.

"No question about that; but where shall we look first?"

"Have you no suggestion to make on that point yourself?"

"I think he's still in this neighborhood."

"I think it's quite possible; and, if you're willing, I'll leave you here for a time and look after another matter."

"All right, old fellow, only don't let us lose track of one another."

"Of course we mustn't do that," and Old Spicer, a little irritated by the escape of both Chamberlain and Bissell, hurried away.

He went straight to Cora Bell's rooms, and had a long and serious talk with her. He then went to the place where he and Killett had spent so much time earlier in the day, and wrote two long letters, which he posted with his own hand. After this he went to Inspector Byrnes' office, on Mulberry Street, and was closeted with that celebrated detective for more than two hours; and then, being quite worn out, he made his way to a neighboring hotel and went to bed.

Early the next morning he started out again.

A little later he found himself in the Bowery. He had just crossed Third Street, walking in the direction of Fourth, when he saw a figure ahead of him that attracted his attention.

It was that of a rather good-looking young man of about twenty-three years of age.

The blood tingled in the old detective's veins. His heart beat faster—his pulse quicker.

He hurried forward.

The young man turned into a saloon. Old Spicer followed him.

The young man called for a drink. The detective did likewise.

The young man cast a suspicious glance at the elder, threw a nickel on the bar and hurried out.

Old Spicer also threw down a piece of money and started for the door.

"It must be done now," he thought; "but it will be a tough job taking him alone."

At that instant he caught sight of two men coming up the street.

They were Detectives Frank Mangin and James Maguire.

Old Spicer immediately gave them a signal, and hurrying forward, they came up in front of the young man. Old Spicer still remaining behind him.

"Chamberlain," said Mangin, in a determined tone of voice, "you are our prisoner."

The street was crowded with people. Chamberlain, who was a muscular young fellow nearly six feet tall, uttered a fearful oath, sprung forward, threw the detective to one side, and drew a revolver.

The crowd instantly scattered.

But the detectives grappled with him, and Old Spicer coming up quickly, knocked the pistol out of his hand, while Maguire, striking him a blow in the side of the head, sent him headlong on the pavement.

In a twinkling of an eye he was on his feet again, but with a pair of steel bracelets on his wrists, and after a few hurried words between Old Spicer and the two detectives, he was marched away to Inspector Byrnes' office.

"That's all right," said Old Spicer, in a tone of quiet satisfaction, when they were gone. "Now I can attend to the other matter," and he took the Third Avenue elevated road to Harlem River.

Two hours and a half later he returned, and met Killett, Stark and Rouse in the inspector's office.

"I am very glad indeed to find you here," he said. "I was afraid I might have to leave without seeing you."

"Why, what do you mean?" asked Killett, in a tone of wonder.

"I'm going to Connecticut," replied Spicer.

"What, and give up the chase for Bissell, Hawks and Bunce?"

"They will all be there by the time I am," said the old man, quietly.

"How's that?" asked Killett, in great surprise.

"They are all passengers on board the schooner Bouncing Betsey, which will land them in the neighborhood of Stony Creek, and I already have my men on the lookout for them there."

"You have done some pretty tall work to-day, to find out all that, and put matters into the shape

you have."

"Yes, I have not been idle, neither last night nor to-day."

"When do you start for home?"

"On the next train."

"I believe I'll go with you. Bunce, of course, will have to be brought back here."

"Of course he will, and I wish you would bear me company."

"I suppose the authorities will hold Chamberlain and Taylor until the governor grants a requisition for their being taken out of the state?"

"Yes, all that has been arranged."

"And Cora Bell—what's to be done with her?"

"She will come up to Connecticut the moment I send for her. Stark or Rouse, I wish one of you, or if you can't get away, that Cosgrove would come up with her."

"All right, sir. We'll see to it."

"Well, then, I believe that's all. And now good-bye, my friends." And after shaking Silas and Reub by the hand, the old detective hurried away in company with Adam Killett.

CHAPTER XXIII.

ON BOARD THE BOUNCING BETSEY.

The Bouncing Betsey was beating her way up the Sound in the face of a head wind, and hence her progress was aggravatingly slow. There were a goodly number of craft in sight, but none near enough to distinguish the persons of those on board the schooner, and so her three worthy passengers had ventured on deck.

Emory Bissell could not be said to be distinguished by either a very healthy or a very happy look. His face was ghastly pale and his step feeble.

Barney Hawks and Bill Bunce were seated on what might be called the quarter-deck. Bissell slowly approached, and when he had almost reached the couple, Barney pushed a camp-stool toward him.

The wounded man sank down upon it with a sigh.

"So Hen Chamberlain gave you a pretty considerable dig in the ribs, did he?" asked Barney, in the way of starting conversation.

"He did that, and if the knife hadn't glanced off exactly as it did, it would have been all over with me, as sure as you're born."

"What made the cub strike you? I know he's pretty hot-blooded, but I shouldn't have thought that of him."

"He resented what he termed my meddling with his business, I believe."

"And had you done so? I didn't even know that you two were acquainted."

"Oh, yes, I have always known Hen, and I have ventured to give him good advice now and then."

"It must have been good advice if *you* gave it to him."

"To be sure, it was so, if he had had the genius to profit by it."

"But what started you on the run? Didn't you dare to stay and face the music?"

"Why, you see, his attack upon me could but draw the attention of the public to me, and knowing the fact that he has called at my rooms several times, and remained an hour or so each time, would be sure to come out and be put down to my disadvantage, I concluded to dig out while I had an opportunity to do so."

"I am inclined to think you did wisely," said Barney, after some moments' reflection.

"But how the deuce did you manage it, in your condition?" asked Bill Bunce. "If I understood you rightly last night, there were officers in the house watching you, if not in your very room."

"It was a pretty sharp piece of work," returned Bissell, thoughtfully. "A detective was just outside my door—some one had called him out the moment before; two more—one of them Old Spicer himself—were in the office below, and another, I believe, was on the sidewalk watching the several entrances. But I knew well enough that my only chance had come, and I resolved to take it.

"Fortunately, my room was connected with the next by a doorway cut through the inner wall of a closet, and the outlet to this room was upon a corridor running at right angles with that upon which mine opened.

"I could hear my keeper talking with some one just outside my door. Cautiously I raised myself in bed. The next moment I slipped out upon the floor.

"On my bureau was a bottle of brandy and a glass. I seized the bottle——"

"But didn't bother with the glass, I'll go bail," interrupted Barney, quickly.

"Not much, you bet. I uncorked the bottle, placed it to my lips, and took such a drink as I hadn't had before in a long time. Then, like a flash, I changed my coat and vest, seized a hat, and disappeared through the closet door.

"Crossing the adjoining room, I opened the door on to the corridor. A gentleman and lady were just passing. I merely bowed, and hurried toward the private staircase at the rear of the hall.

"I didn't see another soul until I had reached the floor below. Then two or three ladies and a gentleman came out of a large room and started toward the stairs. Before they had had a chance to see me I slipped into a sort of private reception-room, and, when they were well out of the way, rushed to the outside door, opened it, and the next minute was standing on the sidewalk.

"As good luck would have it, a cab was passing. I hailed it, the driver stopped, and I sprang inside.

"'Where to?' he asked.

"By Jove! I hadn't thought up to that moment where I wanted to go to, so I simply said, 'Straight ahead!'

"Fortunately he was headed eastward, and, as I didn't interfere, he kept on to the river. At sight of it, what we were talking about yesterday came over me like a flash of lightning, and thinks I, 'Why shouldn't I join Barney and Jake in their voyage to the Gulf of Mexico?' The next moment I decided to do it. And so I told the driver at what point I wanted to get out, and from there I found means to be conveyed to the schooner in the bay."

"Were you wise in letting the cabman take you where you did?" asked Barney, in a somewhat anxious tone.

"I suppose not," was the reply; "but I was far too weak to walk, and so had to risk it."

"It may prove a risk that will cost us all dear."

"As matters turned out, I don't think so, my friend."

"How's that?"

"Why, even if the detectives should happen to stumble upon that cabman, it isn't at all likely they'll ever unearth the man who conveyed me to the bay."

"Who was he?"

"Blessed if I know. I didn't take the trouble to ask."

"How did you happen to fall in with him?"

"He owned a pretty yacht, and was just going aboard of her, when he noticed me on the pier.

"'You seem to be looking for some one?' he said.

"'I was hoping to find an old man who hangs around this pier a good deal,' I replied, 'and who owns a small craft in which he takes parties to different points on the river.'

"'There's no such man about here just now,' said the gentleman.

"'So I see,' I returned, and I fancy I sighed.

"'You are sick and weak,' he exclaimed quickly.

"'Weak I surely am,' I said; 'but I'd be all right, I'm sure, if I could only get up the river a piece.'

"'Well, I'm going up the river. Come on board my yacht and welcome.'

"I thanked him warmly, and he landed me, as you know, on board this schooner."

"And why do you think the detectives won't find him?" asked Barney, eagerly.

"Because I drew out of him that he was on his way to Newport, from whence he was going to sail almost immediately to the Bermudas, otherwise I never would have let him come up alongside the Bouncing Betsey."

"Well, if he's off for the Bermudas, I reckon it's all right; for if we have any kind of luck, it's more than likely we shall be in the Gulf of Mexico, or even in Mexico itself, before he gets back to New York."

"That's the way I look at it."

"We've got to make better time than we're making now to get anywhere," growled Bill Bunce, discontentedly.

"You're right enough there, Bill," said Barney; "but I suppose the captain's doing the best he can, so there's no help for it."

"I suppose there isn't; but I've got it beat into me that this delay will cost us dear."

"I don't see how it can," said Bissell quickly. "Without the testimony of that yacht-owner they can't connect any one of us with the Bouncing Betsey."

"Perhaps not, but they'll do it all the same."

"Why, do you suspect that you and Barney were, or can be, traced to the schooner?"

"No, I don't think that; for after we got away from the detectives at my place, we disguised ourselves so thoroughly that our own mothers never would have known us, and we took the most roundabout way to the bay, and came on board at midnight."

"Then I don't see what there is to fear."

"Nor I, so far as caution is concerned. But that cursed detective they call Old Spicer is like no other man alive, I believe; and before we know it he'll drop down upon us—you'll see."

"Come, come, old fellow, cheer up, or you'll give us all the horrors, and that's useless."

Presently the wind changed, then it became fair, and the Bouncing Betsy bounded over the waves at a lively rate.

Even Bill Bunce, who had so much to make him sad, became cheerful, and in some measure forgot his somber forebodings.

CHAPTER XXIV.

IN NO MAN'S BAY—MAG'S HOVEL.

The day passed, the night came on, and out of the gloom the passenger on board the schooner caught glimpses of the many islands that go to make up the Thimble group.

Then, indistinctly, the main land came into view, and at last the schooner came to anchor in the little bay behind No Man's Island.

As the great sails were lowered, a shrill whistle from the shore reached them. The captain answered it promptly; and presently the sound of oars working in rowlocks was heard.

"That's Pete Coffey," whispered Barney. Then, as the boat came into view, "I wonder who he's got with him?"

No one spoke again until the boat was alongside the schooner.

"Here, take the painter," called out Pete, "and make it fast," and he threw the end of the rope on board.

A sailor caught it and fastened it accordingly.

"Clarky," then said Pete to his companion in the boat, "you stay here," and the next moment he himself was on board the schooner.

He seemed astonished to see Barney and Bissell, and looked upon Bunce with some show of suspicion.

"What's up with you fellows?" he asked. "And who is this chap?"

"We've been driven out of New York, and have got to skip the country," answered Barney.

"And the long and short of it is," Bissell hastened to add, "you must find some safe place in which to secrete us until the schooner is ready for sea."

"Hum! I don't know about you, Mr. Bissell."

"Don't know about me! What do you mean, sir?"

"I don't think it's particularly safe to have anything to do with you. I've noticed that whoever has worked with you, or for you, has been fetched up with a round turn sooner or later, and that you always get off scot-free."

"Come, come, Pete," said Barney hastily, "if you've got any grudge against Emory, it's no time to show it now, when we're all in serious trouble. Just lay it aside till we're in smooth water again."

"Well, for your sake, Barney, I suppose I must do what I can for the crowd; but I tell you what, old fellow, it goes awfully against the grain to do anything for that smooth-tongued traitor."

"Come, come, Pete," said Bissell, in his most plausible tone, "if I've offended you in any way I'm ready and willing to make it all right with you. And now tell us, where can you put us for a night and a day?"

"First, I want to know who this stranger is. You'll please to remember that I haven't been introduced to him yet."

"Excuse me, Pete," Barney hastened to say. "It's Bill Bunce, a friend of mine; you've heard me speak of him;" and then he explained how he happened to be with them.

Pete heard him through to the end; then, with some show of interest, he asked:

"Do I understand you to say that that slippery Jew, Jake Klinkhammer, has really passed in his checks at last?"

"Yes, poor Jake got something in his stomach that he couldn't very well digest, and so he was obliged to throw up the sponge."

"The deuce! whose turn will it be next, I wonder? Do you know, Barney, they're after me, hot and heavy, for that little job in the Stony Creek railway station?"

"They are! But they can't fasten anything on to you."

"I don't know about that; they've got half a dozen men on my track, and if they can't find any evidence against me, they'll manufacture some. Leave the hounds alone for that."

"Is it really so bad, Pete?"

"You just bet it is. And, by the way, cap'n, one thing I came out to say is, that for your sake, as well as my own, I daresn't help you land the liquor or store it away to-night."

"Thunder!" exclaimed the captain, "what'll I do, then?"

"I've got two friends—safe fellows, who are working in the quarry as a blind; they'll help you, and do whatever I could do myself."

"Ah! but where are they now?"

"Waiting in my boat-house—you know the spot."

"Yes, where we usually land, ain't it?"

"That's the place."

"Well, is everything clear to get to work now?"

"Yes, I've given my regular attendants the slip to-night, and you can go ahead with your work as soon as you've a-mind to, and I'll go ahead with mine. Now, then, gentlemen, I'm ready to pilot you to a safe place whenever you're ready to accompany me."

"We're ready now," said Barney, with alacrity. "Let's get into the boat without a moment's delay."

"All right, jump in," and Barney quickly clambered over the schooner's gunwale, and slipped down into the boat.

"Are you sure it's safe for us to land—sure there's no one on the lookout for us?" asked Bissell, nervously.

"Sure as I can be of anything," answered Pete. "At any rate, it's safer than it is for you to stay here, so go ahead," and Bissell let himself down into the boat, and was quickly followed by Bill Bunce, Pete himself bringing up in the rear.

"Where's your togs, gentlemen?" asked Pete, looking about the bottom of the boat as he took his seat.

"What we managed to get away with, we've left on board the schooner," answered Barney. "She expects to get to sea to-morrow night, you know, and we thought it wouldn't be worth while to bring anything ashore for so short a time."

"All right, you ought to know best, but I can't fit you all out with clean shirts and collars, understand."

"Oh, don't let that worry you, my good friend," said Bissell, with a good deal of effusion, "we will excuse you, and do very well, I have no doubt."

Clarky remained silent—indeed, he hardly spoke even when Pete addressed him, but worked away at his oar as if his very life depended upon it.

Presently they reached the shore and landed.

Pete addressed a few words to Clarky in a low tone, and then turning to his other companion, said:

"All ready; come on," and at once started up a narrow pathway, at some distance from the main road.

Bissell, with some curiosity, looked back.

He saw Clarky haul the boat well up out of the water and fasten it to a stake. He then saw him start toward a little clump of trees, where the faint outlines of a boat-house could just be seen.

Pete walked on rapidly, and it was all his friends could do to keep up with him.

They kept on in this way for almost half an hour, when they came to what appeared to be a deserted stone-quarry.

Pete now turned to the left, and they skirted this quarry for some distance until they came to a little cluster of huts or shanties, most of them, like the quarry, deserted.

One or two of the shanties were set well back against a side hill, and into the largest of these Pete conducted his companions.

The place contained two good-sized rooms, one a general living-room, and the other a bedroom.

The first was empty, the other occupied, as was evident, when a woman's voice, in querulous tones, demanded to know who was there.

"It's me, Mag," answered Pete. "Don't fret yourself."

"Don't fret myself! You uneasy, restless villain; you're enough to fret a saint. What're you up to at this time o' night, anyway? Why ain't ye at home and in bed, where you ought to be?"

"I've got business to attend to, and some friends to look after; I shall stow them away inside for twenty-four hours. There's plenty of food in there, I suppose?"

"I suppose there is. If there ain't there ought to be, and that's all I know about it."

"And beds fit to sleep on?"

"How many is there with you?"

"Three."

"Then there are beds enough, so that each one can have two. And now will you let me go to sleep, Pete Coffey?"

"Yes, unless you want a little taste of the Bouncing Betsey's West Indian rum."

"The Bouncing Betsey! West Indian rum, eh? Bring it right here, Pete, like a good fellow."

"I'm coming, my dear."

"That's right, come on. Oh! a friend in need is a friend indeed. I was just longing for some good, pure spirits; and now, here you come to me, like an angel of mercy!"

By this time Pete was in the bedroom and had found his way to the side of the bed.

"Where is it, Pete?" asked the old woman, eagerly stretching out her hand.

He handed her one of several bottles the captain had given him just before he had got into his boat.

She uncorked it and placed the nozzle to her lips; then she took a good, long, hearty pull.

"There! let up!" exclaimed Pete, at last.

But it was hard to induce the old gal to take her lips from the bottle after she had once got them fastened to it.

Pete, understanding the situation, waited patiently, and when at length she stopped to breathe, drew the bottle gently away.

She resigned it with a sigh.

"Good-night, Mag. Sorry I can't leave it with you," and Pete returned to those who were modestly waiting in the other room.

CHAPTER XXV.

A SURPRISE PARTY.

Pete Coffey now took up a kerosene lamp and some matches, but he did not strike a light.

He dropped down on his knees at the back of the cabin, and ran his hand over the boards.

Presently he shoved one aside, and then another, and another.

"Now, one of you come here," he said.

Barney was quickly at his side.

"Let me aim you right," said Pete, "and then crawl ahead on your hands and knees for at least twenty feet before you rise."

Barney started ahead, doing the "baby act" very creditably.

"Come, Bissell, hurry up," said Pete, impatiently, and dropping down beside him, Bissell endeavored to peer into the black darkness beyond.

"What devil's hole is this?" he asked, suspiciously.

"It may be the devil's hole, as you say," answered Pete. "In fact, I have sometimes thought it was myself. At all events, the devil takes better care of his own in there than I've ever known him to do anywhere else; and so, if you really want to escape your enemies, you'd better be getting in, for I don't propose to fool all my time away on you to-night, I can tell you."

Bissell followed after Barney without another word.

Bill Bunce needed no admonition. He had been familiar with dark holes for the better part of his life, and had a particularly friendly feeling for them, and so he followed on after Bissell, keeping close behind him.

Pete, as soon as there was room for him to do so, entered the hole, and having carefully replaced the boards he had slipped aside, lighted his lamp, and holding it up to the roof of the low tunnel, cast its rays ahead, so that Barney could see when it was safe for him to rise.

"Ah!" exclaimed Barney, starting to his feet, "this is something like a hiding place."

The rays of Pete's light had shown him an extensive cavern, hollowed out of the granite rock, of which all that portion of the New England coast is composed.

Speedily he was joined by his companions, and a hasty examination of the chamber took place.

It was large enough to contain twenty or thirty men, and there were accommodations for at least a dozen. The place was also supplied with edibles, and Pete hinted that there was something stronger than water stowed away in one dark recess, "of which, thank God, old Mag knew nothing."

"If she did, I reckon it wouldn't be there long," laughed Barney.

"That's it, the old gal hasn't many failings, but one of 'em is an over-fondness for hard stuff."

After some time spent in talking over the situation, Pete intimated that the travelers might like to get a little rest, and said he would go out and reconnoiter.

The lamp had been placed on a projecting piece of rock that served as a shelf, and with only his knowledge of the place to guide him, Pete started for the entrance.

He could not have had more than time enough to reach the cabin, when the sound of excited voices came back to the fugitives through the tunnel, which served the purpose of a speaking tube.

"Seized? the Bouncing Betsey seized? By whom, in the demon's name?"

It was Pete who asked the question, there could be no doubt of that.

"Yes, Pete, she was taken in less than twenty minutes after you left her," answered another voice.

"That's the fellow he called Clarky," whispered Bissell to his companions.

The others nodded.

"But by whom—by whom was she taken?" demanded Pete, impatiently.

"Revenue officers; and there are three or four detectives with them."

"The deuce! this looks black."

"I guess you'll think so when you know the rest."

"What is the rest? Tell me without any further loss of time."

"Those detectives are sharper than the devil; they went through everything on board the schooner in less than no time, and it didn't take 'em long to find the passengers' duds."

"Ah! I thought it might come to that. Blamed fools, they ought to have brought 'em ashore. But did they recognize 'em?"

"You just bet they did. There was a bean-pole sort of a fellow among 'em, and he says, says he, 'These things belong to Barney Hawks; he wore 'em the night after Margaret Ernst was murdered. And those belong to Bill Bunce; he had 'em on in his saloon the day of the fight there.' 'And these,' said another old fellow, 'are Emory Bissell's: see, here's his name; there's no getting away from that.'"

"Thunder and blazes!" hissed Bissell, "why were we such confounded fools as to leave such evidence of our presence on board the schooner?"

"Simply because we *are* confounded fools," returned Barney; "nothing more or less. But listen: let us know the worst."

"Come, do get out o' here, an' let an old woman get a little sleep. Into the cavern with you, or outdoors—I don't care which."

It was evident Pete and Clarky had been joined by old Mag.

"Wait a minute, Mag, and then we'll be off," said Pete, in a conciliatory tone. "Have the detectives any idea, Clarky, where the fugitives have gone to?"

"Can't say as to that; but I tell you that thin fellow is an awful knowing chap."

"But, see here, man, how comes it that you know so much about the matter? Did you go aboard the schooner again?"

"Yes, I took those bottles up to the boathouse and hid them as you told me; then I had a few words to say to our boys there, when the cap'n came ashore and wanted us all to help him land his goods, so I took a hand and went aboard with him. Then the officers came, and as soon as I could I slipped out to let you know what was in the wind."

"Come into the cavern, we must talk this over with Barney and his friends," and a little later they were heard crawling through the passage.

The first question Bissell put when they had joined them was:

"Is there any one living who knows of the existence of this place who would give the knowledge away to the detectives?"

"Not one," answered Pete, promptly.

"Then, as the schooner is taken," said Bissell, "we must stay here till you get a chance to ship us on board some other West Indian craft."

"That won't work, so far as Pete is concerned," put in Clarky, abruptly.

"Why not?"

"He is to be arrested to-night himself."

"How do you know?"

"Heard it talked up. They've found out that Way was killed in the station while he was in the act of sending off a telegraph message, that he was struck down from behind, then robbed, and his body placed on the track to be mutilated; they have also found out that Pete was around the station at about that time, with some others, and so they are going to take him, and I reckon if it don't turn out a swinging affair for him, he will at least get boarding accommodations up the

river for the rest of his life."

"Hum, it does look a little that way, by Jove!" muttered Pete.

"Well, then," said Bissell, "Pete must stay here with us, and we must depend on you, Clarky, to help us out when the time comes."

"On me? By thunder! I don't know but——"

"But that you are in as bad a box as the rest, eh, young man?"

It was a calm and matter-of-fact voice that uttered these words, and every man in the cavern sprung to his feet as he heard them, with exclamations of consternation on his lips.

Then they saw the tall, thin form of Old Spicer towering over them, and just behind him, four or five more detectives, all thoroughly armed and ready for business!

CHAPTER XXVI.

CONCLUSION.

"Take it quietly, gentlemen, I beg," said Old Spicer, in his usual tones. "The jig's up. I acknowledge that you have shown a good deal of skill and made us some trouble; but we've got you now, like so many rats in a trap."

"By Jove! you shall never take me alive, Mark Spicer," exclaimed Bissell, fiercely.

"Very well, I shall take you dead, then, Emory Bissell," was the calm reply. "For, above all, *you* must not escape. God alone can calculate the evil you have done. You have brought ruin and death upon Charley Way, you have made a miserable woman of his widow for life, you have corrupted and involved in the general ruin Pete Coffey here, and many of his associates, you are responsible for the Ernst murder and for the blasted lives of Henry Chamberlain and Frank Taylor."

"And you'd better add," interrupted Bissell, with savage glee, "that I have had my reward in the knowledge that I have brought eternal misery on one that I'll never name, who has an interest in Hen Chamberlain, and who, with me and one or two others, alone knows the mystery of his life."

"That triumph will yet turn to gall in your memory," said Old Spicer, sternly. "And now surrender quietly, for we have much to do to-night. Seth, you and George go forward and put on the bracelets. If any one of them makes a hostile demonstration we'll shoot him on the spot."

Seth Strickett and George Morgan stepped forward.

"Barney—Bill Bunce—Pete—Clarky, will you be taken and strung up like so many slaughtered hogs? Stand by me, now, and fight to the death!" and whipping out a revolver, he fired point-blank at Old Spicer's heart.

But the attenuated detective was not a very good mark for a weak and excited man to aim at, and so the ball sped by, and the next instant a howl went up, as though all the witches of Macbeth were yelling in concert.

"I'm killed—I'm murdered—I'm done for! Oh, Lord! just let me get at the villain that fired that shot and I'll tear his heart out!" Then, with another yell, Old Mag dashed forward, and with the blood streaming from a wound in her breast, threw herself upon Bissell.

Barney and his friends seeing the confusion, now attempted to escape.

The attempt was useless. But their blood was up and they made a hard fight for it. Pistol reports echoed and re-echoed through the vaulted cavern, and to one standing by it would have seemed as though two regiments were fighting.

At length it was over, and Old Spicer, who, fortunately, had escaped uninjured, began to sum up the results.

Emory Bissell was dead—killed by old Mag, who lay gasping out her life by his side.

Barney Hawks was also dead; no less than three bullets had entered his body, any one of which would have finished him.

Bill Bunce was severely wounded and a prisoner.

Pete Coffey and Clarky surrendered when they saw there was no use in holding out longer.

On the side of the law, one local officer was killed and another badly wounded. Adam Killeet and Seth Stricket were also slightly hurt.

Pete Coffey and Clarky were placed in the local lock-up, and the New York reporter, who was on hand in the village, but who had not got an inkling of what was going on at the bay, or up in the cavern, was, at his own request, locked up with Pete as a prisoner, in order to wheedle a full confession out of him.

His efforts were not rewarded with a very brilliant success.

Old Spicer, Stricket, and Morgan returned to New Haven, well pleased with all that had been accomplished.

Killett, after obtaining a requisition from the governor, took his prisoner, Bill Bunce, to New York; but two days later he died in the Tombs.

With almost unprecedented speed the trial of Chamberlain came on, and Cora Bell appeared against him.

Her evidence, and other facts brought out by Old Spicer and the New York detectives, was so overwhelming that he was brought in guilty after a trial of less than five days; but owing to his youth and the fact that the murder was not actually premeditated, he escaped the gallows.

Taylor's trial followed Chamberlain's, and as it was evident he had been led into the scrape by the latter, and had been so ready to confess, he got off much easier than his friend.

Cora Bell conducted herself very well from first to last during the trials, and so worked upon the feelings of a susceptible young man that soon after it was all over, he offered her his heart and hand.

She promptly accepted, and they are now living very pleasantly together as man and wife.

Before the trial came on, Sadie Seaton strangely disappeared from the city, and has never since been heard of. Old Spicer, to satisfy his own curiosity, thinks of looking her up later.

Peter Coffey's trial has not yet been called; but the knowing ones declare that Clarky's prophecy is pretty sure to be fulfilled. Clarky himself has been released without bail.

Most of Mrs. Ernst's property has been recovered, and the heirs under her will, including August Tepley, are likely soon to benefit substantially by her sudden death.

Adam Killett, and his trusty friends, Stark and Rouse, are busy on a new case in New York. While Old Spicer, whose world-wide fame debars him from any rest, has just received orders to ferret out a dangerous gang of smugglers and murderers who, for some time past, have eluded the vigilance of the constituted authorities along the northern shores of Long Island Sound.

Of course his old friend Seth Stricket, and his adopted son, George Morgan, will assist him in his new undertaking.

[THE END.]



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Transcriber's Notes:

Added table of contents.

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Inconsistent hyphenation retained from the original (e.g. "up-stairs" vs. "upstairs").

Some inconsistencies of dialect have been retained from the original.

Normalized obvious punctuation errors throughout the document.

Changed "McCarthy't" to "McCarthy's."

Changed "contined" to "continued."

Changed "questiou" to "question."

Changed "the the" to "the."

Changed "pnnch" to "punch."

Changed "Marsdan's" to "Marsden's."

Changed "footseps" to "footsteps."

Changed "womam" to "woman."

Changed "coversation" to "conversation."

Changed "full compliment" to "full complement."

Changed "Killet" to "Killett."

Changed "Docter" to "Doctor."

Changed "villian" to "villain."

Changed "Zepley" to "Tepley."

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