

# Two Blooming

# The Adventures of Two Criminals.

# Bay Trees.

BY DOUGLAS WINTON.

"I have seen the wicked . . . spreading himself like a green bay-tree."—Pal. xxvii. v. 35.

"I knowed 'im at once, I did; I seed 'im when pore Bill were in th' dock. Calls 'issell Williams at th' doss-house, but, bless yer! 'e's lost 'is self-respect, 'e 'as—got squiffy off 'arf a pint o' gin, an' 'ol' me all about it. Now, talkin' o' toffs, what I-hic-says, in a-hic-manner o' speakin'—"

But Piggy had heard enough for his purpose, and an idea was germinating in his brain which required that his friend should be got to bed safe and quiet till required, as soon as possible.

"Have another?" he said. This other proved just about all that Mr. Peachey could carry. With Piggy supporting him, they made their way to a doss-house (common lodging-house) in the neighbourhood, smaller, quieter, and more respectable than the same class of place would be in a low quarter of the town, but still a doss-house. Here Piggy paid for two beds, and having seen his friend safely under the blankets, clothes and all, he told the deputy that he was going out to see if he couldn't pick up a shilling or two before the theatres closed. Once round the corner, he quickly divested himself of his ragged overcoat, and making it into as neat a bundle as he could, with the battered hat he had been wearing inside, he hailed a smart hansom.

"Whitechapel High Street, as quick as you can—ten shillings!" The cabman who, if he thought anything about it, took him for a young horse-surgeon at the London Hospital, late for his night-duty, whipped up and whirled him off Eastwards. During that drive Piggy did some of the hardest thinking he had ever done in his life.

which he yielded without seeking to understand it. An' might I hen-quire—

"The work?" said Piggy, anticipating the question. "Oh! a mere nothing; just to drive a cab."

"One of us has to be near that brute all day, Childs-Gordon," continued Piggy as they quitted the room, while Mr. Peachey was giving himself his matutinal scratching, and doing up his braces. "We mustn't let 'im out of sight an' instant, till it's time to steal the cab. I'll stay by 'im now, if you like, while you go off and get shaved and a bath, and buy clothes, and so on; 'Don't be more than an hour or so, as I have lot's to do myself. When you come back, you'll find us either in that little coffee-shop across the way or at the corner pub. Oh, never fear! our friend will be strictly moderate in his potations to-day, I'll see to that. Remember, a regular detective rig-out, suit of dittoes, billi-cock, plain stick, square-toed boots, everything neat but not gaudy, you know. And, I say, Childs-Gordon, try to cultivate the military carriage a bit; your misfortunes have given you a regular crook to your back."

"It's awfully good of you, Porson, Childs-Gordon replied, "and I'm all at a loss to know why you do it. I suppose, strictly speaking, according to the Sunday School books, I ought to reprove you for leading me into sin; but you see I was there before, without any leading, so I don't. But how you found me, or why you picked me out for such a chance, I'm hanged if I know. Now you speak of it, I do remember seeing you at your father's long ago; but you were only a schoolboy then, and—"

on, and his hat and stick lay on the table. He was just completing the loading of a small revolver, which he dropped into the pocket of his overcoat as his visitor entered.

"Thought it as well to have a gun Sergeant, er—Crossby," he said, glancing at the card. "Seems, though, these London tailors don't make no hips pockets no more."

"I don't think there will be any need of it, sir," said Sergeant Crossby, with a smile, "but of course it can do no harm. By the way, sir, Inspector Mackay gave me a message for you."

"The message sir," he continued, "was that he wants you to bring a cheque with you, ready written out and signed, for one hundred thousand pounds to bearer."

the Continent as a Mr. Childs-Gordon, a gentleman formerly well known in London but who disappeared some little time since."

"Why," said the millionaire, looking up surprised, "I've heard of 'im; pretty had egg, wasn't he?"

"Nothing known officially to the police, I believe, sir," replied the sergeant, discreetly.

"No, no I remember," said Van Coortvelt. "Mrs. Van C. an' th' gals was all full of it at the time; th' worst part of it was all hushed up, or something; some one came down with the money. But all the same, it beats me why a crook in want of a name should go an' take the name of another crook. Why not take an honest man's, it don't cost no more? Well, here is the cheque, sergeant; will you take it, or shall I keep it?"

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by, diving a hand into the millionaire's pocket, had possessed himself of the revolver. At the same instant Piggy gagged him with a hand over his mouth. Then, with cords and a gag, previously provided they proceed to bind and gag him scientifically.

"Any difficulty?" said Piggy laughing.

"Difficulty!" replied Childs-Gordon, "he came like a lamb. Talk about abducting schoolgirls! A king of finance does as he's told, and don't even scratch. All right, sir," he continued, patting the little man's shoulder; "nobody's going to hurt you; but we'll talk later on; at present the conversation would be all one-sided. Now, Porson, got a light?"

Piggy flashed his tiny electric torch, which was about the only tool of the trade which he was about to quit that he still carried.

"You miserable little abortion!" he cried; "did you mean that?"



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