

Two Blooming

The Adventures of
Two Criminals.

Bay Trees.

BY
DOUGLAS WINTON.

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

(Continued.)

When they had each had a drink they tried some more experiments. They turned out the studio lamps and turned on the electric light in the case, and then turned it every way to see if the faintest gleam was visible from outside. But it had been well constructed; the only cracks were those necessary for air, and they were carefully screened internally. Next they tested what Piggy called the terab-crawl movement. They pushed the case roughly into a corner, and Jack got inside, and instantly, by a clever hydraulic mechanism, raised it an eighth of an inch on to four tiny castors; a steel spike in the centre of the bottom was pushed out, and, by working it by a system of levers, the whole chest, with Jack in it, crawled at once right into the corner, so as to touch the walls.

"Well, Piggy, I don't think we need any more tests," said Jack. "I think that the affair represents the height of mechanical perfection. Considering that it has cost us three months' work and nearly three hundred pounds, it ought to." "Then we'll pass it as correct," said Piggy. "I've brought a bag which I left in the boat," he continued, "as I shall sleep here. You see, I must disguise myself to-morrow before I go out to book my cabin. I shall take all three berths in that end cabin, just opposite the baggage-room."

"The next cabin is pretty close," said Jack, reflectively; "I hope the occupants will be sea-sick." "We will take no chances of that," replied Piggy. "I shall take all three berths in that one too, only I shall take them in another name, for a passenger coming on board, at Southampton."

They continued to talk over their plans till late into the night. The next morning Piggy made an elaborate toilet as a young clergyman, and sallied off to the steamship office. He returned shortly after noon, and late in the day the two friends paid a visit to the dry dock where lay the Belgradian. The second officer, with whom Piggy had struck up an acquaintance, was most polite, in showing them over the ship. When they had finished their inspection and wished him good-bye, they went off to dine quietly in a private room at a West-End restaurant. Jack's beard made such an alteration in his appearance that he no longer felt the need of concealment.

"How long can you stay in that case," Jack? asked Piggy, when the waiter had placed desert and left them.

"Say a week with comfort, and—'Comfort!' laughed Piggy; 'well, there's nothing like having an optimistic to do with.'"

"Well, I mean comparative comfort," said Jack, laughing in his turn. "You know all those elaborate arrangements we made—"

"I know it is a regular bag or rather box of tricks," said Piggy. "So you really think that you can hold out for a week?" "Certainly," said Jack. "A week easily, and a fortnight at a pinch." "Then," said Piggy, "I will write to-night to the earthen people to come for you in the morning. Probably a day later would have done; but, by having you carted off to-morrow morning, we leave nothing to chance; you are sure then to be the first big package on board, and equally sure—unless the baggage-man is an absolute idiot—to be pushed right away back against the bulk-head, which divides the baggage-room from the specie room. Poor Jack! I'm afraid you'll find it a bit dull in there for four days; but the stake is worth it."

"Worth it!" replied Jack; "I should think it was. Why, Piggy, what sort of a milkop do you take me for? I shall take a book, and go on with my Spanish. There is only one thing I am afraid of."

"What's that?" "Snoring. But, never fear! I'll take no risks; never sleep while there's a chance of anyone being within hearing. And, talking of that, I think it would be as well for me to go home and get a good sleep to-night. Are you coming to the studio?"

"No," said Piggy; "there are some things I want to see about at Ratcliffe street. I shall tell them to come for the case at eleven to-morrow, and I will be on hand at ten."

"Good-night, then," said Jack. And so they separated. But at two o'clock that night came a ringing and a knocking at Piggy's door in Ratcliffe Street as brought him out of bed in a hurry. Having put on some clothes, and satisfied himself that they way of escape by the roof was free, revolver in hand he went to the door. What was his surprise to hear his regular signal, two light taps and a heavy, and pause, and then another heavy knock. "Jack!" he cried, and flung open the door.

"Whatever is the matter?" he said, as Jack entered. "You should never have ventured in this neighborhood, man. After a business of the magnitude of ours at Tom's Croft they will be keeping a match on your apartments over the way at Paardsherg Mansions for months, for years very likely. Oh, no! they don't think

you'll be ass enough to try to enter them; but they rely on the sort of irresistible impulse that so many men seem to feel to have a look at a place they have lived in. In your case they would seem to be right. Why on earth have you come?" "To fetch you to the studio," replied Jack. "Either we have got to put in the hardest night's work that ever was, or everything is going to miscarry in the morning."

"Why, what's up?" "What's up, Piggy? We've been idiots; we've been like Robinson Crusoe who built his big boat two miles out inland, and had to leave her there because he could find no way to carry her to the sea, we've—"

"I made the case in the studio, and the carter will come for it at eleven, and it won't get through the door that's what's up! If we turn to and work like niggers we can get it to pieces and put it together again outside before he comes; but I could never do it myself in the time, so I came."

"Whew!" whistled Piggy. "You did right. Give me time to get a few more clothes on, and I'm with you. Now tell me, did you see anyone outside who looked in the least like a policeman?"

"There's no good our trying to deceive ourselves, Piggy," replied Jack. "I'm pretty certain I did. He was a tall man, in a sort of nondescript rig, suit of dittoes, worn like a uniform, big boots, thick stick, and flat cap. If he was not a detective, all I can say is that I don't know the marks of one."

"Where was he?" "Two doors from here, just where he would have the best view of my old diggings. I was so full of the idea of getting you to come at once to the studio, that I had blundered right into him, and what was worse blundered on and knocked at this door before I had exactly tumbled to who—that is, what he must be. I'm a trobly-distilled kind of idiot, and you ought to kick me."

"Fiddlesticks! Jack," said Piggy heartily. "Where would be the fun of our life if there was no excitement and where would be the excitement if there was no danger? We'll spoof master tee. all right, never fear."

"Perhaps he did not recognize me," suggested Jack; "my beard, you know."

"He wasn't sure of you, that's evident," replied Piggy, "or he would have tried to collar you there and then. But I don't think we will trust too much to the beard, Jack; that's well enough for a casual encounter, but with a trained detective, whose one business in life at present is to look for Mr. Jack Demerse, and no one else, it is a different matter. No, I think our only

safe plan is to assume, that he has seen you, and has recognized you or, if not that, has noticed a man very like what Jack Demerse with a beard would be, go into No. 16, Ratcliffe Street, at two o'clock in the morning, and act accordingly. It will delay us half an hour."

"How?" "Simply, Jack, that this house must know me no more. There will be pretty minute enquiries about the tenant here tomorrow morning; and, though I don't think they will find out much against me, the enquiries will not stop there; probably a watch will be kept, and I—well, I, my dear Jack, am of a far too modest and retiring disposition to wish to have my goings and comings known to New Scotland Yard. Fortunately nothing is lost. I will leave here in my clergyman rig, and take a valise full of things with me. I shall be leaving nothing traceable, and nothing of any importance."

"Your money?" "There will be no danger in cashing a cheque by messenger tomorrow morning," replied Piggy. "Now, Jack, I am going through all my drawers; you go over to the fireplace and burn the papers one after the other that I shy over to you."

So they worked for some twenty minutes or half an hour. Then they were ready to start. Piggy first, carrying the valise, had his hand on the door-knob, when suddenly a sharp double-knock at the door made him stop. They were in darkness, but he instantly grabbed Jack's wrist as a command for perfect silence, then laid his own ear to the keyhole. Getting up he whispered—

"Back, Jack! Upstairs quickly! There are two of them there at least—more, I fear." Arrived at Piggy's flat they locked the door.

"That's two doors," said Piggy. "And now we'll put a couple more between us, which they'll have to break down if they want to follow us."

"We're going by the trap door?" asked Jack. "Yes, it's as easy as stairs; you know, I'd had everything prepared for an emergency like this ever since I came here. Come on, shine up your electric torch, while I lock this door—"

"That's it. Tow to the right, and here we are." Jack held his electric light while Piggy lowered the ladder which led to the trap door in the roof. Sounds of battering on the front door came continuously.

"What about the book-binder?" asked Jack. "Won't he hear, and let them in?" "Bookbinder's taking an Easter trip to Margate with his family," replied Piggy, as he cast off the turns of the rope. "We deserved a little luck. Up you get, Jack; I'm going to try to get the valise away if I can. I can easily drop it, if we have to run."

But Piggy's arrangements were much too perfect for any such necessity. Ropes, well knotted, with hooks for hooking round projections, were ready in the garret. Ten minutes careful climbing brought them to a point over the yard of an empty house, and five minutes later they were quietly walking away in a street car not even in view of the

door where the constables were still knocking. A respectable clergyman and a manly looking young Australian, chatting amicably, and taking it in turns to carry a rather large valise. Anyone would have said one of the new Cecil Rhodes scholars and an Oxford coach!

(To be continued.)

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STORM AT SEA.

Queenstown, Nov. 23.—The steamer Oceanic which arrived here this morning from New York, Nov. 16, reported having been delayed by a severe gale and snowstorms. On account of the high seas she steamed only 250 knots on Nov. 18.

JUST ONCE TOO OFTEN.

Smuggler Caught With the Goods at Huntingdon, Quebec.

Huntingdon, Que., 23.—At this point of the frontier two railways pass over into Uncle Sam's domain, the G. T. R. from Montreal to Massena, and the New York Central from Montreal to New York. Although the customs house officers on both sides of the line are most vigilant in their search for dutiable goods, yet it is suspected that many thousands of dollars worth of goods are smuggled over every year. Not long ago one of the Canadian customs officers who runs between Malone, N. Y., and Valleyfield on the New York Central, noticed a man carrying two large sized valises had passed back and forth several times at intervals during the summer. The officer was certain that he had not seen the man on the train when passing through on his search soon after coming into Canada, but that he always appeared to get on before reaching Valleyfield, so he made up his mind to wait and watch his opportunity. One day not long since the officer saw his man with the valises again passing south towards New York, and he watched for his return. Several days afterwards the officer saw him on the platform of a wayside station near Huntingdon, about to board the train. After the train started again he passed into the next car in search of his man, and found him acting in a rather suspicious manner, trying to keep out of sight. The officer at once approached him, and searched the valises, when he found valuable silks and other costly fabrics, valued at several hundred dollars, which he confiscated. It seems that this man had been in the habit of having some one drive him over with a team from the American side to some way station on the Canadian side, in order to elude the custom officers. But he tried it once too often.

IS THERE A MATTER TO WHICH YOU THINK PUBLIC ATTENTION SHOULD BE CALLED? TELL THE TIMES ABOUT IT.

Lady (looking for an apartment)—I'd like to see the janitor, please. Assistant—Did you have an appointment with him?—(Brooklyn Life.)



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