

Two Blooming

The Adventures of
Two Criminals.

Bay Trees.

BY
DOUGLAS WINTON.

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

(Continued.)

And he had found the one weak link in the whole chain—the smell of the acid, and had provided against it in a way so perfect that no one but Piggy would ever have thought of it. He must have purchased a large trunk, and clothes to fill it, specially to have it placed in the baggage-room. Somehow, perhaps by clockwork, but more probably by using a stopper composed of something that would take a certain known time to dissolve—no sort of difficulty to a chemist like Piggy—he had arranged that a bottle of nitric acid should break, or leak, in it a few hours after stowing. So here was a perfectly plausible and reasonable explanation of the smell of nitric acid in the baggage-room, and Jack might go on with his work in tranquillity; no more danger on that score, at any rate, to be apprehended.

When his watch told him that he had waited long enough, Jack once more dismantled his apparatus; but this time caught all, or at any rate all he could, of the acid which oozed out on a cloth; then scrambled up the cloth in the tin which had held his protene biscuits. The new fumes of the acid were thus materially mitigated, and as soon as he had one of them emptied of its gold, he intended to place the tin in a specie-chest. As he had hoped, the iron where the acid had had access to it was quite rotted through, so much so indeed, that as he took up the chisel again he was a little afraid lest, with the first blow, the whole disc should fall outwards into the specie room, and make more noise than he cared about. However, he had his little steel rod through the central hole by which he could hold it, and, by doing his cutting very carefully, the top of the circle first, he was able to bend the disc of iron back into his box, and finally to tumble it on to the cushion of Willesden canvas wallets without much noise.

"Now," he said, "for an inspection of the specie-room!"

CHAPTER XII.

The "Sofian"—Complete Success. The size of the hole was none too big; it had been made rather small purposely, in order that the disc of metal removed might not be too heavy to handle; but Jack was soon through standing in the specie-room, and reaching back into his box for the electric light, which, with its dry battery, was detachable. However, he did no more than flash it round to get his bearings, then extinguished it, and, climbing cautiously over the little chests of gold, made his way to

the stair, or ladder, which formed the exit into the captain's cabin. Ascending noiselessly—he was wearing rubber-soled shoes—he knelt down on the top step, his ear against the door, and listened. It seemed to him that he could hear something—slight movements, as of a person alone; then came the unmistakable sound of liquid poured into a glass; afterwards he could distinguish the occasional tinkle of knife or fork on china; some one was eating. This was a nuisance; but at the same time he made another discovery which was altogether happy, and more than offset the inconvenience of having to wait till the captain (as he supposed) had finished his meal. He had noticed that, though the cabin was occupied, no light came under the door; now feeling with his finger, he found that the door-frame, as is indeed generally the case with steel and iron doors in modern ships, though he did not know it, was lined with rubber; and there was no key-hole through. This was more than he had dared hope. He had been prepared to block up the crack of the door and the key-hole, if there should be one, against light; but he had been doubtful as to his ability to block them against the fumes of the acid. And though the bottle broken in the Rev. John Hawtree's portmanteau was all right to explain the presence of these in the baggage-room, it could hardly be held to account for even a slight smell penetrating to the captain's cabin from the specie-room. He had pinned his faith on the fumes being fainter now, on the cabin being unoccupied, and, for the rest, to luck. And the luck had come! Here was the door hermetically sealed, and he need have no further anxiety.

He now found out that the person dining was not the captain. A rap, and then, in response to "Come in!" a step, and the query:

"Captain asks if you have all you want, sir?"

"Yes, thanks; and you may tell the captain that I shall be up on the bridge again in ten minutes."

"Very good, sir."

So this must be the pilot. Of course, while in the Channel neither he nor the captain would go down to the saloon, so they were dining one at a time in the captain's cabin. It remained to be seen whether the captain had dined or had yet to dine.

was now eight o'clock.

He turned on his lamp, descended the ladder, and surveyed the boxes of gold; as he had expected, to open them would be mere child's play. Not that they were not solidly made on the contrary, they were good substantial little oak chests, iron-bound and with good locks; but all that, of course, availed nothing against his tools. He selected a four-foot screw-pieced jemmy, set his light down conveniently, and tackled his first. Cr-r-ack! the lid sprang back, and it was open. Inside was a lining of thick lead foil, which he easily cut round with his pocket-knife, below that, neatly packed in rouleaux, was the gold. He would have liked to have stopped to look at it, but it was no time to dandle, so he placed the open chest to one side; it was very heavy, but he could just lift it, and began on number two. When he had finished ten, the idea came to him that it would be a good thing to know at what rate exactly he was getting on; accordingly, on the second ten he timed himself. He commenced the eleventh chest at eighteen minutes past eight, and had finished the twentieth at the half hour. Twelve minutes for ten boxes, a minute and a fraction a box, and there were two hundred and thirty more to open. He made a rapid calculation. At that rate, even allowing a little for contingencies, he ought to have finished them all before one in the morning. Then there would be the packing the gold into the wallets, and the getting the wallets at the door of the baggage-room; but, long before that, he would have Piggy to help him; at any rate, what he had to do now was to go ahead at his best speed. So he spat on his hands and buckled to. He only stopped once about eleven, when he rested for ten minutes and opened a second flask of the cyclist's mixture; then he went at it again, harder than ever. Eight bells struck for midnight, and he never noticed it; nor did he hear Piggy's signal until it was repeated for the third time, and then only because he chanced to be pausing a minute to screw a fresh end on to his jemmy.

As soon as he had heard and returned the signal, Jack put down his jemmy, and, taking his lamp in his hand, crept once more through the hole in the bulkhead into his case, which he proceeded to denude of the panels forming the three sides, which up till now had remained intact. The case was now nothing but a top and bottom, kept apart by a strong steel cubical frame. Through the interstices between the luggage, surrounding it came, rather muffled, but quite distinct, Piggy's voice.

"Jack!"

"Yes."

"I'll switch off mine, I can see a little sort of glint of light; you seem to have got a good place, more or less in the corner?"

"Right in the very corner."

"Good! How are you getting on?"

"An hour more."

"Go back to work at once, Jack; we've less time than I thought. I'll occupy myself clearing away to your hole. I've got a screw-jack and everything I need."

"Don't get jammed by a box, Piggy, whatever you do," said Jack.

"Never fear. I'll be careful; now you get back and bustle all you know. Jack, I'll have cleared a way for us both, and for the swag, and be with you in half an hour."

In fact, a few minutes less than that time had elapsed when, just as Jack finished opening the last of the chests, Piggy's clean-shaven face still with a something beaming and clerical about it, though the spectacles no longer adorned the nose, made its appearance at the hole. He climbed through, and the two friends shook hands heartily.

"By Jove, Piggy," said Jack, "I thought I was a goner when that fellow came into the baggage-room and began to swear at the smell. However did we come to overlook that?"

"Don't know," Piggy replied; "it's just one more example of the fact that one can never be sure that one has thought of everything; however, the important thing is that I did think of it in time, and found a remedy. I tell you, Jack, you've no idea how I raced about London to buy that portmanteau and things to fill it. I fixed up the acid bottle with a soluble stopper of my own invention in the back parlor of a kindly chemist, and completed the final packing of the portmanteau in a four-wheel cab. But, hang it all, Jack! where would be the fun in our life if there were no chances to take? It's in pulling things through in spite of everything that the merit comes in; as we are pulling this through, eh, Jack?"

"Bet your boots, Piggums," replied Jack laughing. "How did you get in—file a key?"

"No need. I used the baggage-man's; a great fat, honest, lusty brute, who now reposes with six glasses of whisky and quite a nice little dose of morphine inside him, snoring like a pig in my berth."

"But what is the great need of hurry, all of a sudden?" asked Jack.

"Why have we less time than we thought?"

"Because this ship, the Sofian," replied Piggy, "is a perfect replica of your old friend the Belgradian, in all points but one—speed. She steams nearly two knots faster than her sister, and, as a consequence, we shall come to an anchor at Southampton about half-past three. It's better for us, in one way, because it will be still quite dark then. But now, Jack, enough of talking; bundle those wallets over, and let's get on; we've got to work double tides."

And work double tides they did; and, with two pair of hands, the wallet filling went on apace. At a quarter before two o'clock Piggy looked at the now small and rapidly diminishing pile of empty wallets and said—

"Here's about another half hour's work for you, Jack. I'll leave you to do it, while I rig up an affair I've thought of for hauling them out."

This was an endless pulley, passing over a block hooked on to the side of the hole that Jack had made in the specie-room bulkhead, and another block out by the baggage-room door.

By a liberal use of his screw-jack Piggy had cleared a sort of way through the pile of cases, and where there was a sharp declivity, or an uneven place, he ruthlessly wrenched a board from the nearest case to form a bridge. Jack lifted a wallet through the hole, hooking it to a steel hook on the endless rope, Piggy stationed at the door of the baggage-room, hauled; and so, quick and fast, following each other like a flock of mountain goats, the wallets came skipping along, to be made into a pile just inside the baggage-room door. This was the easiest task that the two friends had had that night; and, at twenty minutes past three, the last wallet had been added to the pile. Almost at the same moment there was a great splash and a rattling of chain, and they knew that the Sofian was at anchor at Southampton.

(To be continued.)

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SAFETY BOARD

IN SESSION.

One Chemical Engine is on the Way and the Other Will Arrive Next Month.

At a meeting of the safety board yesterday afternoon the chemical engines were reported by J. J. Barry to have been delayed by difficulties in obtaining the specified wheels. One was stated to be on the way, and the other expected about the middle of December. It was decided to take over the Carleton electric light works on Dec. 1. A motion was passed that a reward of \$25 be offered for the conviction of anyone tampering with the fire alarm. Some reference to the recent private investigation of the charges against North End firemen was made.

Some communications were dealt with.

Thomas Ryan asked for a lease of lot No. 8, Fairville, offering \$25 a year. A fourteen-year lease was recommended.

An application was received for a lease on a lot 39x100 on the north side of Main street, Fairville, next to O. D. Hanson's. The offer was \$1,100. The director said that the lot was known as the Cameron lot, and was taken over by the city for \$1,300 in 1895, and brought in \$145 a year. The application was refused.

Robert W. Carson applied for a renewal of lease of lots 1087-9, Brookside ward. This was referred to Ald. Bullock, Tilley, Frink and the director.

The petition of Sergt. Hipwell for half pay during eight days' illness in September, was recommended granted.

Fire department matters were also discussed.

In connection with the charges against the firemen of north end, Ald. Maxwell, the chairman said the report was in the hands of the common clerk, and members could see it. He thought it should be submitted to the council and the press would then get it in the ordinary way.

The federal election returns for Nova Scotia, which have all been received at Ottawa, show a vote of 54,873 for the Liberals, 46,689 for the Conservatives and 2,479 for the Independents, giving the Liberals a majority of 8,184 over the Conservatives and of 5,705 over the Conservatives and Independents combined. This is the only province which is completed.

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