

Two Blooming

The Adventures of
Two Criminals.

BY
DOUGLAS WINTON.

Bay Trees.

(Continued.)

CHAPTER X.

The "Sofian" A Ruse as Old as the Siege of Troy.

John Macklin, the burly baggage-man of the ss. Sofian, was a good man, but a confirmed grouser. And not altogether without reason; passengers might be a little more considerate, a little more careful not to give quite unnecessary trouble.

Certainly the steamboat company does its best to make things easy and simple. When a passenger takes his ticket, the clerk hands him at the same time, and with full explanations, a packet of labels, which labels are gaily colored, plainly printed, gummed on the back, and of three kinds. Kind the first is marked Cabin, and is for small articles wanted continually on the voyage—valises, suit cases, dressing-cases, and the like. All baggage so marked is carried down to its owner's cabin immediately on its arrival on board. A second kind of label is inscribed Not Wanted, and is for all heavy baggage, packing-cases, and the like, which will not be required on the voyage at all. The company requests that all such may be sent on board at least twenty-four hours before sailing, so that they may be stowed away right at the back of the baggage-room. The third label is marked wanted on voyage, and is for articles of personal luggage too cumbersome to go conveniently into the cabins, but to which their owners will want to have access occasionally. These go in the baggage-room, near the entrance.

One would think that no one older than a baby or snorer than an Earlewood inmate could make a mistake. But they do, bless you! they do. They mark their crated bicycles and pianos "cabin," and the evening of the first day at sea they ask to have the whole baggage-room unstowed, as they need a "tooth-brush" out of a "two-ton packing-case at the back! As a passenger line lives by pleasing its passengers, whenever possible this is done: when it simply can't be done, they write to the papers and abuse the company.

Still, Mr. Macklin, the baggage-man, need not have grouched so much as he did. But he was always ready to grouse: he was capable, if nothing better offered, of grouching because he had nothing to grouse about—that was the sort of chap he was. It was the day before sailing. The Sofian was still alongside the company's wharf; two huge drays of passengers' heavy baggage had just been given up; a party on deck were employed striking them down with the

aid of a derrick, and Mr. Macklin and a couple of sailors were stowing them away in the baggage-room as they arrived.

"Well, Johnny, 'ere's one gen'l'man 'as 'ad the kindness to send 'is ditty box aboard in time for you to get it stowed away nice an' comf'able, at all events," said one of the sailors, as he cast the slings of an enormous deal packing-case which had just come down the hatchway.

"And I'll bet yer a pint o' four four-arl that by the second morning 'e'll be cryin' 'o'ave the 'ole baggage-room took apart to get the baby's pap bottle out of it," grumbled Mr. Macklin, as he bent his brawny back to the work of helping to push it along the alley way towards the baggage-room. Well, if 'e does, th' bleeder can wait."

"Dry up, yer bloody old grouser," said the sailor. "Where yer goin' ter 'ave it?"

"'Ere."

"What, in th' corner?"

"Next ter th' corner; leave a space fer that there long flat 'un ter go against th' bulk 'ead."

"Right yer are," said the sailor. "Come along there, down below!" called the first officer's voice from the top of the hatchway; "we're all waiting for you, up here."

The long, thin case, as a matter of fact a valuable picture, crated, going out to adorn the town mansion of some South American magnate, was taking up the middle of the hatchway, and preventing the deck party from sending down anything more till it was carried away. To do this Mr. Macklin and both sailors were needed. However, the three of them were not long in tackling it, and soon had it shoved as far as the baggage-room door.

"Now, then, fist 'er round there," said Mr. Macklin, "over there to the corner, where we left a— Well, I'm—"

"What's up?" asked the second sailor, the one who had not helped with the big packing-case.

"'Ere, Bill," said Mr. Macklin, ignoring him and addressing his mate, "that ain't 'ow we left that there case!"

"Well, I thought as we left it a little ways out from the corner, for sure," said Bill, surveying it with a puzzled expression, and scratching his head.

"Oh, gawn! what yer giving us?" asked the second sailor disgustedly; "p'raps yer'll tell me it's got up an' walked."

"'Ere, Johnny, where'll yer 'ave this bleedin' case? That's the question afore th' court, I take it. Look out! 'Ere's the First!"

"Do you think the company pays you fellows to work, or to conduct a damned debating society?" asked

the first officer, who, dissatisfied with the rate at which the baggage was being stowed away, had come down to see what was the matter. Now, seamen with a reputation for sobriety—or at any rate, for sobriety on duty—to lose, do not tell chief officers stories about heavy packing-cases getting up and walking any more than ship captains, who value their employment, like to tell stories of sea-serpents. So the big case was left in the corner, and the flat case put on top of it, and other cases piled against it, and so the mountain of luggage grew, and Mr. Macklin and his mates, with new problems of neat stowage constantly arising, forgot all about the curious case which moved by itself. But that evening, going ashore for a last glass at the Crown and Anchor, Mr. Macklin got into a heated—and even, at one phase, a physical—argument on the subject of table-turning. Mr. Macklin was the believer, the other man the sceptic. Those who lament the unbelieving age in which we live will be glad to hear that Mr. Macklin's was the first that prevailed. It was the sceptic who went on board with a black eye.

The next morning the ship cast off, and took up a berth in the stream off Tilbury. Early in the afternoon came the tender, with passengers from the special boat train; and, as soon as they were on board, the anchor was hove up, and the big ship swung round and started off for Southampton, where she would take on board her mails and other passengers, to make no other halt until, nearly three weeks later, she would cast anchor in her South American port of destination. From two till five Mr. Macklin was busy getting the "wanted on voyage" trunks out of the alley ways, and stowed, as neatly as he could, in the baggage-room. This time he was alone, as these trunks were not above one man's power—when the man was as brawny a specimen as Mr. Macklin—to handle.

"Rather hot?" said a bland, polite, slightly affected voice behind him.

Looking round, Mr. Macklin saw that he was being addressed by a passenger, a pink and white, pretty, pensive, and a trifle portly specimen of the genus curate, species common of Anglican, who, standing in front of cabin 132, was blandly and interestedly surveying his, Mr. Macklin's struggles with a big portmanteau.

The first answer that rose to Mr. Macklin's lips need not be particularized, especially as he did not give it utterance; it will be sufficient to say that it was rude. However, one makes allowances for curates, and there was something about this curate

that suggested beer—that is, if he were properly handled; so Mr. Macklin, repressing his initial impulse to make the retort obvious—and discourteous—stood up from the portmanteau, passed the back of his hand across his forehead, and replied, as pleasantly as he ever did reply, and that is not saying too much—

"'O! you're right, sir! 'ot—'and dry! I earns my money, I do; not like preachin'."

Mr. Macklin could not be really polite, even with beer in prospect. But the Rev. John Hawtree, such being the name in which cabin No. 132 was booked, was not going to take offence.

"That I'm sure you do," he said "I shall look forward to hearing all about your life and your work on board. You see, this is my cabin, and I suppose you are often working here?"

"Mr. Macklin had 'Baggage-man' in white on his cap-band, and the door that stood open behind him bore the inscription, 'Baggage-room' in black, so the inference was obvious.

"Don't git much time for conversatsi-hony," Mr. Macklin began surlily, but the Rev. Mr. Hawtree cut him short.

"Oh! not now, of course," he said. "I see you are busy. But later on say this evening, after the passengers' dinner—I shall be down here. I am the Rev. John Hawtree, and I am writing a book about life in the British Mercantile Marine, and you could give me a few facts. And—er—you could refresh yourself with a little something after your hard work."

He added, as if on an after-thought: "Just then, one of the officers appeared at the end of the alley way, and Mr. Macklin made a great show of continuing his task. But the Rev. John Hawtree saw that he would comply; so, not wishing at that point to prolong the conversation, he said—

"Well, at eight o'clock then," nodded pleasantly, and passed along the alley way towards the main hatchway.

The mate waited till the parson was out of hearing, then began to ask why the this, that, and the other Mr. Macklin did not get on with his work.

To follow the rest of the events that took place that night, the reader should first devote a few minutes attention to the following plan of that part of the Sofian where the baggage-room, spec-room, and a few of the foremost of the first-first-class passengers' cabins were situated. No door, it will be observed, opens into the spec-room, the only approach being from the deck above, where there is a way to descend from the captain's cabin.

The X in the corner of the baggage-room represents the place where the case had been put—at least, partly, it will be remembered, had put itself. To the case we will now revert.

Instead of going into his cramped quarters fresh, after a good night's rest, as he had hoped, poor Jack had had to go in tired out after a hard night's work. Then had come the long journey, the joltings, unendurable, and ultimately the arrival on board the ship, and the awful crash

with which he had landed at the bottom of the hatchway. But worse even than coming down the hatchway had been the progress along the alley way, rolled over and over by the brawny arms of Mr. Macklin and his assistants, while he held his breath, and prayed that the fittings of the case might hold good. And they did; the chains and springs, and rubber stirrups and hand-grips stood the test and performed their office; and though the discomfort was almost beyond words, not a bruise did he receive.

(To be continued.)

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Mayens—"Think not?"

Thinker—"No, I do not. Why, only yesterday, a little boy begged me to give him a nickel to buy his father a pair of pants. If clothing is really as cheap as that, I don't see any sense in talking about the high cost of living."

You might not think so, but Heeler has done quite a little to diminish bribery in politics. He has? Yes. Many a time when money intended to bribe voters has been placed in his hands he has kept as much of it as circumstances would permit.—Brooklyn Life.

LIQUOR MEN IN BOSTON,

Say They Will Work for
Temperance, but Not
Prohibition.

Boston, Nov. 23.—A large meeting of liquor dealers was held yesterday afternoon in Paine memorial hall, Appleton street, for the purpose as outlined by the presiding officer, "of elevating and benefiting the traffic and eliminating the objectionable features surrounding the saloon and the sale of intoxicating liquors." Notice of the meeting was sent to the trade from the office of the Massachusetts wine and spirits dealers' association.

In his opening remarks President W. A. Miller said that the organization was firmly nonpolitical and in no way interested in the welfare of any political party. He said: "All we ask for is legislation which is fair to our trade. We are not here to plan a campaign against any person or any party. We do not antagonize the honest, earnest temperance people, but we want to work hand in hand with them. Intemperance does not help our trade, but it does greatly injure it. We do not antagonize the few fanatics who conduct what they call the anti-saloon league. Our business is recognized and legalized by the laws of the community, which are made by the will of the majority of the people, and we ask that we be given a fair and honest chance to conduct our business honestly and profitably without unjust interference by unfair legislation."

Edwin F. Hollis, counsel for the association, said, in speaking of the organization's growth and hopes: "Not a dollar has been nor will be spent for legislation, and if we cannot win our ends by fair means then we will go down to an honorable defeat."

Mr. Hollis explained that the plan is to organize the grade of the entire state under one big head, located in this city. Among the things the association will try to bring about he said, are the repeal of the abutments and the semi-colon laws, and possibly a general revision of the liquor laws.

Following Mr. Hollis there were a large number of speakers, including T. F. Connor of Roxbury, Frederick McGrath, Rollin Jones, John Sullivan, Alderman Patrick Bowen, Thomas Burke and George B. Hugo.

Among other things it was urged by the speakers that members take no part in political fights, and to go no farther than to see that their employes are registered. Support of candidates who are favorable to the trade's interests was also encouraged.

Each man had something to say of the benefits of the organization and the manner in which it might be made larger and strengthened. Each gave his opinion and had plenty of good advice to offer. At the conclusion those who had not joined became members upon payment of their fees. Another meeting is soon to be held.



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