

tinent and is now undergoing a little mild punishment."

"M—m—yes," hesitated the detective; "pardon my asking, but isn't this the gaol where the man Gallers died?"

"It is," said the governor coldly; "he had a fit or a something."

"He was undergoing some punishment," said Fells, in the reflective tone of one striving to recollect a circumstance.

"It was stated so by irresponsible people," said the governor roughly.

He took down his hat from a peg and put it on. "It was said he was being punished in the same manner that Amber is—that he became ill and was unable to ring the bell—but it was a lie."

"Of course," said the polite detective.

The governor led the way through the spotless corridors up the steel stairs to the landing whereon Amber's cell was situated. He turned the key and entered, followed by the detective. Amber was sitting on a wooden stool when the cell door opened. He did not trouble to rise until he saw Fells. Then he got up with difficulty.

"Now, Mr. Fells, if you have anything to say to this man, you had better say it," said the governor.

"I think," Fells spoke hesitatingly, deferentially, but none the less emphatically, "I think I may have this interview alone—yes?"

The governor stiffened.

"If you would prefer it, of course," he said grudgingly, and turned to go.

"Excuse me," Fells laid his hand on the official's arm. "I would rather the irons were off this man."

"Attend to your business and allow me to attend to mine, Mr. Inspector," said the governor. "The code allows me the right to award punishment."

"Very good, sir," replied Fells. He waited until the door clanged and then turned to Amber.

"Mr. Amber," he said, "I have been sent down from the Home Office on a curious mission—I understand you are tired of prison?"

"Mr. Fells," said Amber wearily, "I have never found prison so dull as I do at present."

Fells smiled. From his pocket he produced a sheet of foolscap paper closely covered with entries.

"I've discovered your guilty secret," He shook the paper before the prisoner's eyes.

"A list of your convictions, my Amber," he mocked, but Amber said nothing.

"Never, so far as I can trace, have you appeared before a judge and jury." He looked up, but the man in front of him was silent, and his face was expressionless.

"And yet," the detective went on, "to my knowledge, you have been committed to seventeen gaols, on seventeen distinct and separate orders, each signed by a judge and counter-signed by the Home Office."

He waited, but Amber offered no comment.

"In 1901, you were committed to Chengford Gaol on an order signed at Devizes. I can find no record of your having been brought before a court of any description at Devizes."

Still Amber did not speak, and the inspector went on slowly and deliberately.

"At the time of your committal to Chengford, there had been all sorts of stories current about the state of affairs in the gaol. There had been a mutiny of prisoners, and allegations of cruelty against the governor and the warders."

"I remember something about it," said Amber carelessly.

"You were admitted on May 10. On August 1 you were released on an order from the Home Office. On August 3 the governor, the assistant governor and the chief warder were summarily suspended from their duties and were eventually drummed from the prison service."

He looked at Amber again.

"You surprise me," said Amber.

"Although you were released in August, and was apparently a free man, you arrived in the custody of warders at the Preston Convict Establishment on September 9. There

had been some trouble at Preston, I believe."

"I believe there was," said Amber gravely.

"This time," the detective continued, "it was on an order from the Home Office to complete sentence. You were six months in Preston Prison, and after you left, three warders were suspended for carrying messages to prisoners."

He ran his fingers down the paper.

"You weren't exactly a mascot to these gaols, Mr. Amber," he said ironically, "you left behind you a trail of casualties—and nobody seems to have connected your presence with gaps in the ranks."

A slow smile dawned on Amber's face.

"And has my chief inspector come amblin' all the way from London to make these startlin' and mysterious communications?"

The detective dropped his banter.

"Not exactly, Mr. Amber," he said, and the note of respect came to his voice which had so unaccountably irritated the governor. "The fact is, you've been lent."

"Lent?" Amber's eyebrows rose.

"You've been lent," repeated the detective. "The Home Office has lent you to the Colonial Office, and I am here to effect the transfer."

Amber twiddled his manacled hands restlessly.

"I don't want to go out of England just now," he began.

"Oh yes, you do, Mr. Amber, there's a River of Stars somewhere in the world, and a cargo of roguery on its way to locate it."

"So they've gone, have they?"

He was disappointed and did not attempt to disguise the fact.

"I hoped that I should be out in time to stop 'em, but that racket has nothing to do with the Colonial Office."

"Hasn't it?"

Fells went to the wall where the prisoner's bell was, and pushed it. Two minutes later the door swung open.

"There's another visitor, who will explain," he said, and left the exasperated Amber muttering rude things about government departments in general and the Home Office in particular.

In ten minutes the door opened again.

Amber was not prepared for his visitor, and as he sprang awkwardly to his feet, he went alternately red and white. The girl herself was pale, and she did not speak until the door closed behind the warders. That brief space of time gave Amber the opportunity to recover his self-possession.

"I fear that I cannot offer you the courtesies that are due to you," he said. "For the moment my freedom of movement is somewhat restricted."

She thought he referred to his presence in prison, and half smiled at the politeness of a speech so out of all harmony with the grim surroundings.

"You are probably surprised to see me, Mr. Amber," she said. "It was in desperation that I went to the Home Office to endeavour to secure an interview with you—there is one else in the world knows so much of this expedition and the men who have formed it."

"Did you find any difficulty in obtaining permission?" There was an odd twinkle in Amber's eye which she did not observe.

"None—or almost none," she said. "It was very wonderful."

"Not so wonderful, my lady," said Amber. "I'm an old client: anything to oblige a regular customer."

She was looking at him with pain in her eyes.

(To be continued.)

Nothing Showed.—A veteran, talking to his great-grandson, a little lad of eight or nine years, remarked: "Nearly a generation and a half ago my head was grazed by a bullet at the battle of Chickamauga." The little boy looked at the old man's head thoughtfully and said: "There isn't much grazing there now, is there, sir?"—The Argonaut.

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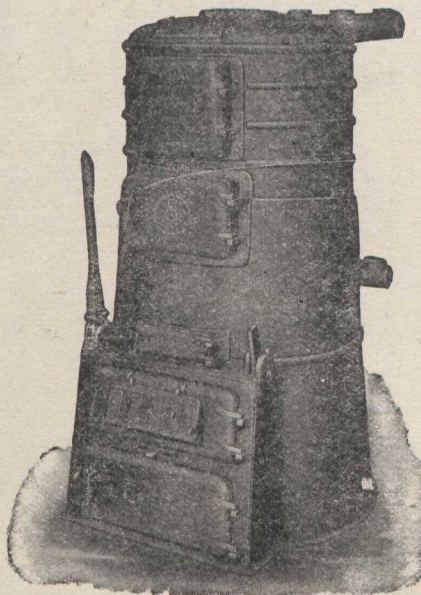
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