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Major Bliss was sitting at his desk, a burnt little man with a small black moustache and hair that had gone grey at the temples.

With a nod he dismissed the warder. "75," he said briefly, "you are going out to-morrow, on a Home Office order."

"Yes, sir," said Amber. The Governor was thoughtfully silent for a moment, drumming his fingers noiselessly on his blotting-pad.

"What are you going to do?" he demanded suddenly.

Amber smiled. "I shall pursue my career of crime," he said cheerfully, and the Governor frowned and shook his head.

"I can't understand you—haven't you any friends?"

Again the amused smile. "No, sir," Amber was even more cheerful than before. "I have nobody to blame for my detection but myself."

The Major turned over some sheets of paper that lay before him, read them, and frowned again.

"Ten convictions!" he said. "A man of your capacity—why, with your ability you might have been—"

"Oh no, I mightn't," interrupted the convict, "that's the gag that judges work, but it's not true. It doesn't follow because a man makes an ingenious criminal that he would be a howling success as an architect, or because he can forge a cheque that he would have made a fortune by company promotion. An ordinary intelligent man can always shine in crime because he is in competition with very dull-witted and ignorant fellow craftsmen."

He took a step forward and leant on the edge of the desk.

"Look here, sir, you remember me at Sandhurst; you were a man of my year. You know that I was dependent on an allowance from an uncle who died before I passed through. What was I fit for when I came down? It seemed jolly easy the first week in London, because I had a tenner to carry on with, but in a month I was starving. So I worked the Spanish prisoner fraud, played on the cupidity of people who thought they were going to make an immense fortune with a little outlay—it was easy money for me."

The Governor shook his head again.

"I've done all sorts of stunts since then," 75 went on reminiscently. "I've worked every kind of trick," he smiled as at some pleasant recollection. "There isn't a move in the game that I don't know; there isn't a bad man in London I couldn't write the biography of, if I was so inclined. I've no friends, no relations, nobody in the world I care two penn'orth of gin about, and I'm quite happy: and when you say I have been in prison ten times, you should say fourteen."

"You're a fool," said the Governor, and pressed a bell.

"I'm an adventuring philosopher," said 75 complacently, as the warder came in to march him back to his cell.

Just before the prison bell clanged the order for bed, a warden brought him a neat bundle of clothing.

"Look over these, 75, and check them," said the officer pleasantly. He handed a printed list to the prisoner.

"Can't be bothered," said Amber, taking the list. "I'll trust to your honesty."

"Check 'em."

Amber unfastened the bundle, unfolded his clothing, shook them out and laid them over the bed.

"You keep a man's kit better than they do in Walton," he said approvingly, "no creases in the coat, trousers nicely pressed—hullo, where's my eyeglass?"

He found it in the waistcoat pocket, carefully wrapped in tissue paper, and was warm in his praise of the prison authorities.

"I'll send a man in to shave you in the morning," said the warden and lingered at the door.

"75," he said, after a pause, "don't you come back here."

"Why not?"

Amber looked up with his eyebrows raised. "Because this is a mug's game," said the warder. "A gentleman like you! Surely you can keep away from a place like this!"

Amber regarded the other with the glint of a smile in his eyes.

"You're ungrateful, my warder," he said gently. "Men like myself give this

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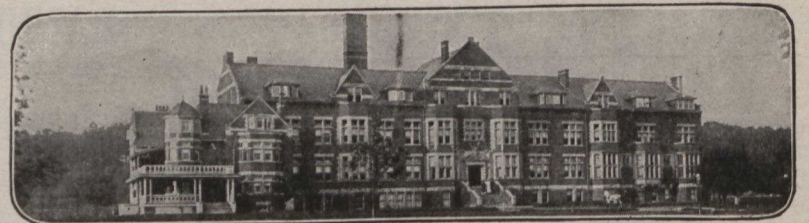
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