

my blameless path as a T square." He observed the quick, professional "look over" the man gave him. The plates were showing out of his pocket he knew, and the next remark might easily be a request for information regarding the contents of the flat package. His eye roved for a means of escape, and a slow moving taxicab attracted him. He raised his hand and whistled.

"Doin' the heavy now, are you?" asked the constable disapprovingly.

"In a sense I am," said Amber, and without moving he addressed the chauffeur who had brought his machine to the kerb.

"I want you to take me to New Scotland Yard," he said; then addressing the policeman, he asked, "Do you think Chief Inspector Fell will be on duty?"

"Inspector Fell"—there was a note of respect in the constable's voice—"I couldn't say, we don't know very much about the Yard people—what are you going to see him about?"

"I am afraid I cannot appease your curiosity, my officer," said Amber as he stepped into the cab, "but I will inform the chief inspector that you were anxious to know."

"Here, Amber, none of that!" said the alarmed policeman, stepping to the edge of the pavement, and laying his hand upon the door. "You're not going to say that?"

"Not a bit," Amber grinned, "my little joke; honour amongst policemen, eh?"

The cab made a wide circle, and Amber, looking back through the little back window, saw the policeman standing in that indefinable attitude which expresses doubt and suspicion.

It was a close shave, and Amber breathed a sigh of relief as the danger slipped past. He had ten minutes to decide upon his plan. Being more than ordinary nimble of wit, his scheme was complete before the cab ran smoothly over Westminster Bridge and turned into New Scotland Yard. There was an inspector behind a desk, who looked up from a report he was writing.

"I want to see Mr. Fell," said Amber.

"Name?"

"Amber."

"Seem to know it,—what is the business?"

For answer, Amber laid one hand on the polished counter that separated him from the officer, and placed two fingers diagonally across it.

THE inspector grunted affirmatively and reached for the telephone.

"An outside—to see Mr. Fell. . . . Yes." He hung up the receiver.

"Forty-seven," he said; "you know your way up."

It happened that Amber did not possess this knowledge, but he found no difficulty in discovering number forty-seven, which was a reception room.

He had a few minutes to wait before a messenger came for him and showed him into a plainly furnished office.

Very little introduction is needed to Josiah Fell, who has figured in every great criminal case during the past twenty years. A short, thick-set man, bald of forehead, with a pointed brown beard. His nose was short and retrouse, his forehead was bald, the flesh about his mild blue eyes was wrinkled and creased by much laughter. He was less like the detective of fiction than the unknowledgable would dare imagine.

He recognised Amber, and for a good reason, for he it was who had exposed the working of an interesting little fraud which, although it had been directed against the least scrupulous of outside brokers, and excited a great deal of private sympathy in police circles, was, nevertheless criminal—as Amber had discovered to his cost.

"Amber, by heavens!" said the detective.

He had a habit of using strong and unnecessary language.

"Amber, my boy, come in and firmey la porte. Well—?"

He unlocked a drawer and produced a box of cigars. He was always glad to meet his "clients," and Amber was an especial favourite of his.

"You'll have a cigar?"

"What's wrong with 'em?" asked Amber, cautiously selecting one.

"Nothing much," and as Amber lit the cheroot he had taken—"What do you want? Confession, fresh start in life—oh! of course, you've got somebody to put away; they telephoned up that you were doing outside work."

Amber shook his head.

"I told 'em that because I knew that would get me an interview without fuss,—an old convict I met in prison gave me the sign."

He took the packages from his pocket and laid them on the table.

"For me?" queried the officer.

"For you, my Hawkshaw," said Amber.

THE detective stripped the paper away, uttering an exclamation as he saw what the parcels contained.

"Gee—Moses!" He whistled long and softly. "Not your work, Amber? Hardly in your line, eh?"

"Hardly."

"Where did you get them?" Fell looked up quickly as he asked the question.

"That's the one thing I'm not going to tell you," said Amber quietly, "but if you want to know how I got them, I burgled an office and found them in a safe."

"When?"

"To-night."

The inspector pressed a bell and a policeman came into the room.

"Send an all station message: In the event of an office burglary being reported, keep the complainant under observation."

The man scribbled the message down and left.

"I send that in case you won't alter your mind about giving me the information I want."

"I'm not likely to tell you," said Amber decisively. "In the first place it won't help you much to know where they came from, unless you can find the factory." The inspector nodded. "When a gang can do work like this, they've usually got more than ordinary resources. If you went for them you'd only bite off a bit of the tail, but the rest of the body would go to earth quicker than money melts."

"I could put them under observation—" began the inspector.

"Pouf!" said Amber scornfully, "pouf, my inspector! Observation be blowed! They'd twig the observer in two shakes; they'd recognise his boots, and his moustache, and his shaven chin. I know your observers. I can pick 'em out in the crowd. No, that's not my idea." Amber hesitated, and appeared to be a little ill at ease.

"Go on, have another cigar, that will help you," encouraged Fell, and opened the box.

"I thank you, but no," said Amber firmly. "I can talk without any such drastic inducements. What I want to say is this; you know my record?"

"I do," said Fell; "or I think I do, which amounts to the same thing."

"My Chief Inspector," said Amber with some severity, "I beg you to apply your great intellect to a matter which concerns you. A flippant and a careless interest in the problem I am putting forward, may very well choke the faucet of frankness which at present is turning none too easily. In other words I am embarrassed."

He was silent for awhile; then he got up from the other side of Fell's desk, where he had sat at the detective's invitation, and began to pace the room.

"It's common talk throughout the prisons of England that there is a gang, a real swell gang, putting banknotes into circulation—not only English but foreign notes," he began.

"It is also common talk in less exclusive circles, Amber, my dear lad," said Fell dryly; "we want that gang badly." He picked up a plate, and held it under the light. "This looks good, but until we 'pull' it I cannot tell how good."

"Suppose"—Amber leant over the table and spoke earnestly—"suppose it is the work of the big gang,—suppose I can track 'em down—"

"Well?"

"Would you find me a billet at the Yard?"

(To be continued.)



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