

had been consulted more frequently than any other.

"Winter excursions to the Nether lands, eh?" said Whitey; "that's not a bad move, Lammie: no splits watch excursion trains."

The train left Holborn at a quarter to eleven by way of Queensborough-Flushing. He looked at his watch: it wanted five minutes to the quarter, and to catch that train seemed an impossibility. Then an idea came to him. There was a telephone in the hall of the boarding-house usually well patronized. It was his good luck that he reached it before another boarder came. It was greater luck that he got through to the traffic manager's office at Victoria with little delay.

"I want to know," he asked rapidly, "if the ten forty-five excursion from Holborn stops at any London stations?"

"Every one of 'em," was the prompt reply, "as far as Penge: we pick up all through the suburbs."

"What time is it due away from Penge?"

He waited in a fume of impatience whilst the official consulted a timetable.

"Eleven eighteen," was the reply.

There was time. Just a little over half an hour. He fled from the house. No taxi was in sight; but there was a rank at no great distance. He had not gone far, however, before an empty cab overtook him.

"Penge Station," he said. "I'll give you a sovereign over your fare if you get there within half an hour."

The chauffeur's face expressed his doubt.

"I'll try," he said.

Through London that day a taxi-cab moved at a rate which was considerably in excess of the speed limit. Clear of the crowded West End, the road was unhampered by traffic to any great extent, but it was seventeen minutes past eleven when the cab pulled up before Penge Station.

The train was already at the platform and Whitey went up the stairs two at a time.

"Ticket," demanded the collector. "I've no ticket—I'll pay on the train."

"You can't come on without a ticket, sir," said the man.

The train was within a few feet of him and was slowly moving, and Whitey made a dart, but a strong hand grasped him and pushed him back and the gate changed in his face.

He stood leaning against the wall, his face white, his fingers working convulsively.

Something in his appearance moved the collector.

"Can't be helped, sir," he said. "I had—"

He stopped and looked in the direction of the departing train.

Swiftly he leant down and unlocked the door.

"Here—quick," he said, "she's stopped outside the station—there's a signal against her. You'll just catch it."

The rear carriages were not clear of the platform and Whitey, sprinting along, scrambled into the guard's van just as the train was moving off again.

He sank down into the guard's seat. Whitey was a man of considerable vitality. Ordinarily the exertion he had made would not have unconvinced him, but now he was suffering from something more than physical distress.

"On me!" he muttered again and again, "to put them on me!"

It was not the loss of the money that hurt him, it was not Lambaire's treachery—he knew Lambaire through and through. It was the substitution of the notes and the terrible risk his estimable friend had inflicted on him.

In his cold way Whitey had decided. He had a code of his own. Against Amber he had no grudge. Such spaces of thought as he allowed him were of a complimentary character. He recognized the master mind, paid tribute to the shrewdness of the man who had beaten him at his own game.

Nor against the law which pursued him—for instinct told him that there would be no mercy from Amber now.

It was against Lambaire that his rage was directed. Lambaire, whose

right-hand man he had been in a score of nefarious schemes. They had been together in bogus companies; they had dealt largely in "Spanish silver"; they had been concerned in most generous systems of forgery. The very notes that Lambaire had employed to fool him with were part of an old stock.

The maker had committed the blunder of giving all the notes the same number.

"They weren't good enough for the public—but good enough for me," thought Whitey, and set his jaw.

The guard tried to make conversation, but his passenger had nothing to say, save "yes" or "no."

It was raining heavily when the train drew up at Chatham, and Whitey with his coat collar turned up, his hat pulled over his eyes and a handkerchief to his mouth, left the guard's van and walked quickly along the train.

The third-class carriages were sparsely filled. It seemed that the "winter excursion" was poorly patronized.

Whitey gave little attention to the thirds—he had an eye for the first-class carriages which were in the main empty. He found his man in the centre of the train—alone. He took him in with a glance of his eye and walked on. The whistle sounded and as the train began to glide from the platform he turned, opened the door of the carriage and stepped in.

There were other people who knew Lambaire was on the train. Amber came through Kent as fast as a 90 horse power car could carry him. He might have caught the train at Penge had he but known. It would have been better for two people if he had.

With him was a placid inspector from Scotland Yard—by name Fells.

"We shall just do it, I think," said Amber looking at his watch, "and any way you will have people waiting?"

The inspector nodded. Speaking was an effort at the pace the car was travelling.

He urged himself to the extent of expressing his surprise that Amber had troubled to take the journey.

**B**UT Amber, who had seen the start of the adventure, was no man to hear the end from another. He was out to finish the business, or see the finish. They reached the quay station as the excursion train came in and hurried along the slippery quay. Already the passengers were beginning their embarkation. By each gangway stood two men, watching.

The last passenger was aboard. "They could not have come," said Amber disappointedly. "If—"

At that moment a railway official came running toward them.

"You gentlemen connected with the police?" he asked, "there's something rum in one of these carriages—he led the way giving information incoherently, '... gentlemen won't get out.'"

They reached the carriage and Amber it was who opened the door.

"Come along, Whitey," he said quietly.

But the man who sat in one corner of the carriage slowly counting two thick packages of bank-notes took no notice.

"That's a good 'un," he muttered. "an' that's a good 'un—eh, Lammie? These are good—but the other lot was bad. What a fool—fool—fool! Oh, my God, what a fool you always was!"

He groaned the words, swaying from side to side as if in pain.

"Come out," said Amber sharply.

Whitey saw him and rose from his seat.

"Hullo, Amber," he said and smiled. "I'm coming—what about our River of Stars, eh? Here's a pretty business—here's money—look."

He thrust out a handful of notes and Amber started back, for they were spotted and blotted with blood.

"These are good 'uns," said Whitey. His lips were trembling, and in his colourless eyes there was a light which no man had ever seen. "The others were bad 'uns. I had to kill old Lammie—he annoyed me."

And he laughed horribly.

Under the seat they found Lambaire, shot through the heart.

THE END.

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