

# MAN WITH THE BRIGHT IDEAS.

## PENAL SERVITUDE ENDS A LONG RUN.

Special to "The People."

IN the seclusion of a prison to which he has been sent to serve a sentence of four years' penal servitude, Ernest William Tester, at the age of fifty, is doubtlessly reflecting that in a life of crime you cannot win.

Tester ought to know. He is no ordinary criminal. He has been used to operating on a big scale and has brought off some big coups.

But his last operation brought him to the Old Bailey. There, disclosures of what was described as a "gigantic conspiracy to defraud, were made. The conspiracy related to transactions with forged share certificates.

With Tester appeared John Malcolm Petrie, himself no innocent lamb, and Gerald Norman Corbett, a young man of hitherto unblemished character.

Tester, who pleaded guilty to forging share certificates of the Equitable Trust of London (Ltd.), was, as stated, sent to penal servitude, and Petrie, his lieutenant, was sentenced to eighteen months' hard labour for conspiring to obtain money by false pretences.

Corbett, who was a pawn in the game, escaped with six months in the second division for a similar offence.

Tester was really the "brains" of the gang.

His method of working was neat.

It was stated that the frauds were carried out with the assistance of a young man named Hammond, employed by the Equitable Trust of London (Ltd.), who was alleged to have stolen the certificate forms which Tester forged with the aid of Petrie.

### £22,000 in Advances.

These documents they were able to leave as security for advances of money reaching a total of £22,000. Hammond, who was also Tester's dupe, was convicted for his part in the affair at the Old Bailey some months ago, and was sentenced to six months in the second division.

Tester began his life of crime about 30 years ago.

It started soon after he had passed his twentieth birthday, when, as a junior clerk, he was convicted of theft and sentenced to four months' imprisonment.

Three years later a further long sentence killed his enthusiasm for the land of his birth, and he tried his luck in the East.

The Orient seemed to stimulate his imagination, and in both Cairo and Constantinople he ran various businesses of his own. Then he had the bright idea of raising large sums of money for the ostensible purpose of taking over the principal tanneries of Cairo. The idea was so bright, however, that it attracted the attention of the police, and for a while nothing further was heard of Ernest William Tester.

During the war Tester returned to this country and enlisted in the army. On his discharge he obtained a post in the Ministry of Munitions. But when whispers of his Egyptian exploits reached official ears Tester lost his job. That was in 1918.

But still full of bright ideas he returned to Egypt, where he formed a company to take over Cairo's Club in Cairo. This place gave Tester ample opportunity

to exercise his peculiar talents. It was frequented by many Army officers.

In Cairo Tester might have settled down to a fairly quiet life—for him. But after a year or so it was discovered that he was using club funds for his own purposes. And so once again he found himself on the run.

Tester's wife had invested £1,000 in the club venture, but she lost every penny of her money and her husband as well.

Then Tester came into touch with Hammond, and embarked upon a series of forgeries which has now resulted in his imprisonment.

The bright ideas continued, however, and he descended upon Ireland, where he formed a company which had for its object the floating of a gigantic sweepstake with a prize of £20,000.

Unfortunately for Tester, the Irish police nipped this little scheme in the bud, and Tester found himself under arrest. He was released on bail, but by then Ireland had lost its appeal for him, so he fled to England.

Here he refreshed his exchequer with a matter of £8,000 obtained from a firm in Leeds, and, still feeling the wanderlust upon him, took a trip on the Continent. His sojourn in France was spoiled by the police, however, who arrested him and held him until he was extradited on the charges which caused his appearance at the Old Bailey.

Now his wanderlust and his bright ideas have been curbed for four years at least.