

close, and his task that morning was to call on his client's solicitors to make a final report on a matter dealing with a forged will.

"You needn't come along to Gresham, Gresham & Wallace with me," he told Tommy. "It's going to be a thoroughly dull conference, and you'll be better employed filing all the data on this case. When I get back we'll add the final report to the file, and then go off for a few days' well-earned holiday."

Tommy set to work, his mind filled with the prospect of lazing on the beach and forgetting, for a few days, that crime and criminals existed. Time went by swiftly, and he was surprised to discover that Hawke had been away over an hour when the phone rang.

"Perkins here—clerk to Gresham, Gresham & Wallace," announced a voice from the other end. "Can I speak to Mr Dixon Hawke?"

"He's at your office!" exclaimed Tommy.

"He most certainly is not," came the quick reply. "My employers have been waiting for him for more than an hour. The appointment was for ten o'clock, and it is now a quarter-past eleven."

"But he left here at twenty to ten, giving himself plenty of time to get to Tavistock Square for the appointment," protested Tommy.

"Perhaps he called in somewhere else first and has been delayed."

"I don't think so. He had no other appointments this morning," declared Tommy.

Nevertheless, he rang Chief Detective-Inspector M'Phinney at Scotland Yard, only to learn that Hawke had

not been seen there. Calls to various other possible places produced the same result, for nobody had seen the detective. He seemed to have disappeared from the moment he left Dover Street.

### On the Jackdaw's Trail

**T**OMMY was growing anxious and considered ringing police stations and hospitals, in case his gov'nor had met with an accident, when the phone rang again.

"Is that young Tommy Burke?" queried a gay voice. "Jackdaw speaking—you know, the descendant of the little black bird that collected the cardinal's ring! Well, I've added a gem to my collection. I've got Dixon Hawke!"

"What do you mean?" demanded Tommy.

"What I say. You needn't look for Hawke any more. I've grabbed him, and I've got him sitting in my nest! Now, now, don't be rude, young fellow! I'm a peace-loving bird. I don't like violence."

The cheerful voice rattled on in a talkative manner, but Tommy was no longer listening. He had reached for the second telephone which stood on Hawke's desk and was whispering to the exchange. Keeping Jackdaw talking by interjecting a few remarks, he learned from the exchange that the crook was speaking from the public telephone at the bottom of Dover Street.

Putting the phone down quietly without ringing off, Tommy turned and ran. He scarcely expected the man to be still at the phone, no matter how quickly he moved, but

## The Laughing Jackdaw

snearing voice reached the young detective.

"Smart, ain't you? But not as smart as Jackdaw. You did just what he figured you would!"

Then as Tommy tried to grab the pipe, his dizziness increased. He could smell sickly, sweet fumes, and the interior of the cab seemed to spin round him. He tried to shout, to bang on the window—anything to attract the attention of the people outside—but instead he crumpled up in an insensible heap on the floor.

### Held to Ransom

**D**IXON HAWKE returned to Dover Street to find M'Phinney there.

"What on earth—" began the private detective, for Duncan M'Phinney was staring at him as though he had seen a ghost.

"Is this a joke of Tommy's?" demanded the Scotland Yard detective crossly. "He phoned me and said you'd gone missing. Then the phone exchange got in touch with me to say that he had rung them to trace a call made to this number from the public booth at the end of the road. He also wanted them to tell me that Jackdaw—that was the name—had collared you, and that he was after Jackdaw! Then you come strolling in as though nothing had happened! Where have you been?"

"At the office of Messrs Gresham, Gresham & Wallace, solicitors," replied Hawke. "I arrived there at five to ten, and left about fifteen minutes ago."

"B-but—" M'Phinney had a look of utter surprise on his face.

when he got there the booth was occupied. A tall man, with khaki trench-coat, collar turned up, and hat brim turned down, so that most of his face was hidden, was clattering the receiver rest up and down.

Tommy ventured into the adjoining call box, keeping his face averted.

"But look here, exchange, the phone has suddenly gone dead," he heard the man shouting. "It's no good you telling me that they haven't rung off, or that I am still connected—the fact remains that I am getting no reply. I am a patient man, but—"

Abruptly he slammed down the receiver and swung out of the call box. Tommy watched him hurry to where a large black saloon waited and slip in behind the wheel.

Luck certainly seemed to be with the young detective, for only a few paces away a taxi was standing with its flag up. He ran to it.

"Follow that car in front," he ordered, showing his card to the driver.

"Right-ho, Mr Burke. I'll stick to him like glue," replied the driver, and the taxi spurted forward after the Jackdaw's car.

Even as he moved, Tommy began to feel strange. A queer muzziness came over him, and it was as though the back of the taxi was full of mist. He looked vaguely about him. Somewhere he could hear a faint hissing, which he traced to a thin rubber pipe. This protruded through the open crack of the glass partition separating him from the driver.

As he reached for it, the driver turned his head for a quick look, and Tommy heard him laugh harshly. A