

Dixon Hawke's Case Book—No. 3

had staked everything on his knowledge of psychology.

The Dip is Freed.

IN the evening papers was a big story about the Dip and the finding of the wallet containing forged notes. The pickpocket was said to have given a description of the man he had robbed, and an arrest was expected shortly.

By the following morning Fleet Street had added to the previous account. The public was promised a sensation when the Dip was brought up before the magistrate.

"Sensation is right!" Hawke said to his assistant, Tommy Burke. "It will seem like fresh bungling when our little friend is released!"

"I am to follow him, chief?"

"As soon as he leaves the court—and don't let him out of your sight!"

Tommy Burke nodded. Shadowing was his speciality, and the Dip would be very clever if he managed to shake him off.

The police court was crowded when the little pickpocket was brought in. He had spent a sleepless night, and expected to be sent for trial on the serious charge. It was, therefore, with complete bewilderment that he heard Chief Inspector Baxter offer a very lame case against him.

Five minutes later Larry the Dip stepped from the dock a free man. He heard the magistrate inform the police that they had no right to bring a man before him on such scanty evidence.

"Cor!" spluttered the Dip. "That's one for old Baxter and Mr Bloomin' Dixon 'Awke!"

He turned up the collar of his ragged jacket against the London drizzle, and shuffled rapidly away up the street. The pickpocket did not notice a young fellow detach himself from a nearby doorway and follow him. Tommy Burke was on the trail.

At the top of the road the Dip halted and considered what he should do. He felt that it would be a good plan to get

out of London for a time. The police, he was sure, would be watching him.

"They never give a cove a chance," he mused. "They'll just 'ound me until they find a chance to pick me up again. Lumme, I ain't likely to have such luck as that again!"

A big car passed him slowly and pulled up. The door opened, and a foreign-looking man leaned out and beckoned. The Dip hesitated and then walked over.

"You were brought up on that foolish charge just now, weren't you?" the stranger said. His smile was friendly, but the Dip remained suspicious. "I happened to be in the courtroom," the man went on. "I am interested in people like you. If you had a chance of honest work, would you take it?"

"Like a shot!" said the Dip.

Out of the Frying-Pan—

THE stranger was a mission-worker, he thought. Generally he avoided people who busied themselves with the welfare of ex-prisoners, for work was something the little pickpocket did not appreciate. Just now, however, it might be a good plan to run straight.

"What kind of work?" he added, still a little doubtful.

"Get in and we'll discuss it!"

The Dip entered the car. There were two men in the back seat, and they drew apart to let him sit between them. The door slammed and the car purred away, followed a few moments later by a taxi which contained Tommy Burke as passenger.

One of the men in the car glanced out of the rear window and then lowered the blind. They were in the press of the London traffic, and the taxi had a perfect right to be behind them.

"I always wanted to go straight," the Dip was saying. As an old lag he knew how to handle mission-workers. "I ain't had a chance," he went on. "The police are 'ard on blokes like me. You 'eard what 'appened in the court—

The Pickpocket Decoy

"At the bottom of the road," the man said briefly.

"Thanks!"

Tommy Burke walked calmly away to make an urgent telephone call. He had changed cabs four times while shadowing the kidnappers of the Dip, and he had left the last one with engine running round the corner.

But he wouldn't need the cab again, for he had come to the end of the trail Dixon Hawke had told him to follow.

The Third Degree.

IN the house, Larry the Dip slumped in a chair, faced by three grim men, who no longer pretended to be interested in his welfare. The little pickpocket knew he was in a tighter corner than he had been at Scotland Yard. He watched his captors as a rabbit does a snake.

"What 'ave I done to you?" he whined. "Why did you bring me 'ere?"

"You lifted a wallet at Rushmoor Park on Friday!"

"I——"

"You told the police you would recognise the man you robbed!"

"It ain't true! I didn't see the cove. It 'appened in the crowd, and I just dipped the gent without looking at 'im!"

"The papers have another story!"

"It ain't true, I tell you! Besides, the cove I dipped was a crook. The money in that wallet was forged, and—— Lumme!"

The Dip understood at last. He understood the reason for the guns and the quiet house outside London. He was in the hands of the gang for whom the police of Great Britain were searching so desperately.

And they thought he could put the Yard on their trail!

Little wonder that the Dip lost his nerve. He shrieked as he swung round and jumped for the door, but a strong hand closed on his shoulder, and he was flung against the wall. The foreign-

they tried to frame me on a forgery charge, and me as innocent as a babe!"

"But you did pick somebody's pocket," said the driver of the car severely.

"Me? Cor lumme, no, sir. I just picked that wallet up, and I'd 'ave handed it over to the cops if they'd given me a chance!"

"The newspapers have a different account."

"Newspapers don't know nothing," said the Dip. "Where are we going?"

The car was moving along the unfamiliar roads on the outskirts of the city. All at once the Dip had a feeling of alarm. There was something strange about the silence of his companions, for mission-workers generally preached at a fellow.

"'Ere!" he began.

He was flung violently against one of the men as the machine swerved and shot through the gates of a large villa, discreetly screened from the road by a row of trees. The door was opened and the Dip was bundled out.

"Listen!" he whined. "I've changed my mind. I don't want your bloomin' 'elp. I——"

"Quiet!" rasped a voice in his ear.

He felt something hard pressed against his ribs, and although he had little knowledge of firearms, he knew the nudge had been given with the muzzle of a revolver. Beads of perspiration rolled down the little man's face, and he thought longingly of the police cell he had occupied the previous night.

"Take him in!" said the man who had given the warning. "I think we managed it without attracting attention."

"No reason for anybody to follow us," growled one of the other strangers. "The police are stupid."

He walked down the drive and closed the gates by which the car had entered.

A polite young fellow who was passing stopped and raised his hat.

"Excuse me," he said. "Can you tell me where I can find a post office?"