

Dixon Hawke's Case Book—No. 3

looking man with the short beard nodded meaningly.

"Take him down to the cellar!"

"You're going to kill me!" whimpered the Dip. "I tell you I don't know anything! That story in the newspapers is all wrong. It was a frame-up to get me into trouble with you. It——"

"Wait!" rasped the bearded man. His companions were dragging the Dip from the room as he spoke. "Wait!" he repeated. "I never thought of that, and the little fool may be right. It may have been a frame-up! Why should such a story be published? Why did the police fail to make a better case against our friend?"

"Too clever for the police!"

"But not too clever for Dixon Hawke, and we know he's working with the Yard. Let's get out of here at once. I smell trouble, and I'm not waiting for it to arrive."

"Do we take the Dip with us?"

"I'll settle the Dip!"

The speaker lifted his revolver, and the little pickpocket sank to his knees. He could not take his eyes off that black muzzle, which in another second would spurt fire and death.

Lucky Dip!

THE Dip saw the finger close over the trigger. He saw the lifted arm become rigid. He threw up his arms with a wild cry as the roar of a shot echoed through the room.

The Dip couldn't understand why he hadn't felt the pain of the shot. He opened his eyes and blinked, seeing the bearded man slumped against the wall with a hand clasped to his smashed shoulder. The revolver fell with a clatter to the floor.

"Drop your weapons!" came a curt voice from the door.

Dixon Hawke stepped into the room with Chief Inspector Baxter at his side. They were followed by a number of plain-clothes men. The wail of a siren

came from the distance as fresh reinforcements of police speeded to the scene.

"A frame-up, as you thought!" Hawke said to the bearded man. "You must admit it was neat bluff!"

"I should have known you'd try a trick like that!" snarled the crook. "How did you get here so quickly?"

"My assistant followed you. It was kind of you to tell him where he could find a telephone. We were waiting for that call, and acted at once!"

He turned his back on the cursing rogue and gave Larry the Dip a friendly smile. The little man was still crouching on the floor, but the colour was coming back to his white cheeks.

"I think you've had your punishment!" Hawke said. "Picking pockets is a dangerous profession, Dip. Why don't you give it up?"

"So 'elp me, I'll never dip another cove so long as I live, Mr 'Awke! Lumme. I was just the bloomin' decoy—the goat shoved out to catch the tiger!"

"You have our thanks for that, and I don't think you'll find the police are without generosity!"

Dixon Hawke glanced at his watch and made for the door. He paused to flash the chief inspector a look full of amusement.

"I hope you'll have no objection to my giving the news to Fleet Street? The papers are just about due to come out with an unkind story of our incompetence for failing to bring proper charges against the Dip. Shall I give them all the details of what really happened?"

Baxter shook his head. His stern face relaxed into something which resembled a grin.

"Just tell 'em we've arrested the forgers," he said. "It would be a pity to destroy that reputation of our being bunglers. So useful when it comes to dealing with smart crooks like our friends here!"