

## LONDON PICKPOCKETS

Tricky or Brutal and Vicious, According to Their Class.

### METHODS OF THE "GUN MOB"

The False Arm Game and the Use of the Pocketless Overcoat—The Pipe and Red Pepper Trick—How a Gang Will Pluck a Victim in a Crowd.

"Gun mob" is simply English thieves' slang for a pickpocket and his gang of confederates—"gentlemen" who reap an annual harvest of anything they can lay their hands upon in a crowd. Summer time, when race courses, athletic grounds and seaside places are crowded, is the pickpocket's favorite and most profitable season, and when an event occurs like a royal garden party at Windsor the light fingered gentry positively chuckle.

Twenty plain clothes detectives attended the last garden party to protect his majesty's guests from the tricks of the pickpockets, but the latter left Windsor richer by hundreds of pounds in spite of Scotland Yard and carried away with them the gold hunter watches of several of the titled guests.

At one time the modern detective was apt to despise the pickpocket somewhat, characterizing him as a low and not particularly clever thief. His ingenuity, daring and coolness today, however, "compel our admiration," to quote one of the cleverest detectives, "and we feel pleased when we lay one of them by the heels."

The British pickpocket's tricks are many and various, and he is adding to their number every day. The false arm game is one of the cleverest and is calculated to deceive a detective, even although he may have his eyes on the operator. A coat is thrown loosely over a false arm, which is held naturally. Apparently both of the pickpocket's hands are in view, while in reality the skillful fingers of one hand are going through the pockets of the man beside him.

The use of the pocketless overcoat, or the cape coat, which makes an entire cover for the hands, is an old dodge, which nevertheless is still popular with the pickpocket. He often prefers, however, to use a novel invention known as the sash method. The sash consists of a piece of black silk or alpaca two yards long and three-quarters wide. It is folded the same as a neck scarf and crossed centrally beneath the coat and vest, both ends being brought under the arms and placed in the hip pockets of the trousers. When ready for action the "tool," as the man is called who actually picks the pocket, places his hands behind the folds of this device, and it enables him to conceal his purpose as he "fronts" a man to rob him of his watch or money if the latter is in his trousers pocket.

A "tool," however, has other means of covering his hands without resorting to the aid of coat or sash. A newspaper or theater programme is often used. Beware of looking over a stranger's shoulder to glance at a newspaper or programme—a little action we are often guilty of when it only necessitates a turn of the head. You may be risking nothing, but, on the other hand, you may be seated or standing by the side of a professional pickpocket, who has only to hold the paper at a certain angle while you are engrossed in some item to cover his movements as he relieves you of your valuables.

The black silk handkerchief and hat are employed in the same manner as the paper, only the former is sometimes used in the "sling method" to carry a supposedly crippled arm. The manner in which that arm would rest against your face, as if raised to avoid some one striking it, while the other hand took your scarfpin and watch would excite compassion from the victim himself.

The pickpocket's most dastardly trick—but one, be it noted, which is only used by the man who is too clumsy to perform that sleight of hand upon which the clever thief prides himself—is that of blinding the victim with pepper blown through a pipe. The bowl of the latter is filled with a false bottom and second tube, the cavity below the false bottom being filled with cayenne pepper, while tobacco is placed above it. Approaching a gentleman in an ill lighted street, the thief asks for a light for his pipe, and while the victim feels for his matches he is suddenly blinded by a discharge of cayenne pepper, which the scoundrel blows through the hole in the bottom of the pipe into his eyes. Maddened with the terrible pain, the victim presses his hands to his eyes, and the robber snatches his watch and chain and deamps, to repeat his exploit on some other unsuspecting pedestrian.

It is not very often, however, that the pickpocket works alone, although women who belong to the light fingered fraternity—and who, by the way, are often more successful than men—usually prefer to do so. Men thieves like to work in "mobs," for the simple reason that they can transfer the "boodle" from one to the other in a crowd. Consequently if recognized by a detective and arrested on suspicion there is nothing in their possession on which they can be convicted.

Besides, confederates—or "stalls," as they are called in the vernacular of the "profession"—are necessary to do that little bit of hustling which makes the "tool's" task so much easier and lessens the risk of detection.

Many are doubtless aware that tram termini in busy thoroughfares are

places where the pickpocket is always looking for plunder, and a "mob" of four will often work together in such a crowd. A prosperous looking victim is selected, and as he attempts to board the car the four quickly surround him, with the "artist" behind.

The confederate in front uses every subterfuge to block the progress of the victim until the coup has been brought off, and while the men on each side hem him in and distract his attention with their hustling the man behind helps himself from his pockets. It is a trick which rarely fails with cool, expert thieves, although amateurs at the game are often caught through lack of nerve and quickness.

The "stall" or confederate will not allow any one who has been chosen for a victim to change his position until a peculiar cluck tells him the trick has been accomplished or unless there has been an alarm from an outside source. When more than one "stall" is used the other men devote part of their attention to watching any of the passengers who may be inclined to suspect mischief, and with their boot toe in close proximity to that of the "tool" they can convey a danger signal without fear of attracting the least attention. When such a signal reaches the "tool" he will desist in his attempt at plunder, and, though he has never turned his head to see who prevented larceny, he will completely lull the suspicions of the same individual by his manner thereafter.

Generally speaking, the profits of pickpocketing are not worth the risk. Occasionally thieves make a good haul, as in the case of the king's garden party already alluded to, but often great risk is run to secure a man's pocketbook, for instance, only to find that it is simply filled with cards and memoranda.

Hard cash is what the pickpocket likes to secure. For jewelry he can only get about one-half of what it is worth from the fence, while for watches he rarely gets more than one-fourth. Consequently the professional pickpocket must be industrious to earn a livelihood.—St. Louis Globe-Democrat.

### Dandyism Which We Admire.

One is sorry for the dandies of our day, because, though their clothes fit ever so well and are ever so fresh, custom prescribes a dark or subfusc hue, with no lace, no velvet (above all, not on coat collars), no slashes, puffs and vandykings, no pearls and gold, no gules and azure. The common trousers are shapeless things, and for perfection you need two pairs every day. Genius is stunted, display is checked, and, though you may wear brilliant hose with knickerbockers in the country, glorious waistcoats are rarely seen except in the windows of tailors' shops at Oxford and Cambridge. The dandy can only cultivate immaculate neatness and perfection of fit. Our officers at Ladysmith when the place was relieved looked like skeletons, but were as spruce and neat, I have been told, as ever they showed in the park. They cultivated self respect, like Stendhal, the celebrated novelist, who was said to have been the only man that shaved every day in the dreadful winter retreat from Moscow. This is the dandyism which we admire, the perfection of personal self respect exhibited in Julius Caesar, Claverhouse, and Montrose, combed his lovelocks, like the Three hundred of Thermopylae, on the morning of his shameful death. He went to the gibbet "like a bridegroom to his bride." History, and "the human heart by which we live," have an immortal tenderness for the great, the wise, the brave, who have died dandies as they lived, gallant hearts and stately gentlemen.—Andrew Lang in Century.

### The Baby in the Sieve.

Among the fellahin of Egypt, mystic land of pyramid and mummy, no man, not even Philip my king's own daddy, may look upon the new little arrival until the seventh day. Upon that morning the baby is placed in a sieve and carried through the house in a procession twinkling with smiles and lighted tapers, the wicked spirits whose curiosity may have been excited by his lordship's advent pushed into the background of life by discreet graft of grain and salt scattered along the triumphant route. Twice the procession pauses in solemn purpose, first to shake the sieve, thus insuring—with lusty wails no doubt—that the wee rider shall prove a fearless man, and, second, to hold the blinking cherub up to the sun to sharpen his eyes. After this he makes his first bow to the paternal presence. He is christened by the 'cadi sucking a stick of sugar candy and allowing the drawn out sweetness to trickle from his mouth into the open sesame of the surprised youngster, after which the cadi pronounces the given name.—Los Angeles Times.

### How the Artists' Model "Happens."

Most of our models are not made; they just happen. Girls, in most cases of breeding and intelligence, want to make a little money for some special occasion. Some acquaintance recognizes that they have distinction and style and gives them the address of an illustrator who happens to need just such a person. They pose once in this way, more or less from necessity, and they can make an independent living in a congenial manner, and so come again. In consequence the women who pose for a livelihood in New York are exceedingly nice as a class. The prevalent idea that the words "artists' model" necessarily mean a highly paid, greatly petted and utterly depraved individual is ridiculous in the extreme. A first class artist's model in New York city receives \$2 a day for six hours' hard work. A photographic model has of course a different proposition. She has shorter hours and higher rates.—From "Being a Model," by Charles F. Peters, in Bohemia.

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