

## Selected Matter.

## CHOOSING A PROFESSION.

HOW A YOUNG MAN DECIDED TO BECOME A  
BURGLAR.

APPRENTICED TO A CLEVER PROFESSIONAL.

When I became eighteen years of age my father, a distinguished begging-letter impostor, said to me: "Reginald, I think it is time that you began to think about choosing a profession."

These were ominous words. Since I left Eton, nearly a year ago, I had spent my time very pleasantly and very idly, and I was sorry to see my long holiday drawing to a close. My father had hoped to have sent me to Cambridge (Cambridge was a tradition in our family,) but business had been very depressed of late, and a sentence of six month's hard labour had considerably straightened my poor father's resources.

It was necessary, highly necessary, that I should choose a calling. With a sigh of resignation I admitted as much.

"If you like," said my father, "I will take you in hand and teach you my profession, and in a few years, perhaps, I may take you into partnership, but, to be candid with you, I doubt whether it is a satisfactory calling for an athletic young fellow like you."

"I don't seem to care about it particularly," said I.

"I'm glad to hear it," said my father. "It's a poor calling for a young man of spirit. Besides, you will have to grow gray in the service before people will listen to you. It's all very well as a refuge in old age, but a young fellow is likely to make a poor hand at it. Now, I should like to

## CONSULT YOUR OWN TASTES

on so important a matter as the choice of a profession. What do you say? The army?"

"No, I don't care for the army."

"Forgery? The bar? Cornish wrecking?"

"Father," said I, "I should like to be a forger, but I write such an infernal hand."

"A regular Eton hand," said he, "not plastic enough for forgery, but you could have a writing-master."

"It's as much as I can do to forge my own name. I don't believe I should ever be able to forge anybody else's."

"Anybody's else you should say, not

'anybody else's.' It's a dreadful barbarism, Eton English."

"No," said I, "I should never make a fortune at it. As to wrecking—why you know how seasick I am."

"You might get over that. Besides, you would deal with wrecks ashore, not wrecks at sea."

"Most of it is done in small boats, I'm told. A deal of small boat work. No, I won't be a wrecker. I think I should like to be a burglar."

"Yes," said my father, considering the subject: "yes, it's

## A FINE, MANLY PROFESSION,

but it's dangerous."

"Just dangerous enough to be exciting—no more."

"Well," said my father, "if you have a distinct taste for burglary I'll see what can be done."

My dear father was always prompt with pen and ink. That evening he wrote to his old friend Ferdinand Stoneleigh, a burglar of the highest professional standing, and in a week I was duly and formally articled to him, with a view to ultimate partnership.

I had to work hard under Mr. Stoneleigh. "Burglary is a jealous mistress," said he. "She will tolerate no rivals. she exacts the undivided devotion of her worshipper."

And so I found it. Every morning at 10 o'clock I had to present myself at Stoneleigh's chambers in New Square, Lincoln's Inn, and until 11, I assisted his clerk with the correspondence. At 12, I had to go out prospecting with Stoneleigh, and from 2 to 4 I had to devote to finding out all particulars necessary to a scientific burglary at any given house.

At first I did this merely for practice, and with no view to an actual attempt. He would tell me of a house of which he knew the particulars, and order me to ascertain all about it and its inmates—their coming and going, the number of their servants, whether any of them were men, and if so, whether they slept in the basement or not, and other details necessary to be known before a burglary could be safely attempted. Then he would compare my information with his own facts, and compliment or blame me as I might deserve. He was a strict master, but always kind, just and courteous, as became a highly-polished gentleman of the old school. He was one of the last men who habitually wore Hessians.

## AFTER A YEAR'S PROBATION

I accompanied him on several expeditions and had the happiness to believe that I was of some little use to him. I shot him eventually in the stomach, mistaking him for the master of a house into which we were breaking, (I had mislaid my dark lantern,) and he died on the grand piano. His dying wish was that his compliments might be conveyed to me.

I now set up on my own account, and engaged his poor old clerk, who nearly broke his heart at his late master's funeral. Stoneleigh left no family. His money—about £12,000, invested for the most part in American railways—he left to the society for providing more bishops, and his ledgers, day-books, memoranda, and papers generally, he bequeathed to me.

As the chambers required furnishing, I lost no time in commencing my professional duties. I looked through his books for a suitable house to begin upon, and found the following attractive entry:—

Thurloe Square—No. 102.

House—Medium.

Occupant—John Davis, bachelor.

Age—Eighty-six.

Physical Peculiarities—Very feeble, eccentric, drinks, Evangelical, snores.

Servants—Two housemaids, one cook.

Sex—All female.

Particulars of Servants Pretty housemaid called Rachel, Jewess. Open to attentions. Goes out for beer at nine p. m., snores. Ugly housemaid called Bella, Presbyterian. Open to attentions, snores. Elderly cook, Primitive Methodist. Open to attentions, snores.

Fastenings—Chubb's lock on street door, chain, and bolts. Bars on all basement windows. Practicable approach from third room, ground floor, which is shattered and barred, but bar has no catch, and can be raised with a table-knife.

Valuable Contents of House—Presentation plate from grateful aesthetes. Gold repeater. Mulready envelope. Two diamond rings. Complete edition of Bradshaw, from 1834 to present time, 588 volumes, bound in limp calf.

General—Mr. Davis sleeps second floor front, servants on third floor. Davis goes to bed at ten. No one on basement, swarms with beetles; otherwise excellent house for purpose.

This seemed to me to be

A CAPITAL HOUSE TO TRY SINGLE HANDED.

At twelve o'clock that very night I pocketed two crowbars, a bunch of skeleton keys, a centrebit, a dark lantern, a box of silent matches, some putty, a life preserver and a knife, and I set off at once for Thurloe square. I remember that it