

# BURGLARY.

BURGLARY is one of the evils that are incident to a high state of civilization and the accumulation of capital and wealth. Wherever riches increase, and bank safes grow plethoric with gold or greenbacks, burglars will be found attempting to wrest the hoarded treasure from its lawful owner. The manner in which they accomplish their purpose has frequently formed the subject of interesting papers to the magazines and reviews, and a few stray remarks on the subject may interest our readers, especially as St. John has within a year been visited by a gang of the safe-robbing fraternity.

Most people are not aware that burglary is a profession, and that its higher branches are never attempted but by those who have become adepts at their business. We are not prepared to state whether the burglars have colleges at which they graduate; but this much is certain, that, individually, they differ widely in the degree of skill with which they practise their unlawful occupation—so much so, indeed, that a skillful detective, in examining premises that have been broken into, will often say "this is White Headed Bob's work," or "Billy go fast did this," and the result of further investigation will, in most instances, confirm the correctness of the surmise.

The class of thieves that most people call burglars are technically termed cracksmen, and they invariably make their head quarters in some large city. They generally work in gangs, and often the person by whom the affair is planned and arranged, leaves it to his confederates to accomplish the robbery. This is done especially when the operation is performed in a small city, for the purpose of warding suspicion from the leading cracksmen, who frequently succeeds in obtaining access to good society, and being invited to the houses of respectable people. Not till after he has left the place is the robbery committed by his confederates, who have been in the meantime furnished by him with elaborately prepared plans of the premises to be robbed, and full directions how to proceed. One of the boldest and most ingenious robberies of this kind we ever heard of, occurred some years ago in a large town in Hampshire. The following account of it is from the *London Quarterly* :—

"A gang of first-rate cracksmen having heard that a certain banker in a country town was in the habit of keeping large sums of money in a strong-box of the banking-house in which he himself dwelt, determined to carry it off. For this purpose the most astute and respectable-looking middle-aged man of the gang was despatched to the town, reconnoitre the premises and get an insight into the character of their victim. The banker, he ascertained, belonged

to the sect of Primitive Methodists, and held what is termed 'love-feasts.' The cracksmen accordingly got himself up as a preacher, studied the peculiar method of holding forth in favour with the sect, wore a white neckhandkerchief, assumed a nasal whine, and laid in a powerful stock of Scripture phrases. Thus armed, he took occasion to hold forth, and that so 'movingly,' that the rumour of his 'discourses' soon came to the ears of the banker, and he was admitted as a guest. His foot once inside the doors, he rapidly 'improved the occasion' in his own peculiar manner. The intimacy grew, and he was speedily on such terms of friendship with every one in the house that he came and went without notice. He acquainted himself with the position of the strong box, and took impressions in wax of the wards of the locks. These he sent up to his pals in town, and in due course he was supplied with false keys. With these he opened the strong box, made exact notes of the value and nature of its contents, and replaced everything as he found it. A plan of the street, the house, and of the particular chamber in which the treasure was kept, was then prepared and forwarded to the confederates in London. He persuaded his kind friend the banker to hold a love-feast on the evening of the final stroke. A few minutes before the time appointed for the robbery, he proposed that the whole assembly should join with him in raising voices to the glory of the Lord. The cracksmen laboured hard and long to keep up the hymn, and noise enough was made to cover the designs of less adroit confederates than his own. The pseudo-preacher, to disarm suspicion, remained with his friend a fortnight after the theft, and on his departure, all the women of the 'persuasion' wept that so good a man should go away from among them!"

The skill attained by some cracksmen is so great that no system of bolts and bars is capable of keeping them out. A sheet of iron, however, in the inside of the panel of a shutter or door will frequently keep out the best among them; and those of them who have opened their minds to the prison authorities, state that it is totally impossible, without alarming the inmates, to force a window that is lightly barred with a thin iron bar and supplied with a bell. A shutter thus protected, and which gives a little with pressure, will not allow the centrebit to work without ringing the alarm.

Most large house robberies are what is termed "put up,"—that is, the thieves are in correspondence with the servants of the house, or with those who have been discarded. The vanity of female servants is said to be a more fertile cause of burglaries than any other. A smart young cracksmen, hearing where there is a large