

that any human being can be improved: all other systems are fallacious, and founded in gross error. When the sneak comes into the hands of the pickpocket, he is instructed and practised every hour of the day, until made tolerably perfect; he is taken then into the streets, to make his first essay in the presence of those who have taught him: and it has been given in evidence, that they dress up a *lay* figure, hanging bells all over it, on which they practice. When the tyro can empty all the pockets of the figure without occasioning a bell to sound, he is considered fit for the street. He generally begins with a pocket-handkerchief, whilst another takes "ding," that is receives it from him. In almost all cases of robbery, one commits the act, and another receives the articles from the thief, which is called taking "ding." If they find a boy dull, they forthwith turn him out of their party.

"A case of this kind came to my knowledge. Four pickpockets who had taken a boy on trial, discharged him the second evening after he had joined them, as being incompetent to the business. The boy, chagrined and disappointed, returned to his fellow-sneaks, at a lodging house in St. Giles's, and told them his story; adding, that the pickpockets were about to have that evening a jollification, and that a supper was prepared, one item in the bill of fare being a rice-pudding, then at the bake-house. The boys soon came to an understanding that they could eat rice-pudding as well as the pickpockets; and it was agreed that the discharged boy, although deemed a bad conveyancer, should convey the pudding out of their reach by going to the bake-house and asking for it in their name. The real owners made the baker pay for it, and, suspecting who had it, gave information which caused the boy to be apprehended and committed to Newgate, where he was found guilty of stealing it and sentenced to be flogged and discharged, on the evidence of these fellows and the baker. A few months afterwards the boy was brought back for another offence, and transported for fourteen years. When, however, they meet with a clever lad, they know how to prize him, and take care to gratify his every wish, that he may be induced to stay with them. These boys as soon as perfect, are made to do nearly all the business themselves, whilst the master pickpocket behind covers them, watching the operations; and, as much as possible avoiding

any interference, and, consequently, risk on his part.

"The qualifications for a pickpocket are a light tread, a delicate sense of touch, combined with firm nerves. These boys may be known by their shoes in the street; they generally wear pumps, or shoes of a very light make, having long quarters. There is about their countenances an affected determination of purpose; and they walk forward, as if bent on some object of business: it is a rule with them never to stop in the street. When they want to confer for a moment they drop into some by-court or alley, where they will fix on some object of attack, as the people pass down a main street; when they start off in the same manner, the boy going first, to do what they call 'stunning,' that is, to pick the pocket. The first-rate hands never on any occasion loiter on the streets, unless at a procession, or an exhibition, when there is an excuse for so doing. Many have a notion that instruments are used in disencumbering the pockets: this is a false idea; the only instruments they use is a good pair of small scissors and which will always be found on the person of a pickpocket when searched: these they use to cut the pocket and all off, when they cannot abstract its contents.

"To these qualifications they unite a quick sight, and a tact of observing when the attention is engaged, or of devising some means to engage it themselves, until the act is done. They are most busy in foggy weather. When in prison, they will be heard to say on such days, 'What a shame to lose such a fine day as this!'

"When an old and good *sneak* is committed to prison, where he is generally without money, (the officers, on apprehending, having taken it from him until after trial,) many offers of liberal premiums are sure to be made him for his list of places capable of being robbed, which means nothing more than a list of names and residences of the careless and incautious tradesmen in and about London.

"After a shop has twice or three times been robbed of considerable sums, the sneaks consider it good again and again—such is the extreme incaution of some persons. Butchers have been favourite objects of attack, in consequence of their shops being generally vacated in the afternoon, and the master or man in the parlour taking a *siesta*—a common practice of theirs, after the fatigues of early rising and labour. One butcher, at Bermondsey, was three times robbed of considerable sums in this way, before he would remove his cash from a desk in the front shop.