

without being told that this 'ere lock in this 'ere bit of wood has been sawed out with that there saw from that there plate-cupboard. But, howsomever, notwithstanding, that's about the rights of it. Oh, yes, you see it now, plain as daylight, don't yer?"

"Oh my! That's thieves! That's burglars—no mistake! Is there anything took?"

"H'm, well it aren't likely they'd trouble to do that neat little bit of carpentry without some return," said Thomas, as he threw open the dismantled door of the plate-cupboard.

"Unless my eyes deceive me, I don't see the teapot, or the coffee-pot or the spoons, or the forks, or the slaver or the salt-cellars, or the cream-jug, or the sugar-basin. That's a nice little haul, take it all round not bad pay for a night's job!"

"Oh, 'tis a terror!—an terrible tale!—no mistake! There's been burglars! that's sure! Oh my!"

"Not much doubt about it," said Thomas. "I s'pose I'd best go and tell the Doctor."

"Of course you had," said the Cook. "We shan't find the things by standing and gaping at the empty cupboard. Come along Jane, and Maria, and Susan, we must get on with the breakfast, anyhow. Burglars or no burglars, it won't do to be late."

Cook led the retreat—Susan and Jane and Maria followed, and the clavering tongues told how horrified they were at the discovery.

Thomas went off to see the Doctor. Early as it was, Mr. Fields had forestalled the footman, and had given Dr. Porchester an account of the night's experiences. They agreed to say nothing about the basket of plate until after making their investigations.

Thomas was rather surprised as he entered the Doctor's study, to be met with the remark:

"I suppose you have come to tell me the plate was stolen last night."

Thomas was on the point of blurting out, "However do you know that, sir?" but he checked himself, and merely said:

"Yes, sir."

"I will see you about it after breakfast you must do the best you can. It is just prayer-time."

The news had spread through the dormitories before the boys came down. Dawson and Hercules made the most of it. Small boys in the fourth class believed that each of the two heroes had killed a burglar in the night. The glamour of romance had its effect on Hercules. He no longer felt confident that the man he saw sneaking along the passage was Thomas. Such a notion would have shorn the adventure of half its glory.

"He was a chap about his size," is all I can say, but there may be a thousand burglars in England the size of Thomas, so I don't think my evidence would be worth much in court."

While the school breakfast was going on old John Carey came up to the

house. He noticed his ladder leaning against the wall, and the sight of it puzzled him. He had not been using it over night, so he stopped to scratch his head and wonder how it got there.

Then, when he entered the kitchen and was received with a volley of female excitement, he put two and two together and drew his own conclusions.

"The chap as did it," he said, "must have got in at some window by my ladder, it's a-leaning against the wall out yonder. That's as plain as my old woman."

Cook and Susan asked him to show them where it was.

"There's no window within reach," said Cook.

In fact, the ladder was leaning against a blank wall, the top being three feet from the gutter. John Carey was not to be gainsaid. He had uttered his oracle, and he was bound to see it through.

"That don't make no difference," he said. "Burgling chaps can do a power of things as would make me and you look foolish. Why, they'd think nothing of skipping up that there ladder in a brace of shakes and standing on the top bar. Th' a they'd catch hold of the gutter, and be on it in three winks, and work along to the end where it meets that ledge, and then along to the window round the corner. That's how he did it, anyhow, you may take my word for it."

Cook looked doubtful, but Susan, whose horror of burglars invested them with super-human strength and agility, said she would go up and see if the window was unbolted.

She went, and what she saw made her hesitate whether to scream, or faint, or turn on hysterics. But she compromised matters by calling down the stairs:

"Oh, Cook, 'tis awful! Come and see for yerself."

Cook and Carey hurried up and saw the incriminating evidence.

"Aye," said Carey, "there, just as I told you; there's the pane of glass took out by a professional; putty scraped away as neat as you could wish, window unbolted, and thrown open. There's the jenny as the bloke forgot, just as you read it in the perilee news. Oh, he was a sharp 'un, I can tell yer! Knew the trick backwards, he did, that's heident, just as I knew he done it."

Cook was amazed, and her unbelief was changed to conviction.

"There! I never could have imagined it, John. Why, one would think you must have been a burgler yourself, to know all about it?"

"Just as I told you," said old John, ignoring the base insinuation.

They told Thomas of the discovery, and Thomas informed the Doctor, who knew about the window already from Mr. Fields. The two masters went and looked at the ladder. They listened to John Carey's explanation of the burglar's tactics. They recognized the impossibility of the feat, but kept their own counsel. And when the inspection was concluded