

*A Conflict With Burglars*  
*A Physician's Story*  
by Henry J. Causepohl

A cold drizzling rain poured down incessantly the whole evening, as I was sitting in the cheerful parlor of Dr. LeGrange, in the latter part of April, several years ago. A bright fire was burning on the hearth, which gave the room a ruddy and cheerful aspect. The doctor was absent on a medical visit, but I looked for his return every minute. I secretly congratulated myself, that fate had not made a physician of me, for to be called out in all sorts of weather was not an occupation that would suit my fancy and a doctor's profession, was by no means one of the pleasantest.

As I was a distant connection to the doctor, he would always insist upon me making my home at his house, whilst I was in the city, which kind offer I never refused, as he was a congenial and entertaining host, always having some intriguing subject at hand to make the hours pass swiftly by. I was deeply interested in reading a late novel by a celebrated writer, as the doctor entered the room. Seating himself near the fire, he pulled an evening paper from his pocket, saying at the same time:

“Have you heard the news, Clarence?”

“No, Doctor, what is it?”

“Why, the most daring burglary took place last night, at the commercial Bank. They bound and gagged the night watchman, and then blowing open the safe, helped them selves to all the money the safe contained, which was no inconsiderable amount, but here—I'll read the account to you.”

The doctor read the full particulars of the bold robbery, after which, our conversation naturally led to burglaries and robberies. I had just given him an account of a robbery that had come under my observation, when he commenced:

“Did I ever tell you how I once was instrumental in breaking up a gang of burglars?”

“No, Doctor, you have not. I am anxious to hear it.”

“Well, it happened shortly after I left college and received my diploma as a practicing physician. My friends advised me to locate in some western settlement, as the city was not a fair field for a new beginner, and I came to the same conclusion, so accordingly, I packed my worldly effects in a carpet bag, which, by the way, were not large, and after bidding all my friends a hearty farewell, I made my journey to a new state which had lately been admitted to the Union. After passing through several enterprising villages, I at length made my home in one of the largest and neatest I had come across. The location was everything I could desire, being situated on a navigable stream, and I had no doubt but that it would soon be a city. After securing a neat room for an office, I hung out my shingle as an M.D.

“Success attended me, and I gained in a short time a very large practice.

“All along, during the Summer and Fall, news of daring burglaries reached me that had been perpetrated in the neighboring villages, and considerable anxiety was felt by the inhabitants of our village, that they would soon ply their unlawful vocation in our midst. Exaggerated rumors were current as to their numbers, some saying they amounted to a hundred or more, and that they took every village by storm that would offer any resistance. This naturally worked the more upon the feelings of the timid.

“One evening, it was the fifteenth day of November, for I shall never forget the date, or the night, a tremendous snow-storm raged without, combined with the fierce whistling of the wind. Never before had I experienced such a storm. I inwardly felt thankful that no sick patient needed my attention that evening, and fervently hoped no calls would be made. I had just completed my arrangements for retiring, when the sound of a horse’s hoof was heard through the muffled snow, and immediately thereafter a thundering knock was mad on my office door, which drove all thoughts of repose out of my head, knowing full well that it could be nothing less than a summons.

“I hastened to unlock the door, when it was suddenly pushed open from the outside, and before I could offer any resistance, my arms were pinioned tight behind me by two masked men, who, thrusting a revolver in close proximity to my head, said:

“Silence, now, Doctor! Not a word, or you are a dead man; no harm is intended against you, so come along with us quietly, and take your surgical instruments with you, for you’ll have to use them, and all will be well.”

“Of course I submitted as gracefully as possible under the circumstances, when they again unloosened my arms, and so taking up my case of instruments, and putting on my coat and hat, I was conducted out into the street, where I was surprised to see a coach standing in front of my door—for I was under the impression my captors had come on horseback.

As I entered the coach, one of the masked ruffians said, “We will not blindfold you, doctor, for there is no need of it, as the coach is so constructed that you can’t see anything or open it from the inside.” Which I found to be the fact. A wooden panel, having a ventilator in the top, shut off all communications with the driver, thus utterly blindfolding me as to the route they were taking. I secretly felt along the sides of the coach, in hopes of finding a place, where I could cut a hole through with my knife. I was not disappointed; close to the door a strip of leather was tacked on, which was formerly used as a window, to make an aperture through it was but the work of a moment, and now I eagerly watched to see some familiar landmarks.

“In a few minutes we passed an old farmhouse with a high sloping roof. I knew, then, instantly, on what road we were, for as fate would have it, I had a sick patient in that house.

“We had already traveled miles, still the horses were kept at full speed, and occasionally familiar views would flit past me. I was just pondering how long my coach imprisonment would last, when it came to an abrupt halt. I hastily closed the aperture I had made, when the door was opened ny one of the men, telling me to follow him, and that my journey was near to an end. Leaving the coach, I was conducted through a dense wood, where walking was very tedious, as

briars and brush-wood often impeded our way. At length we reached what seemed to me to be an old dilapidated mill. A peculiar knock was given on the door by my conductor, when it immediately swung open. Passing through a wide and spacious hall, we ascended a narrow staircase that led to a small apartment, where the man left me, telling me that I would find my patient in there.

“On the table a lamp was burning, casting a dim light throughout the room, and in one corner a rude bedstead was standing, on which a man was reclining, and what surprised me, was his being masked, the same as the others. The thought instantly struck me that I was among a gang of cut-throats and robbers. Yes, very likely, they might be the identical gang of burglars that were creating such a fear throughout the country.

“Approaching the bed, I asked him what ailed him? Without saying a word, he bared his left shoulder and displayed an ugly wound, where a rifle-ball had entered. I took out my surgical instruments to probe the ball, and after some difficulty I succeeded in extracting it. Then, sewing up the wound, I prescribed some composing draught.

“Throughout all, he bore it heroically, and worthy of a better cause. Not a word escaped his lips; and when I told him I was finished, he silently pointed to the door. In gathering up my instruments I chanced to glance under the table, where a white piece of paper was lying. Thinking it might be of use to me, and not to excite any suspicion, I carelessly dropped one of my instruments. Stooping to pick it up again, I picked the paper up with it, and quickly put it in my pocket.

“I then started for the door, which was immediately opened by the same masked man who had conducted me into the room. I was then led back the way I had come, and soon reached the coach. After opening the door, he handed me a well-filled purse, saying at the same time: ‘Here is your pay for services rendered.’ He then closed the door, and the coach started off for home.

“The snow had, by this time, ceased falling. Here and there a star was making its appearance in the sky. After reaching home, I immediately went to my room, not to sleep, but to master the contents of that mysterious piece of paper I had picked up in the burglars’ den. It was plainly written, and after reading it, I could hardly suppress a cry of exultation; for it was nothing less than an order, to every member of the band, to meet at their rendezvous the next evening, on important business. The countersign would be: ‘One for all, and all for one.’ And was signed by Captain Raymond, the leader of that daring band of burglars.

“It seemed that Providence had given it in my power to rid the country of this noted gang, and I immediately availed myself of it. Last as it was, I hastened to the telegraph office, and dispatched a message to the Governor, stating the facts, and requested him to send immediately enough armed men to capture them. I then returned to seek what rest I could, but sleep would not come to my eyes; I was too much excited with the events of the night.

“During the day I called upon the officers of the village, informing them what had taken place. They promised to bring together all the available men they possibly could, and to keep everybody quiet.

“In the evening, the men the Governor sent arrived and in connection with those our village mustered, had quite a formidable appearance. Everything being in readiness, we started, I taking the lead, as guide. At nine o’clock we neared our destination. Here it was arranged that I should go ahead and capture the sentinel. So accordingly putting on a mask I had procured for the occasion, I walked in the direction of the old mill, and soon came to the guard; giving him the countersign, he stepped aside to let me pass. This was my opportunity. With a well-directed blow I felled him to the ground. To gag and bind him was but the work of a moment, and then going back to my comrades, I informed them that the coast was clear.

“As we neared the building, the utmost caution was necessary, as the least noise might bring the whole gang upon us, before we were ready for them.

“Three of us then advanced to the door, I giving the peculiar knock I heard the night before. Here another sentinel, in a loud voice, asked for the countersign, which was given, and the door opened, my two companions followed me as I entered. We soon served the guard as the one before, motioning for the rest to come. We then made a simultaneous rush for the hall, where the gang was assembled. The robbers were completely taken by surprise, and we had already captured and ironed one-half of them. As the rest got over their fright, they then made a desperate resistance, and fought only as men can fight who are fighting for their lives.

“Although we outnumbered them two to one, they persistently, and with dauntless courage, kept up the fight. Their burly leader, especially, seemed to be endowed with the spirit of a demon, cheering on his men, and giving thrust for thrust, blow for blow. Terrible was a havoc he made amongst our men, as his sword plainly showed.

“At last his eye singled me out, and with a fiendish yell he rushed upon me. ‘Spy,’ he hissed through his clenched teeth, ‘it is to you we own this, and your life shall pay for it.’

“Fortunately I had learned the art of fencing, and was, therefore, prepared for him. Terrific were the blows he showered down upon me with his sword, but I successfully parried each stroke, which excited him the more. At length, losing all caution, he made a fearful dash at me, which I dexterously avoided. Finally he was thrown off his guard. I quickly used my advantage, and before he could recover himself, I plunged my sword up to the hilt in his bosom, when he fell heavily to the floor—a convulsive terror—a gurgling in his throat—and all was over.

“This ended the contest; with the fall of their leader the balance surrendered. I then attended to the wounded on each side, binding up their wounds, and rendering surgical aid where necessary. During the conflict we had lost six men, killed outright, and twenty seven more or less wounded, while the burglars had fourteen killed and twenty wounded. We immediately made arrangements to transport the wounded and the dead to the village, and accordingly sent a messenger after some wagons, who in a short time returned, with the necessary teams. Before leaving, we instituted a thorough search throughout the building, and found an immense lot of costly and valuable plunder, that the robbers had collected and stolen from persons at different times. Having removed everything of value, we set out on our return home, and arrived at the village

shortly before daylight, when we immediately proceeded to the prison, to incarcerate those of the burglars that were not wounded.

“The village was by this time all astir, the inhabitants thereof being aroused from their slumbers, by the noise we made at our entrance. Cheer upon cheer followed, as they heard the news of our capture of the whole band, and all were rejoicing at our success.

“A few days afterwards the trial of the burglars took place; crowds flocked together from all the neighboring villages, and were eager to hear the full details of the trial. At the close, each burglar was sentenced to imprisonment for the length of time they were connected with the band. This effectually put a stop to all burglaries and robberies in that section of the state.

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