

# MASKED BURGLARS.

## The Keeseville National Bank Completely Cleaned Out.

### THREE NIGHT WATCHMEN BOUND TO THE FLOOR.

#### The Spherical "Burglar Proof" Safe Blown open and about \$80,000 Gone.

Last Saturday morning at an early hour the citizens of Keeseville were startled by the news that that village had during the night been invaded by a band of armed and masked burglars who after capturing the watchmen, and binding them fast, had broken into the bank, blown open the safe and fled with its valuable contents. The news spread like wild fire over the county; men were sent in all directions to pick up traces of the criminals; telegrams flew over the lines as soon as the offices were open, and the greatest excitement prevailed.

#### THE BANK.

presented a sorry appearance enough when entered by the citizens. The night-lamp was still left burning on the counter, and the front window curtains were yet drawn up, as left by the watchmen the night before. The double door to the vault had been forced open and the floor of the vault was covered with fragments of the door of the Marvin Spherical "Burglar-proof safe," which had been considered by the bank officials as invulnerable, and the entire contents of the safe—bonds, notes and currency—were missing.

#### TRACES.

On the floor were found a steel punch some eight inches long, a short steel wedge very finely finished, a valuable square bellows, probably part of an improved blow-pipe arrangement (which had evidently not been used during the night) and a piece of fuse, such as is used for firing nitro glycerine.

#### THE HEAVIEST LOSSES

by the robbery are parties who had funds—mostly United States bonds—in the bank, not on deposit, but left for safe keeping, without any security. This amount is not far from \$60,000. Among the losers in this class are Daniel and E. H. Stickney of Jay, \$23,000; Mrs. Ladd, formerly Miss Howland of Plattsburgh, \$4,500 (nearly all her means); Austin Bigelow, \$4,500; Mrs. Colvin, Port Kent, \$8,750; Mr. Dodge, \$3,000 and several others who lost smaller amounts.

#### THE ENTIRE LOSS OF THE BANK

is stated at \$8,000 in bonds—mostly town bonds—and \$7,000 in currency, besides all the promisory notes held by the bank.

We have taken considerable pains to collect all the facts bearing upon this remarkable case. The first thought which naturally struck the minds of many persons was that this robbery could not have been executed without the assistance of some "home talent," that three fact that these the watchmen, (notwithstanding they were in different places when the attack was made upon them,) suffered themselves to be bound and intimidated within ear shot of a considerable number of inhabitants, without giving an alarm, was, to say the least of it a very suspicious circumstance and strongly indicated a possibility that the job might have been a "put up" one on their part. These and other considerations made us anxious to get at the exact facts in the case, and to that end we have personally obtained very full statements from all three of these watchmen, and it is proper to say right here that whatever suspicions we had harbored of the kind indicated, previously to investigating this case were entirely dissipated by the honest, frank manner of these men, taken in connection with their previous good characters and the uniformity of their statements. The three men who were bound by the burglars were John Collins, Henry Duval and Wm. H. Ames.

#### THERE ARE THREE POINTS,

which the reader, who desires to get a correct idea of the robbery, should fix in this mind. First, the Keeseville National Bank, which is located on the west bank of the Ausable River close to the bridge in the village of Keeseville and on the north side of the street leading across the bridge; secondly, the Horse Nail Company's Office—across the street and nearly opposite the bank, less than 100 feet from it; and third, the Sorting Room in the rear of the office, about 125 feet from it and nearly in a line with the Bank and office. This office was the regular headquarters of Henry Duval, night watchman, employed by the Horse Nail Company and not by the Bank, although it was part of his business to watch the Bank, as it appears.—Duval is a powerful man, 36 years old and weighs 218 pounds.

#### HENRY DUVAL'S STORY.

He says: I have worked for the Company four years last April; was born in the town of Mooers but father came to this part of the county when I was six years old. I enlisted in the 77th N. Y. regiment in which I served from the commencement of the war in 1861 to its close in 1865, ten months of which time I spent in Andersonville Prison; when I returned from the war I came to Keeseville and have lived here ever since. I have served as night watch for the Company four years the fourth of this July; have had charge of the key to the door of the bank all this time. My business at the bank is to unlock the door early every evening, light the lamp and place it on the counter, and draw up the curtains so that any one passing in the street during any part of the night can look in and see the vault door and every thing inside except behind the counter and in the morning at daylight I go in again and put the light out. Last Friday night I lit the lamp and left it burning as usual on the counter at the bank, the curtains were up and the burglars didn't put the curtains down while they were at work, and didn't put the light out but left it burning and I found it burning in the morning. I consider this the boldest burglary I ever saw done. Once when I was in New York city there was an alarm of fire and while the people were all excited some burglars went through a jewelry store in broad daylight, but that burglary wasn't as bold a one as this.—Just after the town clock on the opposite side of the street from the office struck 12 last Friday night I went out of the office where my headquarters are, locking the door and Kingsland's house and saw that everything was all right there and on the street; I always do this immediately after midnight.—I walked slowly and came back in from fifteen to thirty minutes, put my key in the door of the hall, not of the office, unlocked it, went in and locked the door behind me.—(There is partition between the office and the hall door inside, but it extends back only a few feet so that the hall and office are in one sense the same room.) My light was burning in the office just as I had left it and upon turning around I was confronted by three masked men. My left hand—I am left handed—happened to be in my pocket hold of the handle of my pistol, which I always carry in my pocket ready cocked. The moment I saw the men they said to me simultaneously, "Don't you open your head, if you do we'll blow your brains out." One of the men held a bull's eye lantern, but he didn't turn it on me as there was light enough without. All had dark clothes, think they wore sack coats and wool hats, but only had a glimpse of them. All three wore masks—regular white masks, good fitting, with dark lips and eyes—regular manufactured, full masks. The moment they spoke I pulled my pistol out and fired at them, at random I suppose, and gave a yell; the next I knew one of their hands was on my mouth, another seized me by the throat, and in an instant they crushed me down to the floor and had me handcuffed, with my hands behind me; they then blindfolded me with three towels and crammed a handkerchief into my mouth and bound a linen coat around to hold it in. Then they took my boots off and took me up into Johnny's room, (Collins's) set me down into an arm chair, tied my hands to the chair back with cords and strapped me down to the floor. The straps they used were hams straps as I found afterwards, with the inside loop cut off and they passed the straps through a iron ring which was screwed down into the floor and Collins and Ames were also fastened

about the same time. Then they turned a tin pail up against my chair so that if I stirred it would fall down and make a noise and soon afterwards I think they all left but one. Just before they left I heard one of them say, "Hurry up, it's half past one" Before going they asked me where the key to the bank was and I told them I didn't know and one of them called me a s—b—and struck me pretty hard with a pistol or knife hilt. Afterward I told them it was down stairs. Soon after they left I heard an explosion over at the bank and after that time I heard five more. About 3 o'clock there was somebody came up the stairs and Ames complained that the straps hurt his wrists and the man said he would be back in a few minutes and fix them, but he hasn't got back and when he comes I'd like to try the handcuffs on him. In a few minutes I said, "Boys they've gone," but John and Ames told me to shut up my head. Soon afterwards we worked ourselves loose; John worked the bandage off his eyes some way and by all of us leaning our heads forward he pulled the bandages off Ames' and my heads. Then John got clear from his chair and unbuckled the strap on Ames' foot (only one of Ames' feet were bound) with his teeth and Ames' help, and then we soon got loose. This was just about daylight. I think these were regular city burglars; I think there were at least nine or ten of them. The stage went by while we were trying to get loose and I hollered at the driver as loud as I could but he didn't hear me. I am not a very learned man, there's many smarter men than me in Keeseville, but I think if the fire bells had been rung and enough citizens called out to scour the woods thoroughly Saturday morning early we might have caught those robbers.

#### JOHN COLLINS' STORY.

Mr. Collins is a powerful young man about twenty-six years old. His father, John G. Collins, was an old employe of the Kingslands, having worked for them making iron on the Boquet and, afterwards was foreman of the works at Keeseville.

John Collins has worked for the Horse Nail Co. twelve years, having lately worked by the piece, making boxes. For four years he has slept in the room directly over the Horse Nail Company's office, and was a night watchman only in this sense—that it was considered safer by the Company to have him within call in case assistance should be needed during the night by the regular night watchman. Mr. Collins says:

I have slept in this room (over the office) off and on about four years. While the Railroad Company used this room I slept in an adjoining one. I went to bed last Friday night about a quarter after ten and think I was asleep at eleven, and slept sound until I was awakened by a shot in the hall below, and a yell which I knew to be Duval's; he yelled as if in terrible pain and then all was still for a moment and the next thing I knew there came a heavy blow on my door, the door was burst open and before I was fairly awake three masked men rushed into the room, there was a flash in my face from a bull's eye and the next instant they were all on top of me; they turned me over on my face and strapped my hands behind me; while they were at work on me some more men came up stairs and they asked, "how's the big fellow?" (meaning Duval) and they said, "all right." I think there were about six of the men in all; the men I saw had their faces completely covered by white cloth—which I think was drawn down and tucked into and buttoned up in their coats. They blindfolded me with my pillow-case, then they got me out of bed and put my pants on and strapped me down to the floor. Before they got me bound they asked me where the "key of the vault was," I told them I didn't know, and I didn't. I saw two revolvers pointed at me. I had a revolver in my room which they took but left my watch? They tied my hands down to the chair behind and strapped my feet to the floor. Duval and Ames were both brought in and bound. They tipped a tin pan up against my chair so it would fall and make a noise if I moved, and a coal scuttle against Ames' and a tin pail against Duval's. I didn't know when Ames and Duval came into the room, the first I knew they were there, I heard Ames complain that he couldn't breathe and Duval said he was fainting; one of them said "faint you s—b— if you want to." They asked Duval where they key to the bank was, and he said down stairs. They worked very deliberately and didn't seem to hurry at all. They couldn't find the key at first and came back the second time and Duval told them again. They left us in charge of one man who came up stairs occasionally and took hold of our hands to see if we were fast. Once Ames asked to have the strap around his foot loosened and said he wouldn't make any noise and the man replied in a threatening manner, "you'd better not." About 10 minutes after the men went away, I heard an explosion over at the bank, heard no noise over there until this, the explosion was quite sharp but seemed as if muffled by doors and windows. I heard six blasts in all at intervals of about 10 minutes each, all seemed to be of about the same force. About five minutes after the last blast one of the men came to the lower door and said "Say, say." Our guard said "What," and the other said, "Come here." Then the man said to us "I'll be back in a few minutes," and went out, and that's the last we heard of him. Soon afterwards I asked Ames what time it began to be daylight and he said about three, and that it must be about daylight then. The clock struck three shortly after they went out. Duval said he thought they were gone. After I had made up my mind that they had gone I worked the bandage off so I could see, by moving my scalp, and the sight which Duval and Ames presented, with the long ends of their bandages sticking up like tassels, was so ridiculous that I burst out laughing. Afterwards I contrived to pull off their bandages by the ends with my teeth and then unbuckled Ames' foot also with my teeth. The stage went by a little before four, I yelled as loud as I could but couldn't make the driver hear. I have a confused idea that I heard a wagon in the street soon after the men left, but am not certain. I think it was a band of expects that did the job. They only worked at the bank about one hour.

#### WM. H. AMES' STORY.

Mr. Ames says: I am 54 years old, have lived in Keeseville 32 years, am a bloomer by trade and used to work for the Kingslands on the Boquet River, have been a night watchman at the Horse Nail works 10 years, my business is to guard against fires, I go on at 6 P. M., my beats from the factory out the river to the foundry and when not outside watching spend the night in the "sorting room," sorting nails. Last Friday night I was inside this sorting room at work about half past 12 when, some one knocked at my door; I asked, what was wanted or who's there and somebody asked me to open the door. I opened the door—supposed it was some of the boys who had been fishing; they frequently come to my door that way in the night and I let them in. As soon as I opened the door three masked men stepped inside, two of them got behind me and seized my arms and bound them together; each had revolvers and some of them knives. I knew what had come—we had been expecting it; they said they hadn't come to injure me but that I must keep quiet. The masks were regular white masks. One of the men were as tall as I am and the others small. I weigh over 200 and am 6 feet high. After they had bound me they asked for my handkerchief, I told them I hadn't any and they then took my working frock off and blindfolded me with it; I had no revolver, do not carry one; Duval had one but they took it away from him. They stand they marched me into the office and up stairs where they bound me down to the floor (in the same manner described by the others). I heard them say something about ten being "enough for that job." I think three or four men might have done the whole job but their men might have been eight or nine. They went to the bank about half past one. I am sure I heard five explosions, there may have been six. The last shot was about half past 1. The first sound at the bank was like striking against sheet iron, the shots kept growing heavier and heavier and the last one made the room jar where we were. I think the robbery was committed by science burglars. The voices of the men were different from those of people about about here; think two were foreigners, one an Irishman. They didn't use me harsh, when one of them was fastening my hands he trembled so that he had to stop, and went away. The thought struck me once or twice that some of the men lived about here, but I had no particular reason, that I can remember, for thinking so; I think they took the road to Birningham, and went into the woods.

#### A Noble Example.

Mrs. M. K. Platt: I noticed in today's REPUBLICAN the brief sketch of the "Home for the Friendless" which reflects great credit on its patrons. It has my firm moral support, and if it would be acceptable, I would like to contribute a trifle towards it. You will kindly request your respected collector to call on me every month for the sum of one dollar, which I will gladly give so long as the "Home" may need it. I hope that under your management it will become a success, and continue to be as it is, an honor to the community. I am very respectfully yours, L. S. Sisson.