

JEWELLERY ROBBERY IN BIRMINGHAM.

In the very centre of Birmingham a jeweller's shop was broken into between the hour of closing on Saturday night and yesterday afternoon, and valuables which are roughly estimated to be worth several hundreds of pounds were carried off. The establishment in question is situate on the corner of New Street and Bennett's Hill, and was only opened as a jeweller's shop three weeks ago, the proprietors being Messrs. Charles L. Reis and Co., who trade in Birmingham, Belfast, Dublin, and Glasgow. It was stocked with watches, clocks, jewellery, plated goods, and various fancy articles, and was probably marked by the enterprising burglar as a likely place for plunder almost as soon as the new proprietary took possession. In the two show-windows—one facing New Street and the other Bennett's Hill—was displayed a dazzling array of goods, the New Street window being filled principally with trays of watches, alberts, brooches, rings, and bracelets. A door within a recess at the corner gives access to the shop, and the entrance is further safeguarded with a pair of iron gates, which are closed when business hours are over. The windows are also protected with iron shutters, which are removed in the day-time and replaced at night when the premises are closed. It was one of the regulations of the establishment that a gas-jet should be lighted over the safe at the back of the shop when the manager and assistants left at night, and the police had been asked to lend an eye to the premises. It was not possible, however, for anyone passing outside to perceive much of the interior of the shop, as not only were the windows obscured, but the glass panel of the door was rendered opaque, for the most part, by an ornamental device, reaching nearly to the height of a man. The burglars—for circumstances point to the conclusion that there was more than one—had evidently noted all this, and observation had likewise made them familiar with a vulnerable spot at the back of the shop, where there was a plate-glass window several feet wide and about eighteen inches deep, close to the ceiling. On the outer side this window overlooked a staircase forming the approach to a number of offices occupied by traders and professional men, near the foot of the staircase being a door opening into Bennett's Hill. The burglars managed to gain access at this point, and having stripped a number of trays in the New Street window of their contents got clear away. Mr. W. Ettles, the branch manager, left the premises at ten minutes past eleven on Saturday night, and he states that they were then properly secured. He was passing down New Street at half-past three yesterday afternoon, when his attention was attracted by the fact that the gas-jet over the safe was turned down much lower than usual. He had the keys with him, and entered the shop. He found a number of the trays which had been used for the display of goods

trays which had been used for the display of goods in the New Street window lying in a heap in a corner of the shop behind the counter, completely emptied of their contents, and there were evidences of the place having been forcibly entered since the previous night. Information was at once given to the police, and Detectives Goldrick and Price were soon on the spot. It was found that the plate-glass window at the back of the shop had been smashed, and there were clear indications that one of the thieves had squeezed his body through the aperture, then crept along the top of the fixtures for a few feet, and descended on to the safe. From here he could easily scramble to the floor, less than 5ft. below, and then the spoils of the establishment were at his mercy. The window which has been alluded to was laced inside with iron bars, and it was necessary to dislodge one transverse and one perpendicular bar before getting through, but they were so slightly attached to the woodwork that this was a very easy task. Though the plunder which was carried off was considerable, a very large quantity of jewellery which would be easily portable was left behind. This, however, was probably due to the embarrassment of riches, and, so far as can be ascertained, the thief made such a discriminating selection as would lead one to suppose that he was by no means a novice at the business. The plunder comprised forty gold and forty silver watches, a number of alberts, brooches, and bracelets, and between two and three hundred rings, including wedding-rings, keepers, signet-rings, and gem rings. The property was insured in the Burglary Insurance Office, and it is stated on the part of the proprietors that all the arrangements made for securing the safety of the premises were approved by the representatives of that office. Though the burglary was characterised by great audacity, the scene being so central, and the immediate neighbourhood so well-policed, it was really not a very desperate affair, inasmuch as the thieves were able to conduct their operations completely under cover. They had only to pass the outer door leading to the offices already alluded to, and then their work was comparatively easy. It does not appear that there is any caretaker at the offices, and Messrs. Reis's establishment was, of course, only a lock-up shop. The door at the entrance to the offices was simply secured by a spring lock, and a skeleton key would suffice to open it. Traces which have been left by the burglars make it easy to follow their movements when they got inside. The individual who secured the booty first mounted the handrail at the foot of the staircase, then stepped on to a gas-bracket higher up the wall, and immediately beneath the window, and from this position he was able to smash the plate-glass, force the iron bars, and climb through the opening. No housebreaking implements were left behind, and no evidence is forthcoming that anyone was seen about the premises. It is supposed, however, that the work is that of a gang who have infested Birmingham, Liverpool, and other large towns for some time past. The activity of these crackmen led the police to issue a special warning to jewellers and pawnbrokers in Birmingham only last Saturday. This warning, the need for which was so speedily exemplified, was as follows:—"In consequence of a number of serious robberies, by breaking into lock-up premises, having taken place during the past few weeks in various parts of the country, and large quantities of goods stolen, this notice is for the purpose of respectfully advising those shopkeepers, especially where no one resides on the premises, to secure the same in such a manner, either by having someone constantly on the premises, or by leaving a light burning and having an aperture through which the police can command a complete view of the shop and safes.—J. FARNDALE, Chief Constable." During yesterday Detective-superintendent Van Helden set all the resources of his department in motion with a view to capturing the burglars; but no arrest was made, the clues being of the slenderest description. Particulars of the robbery have been forwarded to the principal constabulary forces throughout the kingdom.