

ROBBERY AT BRENTANO'S

Thieves Blew Open a Safe Friday

Night and Secured \$1,700.

WERE BOTH SKILLFUL AND BOLD

Men Paid to Prevent Such Crime

Near, But Their Suspicions Not

Aroused—Not Discovered

Until Yesterday.

Brentano's counting room was visited Friday night by professional burglars, who drilled and blew open an old-fashioned safe and secured \$1,700 in money.

The robbery is, in a certain sense, mysterious to both Messrs. August and Simon Brentano and the Central Office detectives, as up to last night it had not been determined how the thieves entered the building, while it was evident, from the breaking of a lock, that they left the annex building by the Sixteenth Street delivery door.

In boldness the robbery rivals that of the Manhattan Savings Institution, as it occurred within a few feet of Union Square, on the beat of a shrewd and wide-awake policeman and which is covered by a night watchman of entire trustworthiness who is a pensioned police officer; the Union Square station for park officers is within a stone's throw, a porter and a watchman are on duty in the Brentano building, and the night watchman of the Bank of the Metropolis, as he sits in the banking office, faces Brentano's counting room.

The experts, who accomplished their design, did not, of course, use much of the high explosive that did its work so effectually, but there must have been a detonation, yet no one has been found who remarked any unusual noise, and the burglary, as near as can be judged, occurred before 10 o'clock.

The business of the Brentanos was begun in the Austen G. Fox house, in the quarters formerly occupied by the Bank of the Metropolis and the Whiting Manufacturing Company, and gradually encroached on all the space that could be procured in the building, and it became necessary to take in the old three-story dwelling 22 East Sixteenth Street. Here was the delivery office and a stockroom down stairs, and quarters for the clerical force were on the upper floors.

The firm has a large and practically burglar-proof safe in this building, on which no attempt at robbery was made Friday night. The safe that was blown open was put in the counting room near the cashier's desk to save her and the clerks the fatigue and loss of time necessary to visiting the larger safe. In ordinary circumstances, only a few hundred dollars are kept in the safe, but Saturday is pay day for the fifty-five employes of the firm, and usually the sum required for them is put into the smaller safe on Friday, ready to be divided into the pay envelopes.

It is assumed that the counting room had been under the surveillance of an ally of the burglars for some time, and that the safe breakers were concealed in some part of the office premises when at 6 P. M. on Friday business ended for the day. The thieves, however, ran a great risk of detection, of which they witted nothing.

It had been arranged that Messrs. August and Simon Brentano and two of their staff should after dinner on Friday return to the office to discuss and arrange details of the coming holiday business. Simon Brentano, however, had a cold, and just when he should have started to keep this business engagement he decided to put it off, and so all who were to have met went home.

F. Tiedemann, one of the firm's employes, suggests the time when the burglars began work on the safe. He happened to be in East Sixteenth Street at 6:45 o'clock, and saw a light in the counting room. Supposing that one of the brothers Brentano was there, he did not regard the circumstance as important, and went his way.

The burglary was discovered yesterday morning by August Truckoess, an office boy, who went into the counting room to clean it up. He saw the door of the safe open and a litter of papers on the floor, and went directly to the man who had charge of the boys.

It was found that the burglars had drilled two holes three-eighths of an inch in diameter, and so near together that they formed an "8" near the bolt-throwing knob on the safe door. They used either dynamite or gun cotton, which bulged the inner skin of the door and ungeared the lock mechanism so that the safe was easily opened. An attempt had been made with a cold chisel to chip a corner of the door plate, apparently with a view to using nitro glycerine, but this method of procedure had been abandoned.

The burglars treated checks representing about \$300 with contempt, and only removed papers in the safe to discover if they secreted a hoard. They abandoned a dirty cotton muffler, with which they covered the safe when the charge was "touched off"; a pair of overalls, a hammer, a drill, and a fulminating cartridge, which were taken to Acting Detective Chief O'Brien.

His former side partner, Detective Sergt. John McCaully, was assigned to the case, and he passed a couple of hours yesterday afternoon with Simon Brentano in discussing the robbery and examining the building. The only trace of the burglars outside of the counting room was in a broken lock in a door in the basement, and it was evident that the intruder left the annex building that way. Where they were secreted when the employes of the firm left Friday night was not discovered.

The annex building's third floor is on a level with the second floor of the Union Square building, where the office of the Messrs. Brentano is. This part of the floor is cut off at night by open-work steel gates. The skylight and windows of the annex building are protected with iron bars, and neither the gates nor the bars had been tampered with.

The front of the Union Square building is amply protected by vigilant men at night. A dentist's porter is on duty in one portion of it, and a photographer's watchman in another.

The Brentanos have been robbed twice before. Sixteen years ago there was a small robbery, amounting to \$1,100, at 39 Union Square. Four years ago, at their establishment at 17 Avenue de l'Opera, Paris, at a time when some cracksmen were doing a land-office business, a coffre fort, that could hardly have withstood an assault with a can-opener, was taken from their office and opened in their store, after the burglars had lunched copiously. They obtained 5,500f. The French police were baffled in attempts to find the thieves.