

in its position on the wall. The academy had been locked since then—the holidays intervening—until Wednesday.

Leader's picture, which has had such an eventful career, was presented to the city by Mrs. W. B. Rhodes, and is valued at about £500. It was amongst the British art exhibits at the Christchurch Exhibition. In the absence of a more suitable place, the City Council handed it over to the Academy of Fine Arts for safe keeping. It first disappeared from the academy between April 11th and 12th, 1908, and was restored on Friday, July 17th, of the same year, after three months' negotiations—which are worth reviving at this stage.

**RANSOMED FOR FIFTY POUNDS.**

**WHAT HAPPENED IN 1908.**

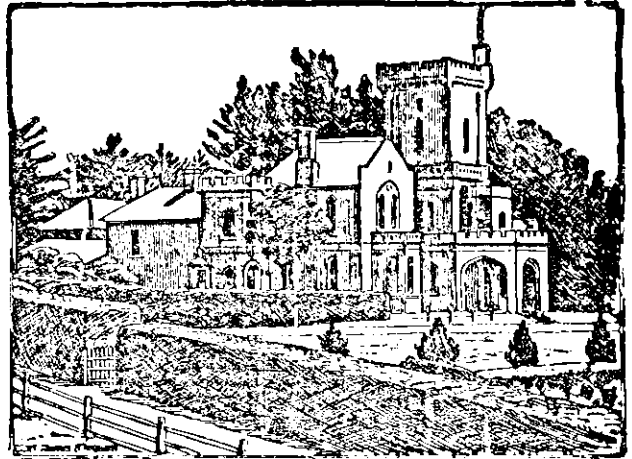
It was on the afternoon of Sunday, April 12th, 1908, that the now famous picture was missed for the first time. At 1.30 p.m. on that day Mr. Walter Leslie opened the Academy for the public. He very soon noticed that the picture was gone, and immediately made a search. A visit to an ante-room revealed traces of the work of the burglars. The picture had been taken from the wall, carried into the ante-room, and there

taken from the frame, the wool-work being left lying in the room. The canvas had bodily disappeared. On the floor was found lying a "jemmy" and a dark-lantern. The burglars—for it seemed to be too big a job for one—had gained entrance from the rear of the academy by climbing on to a shed, and thence on through the window. To prevent any unexpected entry through the main door they had plugged the key-hole with a small piece of wood. It was thought at the time, from the fact that the tools had been left behind, that the burglars had either found that the canvas was as much as they could conveniently carry away, or that they had been obliged, for fear of detection, to beat a hasty retreat.

The "New Zealand Times" said at the time the theft was reported:—"The theory is that the theft was the work of more than average burglars, polished persons who know the value of the work, and not burglars of the ordinary type who invariably concern themselves with bullion or plate or jewellery. They must, too, have had more than a casual acquaintance with the academy precincts, and have known exactly where to find this Leader painting. In close proximity were several pictures ranging in value from 100 to 200 guineas, by prominent

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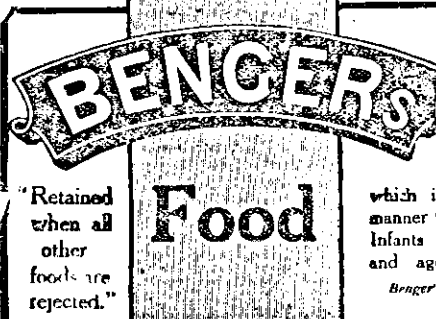
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