

The Bishop's Shadow

by I. T. THURSTON

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I.

LOST—A POCKETBOOK.

IT was about ten o'clock in the morning and a north-east storm was raging in Boston.

The narrow crooked business streets were slippery with mud and thronged with drays and wagons of every description, which, with the continual passing of the street cars, made it a difficult and often a dangerous matter to attempt a crossing.

The rain came in sudden driving sheets, blotting out all but the nearest cars or vehicles, while the wind seemed to lie in wait at every corner ready to spring forth and wrest umbrellas out of the hands of pedestrians at the most critical points in the crossings.

Two ladies coming along Causeway Street by the Union Depot, waited some minutes on the sidewalk watching for an opening in the endless stream of passing teams.

"There! We shan't have a better chance than this. Come on now," one of them exclaimed, stepping quickly forward as there came a little break in the moving line. She stepped in front of two cars that had stopped on parallel tracks and her companion hastily followed her. Just then there came a fierce gust that threatened to turn their umbrellas inside out. The lady in front clutched hers nervously and hurried forward. As she ran past the second car she found herself almost under the feet of a pair of horses attached to a heavy wagon. The driver yelled angrily at her as he hastily pulled up his team; a policeman shouted warningly and sprang toward her, and her friend stopped short with a low cry of terror. But though the pole of the wagon grazed her cheek and the shock threw her almost to the ground, the lady recovered herself and hurried across to the sidewalk.

It was then that a little ragged fellow of perhaps thirteen, slipped swiftly under the very feet of the horses, and, unheeding the savage shouts of the driver, wormed his way rapidly through the crowd and vanished. As he did so, the lady who had so narrowly escaped injury, turned to her friend and cried:—

"Oh my pocketbook! I must have dropped it on the crossing."

"On the crossing, did you say?" questioned the policeman, and as she assented, he turned hastily back to the street, but the cars and teams had passed on and others were surging forward and no trace of the pocketbook was visible. The policeman came back and questioned the lady about it, promising to do what he could to recover it.

"But it's not probable you'll ever see a penny of the money again," he said. "Some rascally thief likely saw ye drop it an' snatched it up."

The policeman was not mistaken. If he had turned through Tremont and Boylston Streets he might have seen a ragged, barefooted boy sauntering along with his hands in his pockets, stopping now and then to look into a shop window, yet ever keeping a keenly watchful eye on every policeman he met. The boy looked as if he had not a penny in those ragged pockets of his, but one of his grimy hands clutched tightly the lost pocketbook, which his sharp eyes had seen as it fell beneath the feet of the horses, and which he had deftly appropriated as he wriggled through the mud.

Heedless of wind and rain the boy lounged along the street. It was not often that he found himself in this section of the city, and it was much less familiar to him than some other localities. He seemed to be wandering aimlessly along, but his restless eyes were on the watch for some retired spot where he might safely examine his prize and see how much money he had secured. For a long time he saw no place that seemed to him a safe one for his purpose, so he went on and on until suddenly he realized that he was tired. He was passing a large brownstone church at the moment, and he sat down on the steps to rest.

"My! But this is a gay ol' church!" he thought, as he looked curiously at the beautiful building. "Wonder where them steps go to."

Springing up he ran across the pillared porch to the foot of the stone stairs that led to the upper entrance to the chapel. Following a sudden impulse he started hastily up these stairs, his bare feet making no sound. At the top of the stairs he found himself shut in on two sides by a high stone balustrade, the chapel door forming the third side. This door was closed. He tried it softly and found it locked. Then he dropped down in the darkest corner of the landing, and, with eyes and ears still keenly alert, pulled from his pocket the mud-stained purse and examined it carefully. He found in it thirty-six dollars in bills and about a dollar more in silver.

The boy gave a gleeful, silent laugh. "Struck it rich this time," he said to himself.

He hunted up a crooked pin from somewhere about his dilapidated garments, and fastened the roll of bills as securely as he could inside the lining of his jacket, keeping the silver in his pocket. Then he again examined the book to be sure that he had overlooked nothing. On the inside of the leather was the name,

"R. A. RUSSELL,"

and there was also a card bearing the same name and an address. The card he tore into tiny bits and chewed into a pellet which he tossed over the stone balustrade. Then, with the pocketbook in his hand, he looked about him. There was a pastor's box fastened beside the door. He crowded the telltale book through the opening in the top of this box, and then with a satisfied air ran blithely down the stone steps. But he stopped short as he came face to face with the sexton who was just crossing the porch.

"Here, you! Where've you been? What you been up to?" cried the man, clutching at him angrily, but the boy was too quick.

He ducked suddenly, slipped under the sexton's hands and darted across the porch and down the steps. Then he stopped to call back:—

"Be'n makin' 'rangements ter preach fer ye here next Sunday—yah! yah!" and with a mocking laugh he disappeared leaving the sexton shaking his fist in impotent wrath.

The boy ran swiftly on until he had gotten quite a distance from the church; then he slackened his pace and began to plan what he should do next. The sight of a confectioner's window reminded him that he was hungry, and he went into the store and bought two tarts which he ate as he walked on. After that he bought a quart of peanuts, two bananas and a piece of mincepie, and having disposed of all these he felt hungry no longer.

Having in his possession what seemed to him a small fortune, he saw no necessity for working, so that night he did not go as usual to the newspaper office for the evening papers, but spent his time loafing around the busiest corners and watching all that went on about the streets. This unusual conduct attracted the

attention of his cronies, and a number of newsboys gathered about him trying to find out the reason of his strange idleness.

"I say, Tode," called one, "why ain't ye gettin' yer papers?"

"Aw, he's come into a fortune, he has," put in another. "His rich uncle's come home an' 'dopted him."

"Naw, he's married Vanderbilt's daughter," sneered a third.

"Say, now Tode, tell us w'at's up," whispered one, sidling up to him. "Hev ye swiped somethin'?"

Tode tried to put on an expression of injured innocence, but his face flushed as he answered, shortly:—

"Come, hush yer noise, will ye! Can't a chap lay off for one day 'thout all the town pitchin' inter him? I made a dollar extry this mornin'—that's all the 'is about it," and stuffing his hands into his pockets he marched off to avoid further comment.

For the next week Tode "lived high" as he expressed it. He had from three to six meals a day and an unlimited amount of pie and peanuts besides, but after all he was not particularly happy. Time hung heavy on his hands sometimes—the more so as the boys, resenting his living in luxurious idleness, held aloof, and would have nothing to do with him. He had been quite a leader among them, and it galled him to be so left out and ignored. He began to think that he should not be sorry when his ill-gotten money was gone. He was thinking after this fashion one day as he strolled aimlessly down a side street. It was a quiet street where at that hour there was little passing, and Tode lounged along with his hands in his pockets until he came to a place where the sidewalk was littered with building material and where a large house was in course of construction. Perhaps the workmen were on strike that day. At any rate none of them were about, and the boy sprang up onto a barrel that was standing near the curbstone, and sat there drumming on the head with two pieces of lath and whistling a lively air.

After a little his whistle ceased and he looked up and down the street with a yawn, saying to himself:—

"Gay ol' street, this is! Looks like everybody's dead or asleep."

But even as he spoke a girl came hastily around the nearest corner and hurried toward him. She looked about fourteen. Her clothes were worn and shabby, but they were clean, and in her arms she carried a baby wrapped in a shawl. She stopped beside Tode and looked at him with imploring eyes.

"Oh can't you help me to hide somewhere? Do! Do!" she cried, with a world of entreaty in her voice.

The boy glanced at her coolly.

"What ye want ter hide for? Been swipin' somethin'?" he questioned, carelessly.

The girl flashed at him an indignant glance, then cast a quick, frightened one behind her.

"No, no!" she exclaimed, earnestly. "I'm no thief. I'm running away from old Mary Leary. She's most killed my little brother giving him whiskey so's to make him look sick when she takes him out begging. Look here!"

She lifted the shawl that was wrapped about the child. Tode leaned over and looked at the little face. It was a pitiful little face—so white and thin, with sunken eyes and blue lips—so pitiful that it touched even Tode's heart, that was not easily touched.

"The ol' woman after ye?" he asked, springing down from the barrel.

"Yes, yes! Oh, do help me," pleaded the girl, the tears running down her cheeks as she gazed at the baby face. "I'm afraid he's going to die."

The boy cast a quick glance about him.

"Here!" he exclaimed, "squat down an' I'll turn this over ye."

He seized a big empty barrel that

stood near. Without a word the girl slipped to the ground and he turned the barrel over her, kicking under the edge a bit of wood to give air. The next moment he stooped down to the opening and whispered:—

"Hi! The ol' lady's a comin'. Don't ye peep. I'll fix her!"

Then he reseated himself again on the barrel-head and began to drum and whistle as before, apparently paying no heed to the woman who came along scolding and swearing, with half a dozen street children following at her heels. She came nearer and nearer but Tode drummed on and whistled unconcernedly until she stopped before him and exclaimed harshly:—

"You boy—have you seen a girl go by here, with a baby?"

"Nope," replied Tode, briefly.

"How long you be'n settin' here?"

"Bout two weeks," answered the boy, gravely.

The woman stormed and blustered, but finding that this made no impression she changed her tactics and began in a wheedling tone:—

"Now, dearie, you'll help an ol' woman find her baby, won't ye? It's heartbroke I am for my pretty darlin' an' that girl has carried him off. Tell me, dearie, did they go this way?"

"I d' know nothin' 'bout yer gal," exclaimed Tode. "Why don't ye scoot 'round an' find her 'f she's cleared out?"

"An' ain't I huntin' her this blessed minute?" shrieked the woman, angrily. "I b'lieve ye *have* seen her. Like's not ye've hid her away somewheres."

Tode turned away from her and resumed his drumming, while the woman cast a suspicious glance at the unfinished building.

"She may be there," she muttered and began searching through the piles of building material on the ground floor.

"Hope she'll break her ol' neck!" thought Tode, vengefully, as he whistled with fresh vigour.

The woman reappeared presently, and casting a threatening glance and a torrent of bad language at the boy, went lumbering heavily down the street with the crowd of noisy, curious children straggling along behind her.

(To be continued.)

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