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T. D. Tweedy, Local Agt.

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The Bishop's Experiment

A Story of a Lost Pin.

By KATE Y. DUNNE.

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"But, my dear, you are all wrong!" exclaimed the bishop's wife, looking reproachfully over the coffee urn, which had hidden her plump face from her husband's adoring glance. "I wasn't careless. It was the washer-woman. If you must blame somebody, James, blame her. Of course I didn't mean to leave a pearl pin—and especially one you had given me—in my laundry bag."

That afternoon as he was walking briskly down Main street to make a parish visit in the distance he saw Alaine's blue hat and shining hair. His heart had a habit of beating faster at the sight of her slender, dainty figure, and that afternoon she looked even more attractive than usual to him among a crowd of commonplace women. He hurried to catch up with her, but she, too, was walking fast and had turned into Pierce's department store before he was near enough to join her.

He went in, too, and secured a vantage point some feet away, where he waited until she should have a chance to slip into a space next to her.

As he waited he noticed her gold bag laid on the counter beside her muffs, out of her direct line of vision. Still the old habit! An idea flashed into the bishop's mind. Object lessons often accomplish what all the lectures in the world fail to do.

Quickly and quietly he laid an arm on the counter, swept it along the glass unnoted by the mob of women surging toward the bar—his Mecca ahead. He was not seen. His hand touched the bag, closed over it, drew it to him, dropped it safely into his pocket.

Was he pickpocket or bishop?

He certainly felt like the former. Never had he felt so abject, so criminally miserable, as when he pushed his way out of that shop, for to carry out his object lesson necessitated giving up that anticipated companionship on his walk. So he went on out and down town alone, wondering why the police did not take him by the arm, why no one pointed the finger of scorn, while that wretched gold thing was glittering so brightly in his pocket.

His parochial visit was not pleasant; his walk was not pleasant; nothing was pleasant. He was obliged to eat a solitary lunch, as Alaine had rounded out her shopping expedition by lunching at her mother's. Even the telephone bell did not ring, as he half expected it might. Nothing happened, and he and that bag seemed to be the only occupants of that quiet house. Alaine reached home just in time to dress for dinner. Then he had a visitor, who detained him until the last moment, so he had no chance for a sight of Alaine until he found her at the table.

He had pictured her distraught, worried, had planned it all—what she should say and he should answer and what the result would be—but the best laid plans of mice and men gang aft agley, and he was disappointed. Alaine was simply radiant, hesitating, having put on the blue dress he was so fond of and looking just as she had looked in those days when she had first turned him from sermons and from services by the magic of her charm.

She had seen old friends by chance, had lunched with a group of favorite aunts and cousins who had made much of her and had found just the desired bit of lace at that sale. The day had been a success from start to finish.

"You didn't lose your purse, did you?" The bishop felt impelled finally to jump into the ditch of his own digging. Alaine looked her astonishment.

"Lose my purse?" she said. "Why, no, of course, I didn't. What a funny question, James! Just because I lost that pin—or, rather, it lost itself—you needn't think I am going to lose everything else I own."

"Are you sure you have your purse?" The bishop was obviously perplexed at her answer.

"Jimmie," she said, "I am going to send for an alienist. You certainly have softening of the brain. My purse is up in my bureau drawer at this very moment."

The bishop was growing excited. "Go and look for it," he interrupted. "I know it is not there."

Alaine was staring at him with marked wonder in her blue eyes. "Jimmie, listen!" she said, emphasizing her words by tapping the table with the end of a spoon. "My purse is in my drawer, where I put it when I came home unless you have stolen it."

"Perhaps I have." The bishop's face was a study in crimson, and he spoke in a loud, dictatorial way. "Go and get it."

Alaine's eyes filled with tears. She had never heard her husband speak in that way before. She was hurt and a little frightened, though she would not show it.

"Certainly," she said in a very dignified tone, sweeping out of the room, leaving the bishop as bewildered as he was excited. He was beginning to feel badly that she was about to be so shocked, but surely there was never a more glaring example of her carelessness than this. To think that she had brought her bag home with her when all the time—

Flying footsteps, flashing eyes, a gold bag thung into his lap! "There, Jimmie—crazy, crazy boy!" exclaimed a triumphant voice. "Now will you be good?"

The very bag—the very—coveys filled the bishop's brain for a moment. "I—I—don't see," he stammered. "Wait a minute, will you?" Then he in his turn did upstairs and went to his bureau drawer. The very bag! It took him some time to get his bearings, to

summon up courage to go down to that lighted room and to the reproachful glance of those blue eyes. But the bishop was a good sport, although the brilliancy of his sermons was sometimes open to criticism. Down to the dining room he bravely walked and laid the bag beside its duplicate. Alaine looked and looked and looked again. Then her haughtiness was that of a tragedy queen.

"James, explain! Did you think you had my bag? And where did you get it?"

The bishop was silent. He was absent-mindedly comparing the duplicates. Alaine's had her monogram on the framework; the other had only initials, "M. M. B." He repeated it over and over to himself, as if it were a favorite refrain. Then he knew that his day of judgment had come.

"I stole it!"

"Where, James?"

"I saw you on Main street this morning—his tone was of the yet unshriven monk—I followed you into Pierce's to ask you to walk down to the Grants with me, I saw your bag lying on the counter beside your muffs, and I—took it."

"What for?"

"Why, just to—to—the bishop was growing extremely nervous under the steady gaze of those questioning blue eyes—"why, my dear, to—hang it all, Alaine! Haven't you any imagination? Can't you imagine why?"

"Certainly not—and I don't propose to try! The idea of a bishop stealing his wife's purse, even trying to give her a moment's fright for any reason at all, is something for which there can be no possible explanation and which I don't even care to think about. But I do say this—I think when a bishop stoops to those dreadful things it is time for his wife to leave him!"

High tragedy was written all over the little lady's face as she folded her arms, arched her eyebrows and looked sternly at her writhing husband. Then a sudden change of expression swept over her mobile face. "James," she said, "did you really and truly do it for the good of your poor black sheep? Did you steal your wife's purse to save her soul?"

Silence.

"James!"

Still silence while the bishop twirled a lock of hair furiously between his thumb and forefinger.

"The bishop turned appealing eyes to hers—so hard, so cold—and as their eyes met something happened. Laughter such as possesses the spirits of elfland overcame the dignified bishop and his wife. Words were impossible. Anger was a thing of the past. Explanations needed not to be made. Pearls of laughter met and mingled across the table. Alaine was the first to recover sufficiently to speak.

"Let's see whose it is," she said. And the bishop handed it to her, while wiping his eyes with the other.

"M. M. B. (himself) muttered Alaine. Then, opening the bag, she held aloft a visiting card. "James," she shrieked, "it is mother's!"

His mother-in-law's! The bishop was speechless—this time with horror. Alaine was an only child, her mother ever on the watch lest he should let the winds of life blow too strongly on her child. He never could face her after a situation like this. She was always severe on his clerical ideas. And now this!

"What can I do?" His tone was that of a suppliant, and Alaine thoroughly enjoyed his misery.

"Do," she said. "There are several things you can do, and you will have to do one of them quickly, or mother will be here asking my advice about what she can do to recover it. Father gave it to her on their last anniversary, and she will be frantic at having lost it. By the way, I don't see why you didn't see her in the shop."

"Neither do I. Now tell me what to do."

Alaine held up her plump hand and counted off fingers as she spoke: "Way No. 1, messenger boy sent to leave it at her door, with no explanation, note or card—spirit too cowardly for a bishop to resort to way No. 2, send at once to Pierce's, saying you found it—falsehood unworthy of your ideals; way No. 3, take it to her yourself and own up to your methods of improving her child's character."

Silence. The bishop looked downcast, Alaine roguish.

"Well, James," she said at last, "what have you decided to do? Mercy, there's the telephone! Oh, my dear, suppose it's mother!"

It was. Muttering the transmitter, Alaine whispered in a flush of excitement: "Dearest, if I save your life now will you stop trying to save my soul any more?"

The bishop's answer was unintelligible, but understood. Still Alaine did not show her hand.

"And, dearest, if I do you must let me choose the text for your special sermon next Sunday. Yes? Now listen while I show you what can be done with a complicated situation."

Saved, not by grace, but by Alaine—a very much bishop took his place in the pulpit the following Sunday and announced as his text "The way of the transgressor is hard."

All the Printer's Fault.

"What became of that paper you were going to start in the interest of uplifting the poor tramp?" asked the interviewer.

"Ah, it fell through," confessed the great reformer, with much agitation, "and all on account of the blooming carelessness of the printer's devil."

"Did he make a grave error?"

"I should say so. You know the paper was to be named the Bar of Hope. Well, that idiot of a printer changed it to the Bar of Soap, and as soon as my constituents heard the name they started running, and they are running yet."—Chicago News.

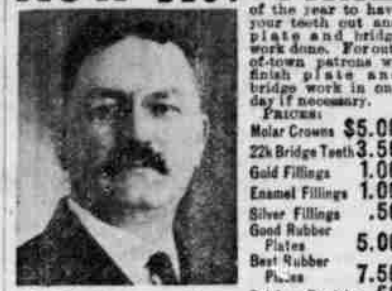
Court Logic.

Lawyer—My client, your honor, has confessed that he committed the burglary. You will admit this an eloquent proof of my client's love of truth and of his upright conscience, and, your honor, a man with such a delicate conscience should not be accused of having broken into a house to steal. Never!

Quite Satisfactory.

Stern Father—Young man, the lights in this house are put out at 10 o'clock! Young Man—That suits me. Don't delay on my account.—New York Times.

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