

The Cop And The Anthem

The signs of approaching winter were there. Birds had begun to fly south. People seemed to want new warm clothes. The dead leaves covered the ground. This approaching winter made Soapy restless. He had no home and no warm clothes. Yet he hoped to find a comfortable lodging for the winter. He hoped to spend winter's three months in the prison on Blackwell's Island. He had been to prison several times with that purpose. Once again he made his small plans for going to the Island.

Soapy's first plan was to have some good dinner at some fine restaurant. Then he would say that he had no money. A cop would be called. He would be taken to a judge. The judge would send him to prison for three months. He entered a restaurant. The best food and the best people in their best clothes appeared here every evening. Unluckily the head waiter saw his broken old shoes while he was entering the restaurant. He quietly but quickly put him out.

Soapy entered another restaurant. He was able to get food. After that he announced that he had no money. He, himself, requested the waiter to call the cop. Instead, the waiter threw him out on the hard street outside. Thus his first plan to reach the prison didn't work.

There was a shop with a wide glass window. Soapy took up a big stone and broke the glass. People came running. There was a cop also. Soapy admitted breaking the glass. But the cop's mind would not consider Soapy. Men who break windows (glasses) do not stop there to talk to cops. They run away as fast as they can. Thus this plan of reaching the prison also failed.

A fear caught Soapy. No cop would arrest him. He thought of something else to try. He came to a cop standing in front of a big theatre. He began to shout as if he had had too much to drink. The cop turned his back on Soapy. He said to someone standing near him, 'It's one of those college boys. He won't hurt anything. We have orders to let them shout.' He was referring to Soapy as a 'college boy'.

Soapy was getting more and more restless. In desperation, he took away the umbrella of a man buying a newspaper. The man followed Soapy. He asked Soapy to give him back his umbrella. Soapy asked him to call the cop standing at the

corner. It turned out that that man himself had stolen the umbrella. So he didn't call the cop. He offered to give it to Soapy. Soapy threw away the umbrella.

Now Soapy gave up all hopes of being arrested that day. He began to move towards Madison Square. He was going home, although it was only a seat in the park. At a quiet corner he stopped.

Here was his old childhood home. Sweet music came to Soapy's ears and seemed to hold him there. He thought of his childhood days. In the church he had mothers, flowers and high hopes. There were friends and clean thoughts and clean clothes. There was a sudden and wonderful change in his soul. He saw how he had fallen. He saw the wasted time, his wrong desires, his dead hopes and the lost power of his mind.

He decided to fight to change his life. He wanted to make a man of himself again. There was still time. He was young enough. He would again find his old purpose in life. The sweet music had changed him. He decided to find work the very next day. The new thoughts had begun to take a firm hold on his mind.

Just then Soapy felt a hand on his arm. It was a cop. He asked Soapy what he was doing there. Full of his new strength, Soapy began to argue with him. The cop took Soapy with him. Next morning the judge sentenced him to three months prison on Blackwell's Island.