

Elizabeth Pike and the Highwayman

SINCE the publication of this story on a previous page (page 85), a full version has come to hand, which is here given:

At the time when there was a run on the banks, Betsy Pike, sister of Joseph Pike, owner of Pike's Bank in Cork, undertook to convey a supply of gold from Dublin. At that time this was a dangerous undertaking on account of the highwaymen that infested the roads. She had two boxes of gold which she carefully hid under her seat in the coach. She retained a small sum of money in her pocket. One of her fellow travellers was a Cork gentleman of her acquaintance. After starting he told her he had some money concealed in his top-boots and also some ready to hand to the robbers, who were almost certain to attack the coach.

Passing over the Kilworth mountains the coach was stopped, and a highwayman demanded the money and watches of the passengers. He first accosted Betsy Pike, who handed him the sum she had ready in her pocket. When he demanded her watch, she hesitated, saying, "Ah, sure thee would not take my watch? It would not be of much value to thee (having a tortoise shell case), but is of great value to me as having belonged to my mother." However, he took it from her and turned to the Cork gentleman, who handed him the purse he had ready. The robber was not satisfied and demanded more, the gentleman protesting he had no more; whereupon Betsy Pike remonstrated with him and said, "Thee should not tell a lie: Thee told me thee had money hid in thee boots." The robber then insisted on getting this, and the gentleman reluctantly produced it. The robber being satisfied, turned to Betsy Pike and handed her back the watch saying, "You are so honest and think so much of the watch, you may have it back." Her companion upbraided her for betraying his secret. She merely repeated that he should not tell a lie.

On arriving at her brother's house with the gold she told him what she had done, and he sent an invitation to the gentleman to come to breakfast next morning, when they explained to him that it was in order to spare the larger amount she kept the robber's attention directed to him, and they then handed to him the amount of money he had lost through her.

When the bank opened, Joseph Pike had one butter firkin filled with sovereigns and a row of others filled with something else and the top covered with gold. When the farmers came in and asked for their deposits Joseph Pike, who had his coat off, and was apparently working very hard, said, "What will you have, boys—quick—notes or gold?" They said, "Gold," when he scooped up the gold, gave it, and got his

receipt. When several had been thus supplied, they told others who were waiting outside, "There seems plenty of gold here," and in the end they brought it back and relodged, and thus the bank was saved.

The lady who communicated the foregoing added, "While I write, the watch is here and I have it in my hand. It was left by Betsy Pike to Elizabeth Jackson, her step-great-niece, and who was called after her. After *her* death it passed into the possession of her brother, Thomas Jackson, of Belfast, who was my uncle. The date of the watch is 1747."

From THOMAS HENRY WEBB'S MS. *Collection of Quaker Stories.*

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