The Adventures of Tom Sawyer

Mark Twain

PREFACE

MOST of the *adventures recorded in this* book really occurred; one or two were experiences of my own, the rest those *of boys who were schoolma*tes of mine. Huck Finn is drawn from life; Tom   
Sawyer also, but not from an *individual --- he is a combin*ation of the characteristics of three boys whom I knew, and therefore bel*ongs to the composite order* of architecture.

*The odd superstitions touched upon were all prevalent among children and slaves in the West at   
the period of this story --- that is to say, thirty or forty years ago.*

**Although my *book is intended mainly fo*r the entertainment of boys and girls, I hope it will not be shunned by *men and women on that acc*ount, for part of my plan has been to try to pleasantly   
remind adults of wh*at they once were themselv*es, and of how they felt and thought and talked, and what queer enterprises they sometimes engaged in.**

THE AUTHOR.

HARTFORD, 1876.

Chapter I

‘TOM!’

***No*** answer.

‘TOM!’

***No*** answer.

‘What’s gone with that boy, I wonder? You TOM!’ ***No*** answer.

The old lady pulled her spec**tacles down and looked over them about the roo**m; then she put them up and looked out under them. Sh**e seldom or never looked THROUGH them for s**o small a thing as a boy; they were her state pair, the pri**de of her heart, and were built for ‘style,’ not se**rvice ---  
 she could have seen through a pair of stove-lids **just as well. She looked perplexed for a momen**t, and then said, not fiercely, but still loud enough for the **furniture to hear:**

‘Well, I lay if I get hold of yo**u I’ll ---‘**

She did not finish, for by th**is time she was bending down and punching un**der the bed with the   
broom, and so she needed breath t**o punctuate the punches with. She resurrected n**othing but   
the cat.

‘I never did see the beat of **that boy!’**

She went to the open door **and stood in it and looked out among the toma**to vines and ‘jimpson’ weeds that constituted the garden**. *No* Tom. So she lifted up her voice at an angl**e calculated for   
distance and shouted:

‘Y-o-u-u TOM!’

There was a slight noise behind her and she turned just in time to seize a small boy by the slack of   
his roundabout and arrest his flight.

‘There! I might ‘a’ thought of that closet. What you been doing in there?’

‘***No***thing.’

‘***No***thing! Look at your hands. And look at your mouth. What IS that truck?’

‘I don’t know, aunt.’

‘Well, I know. It’s jam --- that’s what it is. Forty times I’ve said if you didn’t let that jam alone I’d   
skin you. Hand me that switch.’

The switch hovered in the air --- the peril was desperate --- ‘My! Look behind you, aunt!’

The old lady whirled round, and snatched her skirts out of danger. The lad fled on the instant, scrambled up the high board-fence, and disappeared over it.

His aunt Polly stood surprised a moment, and then broke into a gentle laugh.

‘Hang the boy, can’t I never learn anything? Ain’t he played me tricks enough like that for me to be   
looking out for him by this time? But **old fools is the biggest fools there is. C**an’t learn an old dog new tricks, as the saying is. But my goodnes**s, he never plays them alike, two days,** and how is a body to know what’s coming? He ‘pears to know ju**st how long he can torment me before** I get   
my dander up, and he knows if he can make out to put me off **for a minute or make me laugh, it’s all** down again and I can’t hit him a lick. I ain’t doing my duty by that b**oy, and that’s the Lord’s truth, goodnes**s knows. Spare the rod and spile the child, as the Good Book says. **I’m a laying up sin and suffering for u**s both, I know. He’s full of the Old Scratch, but laws-a-me! he’s **my own dead   
sister’s boy, poor thing, a**nd I ain’t got the heart to lash him, somehow. Every time I let him **off, my conscience does hurt me so, a**nd every time I hit him my old heart most breaks. Well-a-well,   
man **that is born of woman is of few days** and full of trouble, as the Scripture says, and I reckon it’s so. He’ll **play hookey this evening, \* and [\* Sout**hwestern for ‘afternoon"] I’ll just be obleeged   
to make him work, **to-morrow, to punish him. It’s mighty** hard to make him work Saturdays, when   
all the boys is having holiday, but he hates work more than he hates anything else, and I’ve GOT to do some of my duty by him, or I’ll be the ruination of the child.’

Tom did play hookey, and he had a very good time. He got back home barely in season to help Jim, the small colored boy, saw next-day’s wood and split the kindlings before supper --- at least he was   
there in time to tell his adventures to Jim while Jim did three-fourths of the work. Tom’s younger   
brother (or rather half-brother) Sid was already through with his part of the *work (picking up chips),   
for he was a* quiet boy, and had no adventurous, troublesome ways.

**While Tom was eating his supper, and stealing sugar a*s opportunity offered, Aunt Polly a*sked him questions that were full of guile, and very deep --- *for she wanted to trap him into* damaging   
revealments. Like many other simple-hearted souls, it w*as her pet vanity to believe she was*endowed with a talent for dark and mysterious diplomacy, and sh*e loved to contemplate her   
most tr*ansparent devices as marvels of low cunning. Said she: ‘Tom, it was *middling warm in school, warn’t it?’***

‘**Yes**’m.’

‘Powerful warm, warn’t it?’

‘**Yes**’m.’

‘Didn’t you want to go in a-swimming, Tom?’

A bit of a scare shot th**rough Tom --- a touch of uncom**fo*rtable suspicion. He searched Aunt Po*lly’s   
face, but it told him nothing. **So he said:**

‘***No***’m --- well, not very **much.’**

The old lady reached o**ut her hand and felt Tom’s shirt,** a*nd said:*

‘But you ain’t too warm **now, though.’ And it flattered h***er to reflect that she had discovere*d that   
the shirt was dry without anybo**dy knowing that that was wh*at s****he had in her mind. But in spite   
of* her, Tom knew where the wind lay, no**w. So he forestalled what mi*ght*** *be the next move:*

‘Some of us pumped o**n our heads --- mine’s damp yet.** S*ee?’*

Aunt Polly was vexed t**o think she had overlooked that** bi*t of circumstantial evidence, and miss*ed   
a trick. Then she had a new ins**piration:**

‘Tom, you didn’t have t**o undo your shirt collar where *I s****ewed it, to pump on your head,* did you? Unbutton your jacket!’

The trouble vanished out of Tom’s face. He opened his jac*ket. His shirt collar was securely sewe*d.

‘Bother! Well, go ‘long with you. I’d made sure you’d play*ed hookey and been a-swimming. Bu*t I   
forgive ye, Tom. I reckon you’re a kind of a singed cat, as the sayi*ng is --- better’n you look. THIS time.’*

She was half sorry her sagacity had miscarried, and half gla*d that Tom had stumbled into obedien*t   
conduct for once.

But Sidney said:

‘Well, now, if I didn’t think you sewed his collar with whit*e thread, but it’s black.’*

‘Why, I did sew it with white! Tom!’

But Tom did not wait for the rest. As he went out at the d*oor he said:*

‘Siddy, I’ll lick you for that.’

In a safe place Tom examined two large needles which w*ere thrust into the lapels of his jacket, and ha*d thread b**ound about them -**-- one needle carried white th*read and the other black. He said:*

‘She’d n**ever noticed if it** hadn’t been for Sid. Confound it! som*etimes she sews it with white, an*d   
sometim**es she sews it with** black. I wish to geeminy she’d stick to o*ne or t’other --- I can’t keep   
the ru*n of ‘em. B**ut I bet you I’ll lam** Sid for that. I’ll learn *him!’*

He was n**ot the Model Boy** of the village. He kne*w the model boy very well though --- and loathed   
him.*

Within t**wo minutes, or eve**n less, he had forgot*ten all his troubles.* ***No****t because his troubles were on*e whit less **heavy and bitter t**o him than a man’s *are to a man, but because a new and powerful interes*t bore the**m down and drove** them out of his mind *for the time --- just as men’s misfortunes   
are forgotte*n in the ex**citement of new e**nterprises. This new i*nterest was a valued novelty in whistling, which he ha*d just acqu**ired from a negro,** and he was suffering *to practise it undisturbed.   
It consisted in a peculiar bird*-like turn**, a sort of liquid w**arble, produced by t*ouching the tongue to the roof of the mouth at shor*t intervals **in the midst of the** music --- the reader *probably remembers how to do it, if he has ever been* a boy. Dili**gence and attention** soon gave him the k*nack of it, and   
he strode down the street with his mout*h full of ha**rmony and his sou**l full of gratitude. He *felt much as an astronomer feels* who has discovered a new planet --- no doubt, as far as strong, deep,   
u*nalloyed pleasure is concerned, t*he advantage was with the boy, not the astronomer.

The summer evenings were long. It was not dark, *yet. Presently Tom checked his* whistle. A stranger was before him --- a boy a sha**de larger than himself. *A new-comer of*** *any age or either* sex was an   
impressive curiosity in the poor little **shabby village of St. Pe*tersburg. This b****oy was well dress*ed, too --- well dressed on a week-day. This was **simply astounding. His *cap was a dain****ty thing, his clos*e- buttoned blue cloth roundabout was new and **natty, and so were his *pantaloons. He*** *had shoes on ---* and it was only Friday. He even wore a necktie, **a bright bit of ribbon. H*e had a citified****air about him tha*t ate into Tom’s vitals. The more Tom stared at **the splendid marvel, t*he higher he tu****rned up his nos*e at his finery and the shabbier and shabbier his **own outfit seemed to h*im to grow. Ne****ither boy spoke. I*f one moved, the other moved --- but only sidewise, in a circle; they kept   
*face to face and eye to eye all the* time. Finally Tom said:

‘I can lick you!’

‘I’d like to *se****e* you try it.’**

‘Well, I can d**o it.’**

‘***No*** you can’**t, either.’**

‘**Yes** I can.’

‘***No*** you can’**t.’**

‘I can.’

‘You can’t.’

‘Can!’

‘Can’t!’

An uncomfo**rtable pause. Then Tom said:**

‘What’s your **name?’**

‘‘Tisn’t any o**f your business, maybe.’**‘Well I ‘low I’**ll MAKE it my business.’**‘Well why do**n’t you?’**‘If you say m**uch, I will.’**‘Much --- mu**ch --- MUCH. There now.’**

‘Oh, you thin**k you’re mighty smart, DON’T you? I could lick** you with one hand tied behind me, if I wanted to.’

‘Well why do**n’t you DO it? You SAY you can do it.’**

‘Well I WILL, **if you fool with me.’**

‘Oh yes --- I’v**e seen whole families in the same fix.’**

‘Smarty! You **think you’re SOME, now, DON’T you? Oh, wh**at a hat!’

‘You can lum**p that hat if you don’t like it. I dare you to kno**ck it off --- and anybody that’ll take a dare will suck eggs.’

‘You’re a liar**!’**

‘You’re anot**her.’**

‘You’re a figh**ting liar and dasn’t take it up.’**

‘Aw --- take **a walk!’**

‘Say --- if you **give me much more of your sass I’ll take and** bounce a rock off’n your head.’

‘Oh, of COUR**SE you will.’**

‘Well I WILL.**’**

‘Well why do**n’t you DO it then? What do you keep SAYING** you will for? Why don’t you DO it? It’s because you’re afraid**.’**

‘I AIN’T afrai**d.’**

‘You are.’

‘I ain’t.’

‘Yo*u are.’*

An*other pause, and more eying and s*idling around each other. Presently they were shoulder to shoulder. To*m said:*

‘Ge*t away from here!’*

‘G*o away yourself!’*

‘I *won’t.’*

‘I *won’t either.’*

So *they stood, each with a foot place*d at an angle as a brace, and both shoving with might and main, and gl*owering at each other with hate. B*ut neither could get an advantage. After struggling till both were hot an*d flushed, each relaxed his strain w*ith watchful caution, and Tom said:

‘Y*ou’re a coward and a* ***pup. I’ll tell* my big brother on you, and he can thrash you with** his little finger, an*d I’ll make him do it, too.****’***

‘W*hat do I care for your* ***big brother*? I’ve got a brother that’s bigger than he is --- and** what’s more, he ca*n throw him over that fe****nce, too.’* [Both brothers were imaginary.]**

‘T*hat’s a lie.’*

‘Y*OUR saying so don’t* ***make it so.’***

To*m drew a line in the* ***dust with his* big toe, and said:**

‘I *dare you to step over* ***that, and I’ll l*ick you till you can’t stand up. Anybody that’ll t**ake a dare will steal sh*eep.’*

Th*e new boy stepped o****ver promptly,* and said:**

‘***No****w you said you’d do* ***it, now let’s* see you do it.’**

‘D*on’t you crowd me n****ow; you bette*r look out.’**

‘W*ell, you SAID you’d d****o it --- why do*n’t you do it?’**‘B*y jingo! for two cents* ***I WILL do it.’***

Th*e new boy took two* ***broad coppers* out of his pocket and held them out with derisi**on. Tom   
struck th*em to the ground. In an in****stant both bo*ys were rolling and tumbling in the dirt, grippe**d together like ca*ts; and for the space of* ***a minute they* tugged and tore at each other’s hair and   
cl**othes, punched and scr*atched each other’s* ***nose, and cov*ered themselves with dust and glory.   
Presently** the confusion took for*m, and through the* ***fog of battle T*om appeared, seated astride the new boy, and** pounding him with his *fists. ‘Holler ‘nuff!’ s****aid he.***

The *boy only struggled* ***to free himse*lf. He was crying --- mainly from rage.**

‘Ho*ller ‘nuff!’ --- and th****e pounding w*ent on.**

At l*ast the stranger got* ***out a smothe*red ‘‘Nuff!’ and Tom let him up and said:**

‘***No****w that’ll learn you.* ***Better look ou*t who you’re fooling with next time.’**

The *new boy went off b****rushing the* dust from his clothes, sobbing, snuffling, and occa**sionally   
looking back and shaking his head a**nd threatening what he would do to Tom the ‘next time he**caught him out.’ To which Tom responded **with jeers, and started off in high feather, and as soon   
as his** back was turned the new boy snatched up a **stone, threw it and hit him be- tween the   
shoulders and then** turned tail and ran like an antelope. Tom chased the traitor home, and thus found out where he lived. He then held a position at the gate for some time, daring the enemy to   
come out- side, but the enemy only made faces at him through the window and declined. At last the enemy’s mother appeared, and called Tom a bad, vicious, vulgar child, and ordered him away.   
So he went away; but he said he ‘‘lowed’ to ‘lay’ for that boy.

He got home pretty late that night, and when he climbed cautiously in at the window, he uncovered   
an ambuscade, in the person of his aunt; and when she saw the state his clothes were in her resolution to turn his Saturday holiday into captivity at hard labor became adamantine in its firmness.

Chapter II

SATU*RDAY* ***morning was come, a****nd all the summer world was br*ight and fresh, and brimming with life. There *was* ***a song in every heart;*** *and if the heart was young the m*usic issued at the lips. There was cheer in eve*ry fa****ce and a spring in every*** *step. The locust-trees were in bl*oom and the fragrance of the blossoms filled *the a****ir. Cardiff Hill, beyond*** *the village and above it, was gr*een with veg**etation and i**t lay just far enou*gh aw****ay to seem a Delectab****le Land, dreamy, reposeful, and i*nviting.

Tom *appe****ared on the sidewalk w****ith a bucket of whitewash and* a long-handle**d brush. He s**urveyed the fence*, and* ***all gladness left him an****d a deep mel- ancholy settled do*wn upon his s**pirit. Thirty ya**rds of board fence *nine* ***feet high. Life to him s****eemed hollow, and existence but* a burden. Sig**hing, he dipp**ed his brush and p*asse****d it along the topmost*** *plank; repeated the operation; d*id it again;   
co**mpared the i**n- significant white*wash****ed streak with the far-r****eaching continent of unwhitewa*shed fence, **and sat dow**n on a tree-box disco*urage****d. Jim came skipping o****ut at the gate with a tin pail, a*nd singi**ng Buffalo G**als. Bringing water from *the t****own pump had always*** *been hateful work in Tom’s eye*s, before**, but now it d**id not strike him so. H*e remembered that there   
was company at the pump. White,* mulatto, and negro boys and girls were alway*s there waiting their turns, resting, trading playthings, qu*arrelling, fighting, skylarking. And he remembered that   
  
although the pump was only a hundred and fifty yards off, Jim never got back with a bucket of water under an hour --- and even then some- body generally had to go after him. Tom said:

‘Say, Jim, I’ll fetch the water if you’ll whitewash some.’

Jim shook his head and said:

‘Can’t, Mars Tom. Ole missis, she tole me I got to go an’ git dis water an’ not stop foolin’ roun’ wid anybody. She say she sp**ec’ Mars Tom gwine to ax me to whitewash, an’ so she tole me** go ‘long an’ ‘tend to my own business --- sh**e ‘lowed SHE’D ‘tend to de whitewashin’.’**

‘Oh, never you **mind what she said, Jim. That’s the way she always talks. Gi**mme the bucket --- I won’t be gone only a a **minute. SHE won’t ever know.’**

‘Oh, I dasn’t, **Mars Tom. Ole missis she’d take an’ tar de head off’n me. ‘Dee**d she would.’

‘SHE! She nev**er licks anybody --- whacks ‘em over the head with her thimb**le --- and who cares   
for that, I’d like to kno**w. She talks awful, but talk don’t hurt --- anyways it don’t if sh**e don’t cry.   
Jim, I’ll give you a marvel. I’ll giv**e you a white alley!’ Jim began to waver.**

‘White alley, J**im! And it’s a bully taw.’**

My! Dat’s a m**ighty gay marvel, I tell you!**

But Mars Tom **I’s powerful ‘fraid ole missis ---‘ ‘And besides, if you will I’ll sh**ow you my sore toe.’

Jim was only h**uman --- this attraction was too much for him. He put down** his pail, took the white alley, and bent over **the toe with absorbing interest while the bandage was being u**nwound. In   
another moment he was flying d**own the street with his pail and a tingling rear, Tom was   
white**washing with vigor, and Aunt Polly was retir**ing from the field with a slipper in her hand and**

**triumph in h**er eye. But Tom’s energy did not last. He b**egan to think of the fun he had planned  
 for this day, and his** sorrows multiplied. Soon the free boys wou**ld come tripping along on all sorts   
of delicious expeditions, a**nd they would make a world of fun of him f**or having to work --- the   
very thought of it burnt him like fire.** He got out his worldly wealth and examined **it --- bits of toys,   
marbles, and trash; enough to buy an excha**nge of WORK, maybe, but not half enough to **buy so  
 much as half an hour of pure freedom. So he returne**d his straitened means to his pocket, and  
 g**ave up the idea of trying to buy the boys. At this dark and ho**peless moment an inspiration burst upon hi**m! *No*thing less than a great, magnificent inspiration.**

He took up his **brush and went tranquilly to work. Ben Rogers hove in sight** presently --- the very boy, of all boys, whos**e ridicule he had been dreading. Ben’s gait was the hop-skip-a**nd-jump --- proof enough that his heart was light and his anticipations high. He was eating an apple, and giving a long, melodious whoop, at intervals, followed by a deep-toned ding- dong-dong, ding-dongdong, for he was personating a steamboat. As he drew near, he slackened speed, took the middle of the street, leaned far over to star- board and rounded to ponderously and with laborious pomp and circumstance --- for he was personating the Big M*issouri, and considered himself to be drawing nine feet of water. He was boat* and captain and engine-be*lls combined, so he had to imagine himself standing on his own hurricane-deck* giving the orders and execu*ting them:*

‘Stop her, *sir! Ting-a-ling-ling!’ The headway ran almost out, and he drew up slowly towa*rd the sidewalk.

‘Ship up t*o back! Ting-a-ling-ling!’ His arms straightened and stiffened down his sides.*

‘Set her b*ack on the stabboard! Ting-a-ling-ling! Chow! ch-chow-wow! Chow!’ His right h*and, mean- time, describing *stately circles --- for it was representing a forty-foot wheel.*

‘Let her g*o back on the labboard! Ting-a-ling- ling! Chow-ch-chow-chow!’ The left hand b*egan to describe circles.

‘Stop the stabboard! Ting-a-ling-ling! Stop the labboard! Come ahead on the stabboard! Stop her! Let your outside turn over slow! Ting-a-ling-ling! Chow-owow! Get out that head-line! LIVELY now! Come --- out with your spring-line --- what’re you about there! Take a turn round that stump with the bight of it! Stand by that stage, now --- let her go! Done with the engines, sir! Ting-a-ling-ling! SH’T! S’H’T! SH’T!’ (trying the gaugecocks).

Tom went on whitewa**shing --- paid no attention to the steamboat. Ben st**ared a moment and then said: ‘Hi-YI! YOU’RE up a stu**mp, ain’t you!’**

***No*** answer. Tom surve**yed his last touch with the eye of an artist, then he** gave his brush another gentle sweep and surveyed th**e result, as before. Ben ranged up alongside of him.** Tom’s mouth watered for the apple, but he stuck to **his work. Ben said:**

‘Hello, old chap, you g**ot to work, hey?’ Tom wheeled suddenly and said:**

‘Why, it’s you, Ben! I w**arn’t noticing.’**

‘Say --- I’m going in a-s**wimming, I am. Don’t you wish you could? But of c**ourse you’d druther WORK --- wouldn’t you? Course **you would!’**

Tom contemplated the **boy a bit, and said:**

‘What do you call work**?’**

‘Why, ain’t THAT work**?’**

Tom resumed his whit**ewashing, and answered care- lessly:**

‘Well, maybe it is, and **maybe it ain’t. All I know, is, it suits Tom Sawyer.’**

‘Oh come, now, you do**n’t mean to let on that you LIKE it?’**

The brush continued to **move.**

‘Like it? Well, I don’t se**e why I oughtn’t to like it.**

Does a boy get a chanc**e to whitewash a fence every day?’ That put the thi**ng in a new light. Ben stopped nibbling his apple. Tom **swept his brush daintily back and forth --- stepped b**ack to note the effect --- added a touch here and ther**e --- criticised the effect again --- Ben watching ever**y move and getting more and more interested, more **and more absorbed. Pres- ently he said:**

‘Say, Tom, let ME whit**ewash a little.’**

Tom considered, was a**bout to consent; but he altered his mind:**

‘***No*** --- no --- I reckon it **wouldn’t hardly do, Ben. You see, Aunt Polly’s awfu**l particular about this fence --- right here on the stre**et, you know --- but if it was the back fence I wouldn**’t mind and SHE wouldn’t. **Yes**, she’s awful particular **about this fence; it’s got to be done very careful; I r**eckon there ain’t one boy in a thousand, maybe two **thousand, that can do it the way it’s got to be done.’**

‘***No*** --- is that so? Oh c**ome, now --- lemme just try. Only just a little --- I’d l**et YOU, if you was me, Tom.’

‘Ben, I’d like to, hones**t injun; but Aunt Polly --- well, Jim wanted to do it,** but she wouldn’t let him; Sid wanted to do it, and she wouldn’t let Sid. ***No***w don’t you see how I’m fixed? If you was to tackle this fence and anything was to happen to it ---‘

‘Oh, shucks, I’ll be just as careful. ***No***w lemme try.

Say --- I’ll give you the core of my apple.’

‘Well, here --- ***No***, Ben, now don’t. I’m afeard ---‘

‘I’ll give you ALL of it!’

Tom gave *up the brush with reluctance in his fa*ce, but alacrity in his heart. And while the late steamer Big Missouri w*orked and sweated in the sun, the r*etired artist sat on a barrel in the shade close by, dangled his legs, m*unched his* ***apple, and planned the sl*aughter of more innocents. There was no lack of ma**terial; boys happ*ened along* ***every little while; they c*ame to jeer, but remained to whitewash. By the tim**e Ben was fagge*d out, Tom* ***had traded the next cha*nce to Billy Fisher for a kite, in good repair; and wh**en he played ou*t, Johnny M****iller bought in for a dead* rat and a string to swing it with --- and so on, and** so on, hour after *hour. And* ***when the middle of the* afternoon came, from being a poor poverty-stricken** boy in the mor*ning, Tom w****as literally rolling in we*alth. He had besides the things before mentioned,** twelve marbles, p*art of a je****ws-harp, a piece of blue* bottle-glass to look through, a spool cannon, a ke**y that wouldn’t u*nlock anyt****hing, a fragment of chal*k, a glass stopper of a decanter, a tin soldier, a cou**ple of tadpoles, *six firecrack****ers, a kitten with only o*ne eye, a brass door- knob, a dog-collar --- but no dog** --- the handle *of a knife, fou****r pieces of orange-pe*el, and a dilapidated old window sash.**

He had ha*d a nice, go****od, idle time all the whil*e --- plenty of company --- and the fence had three c**oats of whitew*ash on it! If he* ***hadn’t run out of whit*ewash he would have bankrupted every boy in the vill**age.

Tom said *to himself t****hat it was not such a h*ollow world, after all. He had discovered a great law of h**uman ac*tion, without know****ing it --- namely,* that in order to make a man or a boy covet a thing, it i**s only neces*sary to make th****e thing difficult to at*tain. If he had been a great and wise philosopher, like the** writer of *this book, he woul****d now have co*mprehended that Work consists of whatever a body is OBLIGED** t*o do, and that Play consists* ***of what*ever a body is not obliged to do. And this would help him to underst*an****d why constructing artificial flowe*rs or performing on a tread-mill is work, while rolling ten-pins or cli*mbing Mont Blanc is only amusemen*t. There are wealthy gentlemen in England who drive four-horse pass*enger- coaches twenty or thirty mile*s on a daily line, in the summer, because the privilege costs them considerable money; but if they were offered wages for the service, that would turn it into work and then they would resign.

The boy mused awhile over the substantial change which had taken place in his worldly circumstances, and then wended toward headquarters to report.

Chapter III

TOM presented himself before Aunt Polly, who was sitting by an open window in a pleasant rearward apartment, which was bedroom, breakfast-room, diningroom, and library, combined. The balmy sum- mer air, the restful quiet, the odor of the flowers, and the drowsing murmur of the bees had had their effect, and she was nodding over her knit- ting --- for she had no company but the cat, and it was asleep in her lap. Her spectacles were propped up on her gray head for safety. She had thought that of course Tom had deserted long ago, and she wondered at seeing him place himself in her power again in this intrepid way. He said: ‘Mayn’t I go and play now, aunt?’

‘What, a’ready? How much have you done?’

‘It’s all done, aunt.’

‘Tom, don’t lie to me --- I can’t bear it.’

‘I ain’t, aunt; it IS all done.’

Aunt Polly placed small trust in such evidence. She went out to see for herself; and she would have been content to find twenty per cent. of Tom’s state- ment true. When she found the entire fence white- washed, and not only whitewashed but elaborately coated and recoated, and even a streak added to the ground, her astonishment was almost unspeakable. She said:

‘Well, I never! There’s no getting round it, you can work when you’re a mind to, Tom.’ And then she diluted the compliment by adding, ‘But it’s power- ful seldom you’re a mind to, I’m bound to say. Well, go ‘long and play; but mind you get back some time in a week, or I’ll tan you.’

She was so overcome by the splendor of his achieve- ment that she took him into the closet and selected a choice apple and delivered it to him, along with an improving lecture upon the added value and flavor a treat took to itself when it came without sin through virtuous effort. And while she closed with a happy Scriptural flourish, he ‘hooked’ a doughnut.

Then he skipped out, and saw Sid just starting up the outside stairway that led to the back rooms on the second floor. Clods were handy and the air was full of them in a twinkling. They raged around Sid like a hail-storm; and before Aunt Polly could collect her surprised faculties and sally to the rescue, six or seven clods had taken personal effect, and Tom was over the fence and gone. There was a gate, but as a general thing he was too crowded for time to make use of it. His soul was at peace, now that he had settled with Sid for calling attention to his black thread and getting him into trouble.

Tom skirted the block, and came round into a muddy alley that led by the back of his aunt’s cow- stable. He presently got safely beyond the reach of capture and punishment, and hastened toward the public square of the village, where two ‘military’ companies of boys had met for conflict, according to previous appointment. Tom was General of one of these armies, Joe Harper (a bosom friend) General of the other. These two great commanders did not condescend to fight in person --- that being better suited to the still smaller fry --- but sat together on an eminence and conducted the field operations by orders delivered through aides-de-camp. Tom’s army won a great victory, after a long and hard-fought battle. Then the dead were counted, prisoners exchanged, the terms of the next disagreement agreed upon, and the day for the necessary battle appointed; after which the armies fell into line and marched away, and Tom turned homeward alone.

As he was passing by the house where Jeff Thatcher lived, he saw a new girl in the garden --- a lovely little blue-eyed creature with yellow hair plaited into two longtails, white summer frock and embroidered pan- talettes.

The fresh-crowned hero fell without firing a shot. A certain Amy Lawrence vanished out of his heart and left not even a memory of herself behind. He had thought he loved her to distraction; he had regarded his passion as adoration; and behold it was only a poor little evanescent partiality. He had been months winning her; she had confessed hardly a week ago; he had been the happiest and the proudest boy in the world only seven short days, and here in one instant of time she had gone out of his heart like a casual stranger whose visit is done.

He worshipped this new angel with furtive eye, till he saw that she had discovered him; then he pre- tended he did not know she was present, and began to ‘show off’ in all sorts of absurd boyish ways, in order to win her admiration. He kept up this grotesque foolishness for some time; but by-and-by, while he was in the midst of some dangerous gymnastic performances, he glanced aside and saw that the little girl was wending her way toward the house. Tom came up to the fence and leaned on it, grieving, and hoping she would tarry yet awhile longer. She halted a moment on the steps and then moved toward the door. Tom heaved a great sigh as she put her foot on the threshold. But his face lit up, right away, for she tossed a pansy over the fence a moment before she disappeared.

The boy ran around and stopped within a foot or two of the flower, and then shaded his eyes with his hand and began to look down street as if he had dis- covered something of interest going on in that direction. Presently he picked up a straw and began trying to balance it on his nose, with his head tilted far back; and as he moved from side to side, in his efforts, he edged nearer and nearer toward the pansy; finally his bare foot rested upon it, his pliant toes closed upon it, and he hopped away with the treasure and disappeared round the corner. But only for a minute --- only while he could button the flower inside his jacket, next his heart --- or next his stomach, possibly, for he was not much posted in anatomy, and not hypercritical, any- way.

He returned, now, and hung about the fence till nightfall, ‘showing off,’ as before; but the girl never exhibited herself again, though Tom comforted him- self a little with the hope that she had been near some window, meantime, and been aware of his attentions. Finally he strode home reluctantly, with his poor head full of visions.

All through supper his spirits were so high that his aunt wondered ‘what had got into the child.’ He took a good scolding about clodding Sid, and did not seem to mind it in the least. He tried to steal sugar under his aunt’s very nose, and got his knuckles rapped for it. He said:

‘Aunt, you don’t whack Sid when he takes it.’

‘Well, Sid don’t torment a body the way you do.

You’d be always into that sugar if I warn’t watching you.’

Presently she stepped into the kitchen, and Sid, happy in his immunity, reached for the sugar-bowl --- a sort of glorying over Tom which was wellnigh un- bearable. But Sid’s fingers slipped and the bowl dropped and broke. Tom was in ecstasies. In such ecstasies that he even controlled his tongue and was silent. He said to himself that he would not speak a word, even when his aunt came in, but would sit per- fectly still till she asked who did the mischief; and then he would tell, and there would be nothing so good in the world as to see that pet model ‘catch it.’ He was so brimful of exultation that he could hardly hold him- self when the old lady came back and stood above the wreck discharging lightnings of wrath from over her spectacles. He said to himself, ‘***No***w it’s coming!’ And the next instant he was sprawling on the floor! The potent palm was uplifted to strike again when Tom cried out:

‘Hold on, now, what ‘er you belting ME for? --- Sid broke it!’

Aunt Polly paused, perplexed, and Tom looked for healing pity. But when she got her tongue again, she only said:

‘Umf! Well, you didn’t get a lick amiss, I reckon. You been into some other audacious mischief when I wasn’t around, like enough.’

Then her conscience reproached her, and she yearned to say something kind and loving; but she judged that this would be construed into a confession that she had been in the wrong, and discipline forbade that. So she kept silence, and went about her affairs with a troubled heart. Tom sulked in a corner and exalted his woes. He knew that in her heart his aunt was on her knees to him, and he was morosely gratified by the consciousness of it. He would hang out no signals, he would take notice of none. He knew that a yearning glance fell upon him, now and then, through a film of tears, but he refused recognition of it. He pictured him- self lying sick unto death and his aunt bending over him beseec*hing one little forgiving word, but he would tu*rn his face to the wall, and die with that word unsai*d. Ah, how would she feel then? And he pic*tured himself brought home from the river, dead, wi*th his curls all wet, and his sore heart at rest.* How she would throw herself upon him, and how he*r tears would fall like rain, and her lips pray G*od to give her back her boy and she would never, **nev*er abuse him any more! But he would lie the*re cold and white and make no sign --- a poor little *sufferer, whose griefs were at an end. H*e so worked upon his feelings with the pathos of t*hese dreams, that he had to keep swallow*ing, he was so like to choke; and his eyes swam in *a blur of water, which overflowed when he* winked, and ran down and trickled from the end of *his nose. And such a luxury to him was this* petting of his sorrows, that he could not bear to hav*e any worldly cheeriness or any grating deli*ght intrude upon it; it was too sacred for such conta*ct; and so, presently, when his cousin Mary*** *d*anced in, all alive with the joy of seeing home again *after an age-long visit of one week to the c*ountry, he got up and moved in clouds and darkness *out at one door as she brought song and sun*shine in at the other.

He wandered far from the ac*customed haunts of boys, and sought desola*te places that were in har- mony with his spirit. A log *raft in the river invited him, and he seated hi*mself on its outer edge and contemplated the dreary *vastness of the stream, wish- ing, the while,* that he could only be drowned, all at once and unco*nsciously, without undergoing the un- comfo*rtable routine devised by nature. Then he thought *of his flower. He got it out, rumpled and* wilted, and it mightily increased his dismal felicity. H*e wondered if she would pity him if she kne*w? Would she cry, and wish that she had a right to p*ut her arms around his neck and comfort hi*m? Or would she turn coldly away like all the hollow world? This picture brought such an agony of pleasurable suf- fering that he worked it over and over again in his mind and set it up in new and varied lights, till he wore it threadbare. At last he rose up sighing and departed in the darkness.

About half-past nine or ten o’clock he came along the deserted street to where the Adored Unknown lived; he paused a moment; no sound fell upon his listening ear; a candle was casting a dull glow up*on the curtain of a second-story window. Was the sacred pr*esence there? He climbed the fence, th*readed his stealthy way through the plants, till he stood und*er that window; he looked up at it long*, and with emotion; then he laid him down on the ground un*der it, dis- posing himself upon his bac*k, with his hands clasped upon his breast and holding his po*or wilted flower. And thus he would di*e --- out in the cold world, with no shelter over his homeless* head, no friendly hand to wipe the de*ath-damps from his brow, no loving face to bend pityingly* over him when the great agony came*. And thus SHE would see him when she looked out upon t*he glad morning, and oh! would she d*rop one little tear upon his poor, lifeless form, would she he*ave one little sigh to see a bright young *life so rudely blighted, so untimely cut down?*

The window went up, a maid-servant’s discordant voice profaned the holy calm, and a deluge of water drenched the prone martyr’s remains!

The strangling hero sprang up with a relieving snort. There was a whiz as of a missile in the air, mingled with the murmur of a curse, a sound as of shivering glass followed, and a small, vague form went over the fence and shot away in the gloom.

***No***t long after, as Tom, all undressed for bed, was surveying his drenched garments by the light of a tallow dip, Sid woke up; but if he had any dim idea of making any ‘references to allusions,’ he thought better of it and held his peace, for there was danger in Tom’s eye.

Tom turned in without the added vexation of prayers, and Sid made mental note of the omission.