The Adventures of

Huckleberry Finn

By Mark Twain

The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn

NOTICE

PERSONS attempting to find a motive in this narra- tive

will be prosecuted; persons attempting to find a moral

in it will be banished; persons attempting to find a plot in

it will be shot.

BY ORDER OF THE AUTHOR,

Per G.G., Chief of Ordnance.

EXPLANATORY

IN this book a number of dialects are used, to wit: the Missouri negro dialect; the extremest form of the backwoods

Southwestern dialect; the ordinary ‘Pike County’ dialect;

and four modified varieties of this last. The shadings have

not been done in a hap- hazard fashion, or by guesswork;

but painstakingly, and with the trustworthy guidance and

support of personal familiarity with these several forms of

speech.

I make this explanation for the reason that without it

many readers would suppose that all these characters were

trying to talk alike and not succeeding.

THE AUTHOR.

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Scene: The Mississippi Valley

Time: Forty to fifty years ago

Chapter I

YOU don’t know about me without you have read a book

by the name of The Adventures of Tom Sawyer; but that

ain’t no matter. That book was made by Mr. Mark Twain,

and he told the truth, mainly. There was things which he

stretched, but mainly he told the truth. That is nothing. I

never seen anybody but lied one time or another, without

it was Aunt Polly, or the widow, or maybe Mary. Aunt Polly — Tom’s Aunt Polly, she is — and Mary, and the Widow

Douglas is all told about in that book, which is mostly a true

book, with some stretchers, as I said before.

Now the way that the book winds up is this: Tom and

me found the money that the robbers hid in the cave, and it

made us rich. We got six thousand dollars apiece — all gold.

It was an awful sight of money when it was piled up. Well,

Judge Thatcher he took it and put it out at interest, and it

fetched us a dollar a day apiece all the year round — more

than a body could tell what to do with. The Widow Douglas she took me for her son, and allowed she would sivilize

me; but it was rough living in the house all the time, considering how dismal regular and decent the widow was in

all her ways; and so when I couldn’t stand it no longer I lit

out. I got into my old rags and my sugar-hogshead again,

and was free and satisfied. But Tom Sawyer he hunted me

up and said he was going to start a band of robbers, and I

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might join if I would go back to the widow and be respectable. So I went back.

The widow she cried over me, and called me a poor lost

lamb, and she called me a lot of other names, too, but she

never meant no harm by it. She put me in them new clothes

again, and I couldn’t do nothing but sweat and sweat, and

feel all cramped up. Well, then, the old thing commenced

again. The widow rung a bell for supper, and you had to

come to time. When you got to the table you couldn’t go

right to eating, but you had to wait for the widow to tuck

down her head and grumble a little over the victuals, though

there warn’t really anything the matter with them, — that is,

nothing only everything was cooked by itself. In a barrel of

odds and ends it is different; things get mixed up, and the

juice kind of swaps around, and the things go better.

After supper she got out her book and learned me about

Moses and the Bulrushers, and I was in a sweat to find out

all about him; but by and by she let it out that Moses had

been dead a considerable long time; so then I didn’t care

no more about him, because I don’t take no stock in dead

people.

Pretty soon I wanted to smoke, and asked the widow

to let me. But she wouldn’t. She said it was a mean practice and wasn’t clean, and I must try to not do it any more.

That is just the way with some people. They get down on a

thing when they don’t know nothing about it. Here she was

a-bothering about Moses, which was no kin to her, and no

use to any- body, being gone, you see, yet finding a power

of fault with me for doing a thing that had some good in it.

And she took snuff, too; of course that was all right, because

she done it herself.

Her sister, Miss Watson, a tolerable slim old maid, with

goggles on, had just come to live with her, and took a set

at me now with a spelling-book. She worked me middling

hard for about an hour, and then the widow made her ease

up. I couldn’t stood it much longer. Then for an hour it was

deadly dull, and I was fidgety. Miss Watson would say, ‘Don’t

put your feet up there, Huckleberry;’ and ‘Don’t scrunch up

like that, Huckleberry — set up straight;’ and pretty soon

she would say, ‘Don’t gap and stretch like that, Huckleberry

— why don’t you try to be- have?’ Then she told me all about

the bad place, and I said I wished I was there. She got mad

then, but I didn’t mean no harm. All I wanted was to go

somewheres; all I wanted was a change, I warn’t particular.

She said it was wicked to say what I said; said she wouldn’t

say it for the whole world; she was going to live so as to go

to the good place. Well, I couldn’t see no advantage in going where she was going, so I made up my mind I wouldn’t

try for it. But I never said so, because it would only make

trouble, and wouldn’t do no good.

Now she had got a start, and she went on and told me all

about the good place. She said all a body would have to do

there was to go around all day long with a harp and sing,

forever and ever. So I didn’t think much of it. But I never

said so. I asked her if she reckoned Tom Sawyer would go

there, and she said not by a considerable sight. I was glad

about that, because I wanted him and me to be together.

Miss Watson she kept pecking at me, and it got tiresome

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and lonesome. By and by they fetched the niggers in and

had prayers, and then everybody was off to bed. I went up to

my room with a piece of candle, and put it on the table. Then

I set down in a chair by the window and tried to think of

something cheerful, but it warn’t no use. I felt so lonesome

I most wished I was dead. The stars were shining, and the

leaves rustled in the woods ever so mournful; and I heard

an owl, away off, who-whooing about some- body that was

dead, and a whippowill and a dog cry- ing about somebody

that was going to die; and the wind was trying to whisper

something to me, and I couldn’t make out what it was, and

so it made the cold shivers run over me. Then away out in

the woods I heard that kind of a sound that a ghost makes

when it wants to tell about something that’s on its mind and

can’t make itself understood, and so can’t rest easy in its

grave, and has to go about that way every night grieving.

I got so down-hearted and scared I did wish I had some

company. Pretty soon a spider went crawling up my shoulder, and I flipped it off and it lit in the candle; and before I

could budge it was all shriveled up. I didn’t need anybody to

tell me that that was an awful bad sign and would fetch me

some bad luck, so I was scared and most shook the clothes

off of me. I got up and turned around in my tracks three

times and crossed my breast every time; and then I tied up

a little lock of my hair with a thread to keep witches away.

But I hadn’t no confidence. You do that when you’ve lost a

horseshoe that you’ve found, instead of nailing it up over

the door, but I hadn’t ever heard anybody say it was any way

to keep off bad luck when you’d killed a spider.

I set down again, a-shaking all over, and got out my pipe

for a smoke; for the house was all as still as death now, and

so the widow wouldn’t know. Well, after a long time I heard

the clock away off in the town go boom — boom — boom

— twelve licks; and all still again — stiller than ever. Pretty soon I heard a twig snap down in the dark amongst the

trees — something was a stirring. I set still and listened. Directly I could just barely hear a ‘me-yow! me- yow!’ down

there. That was good! Says I, ‘me- yow! me-yow!’ as soft as I

could, and then I put out the light and scrambled out of the

window on to the shed. Then I slipped down to the ground

and crawled in among the trees, and, sure enough, there

was Tom Sawyer waiting for me.

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Chapter II

WE went tiptoeing along a path amongst the trees back

towards the end of the widow’s garden, stooping

down so as the branches wouldn’t scrape our heads. When

we was passing by the kitchen I fell over a root and made

a noise. We scrouched down and laid still. Miss Watson’s

big nigger, named Jim, was setting in the kitchen door; we

could see him pretty clear, because there was a light behind

him. He got up and stretched his neck out about a minute,

listening. Then he says:

‘Who dah?’

He listened some more; then he come tiptoeing down

and stood right between us; we could a touched him, nearly.

Well, likely it was minutes and minutes that there warn’t

a sound, and we all there so close together. There was a

place on my ankle that got to itching, but I dasn’t scratch

it; and then my ear begun to itch; and next my back, right

between my shoul- ders. Seemed like I’d die if I couldn’t

scratch. Well, I’ve noticed that thing plenty times since. If

you are with the quality, or at a funeral, or trying to go to

sleep when you ain’t sleepy — if you are anywheres where it

won’t do for you to scratch, why you will itch all over in upwards of a thousand places. Pretty soon Jim says:

‘Say, who is you? Whar is you? Dog my cats ef I didn’ hear

sumf’n. Well, I know what I’s gwyne to do: I’s gwyne to set

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down here and listen tell I hears it agin.’

So he set down on the ground betwixt me and Tom. He

leaned his back up against a tree, and stretched his legs out

till one of them most touched one of mine. My nose begun to itch. It itched till the tears come into my eyes. But

I dasn’t scratch. Then it begun to itch on the inside. Next

I got to itching under- neath. I didn’t know how I was going to set still. This miserableness went on as much as six or

seven minutes; but it seemed a sight longer than that. I was

itching in eleven different places now. I reckoned I couldn’t

stand it more’n a minute longer, but I set my teeth hard and

got ready to try. Just then Jim begun to breathe heavy; next

he begun to snore — and then I was pretty soon comfortable again.

Tom he made a sign to me — kind of a little noise with

his mouth — and we went creeping away on our hands and

knees. When we was ten foot off Tom whispered to me, and

wanted to tie Jim to the tree for fun. But I said no; he might

wake and make a dis- turbance, and then they’d find out I

warn’t in. Then Tom said he hadn’t got candles enough, and

he would slip in the kitchen and get some more. I didn’t

want him to try. I said Jim might wake up and come. But

Tom wanted to resk it; so we slid in there and got three candles, and Tom laid five cents on the table for pay. Then we

got out, and I was in a sweat to get away; but nothing would

do Tom but he must crawl to where Jim was, on his hands

and knees, and play something on him. I waited, and it

seemed a good while, everything was so still and lonesome.

As soon as Tom was back we cut along the path, around

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the garden fence, and by and by fetched up on the steep top

of the hill the other side of the house. Tom said he slipped

Jim’s hat off of his head and hung it on a limb right over him,

and Jim stirred a little, but he didn’t wake. Afterwards Jim

said the witches be- witched him and put him in a trance,

and rode him all over the State, and then set him under the

trees again, and hung his hat on a limb to show who done

it. And next time Jim told it he said they rode him down to

New Orleans; and, after that, every time he told it he spread

it more and more, till by and by he said they rode him all

over the world, and tired him most to death, and his back

was all over saddle-boils. Jim was monstrous proud about

it, and he got so he wouldn’t hardly notice the other niggers. Niggers would come miles to hear Jim tell about it, and

he was more looked up to than any nigger in that country. Strange niggers would stand with their mouths open

and look him all over, same as if he was a wonder. Niggers

is always talking about witches in the dark by the kitchen

fire; but whenever one was talking and letting on to know

all about such things, Jim would happen in and say, ‘Hm!

What you know ‘bout witches?’ and that nigger was corked

up and had to take a back seat. Jim always kept that fivecenter piece round his neck with a string, and said it was a

charm the devil give to him with his own hands, and told

him he could cure anybody with it and fetch witches whenever he wanted to just by saying some- thing to it; but he

never told what it was he said to it. Niggers would come

from all around there and give Jim anything they had, just

for a sight of that five- center piece; but they wouldn’t touch

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it, because the devil had had his hands on it. Jim was most

ruined for a servant, because he got stuck up on account of

having seen the devil and been rode by witches.

Well, when Tom and me got to the edge of the hill- top

we looked away down into the village and could see three

or four lights twinkling, where there was sick folks, maybe;

and the stars over us was sparkling ever so fine; and down

by the village was the river, a whole mile broad, and awful

still and grand. We went down the hill and found Jo Harper

and Ben Rogers, and two or three more of the boys, hid in

the old tanyard. So we unhitched a skiff and pulled down

the river two mile and a half, to the big scar on the hillside,

and went ashore.

We went to a clump of bushes, and Tom made everybody

swear to keep the secret, and then showed them a hole in

the hill, right in the thickest part of the bushes. Then we lit

the candles, and crawled in on our hands and knees. We

went about two hundred yards, and then the cave opened

up. Tom poked about amongst the passages, and pretty

soon ducked under a wall where you wouldn’t a noticed that

there was a hole. We went along a narrow place and got into

a kind of room, all damp and sweaty and cold, and there we

stopped. Tom says:

‘Now, we’ll start this band of robbers and call it Tom

Sawyer’s Gang. Everybody that wants to join has got to take

an oath, and write his name in blood.’

Everybody was willing. So Tom got out a sheet of paper

that he had wrote the oath on, and read it. It swore every boy

to stick to the band, and never tell any of the secrets; and if

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anybody done anything to any boy in the band, whichever boy was ordered to kill that person and his family must

do it, and he mustn’t eat and he mustn’t sleep till he had

killed them and hacked a cross in their breasts, which was

the sign of the band. And nobody that didn’t belong to the

band could use that mark, and if he did he must be sued;

and if he done it again he must be killed. And if anybody

that belonged to the band told the secrets, he must have his

throat cut, and then have his carcass burnt up and the ashes scattered all around, and his name blotted off of the list

with blood and never men- tioned again by the gang, but

have a curse put on it and be forgot forever.

Everybody said it was a real beautiful oath, and asked

Tom if he got it out of his own head. He said, some of it, but

the rest was out of pirate-books and robber-books, and every gang that was high-toned had it.

Some thought it would be good to kill the FAMILIES of

boys that told the secrets. Tom said it was a good idea, so he

took a pencil and wrote it in. Then Ben Rogers says:

‘Here’s Huck Finn, he hain’t got no family; what you going to do ‘bout him?’

‘Well, hain’t he got a father?’ says Tom Sawyer.

‘Yes, he’s got a father, but you can’t never find him these

days. He used to lay drunk with the hogs in the tanyard, but

he hain’t been seen in these parts for a year or more.’

They talked it over, and they was going to rule me out,

because they said every boy must have a family or somebody to kill, or else it wouldn’t be fair and square for the

others. Well, nobody could think of anything to do — ev-

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erybody was stumped, and set still. I was most ready to cry;

but all at once I thought of a way, and so I offered them Miss

Watson — they could kill her. Everybody said:

‘Oh, she’ll do. That’s all right. Huck can come in.’

Then they all stuck a pin in their fingers to get blood to

sign with, and I made my mark on the paper.

‘Now,’ says Ben Rogers, ‘what’s the line of busi- ness of

this Gang?’

‘Nothing only robbery and murder,’ Tom said.

‘But who are we going to rob? — houses, or cattle, or —‘

‘Stuff! stealing cattle and such things ain’t rob- bery; it’s

burglary,’ says Tom Sawyer. ‘We ain’t burglars. That ain’t no

sort of style. We are high- waymen. We stop stages and carriages on the road, with masks on, and kill the people and

take their watches and money.’

‘Must we always kill the people?’

‘Oh, certainly. It’s best. Some authorities think different,

but mostly it’s considered best to kill them — except some

that you bring to the cave here, and keep them till they’re

ransomed.’

‘Ransomed? What’s that?’

‘I don’t know. But that’s what they do. I’ve seen it in books;

and so of course that’s what we’ve got to do.’

‘But how can we do it if we don’t know what it is?’

‘Why, blame it all, we’ve GOT to do it. Don’t I tell you

it’s in the books? Do you want to go to doing different from

what’s in the books, and get things all muddled up?’

‘Oh, that’s all very fine to SAY, Tom Sawyer, but how in

the nation are these fellows going to be ran- somed if we

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don’t know how to do it to them? — that’s the thing I want

to get at. Now, what do you reckon it is?’

‘Well, I don’t know. But per’aps if we keep them till they’re

ransomed, it means that we keep them till they’re dead. ‘

‘Now, that’s something LIKE. That’ll answer. Why

couldn’t you said that before? We’ll keep them till they’re

ransomed to death; and a bothersome lot they’ll be, too —

eating up everything, and always trying to get loose.’

‘How you talk, Ben Rogers. How can they get loose when

there’s a guard over them, ready to shoot them down if they

move a peg?’

‘A guard! Well, that IS good. So somebody’s got to set up

all night and never get any sleep, just so as to watch them. I

think that’s foolishness. Why can’t a body take a club and

ransom them as soon as they get here?’

‘Because it ain’t in the books so — that’s why. Now, Ben

Rogers, do you want to do things regular, or don’t you? —

that’s the idea. Don’t you reckon that the people that made

the books knows what’s the correct thing to do? Do you

reckon YOU can learn ‘em anything? Not by a good deal.

No, sir, we’ll just go on and ransom them in the regular

way.’

‘All right. I don’t mind; but I say it’s a fool way, anyhow.

Say, do we kill the women, too?’

‘Well, Ben Rogers, if I was as ignorant as you I wouldn’t

let on. Kill the women? No; nobody ever saw anything in

the books like that. You fetch them to the cave, and you’re

always as polite as pie to them; and by and by they fall in

love with you, and never want to go home any more.’

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‘Well, if that’s the way I’m agreed, but I don’t take no

stock in it. Mighty soon we’ll have the cave so cluttered up

with women, and fellows waiting to be ransomed, that there

won’t be no place for the rob- bers. But go ahead, I ain’t got

nothing to say.’

Little Tommy Barnes was asleep now, and when they

waked him up he was scared, and cried, and said he wanted

to go home to his ma, and didn’t want to be a robber any

more.

So they all made fun of him, and called him cry- baby,

and that made him mad, and he said he would go straight

and tell all the secrets. But Tom give him five cents to keep

quiet, and said we would all go home and meet next week,

and rob somebody and kill some people.

Ben Rogers said he couldn’t get out much, only Sundays,

and so he wanted to begin next Sunday; but all the boys said

it would be wicked to do it on Sunday, and that settled the

thing. They agreed to get to- gether and fix a day as soon as

they could, and then we elected Tom Sawyer first captain

and Jo Harper second captain of the Gang, and so started

home.

I clumb up the shed and crept into my window just before day was breaking. My new clothes was all greased up

and clayey, and I was dog-tired.

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Chapter III

WELL, I got a good going-over in the morning from old

Miss Watson on account of my clothes; but the widow

she didn’t scold, but only cleaned off the grease and clay,

and looked so sorry that I thought I would behave awhile

if I could. Then Miss Watson she took me in the closet and

prayed, but nothing come of it. She told me to pray every

day, and whatever I asked for I would get it. But it warn’t

so. I tried it. Once I got a fish-line, but no hooks. It warn’t

any good to me without hooks. I tried for the hooks three

or four times, but somehow I couldn’t make it work. By and

by, one day, I asked Miss Watson to try for me, but she said

I was a fool. She never told me why, and I couldn’t make it

out no way.

I set down one time back in the woods, and had a long

think about it. I says to myself, if a body can get anything

they pray for, why don’t Deacon Winn get back the money

he lost on pork? Why can’t the widow get back her silver

snuffbox that was stole? Why can’t Miss Watson fat up? No,

says I to my self, there ain’t nothing in it. I went and told the

widow about it, and she said the thing a body could get by

praying for it was ‘spiritual gifts.’ This was too many for me,

but she told me what she meant — I must help other people,

and do everything I could for other people, and look out for

them all the time, and never think about myself. This was

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including Miss Watson, as I took it. I went out in the woods

and turned it over in my mind a long time, but I couldn’t see

no advantage about it — except for the other peo- ple; so at

last I reckoned I wouldn’t worry about it any more, but just

let it go. Sometimes the widow would take me one side and

talk about Providence in a way to make a body’s mouth water; but maybe next day Miss Watson would take hold and

knock it all down again. I judged I could see that there was

two Providences, and a poor chap would stand considerable

show with the widow’s Providence, but if Miss Wat- son’s

got him there warn’t no help for him any more. I thought

it all out, and reckoned I would belong to the widow’s if he

wanted me, though I couldn’t make out how he was a-going

to be any better off then than what he was before, seeing I

was so ignorant, and so kind of low-down and ornery.

Pap he hadn’t been seen for more than a year, and that

was comfortable for me; I didn’t want to see him no more.

He used to always whale me when he was sober and could

get his hands on me; though I used to take to the woods

most of the time when he was around. Well, about this time

he was found in the river drownded, about twelve mile

above town, so people said. They judged it was him, anyway;

said this drownded man was just his size, and was ragged,

and had uncommon long hair, which was all like pap; but

they couldn’t make nothing out of the face, be- cause it had

been in the water so long it warn’t much like a face at all.

They said he was floating on his back in the water. They took

him and buried him on the bank. But I warn’t comfortable

long, because I happened to think of something. I knowed

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mighty well that a drownded man don’t float on his back,

but on his face. So I knowed, then, that this warn’t pap, but a

woman dressed up in a man’s clothes. So I was uncomfortable again. I judged the old man would turn up again by and

by, though I wished he wouldn’t.

We played robber now and then about a month, and then I

resigned. All the boys did. We hadn’t robbed nobody, hadn’t

killed any people, but only just pre- tended. We used to hop

out of the woods and go charging down on hog-drivers and

women in carts taking garden stuff to market, but we never hived any of them. Tom Sawyer called the hogs ‘ingots,’

and he called the turnips and stuff ‘julery,’ and we would go

to the cave and powwow over what we had done, and how

many people we had killed and marked. But I couldn’t see

no profit in it. One time Tom sent a boy to run about town

with a blazing stick, which he called a slogan (which was

the sign for the Gang to get together), and then he said he

had got secret news by his spies that next day a whole parcel

of Spanish merchants and rich A-rabs was going to camp

in Cave Hollow with two hundred elephants, and six hundred camels, and over a thousand ‘sumter’ mules, all loaded

down with di’monds, and they didn’t have only a guard of

four hundred soldiers, and so we would lay in ambuscade,

as he called it, and kill the lot and scoop the things. He said

we must slick up our swords and guns, and get ready. He

never could go after even a turnip-cart but he must have

the swords and guns all scoured up for it, though they was

only lath and broomsticks, and you might scour at them till

you rotted, and then they warn’t worth a mouthful of ashes

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more than what they was before. I didn’t believe we could

lick such a crowd of Spaniards and A-rabs, but I wanted to

see the camels and elephants, so I was on hand next day,

Saturday, in the ambuscade; and when we got the word we

rushed out of the woods and down the hill. But there warn’t

no Spaniards and A-rabs, and there warn’t no camels nor

no elephants. It warn’t anything but a Sunday-school picnic, and only a primer-class at that. We busted it up, and

chased the children up the hollow; but we never got anything but some doughnuts and jam, though Ben Rogers got

a rag doll, and Jo Harper got a hymn-book and a tract; and

then the teacher charged in, and made us drop everything

and cut. I didn’t see no di’monds, and I told Tom Sawyer

so. He said there was loads of them there, anyway; and he

said there was A-rabs there, too, and elephants and things.

I said, why couldn’t we see them, then? He said if I warn’t

so ignorant, but had read a book called Don Quixote, I

would know without asking. He said it was all done by enchantment. He said there was hundreds of soldiers there,

and elephants and treasure, and so on, but we had enemies

which he called magicians; and they had turned the whole

thing into an infant Sunday- school, just out of spite. I said,

all right; then the thing for us to do was to go for the magicians. Tom Sawyer said I was a numskull.

‘Why,’ said he, ‘a magician could call up a lot of genies,

and they would hash you up like nothing before you could

say Jack Robinson. They are as tall as a tree and as big

around as a church.’

‘Well,’ I says, ‘s’pose we got some genies to help US —

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can’t we lick the other crowd then?’

‘How you going to get them?’

‘I don’t know. How do THEY get them?’

‘Why, they rub an old tin lamp or an iron ring, and then

the genies come tearing in, with the thunder and lightning

a-ripping around and the smoke a-rolling, and everything

they’re told to do they up and do it. They don’t think nothing of pulling a shot-tower up by the roots, and belting a

Sunday-school superinten- dent over the head with it — or

any other man.’

‘Who makes them tear around so?’

‘Why, whoever rubs the lamp or the ring. They belong

to whoever rubs the lamp or the ring, and they’ve got to

do whatever he says. If he tells them to build a palace forty

miles long out of di’monds, and fill it full of chewing-gum,

or whatever you want, and fetch an emperor’s daughter

from China for you to marry, they’ve got to do it — and

they’ve got to do it before sun-up next morning, too. And

more: they’ve got to waltz that palace around over the country wherever you want it, you understand.’

‘Well,’ says I, ‘I think they are a pack of flat- heads for not

keeping the palace themselves ‘stead of fooling them away

like that. And what’s more — if I was one of them I would

see a man in Jericho before I would drop my business and

come to him for the rub- bing of an old tin lamp.’

‘How you talk, Huck Finn. Why, you’d HAVE to come

when he rubbed it, whether you wanted to or not.’

‘What! and I as high as a tree and as big as a church? All

right, then; I WOULD come; but I lay I’d make that man

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climb the highest tree there was in the country.’

‘Shucks, it ain’t no use to talk to you, Huck Finn. You

don’t seem to know anything, somehow — perfect saphead.’

I thought all this over for two or three days, and then I

reckoned I would see if there was anything in it. I got an old

tin lamp and an iron ring, and went out in the woods and

rubbed and rubbed till I sweat like an Injun, calculating to

build a palace and sell it; but it warn’t no use, none of the

genies come. So then I judged that all that stuff was only

just one of Tom Sawyer’s lies. I reckoned he believed in the

A-rabs and the elephants, but as for me I think different. It

had all the marks of a Sunday-school.

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Chapter IV

WELL, three or four months run along, and it was well

into the winter now. I had been to school most all the

time and could spell and read and write just a little, and

could say the multiplication table up to six times seven is

thirty-five, and I don’t reckon I could ever get any further

than that if I was to live forever. I don’t take no stock in

mathematics, any- way.

At first I hated the school, but by and by I got so I could

stand it. Whenever I got uncommon tired I played hookey,

and the hiding I got next day done me good and cheered

me up. So the longer I went to school the easier it got to be.

I was getting sort of used to the widow’s ways, too, and they

warn’t so raspy on me. Living in a house and sleeping in a

bed pulled on me pretty tight mostly, but before the cold

weather I used to slide out and sleep in the woods sometimes, and so that was a rest to me. I liked the old ways best,

but I was getting so I liked the new ones, too, a little bit. The

widow said I was coming along slow but sure, and doing

very satisfactory. She said she warn’t ashamed of me.

One morning I happened to turn over the salt-cellar at

breakfast. I reached for some of it as quick as I could to

throw over my left shoulder and keep off the bad luck, but

Miss Watson was in ahead of me, and crossed me off. She

says, ‘Take your hands away, Huckleberry; what a mess you

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are always making!’ The widow put in a good word for me,

but that warn’t going to keep off the bad luck, I knowed that

well enough. I started out, after breakfast, feeling worried

and shaky, and wondering where it was going to fall on me,

and what it was going to be. There is ways to keep off some

kinds of bad luck, but this wasn’t one of them kind; so I never tried to do anything, but just poked along low-spirited

and on the watch-out.

I went down to the front garden and clumb over the stile

where you go through the high board fence. There was an

inch of new snow on the ground, and I seen somebody’s

tracks. They had come up from the quarry and stood around

the stile a while, and then went on around the garden fence.

It was funny they hadn’t come in, after standing around so.

I couldn’t make it out. It was very curious, somehow. I was

going to follow around, but I stooped down to look at the

tracks first. I didn’t notice anything at first, but next I did.

There was a cross in the left boot-heel made with big nails,

to keep off the devil.

I was up in a second and shinning down the hill. I looked

over my shoulder every now and then, but I didn’t see nobody. I was at Judge Thatcher’s as quick as I could get there.

He said:

‘Why, my boy, you are all out of breath. Did you come for

your interest?’

‘No, sir,’ I says; ‘is there some for me?’

‘Oh, yes, a half-yearly is in last night — over a hundred

and fifty dollars. Quite a fortune for you. You had better let

me invest it along with your six thousand, because if you

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take it you’ll spend it.’

‘No, sir,’ I says, ‘I don’t want to spend it. I don’t want it at

all — nor the six thousand, nuther. I want you to take it; I

want to give it to you — the six thousand and all.’

He looked surprised. He couldn’t seem to make it out.

He says:

‘Why, what can you mean, my boy?’

I says, ‘Don’t you ask me no questions about it, please.

You’ll take it — won’t you?’

He says:

‘Well, I’m puzzled. Is something the matter?’

‘Please take it,’ says I, ‘and don’t ask me noth- ing — then

I won’t have to tell no lies.’

He studied a while, and then he says:

‘Oho-o! I think I see. You want to SELL all your property

to me — not give it. That’s the correct idea.’

Then he wrote something on a paper and read it over,

and says:

‘There; you see it says ‘for a consideration.’ That means I

have bought it of you and paid you for it. Here’s a dollar for

you. Now you sign it.’

So I signed it, and left.

Miss Watson’s nigger, Jim, had a hair-ball as big as your

fist, which had been took out of the fourth stomach of an ox,

and he used to do magic with it. He said there was a spirit

inside of it, and it knowed everything. So I went to him that

night and told him pap was here again, for I found his tracks

in the snow. What I wanted to know was, what he was going

to do, and was he going to stay? Jim got out his hair-ball and

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said something over it, and then he held it up and dropped

it on the floor. It fell pretty solid, and only rolled about an

inch. Jim tried it again, and then another time, and it acted just the same. Jim got down on his knees, and put his

ear against it and listened. But it warn’t no use; he said it

wouldn’t talk. He said sometimes it wouldn’t talk without

money. I told him I had an old slick counterfeit quarter that

warn’t no good because the brass showed through the silver a little, and it wouldn’t pass nohow, even if the brass

didn’t show, because it was so slick it felt greasy, and so that

would tell on it every time. (I reckoned I wouldn’t say nothing about the dollar I got from the judge.) I said it was pretty

bad money, but maybe the hair-ball would take it, because

maybe it wouldn’t know the difference. Jim smelt it and bit

it and rubbed it, and said he would manage so the hair-ball

would think it was good. He said he would split open a raw

Irish potato and stick the quarter in between and keep it

there all night, and next morning you couldn’t see no brass,

and it wouldn’t feel greasy no more, and so anybody in

town would take it in a minute, let alone a hair-ball. Well, I

knowed a potato would do that before, but I had forgot it.

Jim put the quarter under the hair-ball, and got down

and listened again. This time he said the hair- ball was all

right. He said it would tell my whole fortune if I wanted it

to. I says, go on. So the hair- ball talked to Jim, and Jim told

it to me. He says:

‘Yo’ ole father doan’ know yit what he’s a-gwyne to do.

Sometimes he spec he’ll go ‘way, en den agin he spec he’ll

stay. De bes’ way is to res’ easy en let de ole man take his

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own way. Dey’s two angels hoverin’ roun’ ‘bout him. One

uv ‘em is white en shiny, en t’other one is black. De white

one gits him to go right a little while, den de black one sail

in en bust it all up. A body can’t tell yit which one gwyne to

fetch him at de las’. But you is all right. You gwyne to have

considable trouble in yo’ life, en con- sidable joy. Sometimes

you gwyne to git hurt, en sometimes you gwyne to git sick;

but every time you’s gwyne to git well agin. Dey’s two gals

flyin’ ‘bout you in yo’ life. One uv ‘em’s light en t’other one is

dark. One is rich en t’other is po’. You’s gwyne to marry de

po’ one fust en de rich one by en by. You wants to keep ‘way

fum de water as much as you kin, en don’t run no resk, ‘kase

it’s down in de bills dat you’s gwyne to git hung.’

When I lit my candle and went up to my room that night

there sat pap — his own self!

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Chapter V

I HAD shut the door to. Then I turned around. and there

he was. I used to be scared of him all the time, he tanned

me so much. I reckoned I was scared now, too; but in a minute I see I was mistaken — that is, after the first jolt, as you

may say, when my breath sort of hitched, he being so unexpected; but right away after I see I warn’t scared of him

worth bothring about.

He was most fifty, and he looked it. His hair was long

and tangled and greasy, and hung down, and you could see

his eyes shining through like he was behind vines. It was all

black, no gray; so was his long, mixed-up whiskers. There

warn’t no color in his face, where his face showed; it was

white; not like another man’s white, but a white to make a

body sick, a white to make a body’s flesh crawl — a tree-toad

white, a fish-belly white. As for his clothes — just rags, that

was all. He had one ankle resting on t’other knee; the boot

on that foot was busted, and two of his toes stuck through,

and he worked them now and then. His hat was laying on

the floor — an old black slouch with the top caved in, like

a lid.

I stood a-looking at him; he set there a-looking at me,

with his chair tilted back a little. I set the candle down. I

noticed the window was up; so he had clumb in by the shed.

He kept a-looking me all over. By and by he says:

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‘Starchy clothes — very. You think you’re a good deal of a

big-bug, DON’T you?’

‘Maybe I am, maybe I ain’t,’ I says.

‘Don’t you give me none o’ your lip,’ says he. ‘You’ve put

on considerable many frills since I been away. I’ll take you

down a peg before I get done with you. You’re educated, too,

they say — can read and write. You think you’re better’n

your father, now, don’t you, because he can’t? I’LL take it out

of you. Who told you you might meddle with such hifalut’n

foolishness, hey? — who told you you could?’

‘The widow. She told me.’

‘The widow, hey? — and who told the widow she could

put in her shovel about a thing that ain’t none of her business?’

‘Nobody never told her.’

‘Well, I’ll learn her how to meddle. And looky here —

you drop that school, you hear? I’ll learn people to bring

up a boy to put on airs over his own father and let on to be

better’n what HE is. You lemme catch you fooling around

that school again, you hear? Your mother couldn’t read,

and she couldn’t write, nuther, before she died. None of the

family couldn’t before THEY died. I can’t; and here you’re

a-swelling yourself up like this. I ain’t the man to stand it

— you hear? Say, lemme hear you read.’

I took up a book and begun something about Gen- eral

Washington and the wars. When I’d read about a half a

minute, he fetched the book a whack with his hand and

knocked it across the house. He says:

‘It’s so. You can do it. I had my doubts when you told me.

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Now looky here; you stop that putting on frills. I won’t have

it. I’ll lay for you, my smarty; and if I catch you about that

school I’ll tan you good. First you know you’ll get religion,

too. I never see such a son.

He took up a little blue and yaller picture of some cows

and a boy, and says:

‘What’s this?’

‘It’s something they give me for learning my lessons

good.’

He tore it up, and says:

‘I’ll give you something better — I’ll give you a cowhide.

He set there a-mumbling and a-growling a minute, and

then he says:

‘AIN’T you a sweet-scented dandy, though? A bed; and

bedclothes; and a look’n’-glass; and a piece of carpet on the

floor — and your own father got to sleep with the hogs in

the tanyard. I never see such a son. I bet I’ll take some o’

these frills out o’ you before I’m done with you. Why, there

ain’t no end to your airs — they say you’re rich. Hey? —

how’s that?’

‘They lie — that’s how.’

‘Looky here — mind how you talk to me; I’m a- standing about all I can stand now — so don’t gimme no sass.

I’ve been in town two days, and I hain’t heard nothing but

about you bein’ rich. I heard about it away down the river,

too. That’s why I come. You git me that money to-morrow

— I want it.’

‘I hain’t got no money.’

‘It’s a lie. Judge Thatcher’s got it. You git it. I want it.’

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‘I hain’t got no money, I tell you. You ask Judge Thatcher;

he’ll tell you the same.’

‘All right. I’ll ask him; and I’ll make him pungle, too, or

I’ll know the reason why. Say, how much you got in your

pocket? I want it.’

‘I hain’t got only a dollar, and I want that to —‘

‘It don’t make no difference what you want it for — you

just shell it out.’

He took it and bit it to see if it was good, and then he said

he was going down town to get some whisky; said he hadn’t

had a drink all day. When he had got out on the shed he put

his head in again, and cussed me for putting on frills and

trying to be better than him; and when I reckoned he was

gone he come back and put his head in again, and told me to

mind about that school, because he was going to lay for me

and lick me if I didn’t drop that.

Next day he was drunk, and he went to Judge Thatcher’s

and bullyragged him, and tried to make him give up the

money; but he couldn’t, and then he swore he’d make the

law force him.

The judge and the widow went to law to get the court to

take me away from him and let one of them be my guardian; but it was a new judge that had just come, and he didn’t

know the old man; so he said courts mustn’t interfere and

separate families if they could help it; said he’d druther not

take a child away from its father. So Judge Thatcher and the

widow had to quit on the business.

That pleased the old man till he couldn’t rest. He said

he’d cowhide me till I was black and blue if I didn’t raise

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some money for him. I borrowed three dollars from Judge

Thatcher, and pap took it and got drunk, and went a-blowing around and cussing and whooping and carrying on;

and he kept it up all over town, with a tin pan, till most

midnight; then they jailed him, and next day they had him

before court, and jailed him again for a week. But he said

HE was satisfied; said he was boss of his son, and he’d make

it warm for HIM.

When he got out the new judge said he was a-going to

make a man of him. So he took him to his own house, and

dressed him up clean and nice, and had him to breakfast

and dinner and supper with the family, and was just old pie

to him, so to speak. And after supper he talked to him about

temperance and such things till the old man cried, and said

he’d been a fool, and fooled away his life; but now he was agoing to turn over a new leaf and be a man nobody wouldn’t

be ashamed of, and he hoped the judge would help him and

not look down on him. The judge said he could hug him for

them words; so he cried, and his wife she cried again; pap

said he’d been a man that had always been misunderstood

before, and the judge said he believed it. The old man said

that what a man wanted that was down was sympathy, and

the judge said it was so; so they cried again. And when it

was bedtime the old man rose up and held out his hand,

and says:

‘Look at it, gentlemen and ladies all; take a-hold of it;

shake it. There’s a hand that was the hand of a hog; but it

ain’t so no more; it’s the hand of a man that’s started in on

a new life, and’ll die before he’ll go back. You mark them

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words — don’t forget I said them. It’s a clean hand now;

shake it — don’t be afeard.’

So they shook it, one after the other, all around, and cried.

The judge’s wife she kissed it. Then the old man he signed a

pledge — made his mark. The judge said it was the holiest

time on record, or something like that. Then they tucked

the old man into a beauti- ful room, which was the spare

room, and in the night some time he got powerful thirsty

and clumb out on to the porch-roof and slid down a stanchion and traded his new coat for a jug of forty-rod, and

clumb back again and had a good old time; and towards

daylight he crawled out again, drunk as a fiddler, and rolled

off the porch and broke his left arm in two places, and was

most froze to death when somebody found him after sunup. And when they come to look at that spare room they

had to take soundings before they could navigate it.

The judge he felt kind of sore. He said he reckoned a body

could reform the old man with a shotgun, maybe, but he

didn’t know no other way.

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Chapter VI

WELL, pretty soon the old man was up and around

again, and then he went for Judge Thatcher in the

courts to make him give up that money, and he went for

me, too, for not stopping school. He catched me a couple of

times and thrashed me, but I went to school just the same,

and dodged him or outrun him most of the time. I didn’t

want to go to school much before, but I reckoned I’d go now

to spite pap. That law trial was a slow business — appeared

like they warn’t ever going to get started on it; so every now

and then I’d borrow two or three dollars off of the judge

for him, to keep from getting a cowhiding. Every time he

got money he got drunk; and every time he got drunk he

raised Cain around town; and every time he raised Cain he

got jailed. He was just suited — this kind of thing was right

in his line.

He got to hanging around the widow’s too much and so

she told him at last that if he didn’t quit using around there

she would make trouble for him. Well, WASN’T he mad?

He said he would show who was Huck Finn’s boss. So he

watched out for me one day in the spring, and catched me,

and took me up the river about three mile in a skiff, and

crossed over to the Illinois shore where it was woody and

there warn’t no houses but an old log hut in a place where

the timber was so thick you couldn’t find it if you didn’t

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know where it was.

He kept me with him all the time, and I never got a

chance to run off. We lived in that old cabin, and he always

locked the door and put the key under his head nights. He

had a gun which he had stole, I reckon, and we fished and

hunted, and that was what we lived on. Every little while

he locked me in and went down to the store, three miles, to

the ferry, and traded fish and game for whisky, and fetched

it home and got drunk and had a good time, and licked me.

The widow she found out where I was by and by, and she

sent a man over to try to get hold of me; but pap drove him

off with the gun, and it warn’t long after that till I was used

to being where I was, and liked it — all but the cowhide

part.

It was kind of lazy and jolly, laying off comfortable all

day, smoking and fishing, and no books nor study. Two

months or more run along, and my clothes got to be all rags

and dirt, and I didn’t see how I’d ever got to like it so well at

the widow’s, where you had to wash, and eat on a plate, and

comb up, and go to bed and get up regular, and be forever

bothering over a book, and have old Miss Watson pecking

at you all the time. I didn’t want to go back no more. I had

stopped cussing, because the widow didn’t like it; but now

I took to it again because pap hadn’t no objec- tions. It was

pretty good times up in the woods there, take it all around.

But by and by pap got too handy with his hick’ry, and I

couldn’t stand it. I was all over welts. He got to going away

so much, too, and locking me in. Once he locked me in and

was gone three days. It was dreadful lonesome. I judged

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he had got drowned, and I wasn’t ever going to get out any

more. I was scared. I made up my mind I would fix up some

way to leave there. I had tried to get out of that cabin many

a time, but I couldn’t find no way. There warn’t a window to

it big enough for a dog to get through. I couldn’t get up the

chimbly; it was too narrow. The door was thick, solid oak

slabs. Pap was pretty careful not to leave a knife or anything

in the cabin when he was away; I reckon I had hunted the

place over as much as a hundred times; well, I was most all

the time at it, because it was about the only way to put in

the time. But this time I found something at last; I found

an old rusty wood-saw without any handle; it was laid in

between a rafter and the clapboards of the roof. I greased it

up and went to work. There was an old horse-blanket nailed

against the logs at the far end of the cabin behind the table, to keep the wind from blowing through the chinks and

putting the candle out. I got under the table and raised the

blanket, and went to work to saw a section of the big bottom log out — big enough to let me through. Well, it was a

good long job, but I was getting towards the end of it when

I heard pap’s gun in the woods. I got rid of the signs of my

work, and dropped the blanket and hid my saw, and pretty

soon pap come in.

Pap warn’t in a good humor — so he was his natural

self. He said he was down town, and everything was going wrong. His lawyer said he reckoned he would win his

lawsuit and get the money if they ever got started on the

trial; but then there was ways to put it off a long time, and

Judge Thatcher knowed how to do it And he said people al-

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lowed there’d be another trial to get me away from him and

give me to the widow for my guardian, and they guessed it

would win this time. This shook me up considerable, because I didn’t want to go back to the widow’s any more and

be so cramped up and sivilized, as they called it. Then the

old man got to cussing, and cussed every- thing and everybody he could think of, and then cussed them all over again

to make sure he hadn’t skipped any, and after that he polished off with a kind of a general cuss all round, including

a considerable parcel of people which he didn’t know the

names of, and so called them what’s-his-name when he got

to them, and went right along with his cussing.

He said he would like to see the widow get me. He said he

would watch out, and if they tried to come any such game

on him he knowed of a place six or seven mile off to stow

me in, where they might hunt till they dropped and they

couldn’t find me. That made me pretty uneasy again, but

only for a minute; I reckoned I wouldn’t stay on hand till he

got that chance.

The old man made me go to the skiff and fetch the things

he had got. There was a fifty-pound sack of corn meal, and a

side of bacon, ammunition, and a four-gallon jug of whisky,

and an old book and two newspapers for wadding, besides

some tow. I toted up a load, and went back and set down on

the bow of the skiff to rest. I thought it all over, and I reckoned I would walk off with the gun and some lines, and

take to the woods when I run away. I guessed I wouldn’t

stay in one place, but just tramp right across the country,

mostly night times, and hunt and fish to keep alive, and so

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get so far away that the old man nor the widow couldn’t ever

find me any more. I judged I would saw out and leave that

night if pap got drunk enough, and I reckoned he would. I

got so full of it I didn’t notice how long I was staying till

the old man hollered and asked me whether I was asleep or

drownded.

I got the things all up to the cabin, and then it was about

dark. While I was cooking supper the old man took a swig

or two and got sort of warmed up, and went to ripping

again. He had been drunk over in town, and laid in the gutter all night, and he was a sight to look at. A body would a

thought he was Adam — he was just all mud. Whenever his

liquor begun to work he most always went for the govment.

his time he says:

‘Call this a govment! why, just look at it and see what it’s

like. Here’s the law a-standing ready to take a man’s son

away from him — a man’s own son, which he has had all

the trouble and all the anxiety and all the expense of raising. Yes, just as that man has got that son raised at last, and

ready to go to work and begin to do suthin’ for HIM and

give him a rest, the law up and goes for him. And they call

THAT govment! That ain’t all, nuther. The law backs that

old Judge Thatcher up and helps him to keep me out o’ my

property. Here’s what the law does: The law takes a man

worth six thousand dollars and up’ards, and jams him into

an old trap of a cabin like this, and lets him go round in

clothes that ain’t fitten for a hog. They call that govment! A

man can’t get his rights in a govment like this. Sometimes

I’ve a mighty notion to just leave the country for good and

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all. Yes, and I TOLD ‘em so; I told old Thatcher so to his

face. Lots of ‘em heard me, and can tell what I said. Says I,

for two cents I’d leave the blamed country and never come

a-near it agin. Them’s the very words. I says look at my hat

— if you call it a hat — but the lid raises up and the rest of

it goes down till it’s below my chin, and then it ain’t rightly

a hat at all, but more like my head was shoved up through

a jint o’ stove- pipe. Look at it, says I — such a hat for me

to wear — one of the wealthiest men in this town if I could

git my rights.

‘Oh, yes, this is a wonderful govment, wonderful. Why,

looky here. There was a free nigger there from Ohio — a

mulatter, most as white as a white man. He had the whitest

shirt on you ever see, too, and the shiniest hat; and there

ain’t a man in that town that’s got as fine clothes as what he

had; and he had a gold watch and chain, and a silver-headed

cane — the awful- est old gray-headed nabob in the State.

And what do you think? They said he was a p’fessor in a

college, and could talk all kinds of languages, and knowed

everything. And that ain’t the wust. They said he could

VOTE when he was at home. Well, that let me out. Thinks

I, what is the country a-coming to? It was ‘lection day, and

I was just about to go and vote myself if I warn’t too drunk

to get there; but when they told me there was a State in this

country where they’d let that nigger vote, I drawed out. I

says I’ll never vote agin. Them’s the very words I said; they

all heard me; and the country may rot for all me — I’ll never

vote agin as long as I live. And to see the cool way of that

nigger — why, he wouldn’t a give me the road if I hadn’t

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shoved him out o’ the way. I says to the people, why ain’t

this nigger put up at auction and sold? — that’s what I want

to know. And what do you reckon they said? Why, they said

he couldn’t be sold till he’d been in the State six months,

and he hadn’t been there that long yet. There, now — that’s a

specimen. They call that a govment that can’t sell a free nigger till he’s been in the State six months. Here’s a govment

that calls itself a govment, and lets on to be a govment, and

thinks it is a govment, and yet’s got to set stock-still for six

whole months before it can take a hold of a prowling, thieving, infernal, white-shirted free nigger, and —‘

Pap was agoing on so he never noticed where his old limber legs was taking him to, so he went head over heels over

the tub of salt pork and barked both shins, and the rest of

his speech was all the hottest kind of language — mostly

hove at the nigger and the gov- ment, though he give the tub

some, too, all along, here and there. He hopped around the

cabin con- siderable, first on one leg and then on the other,

hold- ing first one shin and then the other one, and at last

he let out with his left foot all of a sudden and fetched the

tub a rattling kick. But it warn’t good judgment, because

that was the boot that had a couple of his toes leaking out of

the front end of it; so now he raised a howl that fairly made

a body’s hair raise, and down he went in the dirt, and rolled

there, and held his toes; and the cussing he done then laid

over anything he had ever done previous. He said so his

own self after- wards. He had heard old Sowberry Hagan in

his best days, and he said it laid over him, too; but I reckon

that was sort of piling it on, maybe.

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After supper pap took the jug, and said he had enough

whisky there for two drunks and one delirium tremens.

That was always his word. I judged he would be blind drunk

in about an hour, and then I would steal the key, or saw myself out, one or t’other. He drank and drank, and tumbled

down on his blankets by and by; but luck didn’t run my way.

He didn’t go sound asleep, but was uneasy. He groaned and

moaned and thrashed around this way and that for a long

time. At last I got so sleepy I couldn’t keep my eyes open all

I could do, and so before I knowed what I was about I was

sound asleep, and the candle burning.

I don’t know how long I was asleep, but all of a sudden

there was an awful scream and I was up. There was pap

looking wild, and skipping around every which way and

yelling about snakes. He said they was crawling up his legs;

and then he would give a jump and scream, and say one

had bit him on the cheek — but I couldn’t see no snakes.

He started and run round and round the cabin, hollering

‘Take him off! take him off! he’s biting me on the neck!’ I

never see a man look so wild in the eyes. Pretty soon he was

all fagged out, and fell down panting; then he rolled over

and over wonderful fast, kicking things every which way,

and striking and grabbing at the air with his hands, and

screaming and saying there was devils a-hold of him. He

wore out by and by, and laid still a while, moaning. Then

he laid stiller, and didn’t make a sound. I could hear the

owls and the wolves away off in the woods, and it seemed

terri- ble still. He was laying over by the corner. By and by

he raised up part way and listened, with his head to one side.

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He says, very low:

‘Tramp — tramp — tramp; that’s the dead; tramp —

tramp — tramp; they’re coming after me; but I won’t go. Oh,

they’re here! don’t touch me — don’t! hands off — they’re

cold; let go. Oh, let a poor devil alone!’

Then he went down on all fours and crawled off, begging

them to let him alone, and he rolled himself up in his blanket and wallowed in under the old pine table, still a-begging;

and then he went to crying. I could hear him through the

blanket.

By and by he rolled out and jumped up on his feet looking wild, and he see me and went for me. He chased me

round and round the place with a clasp- knife, calling me

the Angel of Death, and saying he would kill me, and then

I couldn’t come for him no more. I begged, and told him I

was only Huck; but he laughed SUCH a screechy laugh, and

roared and cussed, and kept on chasing me up. Once when I

turned short and dodged under his arm he made a grab and

got me by the jacket between my shoulders, and I thought I

was gone; but I slid out of the jacket quick as lightning, and

saved myself. Pretty soon he was all tired out, and dropped

down with his back against the door, and said he would rest

a minute and then kill me. He put his knife under him, and

said he would sleep and get strong, and then he would see

who was who.

So he dozed off pretty soon. By and by I got the old splitbottom chair and clumb up as easy as I could, not to make

any noise, and got down the gun. I slipped the ramrod

down it to make sure it was loaded, then I laid it across the

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turnip barrel, pointing towards pap, and set down behind it

to wait for him to stir. And how slow and still the time did

drag along.

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Chapter VII

RGIT up! What you ‘bout?’

I opened my eyes and looked around, trying to make

out where I was. It was after sun-up, and I had been sound

asleep. Pap was standing over me looking sourQand sick,

too. He says:

‘What you doin’ with this gun?’

I judged he didn’t know nothing about what he had been

doing, so I says:

‘Somebody tried to get in, so I was laying for him.’

‘Why didn’t you roust me out?’

‘Well, I tried to, but I couldn’t; I couldn’t budge you.’

‘Well, all right. Don’t stand there palavering all day, but

out with you and see if there’s a fish on the lines for breakfast. I’ll be along in a minute.’

He unlocked the door, and I cleared out up the riverbank. I noticed some pieces of limbs and such things floating

down, and a sprinkling of bark; so I knowed the river had

begun to rise. I reckoned I would have great times now if I

was over at the town. The June rise used to be always luck

for me; because as soon as that rise begins here comes cordwood float- ing down, and pieces of log rafts — sometimes

a dozen logs together; so all you have to do is to catch them

and sell them to the wood-yards and the sawmill.

I went along up the bank with one eye out for pap and

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t’other one out for what the rise might fetch along. Well, all

at once here comes a canoe; just a beauty, too, about thirteen or fourteen foot long, riding high like a duck. I shot

head-first off of the bank like a frog, clothes and all on, and

struck out for the canoe. I just expected there’d be somebody lay- ing down in it, because people often done that to

fool folks, and when a chap had pulled a skiff out most to it

they’d raise up and laugh at him. But it warn’t so this time.

It was a drift-canoe sure enough, and I clumb in and paddled her ashore. Thinks I, the old man will be glad when he

sees this — she’s worth ten dollars. But when I got to shore

pap wasn’t in sight yet, and as I was running her into a little

creek like a gully, all hung over with vines and willows, I

struck another idea: I judged I’d hide her good, and then,

‘stead of taking to the woods when I run off, I’d go down the

river about fifty mile and camp in one place for good, and

not have such a rough time tramping on foot.

It was pretty close to the shanty, and I thought I heard

the old man coming all the time; but I got her hid; and then

I out and looked around a bunch of willows, and there was

the old man down the path a piece just drawing a bead on a

bird with his gun. So he hadn’t seen anything.

When he got along I was hard at it taking up a ‘trot’ line.

He abused me a little for being so slow; but I told him I fell

in the river, and that was what made me so long. I knowed

he would see I was wet, and then he would be asking questions. We got five catfish off the lines and went home.

While we laid off after breakfast to sleep up, both of us

being about wore out, I got to thinking that if I could fix up

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some way to keep pap and the widow from trying to follow

me, it would be a certainer thing than trust- ing to luck to

get far enough off before they missed me; you see, all kinds

of things might happen. Well, I didn’t see no way for a while,

but by and by pap raised up a minute to drink another barrel of water, and he says:

‘Another time a man comes a-prowling round here you

roust me out, you hear? That man warn’t here for no good.

I’d a shot him. Next time you roust me out, you hear?’

Then he dropped down and went to sleep again; but what

he had been saying give me the very idea I wanted. I says

to myself, I can fix it now so nobody won’t think of following me.

About twelve o’clock we turned out and went along up

the bank. The river was coming up pretty fast, and lots of

driftwood going by on the rise. By and by along comes part

of a log raft — nine logs fast together. We went out with the

skiff and towed it ashore. Then we had dinner. Anybody but

pap would a waited and seen the day through, so as to catch

more stuff; but that warn’t pap’s style. Nine logs was enough

for one time; he must shove right over to town and sell. So

he locked me in and took the skiff, and started off towing

the raft about half- past three. I judged he wouldn’t come

back that night. I waited till I reckoned he had got a good

start; then I out with my saw, and went to work on that log

again. Before he was t’other side of the river I was out of the

hole; him and his raft was just a speck on the water away

off yonder.

I took the sack of corn meal and took it to where the

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canoe was hid, and shoved the vines and branches apart

and put it in; then I done the same with the side of bacon;

then the whisky-jug. I took all the coffee and sugar there

was, and all the ammunition; I took the wadding; I took the

bucket and gourd; I took a dipper and a tin cup, and my old

saw and two blankets, and the skillet and the coffee-pot. I

took fish-lines and matches and other things — everything

that was worth a cent. I cleaned out the place. I wanted an

axe, but there wasn’t any, only the one out at the woodpile,

and I knowed why I was going to leave that. I fetched out

the gun, and now I was done.

I had wore the ground a good deal crawling out of the

hole and dragging out so many things. So I fixed that as

good as I could from the outside by scattering dust on the

place, which covered up the smoothness and the sawdust.

Then I fixed the piece of log back into its place, and put two

rocks under it and one against it to hold it there, for it was

bent up at that place and didn’t quite touch ground. If you

stood four or five foot away and didn’t know it was sawed,

you wouldn’t never notice it; and besides, this was the back

of the cabin, and it warn’t likely anybody would go fooling

around there.

It was all grass clear to the canoe, so I hadn’t left a track.

I followed around to see. I stood on the bank and looked

out over the river. All safe. So I took the gun and went up

a piece into the woods, and was hunting around for some

birds when I see a wild pig; hogs soon went wild in them

bottoms after they had got away from the prairie farms. I

shot this fel- low and took him into camp.

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I took the axe and smashed in the door. I beat it and

hacked it considerable a-doing it. I fetched the pig in, and

took him back nearly to the table and hacked into his throat

with the axe, and laid him down on the ground to bleed; I

say ground because it was ground — hard packed, and no

boards. Well, next I took an old sack and put a lot of big

rocks in it — all I could drag — and I started it from the pig,

and dragged it to the door and through the woods down to

the river and dumped it in, and down it sunk, out of sight.

You could easy see that something had been dragged over

the ground. I did wish Tom Sawyer was there; I knowed he

would take an interest in this kind of business, and throw in

the fancy touches. Nobody could spread himself like Tom

Sawyer in such a thing as that.

Well, last I pulled out some of my hair, and blooded the

axe good, and stuck it on the back side, and slung the axe

in the corner. Then I took up the pig and held him to my

breast with my jacket (so he couldn’t drip) till I got a good

piece below the house and then dumped him into the river.

Now I thought of some- thing else. So I went and got the

bag of meal and my old saw out of the canoe, and fetched

them to the house. I took the bag to where it used to stand,

and ripped a hole in the bottom of it with the saw, for there

warn’t no knives and forks on the place — pap done everything with his clasp-knife about the cooking. Then I

carried the sack about a hundred yards across the grass and

through the willows east of the house, to a shallow lake that

was five mile wide and full of rushes — and ducks too, you

might say, in the season. There was a slough or a creek lead-

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ing out of it on the other side that went miles away, I don’t

know where, but it didn’t go to the river. The meal sifted out

and made a little track all the way to the lake. I dropped

pap’s whetstone there too, so as to look like it had been done

by accident. Then I tied up the rip in the meal sack with a

string, so it wouldn’t leak no more, and took it and my saw

to the canoe again.

It was about dark now; so I dropped the canoe down

the river under some willows that hung over the bank, and

waited for the moon to rise. I made fast to a willow; then I

took a bite to eat, and by and by laid down in the canoe to

smoke a pipe and lay out a plan. I says to myself, they’ll follow the track of that sack- ful of rocks to the shore and then

drag the river for me. And they’ll follow that meal track to

the lake and go browsing down the creek that leads out of it

to find the robbers that killed me and took the things. They

won’t ever hunt the river for anything but my dead carcass.

They’ll soon get tired of that, and won’t bother no more

about me. All right; I can stop anywhere I want to. Jackson’s

Island is good enough for me; I know that island pretty well,

and nobody ever comes there. And then I can paddle over

to town nights, and slink around and pick up things I want.

Jackson’s Island’s the place.

I was pretty tired, and the first thing I knowed I was

asleep. When I woke up I didn’t know where I was for a

minute. I set up and looked around, a little scared. Then I

remembered. The river looked miles and miles across. The

moon was so bright I could a counted the drift logs that

went a-slipping along, black and still, hundreds of yards out

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from shore. Every- thing was dead quiet, and it looked late,

and SMELT late. You know what I mean — I don’t know the

words to put it in.

I took a good gap and a stretch, and was just going to unhitch and start when I heard a sound away over the water.

I listened. Pretty soon I made it out. It was that dull kind

of a regular sound that comes from oars working in rowlocks when it’s a still night. I peeped out through the willow

branches, and there it was — a skiff, away across the water.

I couldn’t tell how many was in it. It kept a-coming, and

when it was abreast of me I see there warn’t but one man in

it. Think’s I, maybe it’s pap, though I warn’t expecting him.

He dropped below me with the current, and by and by he

came a-swinging up shore in the easy water, and he went

by so close I could a reached out the gun and touched him.

Well, it WAS pap, sure enough — and sober, too, by the way

he laid his oars.

I didn’t lose no time. The next minute I was a- spinning

down stream soft but quick in the shade of the bank. I made

two mile and a half, and then struck out a quarter of a mile

or more towards the middle of the river, because pretty soon

I would be passing the ferry landing, and people might see

me and hail me. I got out amongst the driftwood, and then

laid down in the bottom of the canoe and let her float. I laid

there, and had a good rest and a smoke out of my pipe, looking away into the sky; not a cloud in it. The sky looks ever so

deep when you lay down on your back in the moonshine; I

never knowed it before. And how far a body can hear on the

water such nights! I heard people talking at the ferry land-

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ing. I heard what they said, too — every word of it. One

man said it was getting towards the long days and the short

nights now. T’other one said THIS warn’t one of the short

ones, he reckoned — and then they laughed, and he said it

over again, and they laughed again; then they waked up another fellow and told him, and laughed, but he didn’t laugh;

he ripped out something brisk, and said let him alone. The

first fellow said he ‘lowed to tell it to his old woman — she

would think it was pretty good; but he said that warn’t

nothing to some things he had said in his time. I heard one

man say it was nearly three o’clock, and he hoped daylight

wouldn’t wait more than about a week longer. After that the

talk got further and further away, and I couldn’t make out

the words any more; but I could hear the mumble, and now

and then a laugh, too, but it seemed a long ways off.

I was away below the ferry now. I rose up, and there was

Jackson’s Island, about two mile and a half down stream,

heavy timbered and standing up out of the middle of the

river, big and dark and solid, like a steamboat without any

lights. There warn’t any signs of the bar at the head — it was

all under water now.

It didn’t take me long to get there. I shot past the head at

a ripping rate, the current was so swift, and then I got into

the dead water and landed on the side towards the Illinois

shore. I run the canoe into a deep dent in the bank that I

knowed about; I had to part the willow branches to get in;

and when I made fast nobody could a seen the canoe from

the outside.

I went up and set down on a log at the head of the island,

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and looked out on the big river and the black driftwood and

away over to the town, three mile away, where there was

three or four lights twinkling. A monstrous big lumber-raft

was about a mile up stream, coming along down, with a lantern in the middle of it. I watched it come creeping down,

and when it was most abreast of where I stood I heard a

man say, ‘Stern oars, there! heave her head to stab- board!’ I

heard that just as plain as if the man was by my side.

There was a little gray in the sky now; so I stepped into

the woods, and laid down for a nap before break- fast.

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Chapter VIII

THE sun was up so high when I waked that I judged it

was after eight o’clock. I laid there in the grass and the

cool shade thinking about things, and feeling rested and

ruther comfortable and satisfied. I could see the sun out at

one or two holes, but mostly it was big trees all about, and

gloomy in there amongst them. There was freckled places on the ground where the light sifted down through the

leaves, and the freckled places swapped about a little, showing there was a little breeze up there. A couple of squirrels

set on a limb and jabbered at me very friendly.

I was powerful lazy and comfortable — didn’t want to

get up and cook breakfast. Well, I was dozing off again

when I thinks I hears a deep sound of ‘boom!’ away up the

river. I rouses up, and rests on my elbow and listens; pretty

soon I hears it again. I hopped up, and went and looked out

at a hole in the leaves, and I see a bunch of smoke laying on

the water a long ways up — about abreast the ferry. And

there was the ferryboat full of people floating along down.

I knowed what was the matter now. ‘Boom!’ I see the white

smoke squirt out of the ferryboat’s side. You see, they was

firing cannon over the water, trying to make my carcass

come to the top.

I was pretty hungry, but it warn’t going to do for me to

start a fire, because they might see the smoke. So I set there

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and watched the cannon-smoke and listened to the boom.

The river was a mile wide there, and it always looks pretty

on a summer morning — so I was having a good enough

time seeing them hunt for my remainders if I only had a bite

to eat. Well, then I happened to think how they always put

quicksilver in loaves of bread and float them off, because

they always go right to the drownded carcass and stop there.

So, says I, I’ll keep a lookout, and if any of them’s floating

around after me I’ll give them a show. I changed to the Illinois edge of the island to see what luck I could have, and

I warn’t disappointed. A big double loaf come along, and I

most got it with a long stick, but my foot slipped and she

floated out further. Of course I was where the current set in

the closest to the shore — I knowed enough for that. But by

and by along comes another one, and this time I won. I took

out the plug and shook out the little dab of quick- silver, and

set my teeth in. It was ‘baker’s bread’ — what the quality

eat; none of your low-down corn-pone.

I got a good place amongst the leaves, and set there on

a log, munching the bread and watching the ferry- boat,

and very well satisfied. And then something struck me. I

says, now I reckon the widow or the parson or somebody

prayed that this bread would find me, and here it has gone

and done it. So there ain’t no doubt but there is something

in that thing — that is, there’s something in it when a body

like the widow or the parson prays, but it don’t work for me,

and I reckon it don’t work for only just the right kind.

I lit a pipe and had a good long smoke, and went on

watching. The ferryboat was floating with the current, and I

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allowed I’d have a chance to see who was aboard when she

come along, because she would come in close, where the

bread did. When she’d got pretty well along down towards

me, I put out my pipe and went to where I fished out the

bread, and laid down behind a log on the bank in a little

open place. Where the log forked I could peep through.

By and by she come along, and she drifted in so close

that they could a run out a plank and walked ashore. Most

everybody was on the boat. Pap, and Judge Thatcher, and

Bessie Thatcher, and Jo Harper, and Tom Sawyer, and his

old Aunt Polly, and Sid and Mary, and plenty more. Everybody was talking about the murder, but the captain broke

in and says:

‘Look sharp, now; the current sets in the closest here,

and maybe he’s washed ashore and got tangled amongst the

brush at the water’s edge. I hope so, anyway.’

‘I didn’t hope so. They all crowded up and leaned over

the rails, nearly in my face, and kept still, watch- ing with

all their might. I could see them first-rate, but they couldn’t

see me. Then the captain sung out:

‘Stand away!’ and the cannon let off such a blast right before me that it made me deef with the noise and pretty near

blind with the smoke, and I judged I was gone. If they’d a

had some bullets in, I reckon they’d a got the corpse they

was after. Well, I see I warn’t hurt, thanks to goodness. The

boat floated on and went out of sight around the shoulder of

the island. I could hear the booming now and then, further

and further off, and by and by, after an hour, I didn’t hear it

no more. The island was three mile long. I judged they had

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got to the foot, and was giving it up. But they didn’t yet a

while. They turned around the foot of the island and started up the channel on the Mis- souri side, under steam, and

booming once in a while as they went. I crossed over to that

side and watched them. When they got abreast the head of

the island they quit shooting and dropped over to the Missouri shore and went home to the town.

I knowed I was all right now. Nobody else would come

a-hunting after me. I got my traps out of the canoe and

made me a nice camp in the thick woods. I made a kind of

a tent out of my blankets to put my things under so the rain

couldn’t get at them. I catched a catfish and haggled him

open with my saw, and towards sundown I started my camp

fire and had supper. Then I set out a line to catch some fish

for breakfast.

When it was dark I set by my camp fire smoking, and

feeling pretty well satisfied; but by and by it got sort of lonesome, and so I went and set on the bank and listened to

the current swashing along, and counted the stars and drift

logs and rafts that come down, and then went to bed; there

ain’t no better way to put in time when you are lonesome;

you can’t stay so, you soon get over it.

And so for three days and nights. No difference — just

the same thing. But the next day I went explor- ing around

down through the island. I was boss of it; it all belonged to

me, so to say, and I wanted to know all about it; but mainly I

wanted to put in the time. I found plenty strawberries, ripe

and prime; and green summer grapes, and green razberries; and the green blackberries was just beginning to show.

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They would all come handy by and by, I judged.

Well, I went fooling along in the deep woods till I judged

I warn’t far from the foot of the island. I had my gun along,

but I hadn’t shot nothing; it was for protection; thought I

would kill some game nigh home. About this time I mighty

near stepped on a good-sized snake, and it went sliding off

through the grass and flowers, and I after it, trying to get

a shot at it. I clipped along, and all of a sudden I bounded

right on to the ashes of a camp fire that was still smoking.

My heart jumped up amongst my lungs. I never waited

for to look further, but uncocked my gun and went sneaking back on my tiptoes as fast as ever I could. Every now

and then I stopped a second amongst the thick leaves and

listened, but my breath come so hard I couldn’t hear nothing else. I slunk along an- other piece further, then listened

again; and so on, and so on. If I see a stump, I took it for a

man; if I trod on a stick and broke it, it made me feel like a

person had cut one of my breaths in two and I only got half,

and the short half, too.

When I got to camp I warn’t feeling very brash, there

warn’t much sand in my craw; but I says, this ain’t no time

to be fooling around. So I got all my traps into my canoe

again so as to have them out of sight, and I put out the fire

and scattered the ashes around to look like an old last year’s

camp, and then clumb a tree.

I reckon I was up in the tree two hours; but I didn’t see

nothing, I didn’t hear nothing — I only THOUGHT I heard

and seen as much as a thousand things. Well, I couldn’t stay

up there forever; so at last I got down, but I kept in the thick

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woods and on the lookout all the time. All I could get to eat

was berries and what was left over from breakfast.

By the time it was night I was pretty hungry. So when it

was good and dark I slid out from shore before moonrise

and paddled over to the Illinois bank — about a quarter of

a mile. I went out in the woods and cooked a supper, and

I had about made up my mind I would stay there all night

when I hear a PLUNKETY- PLUNK, PLUNKETY-PLUNK,

and says to myself, horses coming; and next I hear people’s

voices. I got everything into the canoe as quick as I could,

and then went creeping through the woods to see what I

could find out. I hadn’t got far when I hear a man say:

‘We better camp here if we can find a good place; the

horses is about beat out. Let’s look around.’

I didn’t wait, but shoved out and paddled away easy. I

tied up in the old place, and reckoned I would sleep in the

canoe.

I didn’t sleep much. I couldn’t, somehow, for thinking.

And every time I waked up I thought somebody had me by

the neck. So the sleep didn’t do me no good. By and by I says

to myself, I can’t live this way; I’m a-going to find out who

it is that’s here on the island with me; I’ll find it out or bust.

Well, I felt better right off.

So I took my paddle and slid out from shore just a step or

two, and then let the canoe drop along down amongst the

shadows. The moon was shining, and out- side of the shadows it made it most as light as day. I poked along well on to

an hour, everything still as rocks and sound asleep. Well, by

this time I was most down to the foot of the island. A little

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ripply, cool breeze begun to blow, and that was as good as

saying the night was about done. I give her a turn with the

paddle and brung her nose to shore; then I got my gun and

slipped out and into the edge of the woods. I sat down there

on a log, and looked out through the leaves. I see the moon

go off watch, and the darkness begin to blanket the river.

But in a little while I see a pale streak over the treetops, and

knowed the day was coming. So I took my gun and slipped

off towards where I had run across that camp fire, stopping

every minute or two to listen. But I hadn’t no luck somehow;

I couldn’t seem to find the place. But by and by, sure enough,

I catched a glimpse of fire away through the trees. I went for

it, cautious and slow. By and by I was close enough to have

a look, and there laid a man on the ground. It most give me

the fantods. He had a blanket around his head, and his head

was nearly in the fire. I set there behind a clump of bushes

in about six foot of him, and kept my eyes on him steady. It

was getting gray daylight now. Pretty soon he gapped and

stretched himself and hove off the blanket, and it was Miss

Watson’s Jim! I bet I was glad to see him. I says:

‘Hello, Jim!’ and skipped out.

He bounced up and stared at me wild. Then he drops

down on his knees, and puts his hands together and says:

‘Doan’ hurt me — don’t! I hain’t ever done no harm to a

ghos’. I alwuz liked dead people, en done all I could for ‘em.

You go en git in de river agin, whah you b’longs, en doan’ do

nuffn to Ole Jim, ‘at ‘uz awluz yo’ fren’.’

Well, I warn’t long making him understand I warn’t dead.

I was ever so glad to see Jim. I warn’t lone- some now. I told

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him I warn’t afraid of HIM telling the people where I was. I

talked along, but he only set there and looked at me; never

said nothing. Then I says:

‘It’s good daylight. Le’s get breakfast. Make up your camp

fire good.’

‘What’s de use er makin’ up de camp fire to cook strawbries en sich truck? But you got a gun, hain’t you? Den we

kin git sumfn better den strawbries.’

‘Strawberries and such truck,’ I says. ‘Is that what you

live on?’

‘I couldn’ git nuffn else,’ he says.

‘Why, how long you been on the island, Jim?’

‘I come heah de night arter you’s killed.’

‘What, all that time?’

‘Yes — indeedy.’

‘And ain’t you had nothing but that kind of rub- bage to

eat?’

‘No, sah — nuffn else.’

‘Well, you must be most starved, ain’t you?’

‘I reck’n I could eat a hoss. I think I could. How long you

ben on de islan’?’

‘Since the night I got killed.’

‘No! W’y, what has you lived on? But you got a gun. Oh,

yes, you got a gun. Dat’s good. Now you kill sumfn en I’ll

make up de fire.’

So we went over to where the canoe was, and while he

built a fire in a grassy open place amongst the trees, I fetched

meal and bacon and coffee, and coffee-pot and frying-pan,

and sugar and tin cups, and the nigger was set back consid-

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erable, because he reckoned it was all done with witchcraft.

I catched a good big catfish, too, and Jim cleaned him with

his knife, and fried him.

When breakfast was ready we lolled on the grass and

eat it smoking hot. Jim laid it in with all his might, for he

was most about starved. Then when we had got pretty well

stuffed, we laid off and lazied. By and by Jim says:

‘But looky here, Huck, who wuz it dat ‘uz killed in dat

shanty ef it warn’t you?’

Then I told him the whole thing, and he said it was smart.

He said Tom Sawyer couldn’t get up no better plan than

what I had. Then I says:

‘How do you come to be here, Jim, and how’d you get

here?’

He looked pretty uneasy, and didn’t say nothing for a

minute. Then he says:

‘Maybe I better not tell.’

‘Why, Jim?’

‘Well, dey’s reasons. But you wouldn’ tell on me ef I uz to

tell you, would you, Huck?’

‘Blamed if I would, Jim.’

‘Well, I b’lieve you, Huck. I — I RUN OFF.’

‘Jim!’

‘But mind, you said you wouldn’ tell — you know you

said you wouldn’ tell, Huck.’

‘Well, I did. I said I wouldn’t, and I’ll stick to it. Honest

INJUN, I will. People would call me a low- down Abolitionist and despise me for keeping mum — but that don’t make

no difference. I ain’t a-going to tell, and I ain’t a-going back

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there, anyways. So, now, le’s know all about it.’

‘Well, you see, it ‘uz dis way. Ole missus — dat’s Miss

Watson — she pecks on me all de time, en treats me pooty

rough, but she awluz said she wouldn’ sell me down to Orleans. But I noticed dey wuz a nigger trader roun’ de place

considable lately, en I begin to git oneasy. Well, one night I

creeps to de do’ pooty late, en de do’ warn’t quite shet, en I

hear old missus tell de widder she gwyne to sell me down

to Orleans, but she didn’ want to, but she could git eight

hund’d dollars for me, en it ‘uz sich a big stack o’ money

she couldn’ resis’. De widder she try to git her to say she

wouldn’ do it, but I never waited to hear de res’. I lit out

mighty quick, I tell you.

‘I tuck out en shin down de hill, en ‘spec to steal a skift

‘long de sho’ som’ers ‘bove de town, but dey wuz people astirring yit, so I hid in de ole tumble-down cooper-shop on

de bank to wait for everybody to go ‘way. Well, I wuz dah

all night. Dey wuz somebody roun’ all de time. ‘Long ‘bout

six in de mawnin’ skifts begin to go by, en ‘bout eight er

nine every skift dat went ‘long wuz talkin’ ‘bout how yo’

pap come over to de town en say you’s killed. Dese las’ skifts

wuz full o’ ladies en genlmen a-goin’ over for to see de place.

Sometimes dey’d pull up at de sho’ en take a res’ b’fo’ dey

started acrost, so by de talk I got to know all ‘bout de killin’. I ‘uz powerful sorry you’s killed, Huck, but I ain’t no

mo’ now.

‘I laid dah under de shavin’s all day. I ‘uz hungry, but I

warn’t afeard; bekase I knowed ole missus en de widder wuz

goin’ to start to de camp- meet’n’ right arter breakfas’ en be

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gone all day, en dey knows I goes off wid de cattle ‘bout daylight, so dey wouldn’ ‘spec to see me roun’ de place, en so

dey wouldn’ miss me tell arter dark in de evenin’. De yuther

servants wouldn’ miss me, kase dey’d shin out en take holiday soon as de ole folks ‘uz out’n de way.

‘Well, when it come dark I tuck out up de river road, en

went ‘bout two mile er more to whah dey warn’t no houses.

I’d made up my mine ‘bout what I’s agwyne to do. You see,

ef I kep’ on tryin’ to git away afoot, de dogs ‘ud track me; ef

I stole a skift to cross over, dey’d miss dat skift, you see, en

dey’d know ‘bout whah I’d lan’ on de yuther side, en whah

to pick up my track. So I says, a raff is what I’s arter; it doan’

MAKE no track.

‘I see a light a-comin’ roun’ de p’int bymeby, so I wade’

in en shove’ a log ahead o’ me en swum more’n half way acrost de river, en got in ‘mongst de drift- wood, en kep’ my

head down low, en kinder swum agin de current tell de raff

come along. Den I swum to de stern uv it en tuck a-holt. It

clouded up en ‘uz pooty dark for a little while. So I clumb

up en laid down on de planks. De men ‘uz all ‘way yonder in

de middle, whah de lantern wuz. De river wuz a- risin’, en

dey wuz a good current; so I reck’n’d ‘at by fo’ in de mawnin’

I’d be twenty-five mile down de river, en den I’d slip in jis

b’fo’ daylight en swim asho’, en take to de woods on de Illinois side.

‘But I didn’ have no luck. When we ‘uz mos’ down to

de head er de islan’ a man begin to come aft wid de lantern, I see it warn’t no use fer to wait, so I slid overboard

en struck out fer de islan’. Well, I had a notion I could lan’

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mos’ anywhers, but I couldn’t — bank too bluff. I ‘uz mos’

to de foot er de islan’ b’fo’ I found’ a good place. I went into

de woods en jedged I wouldn’ fool wid raffs no mo’, long

as dey move de lantern roun’ so. I had my pipe en a plug er

dog-leg, en some matches in my cap, en dey warn’t wet, so

I ‘uz all right.’

‘And so you ain’t had no meat nor bread to eat all this

time? Why didn’t you get mud-turkles?’

‘How you gwyne to git ‘m? You can’t slip up on um en

grab um; en how’s a body gwyne to hit um wid a rock? How

could a body do it in de night? En I warn’t gwyne to show

mysef on de bank in de daytime.’

‘Well, that’s so. You’ve had to keep in the woods all the

time, of course. Did you hear ‘em shooting the cannon?’

‘Oh, yes. I knowed dey was arter you. I see um go by heah

— watched um thoo de bushes.’

Some young birds come along, flying a yard or two at

a time and lighting. Jim said it was a sign it was going to

rain. He said it was a sign when young chickens flew that

way, and so he reckoned it was the same way when young

birds done it. I was going to catch some of them, but Jim

wouldn’t let me. He said it was death. He said his father laid

mighty sick once, and some of them catched a bird, and his

old granny said his father would die, and he did.

And Jim said you mustn’t count the things you are going to cook for dinner, because that would bring bad luck.

The same if you shook the table-cloth after sundown. And

he said if a man owned a beehive and that man died, the

bees must be told about it before sun-up next morning, or

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else the bees would all weaken down and quit work and die.

Jim said bees wouldn’t sting idiots; but I didn’t believe that,

be- cause I had tried them lots of times myself, and they

wouldn’t sting me.

I had heard about some of these things before, but not all

of them. Jim knowed all kinds of signs. He said he knowed

most everything. I said it looked to me like all the signs was

about bad luck, and so I asked him if there warn’t any goodluck signs. He says:

‘Mighty few — an’ DEY ain’t no use to a body. What you

want to know when good luck’s a-comin’ for? Want to keep

it off?’ And he said: ‘Ef you’s got hairy arms en a hairy breas’,

it’s a sign dat you’s agwyne to be rich. Well, dey’s some use

in a sign like dat, ‘kase it’s so fur ahead. You see, maybe

you’s got to be po’ a long time fust, en so you might git discourage’ en kill yo’sef ‘f you didn’ know by de sign dat you

gwyne to be rich bymeby.’

‘Have you got hairy arms and a hairy breast, Jim?’

‘What’s de use to ax dat question? Don’t you see I has?’

‘Well, are you rich?’

‘No, but I ben rich wunst, and gwyne to be rich agin.

Wunst I had foteen dollars, but I tuck to specalat’n’, en got

busted out.’

‘What did you speculate in, Jim?’

‘Well, fust I tackled stock.’

‘What kind of stock?’

‘Why, live stock — cattle, you know. I put ten dollars in

a cow. But I ain’ gwyne to resk no mo’ money in stock. De

cow up ‘n’ died on my han’s.’

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‘So you lost the ten dollars.’

‘No, I didn’t lose it all. I on’y los’ ‘bout nine of it. I sole de

hide en taller for a dollar en ten cents.’

‘You had five dollars and ten cents left. Did you speculate

any more?’

‘Yes. You know that one-laigged nigger dat b’longs to old

Misto Bradish? Well, he sot up a bank, en say anybody dat

put in a dollar would git fo’ dollars mo’ at de en’ er de year.

Well, all de niggers went in, but dey didn’t have much. I wuz

de on’y one dat had much. So I stuck out for mo’ dan fo’ dollars, en I said ‘f I didn’ git it I’d start a bank my- sef. Well,

o’ course dat nigger want’ to keep me out er de business,

bekase he says dey warn’t business ‘nough for two banks, so

he say I could put in my five dollars en he pay me thirty-five

at de en’ er de year.

‘So I done it. Den I reck’n’d I’d inves’ de thirty-five dollars right off en keep things a-movin’. Dey wuz a nigger

name’ Bob, dat had ketched a wood- flat, en his marster

didn’ know it; en I bought it off’n him en told him to take de

thirty-five dollars when de en’ er de year come; but somebody stole de wood-flat dat night, en nex day de one-laigged

nigger say de bank’s busted. So dey didn’ none uv us git no

money.’

‘What did you do with the ten cents, Jim?’

‘Well, I ‘uz gwyne to spen’ it, but I had a dream, en de

dream tole me to give it to a nigger name’ Balum — Balum’s

Ass dey call him for short; he’s one er dem chuckleheads,

you know. But he’s lucky, dey say, en I see I warn’t lucky. De

dream say let Balum inves’ de ten cents en he’d make a raise

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for me. Well, Balum he tuck de money, en when he wuz in

church he hear de preacher say dat whoever give to de po’

len’ to de Lord, en boun’ to git his money back a hund’d

times. So Balum he tuck en give de ten cents to de po’, en

laid low to see what wuz gwyne to come of it.’

‘Well, what did come of it, Jim?’

‘Nuffn never come of it. I couldn’ manage to k’leck dat

money no way; en Balum he couldn’. I ain’ gwyne to len’ no

mo’ money ‘dout I see de security. Boun’ to git yo’ money

back a hund’d times, de preacher says! Ef I could git de ten

CENTS back, I’d call it squah, en be glad er de chanst.’

‘Well, it’s all right anyway, Jim, long as you’re going to be

rich again some time or other.’

‘Yes; en I’s rich now, come to look at it. I owns mysef,

en I’s wuth eight hund’d dollars. I wisht I had de money, I

wouldn’ want no mo’.’

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Chapter IX

I WANTED to go and look at a place right about the middle of the island that I’d found when I was exploring; so

we started and soon got to it, because the island was only

three miles long and a quarter of a mile wide.

This place was a tolerable long, steep hill or ridge about

forty foot high. We had a rough time getting to the top, the

sides was so steep and the bushes so thick. We tramped

and clumb around all over it, and by and by found a good

big cavern in the rock, most up to the top on the side towards Illinois. The cavern was as big as two or three rooms

bunched together, and Jim could stand up straight in it. It

was cool in there. Jim was for putting our traps in there

right away, but I said we didn’t want to be climbing up and

down there all the time.

Jim said if we had the canoe hid in a good place, and

had all the traps in the cavern, we could rush there if anybody was to come to the island, and they would never find

us without dogs. And, besides, he said them little birds had

said it was going to rain, and did I want the things to get

wet?

So we went back and got the canoe, and paddled up

abreast the cavern, and lugged all the traps up there. Then

we hunted up a place close by to hide the canoe in, amongst

the thick willows. We took some fish off of the lines and set

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them again, and begun to get ready for dinner.

The door of the cavern was big enough to roll a hogshead

in, and on one side of the door the floor stuck out a little bit,

and was flat and a good place to build a fire on. So we built

it there and cooked dinner.

We spread the blankets inside for a carpet, and eat our

dinner in there. We put all the other things handy at the

back of the cavern. Pretty soon it darkened up, and begun

to thunder and lighten; so the birds was right about it. Directly it begun to rain, and it rained like all fury, too, and

I never see the wind blow so. It was one of these regular

summer storms. It would get so dark that it looked all blueblack outside, and lovely; and the rain would thrash along

by so thick that the trees off a little ways looked dim and

spider- webby; and here would come a blast of wind that

would bend the trees down and turn up the pale under- side

of the leaves; and then a perfect ripper of a gust would follow along and set the branches to tossing their arms as if

they was just wild; and next, when it was just about the bluest and blackest — FST! it was as bright as glory, and you’d

have a little glimpse of tree- tops a-plunging about away off

yonder in the storm, hundreds of yards further than you

could see before; dark as sin again in a second, and now

you’d hear the thunder let go with an awful crash, and then

go rum- bling, grumbling, tumbling, down the sky towards

the under side of the world, like rolling empty barrels down

stairs — where it’s long stairs and they bounce a good deal,

you know.

‘Jim, this is nice,’ I says. ‘I wouldn’t want to be nowhere

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else but here. Pass me along another hunk of fish and some

hot corn-bread.’

‘Well, you wouldn’t a ben here ‘f it hadn’t a ben for Jim.

You’d a ben down dah in de woods widout any dinner, en

gittn’ mos’ drownded, too; dat you would, honey. Chickens

knows when it’s gwyne to rain, en so do de birds, chile.’

The river went on raising and raising for ten or twelve

days, till at last it was over the banks. The water was three

or four foot deep on the island in the low places and on the

Illinois bottom. On that side it was a good many miles wide,

but on the Missouri side it was the same old distance across

— a half a mile — because the Missouri shore was just a wall

of high bluffs.

Daytimes we paddled all over the island in the canoe,

It was mighty cool and shady in the deep woods, even if

the sun was blazing outside. We went winding in and out

amongst the trees, and sometimes the vines hung so thick

we had to back away and go some other way. Well, on every

old broken-down tree you could see rabbits and snakes and

such things; and when the island had been overflowed a day

or two they got so tame, on account of being hungry, that

you could paddle right up and put your hand on them if

you wanted to; but not the snakes and turtles — they would

slide off in the water. The ridge our cavern was in was full of

them. We could a had pets enough if we’d wanted them.

One night we catched a little section of a lumber raft —

nice pine planks. It was twelve foot wide and about fifteen

or sixteen foot long, and the top stood above water six or

seven inches — a solid, level floor. We could see saw-logs go

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by in the daylight some- times, but we let them go; we didn’t

show ourselves in daylight.

Another night when we was up at the head of the island,

just before daylight, here comes a frame-house down, on

the west side. She was a two-story, and tilted over considerable. We paddled out and got aboard — clumb in at an

upstairs window. But it was too dark to see yet, so we made

the canoe fast and set in her to wait for daylight.

The light begun to come before we got to the foot of the

island. Then we looked in at the window. We could make

out a bed, and a table, and two old chairs, and lots of things

around about on the floor, and there was clothes hanging

against the wall. There was something laying on the floor in

the far corner that looked like a man. So Jim says:

‘Hello, you!’

But it didn’t budge. So I hollered again, and then Jim

says:

‘De man ain’t asleep — he’s dead. You hold still — I’ll go

en see.’

He went, and bent down and looked, and says:

‘It’s a dead man. Yes, indeedy; naked, too. He’s ben shot

in de back. I reck’n he’s ben dead two er three days. Come in,

Huck, but doan’ look at his face — it’s too gashly.’

I didn’t look at him at all. Jim throwed some old rags over

him, but he needn’t done it; I didn’t want to see him. There

was heaps of old greasy cards scattered around over the floor,

and old whisky bottles, and a couple of masks made out of

black cloth; and all over the walls was the ignorantest kind

of words and pictures made with charcoal. There was two

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old dirty calico dresses, and a sun-bonnet, and some women’s underclothes hanging against the wall, and some men’s

clothing, too. We put the lot into the canoe — it might come

good. There was a boy’s old speckled straw hat on the floor; I

took that, too. And there was a bottle that had had milk in it,

and it had a rag stopper for a baby to suck. We would a took

the bottle, but it was broke. There was a seedy old chest, and

an old hair trunk with the hinges broke. They stood open,

but there warn’t nothing left in them that was any account.

The way things was scattered about we reckoned the people

left in a hurry, and warn’t fixed so as to carry off most of

their stuff.

We got an old tin lantern, and a butcher-knife with- out

any handle, and a bran-new Barlow knife worth two bits in

any store, and a lot of tallow candles, and a tin candlestick,

and a gourd, and a tin cup, and a ratty old bedquilt off the

bed, and a reticule with needles and pins and beeswax and

buttons and thread and all such truck in it, and a hatchet

and some nails, and a fishline as thick as my little finger

with some mon- strous hooks on it, and a roll of buckskin,

and a leather dog-collar, and a horseshoe, and some vials of

medicine that didn’t have no label on them; and just as we

was leaving I found a tolerable good curry-comb, and Jim he

found a ratty old fiddle-bow, and a wooden leg. The straps

was broke off of it, but, barring that, it was a good enough

leg, though it was too long for me and not long enough for

Jim, and we couldn’t find the other one, though we hunted

all around.

And so, take it all around, we made a good haul. When

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we was ready to shove off we was a quarter of a mile below

the island, and it was pretty broad day; so I made Jim lay

down in the canoe and cover up with the quilt, because if

he set up people could tell he was a nigger a good ways off.

I paddled over to the Illinois shore, and drifted down most

a half a mile doing it. I crept up the dead water under the

bank, and hadn’t no accidents and didn’t see nobody. We

got home all safe.

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Chapter X

AFTER breakfast I wanted to talk about the dead man

and guess out how he come to be killed, but Jim didn’t

want to. He said it would fetch bad luck; and besides, he

said, he might come and ha’nt us; he said a man that warn’t

buried was more likely to go a- ha’nting around than one

that was planted and com- fortable. That sounded pretty

reasonable, so I didn’t say no more; but I couldn’t keep from

studying over it and wishing I knowed who shot the man,

and what they done it for.

We rummaged the clothes we’d got, and found eight

dollars in silver sewed up in the lining of an old blanket

overcoat. Jim said he reckoned the people in that house

stole the coat, because if they’d a knowed the money was

there they wouldn’t a left it. I said I reckoned they killed

him, too; but Jim didn’t want to talk about that. I says:

‘Now you think it’s bad luck; but what did you say when I

fetched in the snake-skin that I found on the top of the ridge

day before yesterday? You said it was the worst bad luck in

the world to touch a snake-skin with my hands. Well, here’s

your bad luck! We’ve raked in all this truck and eight dollars besides. I wish we could have some bad luck like this

every day, Jim.’

‘Never you mind, honey, never you mind. Don’t you git

too peart. It’s a-comin’. Mind I tell you, it’s a-comin’.’

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It did come, too. It was a Tuesday that we had that talk.

Well, after dinner Friday we was laying around in the grass

at the upper end of the ridge, and got out of tobacco. I went

to the cavern to get some, and found a rattlesnake in there.

I killed him, and curled him up on the foot of Jim’s blanket, ever so natural, thinking there’d be some fun when Jim

found him there. Well, by night I forgot all about the snake,

and when Jim flung himself down on the blanket while I

struck a light the snake’s mate was there, and bit him.

He jumped up yelling, and the first thing the light showed

was the varmint curled up and ready for another spring. I

laid him out in a second with a stick, and Jim grabbed pap’s

whisky-jug and begun to pour it down.

He was barefooted, and the snake bit him right on the

heel. That all comes of my being such a fool as to not remember that wherever you leave a dead snake its mate always

comes there and curls around it. Jim told me to chop off the

snake’s head and throw it away, and then skin the body and

roast a piece of it. I done it, and he eat it and said it would

help cure him. He made me take off the rattles and tie them

around his wrist, too. He said that that would help. Then I

slid out quiet and throwed the snakes clear away amongst

the bushes; for I warn’t going to let Jim find out it was all my

fault, not if I could help it.

Jim sucked and sucked at the jug, and now and then he

got out of his head and pitched around and yelled; but every time he come to himself he went to sucking at the jug

again. His foot swelled up pretty big, and so did his leg; but

by and by the drunk begun to come, and so I judged he was

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all right; but I’d druther been bit with a snake than pap’s

whisky.

Jim was laid up for four days and nights. Then the swelling was all gone and he was around again. I made up my

mind I wouldn’t ever take a-holt of a snake-skin again with

my hands, now that I see what had come of it. Jim said he

reckoned I would believe him next time. And he said that

handling a snake- skin was such awful bad luck that maybe

we hadn’t got to the end of it yet. He said he druther see

the new moon over his left shoulder as much as a thousand

times than take up a snake-skin in his hand. Well, I was

getting to feel that way myself, though I’ve always reckoned

that looking at the new moon over your left shoulder is one

of the carelessest and foolishest things a body can do. Old

Hank Bunker done it once, and bragged about it; and in less

than two years he got drunk and fell off of the shot-tower,

and spread him- self out so that he was just a kind of a layer,

as you may say; and they slid him edgeways between two

barn doors for a coffin, and buried him so, so they say, but I

didn’t see it. Pap told me. But anyway it all come of looking

at the moon that way, like a fool.

Well, the days went along, and the river went down between its banks again; and about the first thing we done

was to bait one of the big hooks with a skinned rabbit and

set it and catch a catfish that was as big as a man, being

six foot two inches long, and weighed over two hundred

pounds. We couldn’t handle him, of course; he would a

flung us into Illinois. We just set there and watched him rip

and tear around till he drownded. We found a brass button

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in his stomach and a round ball, and lots of rubbage. We

split the ball open with the hatchet, and there was a spool

in it. Jim said he’d had it there a long time, to coat it over so

and make a ball of it. It was as big a fish as was ever catched

in the Mississippi, I reckon. Jim said he hadn’t ever seen a

bigger one. He would a been worth a good deal over at the

village. They peddle out such a fish as that by the pound in

the market- house there; everybody buys some of him; his

meat’s as white as snow and makes a good fry.

Next morning I said it was getting slow and dull, and

I wanted to get a stirring up some way. I said I reckoned I

would slip over the river and find out what was going on.

Jim liked that notion; but he said I must go in the dark and

look sharp. Then he studied it over and said, couldn’t I put

on some of them old things and dress up like a girl? That

was a good notion, too. So we shortened up one of the calico gowns, and I turned up my trouser-legs to my knees

and got into it. Jim hitched it behind with the hooks, and it

was a fair fit. I put on the sun-bonnet and tied it under my

chin, and then for a body to look in and see my face was like

looking down a joint of stove- pipe. Jim said nobody would

know me, even in the daytime, hardly. I practiced around

all day to get the hang of the things, and by and by I could

do pretty well in them, only Jim said I didn’t walk like a girl;

and he said I must quit pulling up my gown to get at my

britches-pocket. I took notice, and done better.

I started up the Illinois shore in the canoe just after

dark.

I started across to the town from a little below the ferry-

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landing, and the drift of the current fetched me in at the

bottom of the town. I tied up and started along the bank.

There was a light burning in a little shanty that hadn’t been

lived in for a long time, and I wondered who had took up

quarters there. I slipped up and peeped in at the window.

There was a woman about forty year old in there knitting by

a candle that was on a pine table. I didn’t know her face; she

was a stranger, for you couldn’t start a face in that town that

I didn’t know. Now this was lucky, because I was weakening; I was getting afraid I had come; people might know my

voice and find me out. But if this woman had been in such a

little town two days she could tell me all I wanted to know;

so I knocked at the door, and made up my mind I wouldn’t

forget I was a girl.

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Chapter XI

‘COME in,’ says the woman, and I did. She says: ‘Take

a cheer.’

I done it. She looked me all over with her little shiny eyes,

and says:

‘What might your name be?’

‘Sarah Williams.’

‘Where ‘bouts do you live? In this neighbor- hood?’

‘No’m. In Hookerville, seven mile below. I’ve walked all

the way and I’m all tired out.’

‘Hungry, too, I reckon. I’ll find you something.’

‘No’m, I ain’t hungry. I was so hungry I had to stop two

miles below here at a farm; so I ain’t hungry no more. It’s

what makes me so late. My mother’s down sick, and out of

money and everything, and I come to tell my uncle Abner

Moore. He lives at the upper end of the town, she says. I

hain’t ever been here before. Do you know him?’

‘No; but I don’t know everybody yet. I haven’t lived here

quite two weeks. It’s a considerable ways to the upper end

of the town. You better stay here all night. Take off your

bonnet.’

‘No,’ I says; ‘I’ll rest a while, I reckon, and go on. I ain’t

afeared of the dark.’

She said she wouldn’t let me go by myself, but her husband would be in by and by, maybe in a hour and a half,

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and she’d send him along with me. Then she got to talking

about her husband, and about her rela- tions up the river, and her relations down the river, and about how much

better off they used to was, and how they didn’t know but

they’d made a mistake coming to our town, instead of letting well alone — and so on and so on, till I was afeard I had

made a mistake coming to her to find out what was going

on in the town; but by and by she dropped on to pap and the

murder, and then I was pretty willing to let her clatter right

along. She told about me and Tom Sawyer finding the six

thousand dollars (only she got it ten) and all about pap and

what a hard lot he was, and what a hard lot I was, and at last

she got down to where I was murdered. I says:

‘Who done it? We’ve heard considerable about these goings on down in Hookerville, but we don’t know who ‘twas

that killed Huck Finn.’

‘Well, I reckon there’s a right smart chance of people

HERE that’d like to know who killed him. Some think old

Finn done it himself.’

‘No — is that so?’

‘Most everybody thought it at first. He’ll never know

how nigh he come to getting lynched. But before night they

changed around and judged it was done by a runaway nigger named Jim.’

‘Why HE —‘

I stopped. I reckoned I better keep still. She run on, and

never noticed I had put in at all:

‘The nigger run off the very night Huck Finn was killed.

So there’s a reward out for him — three hun- dred dollars.

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And there’s a reward out for old Finn, too — two hundred dollars. You see, he come to town the morning after

the murder, and told about it, and was out with ‘em on the

ferryboat hunt, and right away after he up and left. Before

night they wanted to lynch him, but he was gone, you see.

Well, next day they found out the nigger was gone; they

found out he hadn’t ben seen sence ten o’clock the night the

murder was done. So then they put it on him, you see; and

while they was full of it, next day, back comes old Finn, and

went boo-hooing to Judge Thatcher to get money to hunt for

the nigger all over Illinois with. The judge gave him some,

and that evening he got drunk, and was around till after

mid- night with a couple of mighty hard-looking strangers, and then went off with them. Well, he hain’t come back

sence, and they ain’t looking for him back till this thing

blows over a little, for people thinks now that he killed his

boy and fixed things so folks would think robbers done it,

and then he’d get Huck’s money without having to bother

a long time with a lawsuit. People do say he warn’t any too

good to do it. Oh, he’s sly, I reckon. If he don’t come back

for a year he’ll be all right. You can’t prove anything on him,

you know; everything will be quieted down then, and he’ll

walk in Huck’s money as easy as nothing.’

‘Yes, I reckon so, ‘m. I don’t see nothing in the way of it.

Has everybody guit thinking the nigger done it?’

‘Oh, no, not everybody. A good many thinks he done it.

But they’ll get the nigger pretty soon now, and maybe they

can scare it out of him.’

‘Why, are they after him yet?’

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‘Well, you’re innocent, ain’t you! Does three hundred

dollars lay around every day for people to pick up? Some

folks think the nigger ain’t far from here. I’m one of them

— but I hain’t talked it around. A few days ago I was talking with an old couple that lives next door in the log shanty,

and they happened to say hardly anybody ever goes to that

island over yonder that they call Jackson’s Island. Don’t

any- body live there? says I. No, nobody, says they. I didn’t

say any more, but I done some thinking. I was pretty near

certain I’d seen smoke over there, about the head of the island, a day or two before that, so I says to myself, like as

not that nigger’s hiding over there; anyway, says I, it’s worth

the trouble to give the place a hunt. I hain’t seen any smoke

sence, so I reckon maybe he’s gone, if it was him; but husband’s going over to see — him and another man. He was

gone up the river; but he got back to-day, and I told him as

soon as he got here two hours ago.’

I had got so uneasy I couldn’t set still. I had to do something with my hands; so I took up a needle off of the table

and went to threading it. My hands shook, and I was making

a bad job of it. When the woman stopped talking I looked

up, and she was looking at me pretty curious and smiling a

little. I put down the needle and thread, and let on to be interested — and I was, too — and says:

‘Three hundred dollars is a power of money. I wish my

mother could get it. Is your husband going over there tonight?’

‘Oh, yes. He went up-town with the man I was telling you

of, to get a boat and see if they could borrow another gun.

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They’ll go over after midnight.’

‘Couldn’t they see better if they was to wait till daytime?’

‘Yes. And couldn’t the nigger see better, too? After midnight he’ll likely be asleep, and they can slip around through

the woods and hunt up his camp fire all the better for the

dark, if he’s got one.’

‘I didn’t think of that.’

The woman kept looking at me pretty curious, and I

didn’t feel a bit comfortable. Pretty soon she says”

‘What did you say your name was, honey?’

‘M — Mary Williams.’

Somehow it didn’t seem to me that I said it was Mary before, so I didn’t look up — seemed to me I said it was Sarah;

so I felt sort of cornered, and was afeared maybe I was looking it, too. I wished the woman would say something more;

the longer she set still the uneasier I was. But now she says:

‘Honey, I thought you said it was Sarah when you first

come in?’

‘Oh, yes’m, I did. Sarah Mary Williams. Sarah’s my first

name. Some calls me Sarah, some calls me Mary.’

‘Oh, that’s the way of it?’

‘Yes’m.’

I was feeling better then, but I wished I was out of there,

anyway. I couldn’t look up yet.

Well, the woman fell to talking about how hard times was,

and how poor they had to live, and how the rats was as free

as if they owned the place, and so forth and so on, and then

I got easy again. She was right about the rats. You’d see one

stick his nose out of a hole in the corner every little while.

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She said she had to have things handy to throw at them

when she was alone, or they wouldn’t give her no peace. She

showed me a bar of lead twisted up into a knot, and said she

was a good shot with it generly, but she’d wrenched her arm

a day or two ago, and didn’t know whether she could throw

true now. But she watched for a chance, and directly banged

away at a rat; but she missed him wide, and said ‘Ouch!’ it

hurt her arm so. Then she told me to try for the next one. I

wanted to be getting away before the old man got back, but

of course I didn’t let on. I got the thing, and the first rat that

showed his nose I let drive, and if he’d a stayed where he

was he’d a been a tolerable sick rat. She said that was firstrate, and she reckoned I would hive the next one. She went

and got the lump of lead and fetched it back, and brought

along a hank of yarn which she wanted me to help her with.

I held up my two hands and she put the hank over them,

and went on talking about her and her husband’s matters.

But she broke off to say:

‘Keep your eye on the rats. You better have the lead in

your lap, handy.’

So she dropped the lump into my lap just at that moment,

and I clapped my legs together on it and she went on talking.

But only about a minute. Then she took off the hank and

looked me straight in the face, and very pleasant, and says:

‘Come, now, what’s your real name?’

‘Wh — what, mum?’

‘What’s your real name? Is it Bill, or Tom, or Bob? — or

what is it?’

I reckon I shook like a leaf, and I didn’t know hardly

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what to do. But I says:

‘Please to don’t poke fun at a poor girl like me, mum. If

I’m in the way here, I’ll —‘

‘No, you won’t. Set down and stay where you are. I ain’t

going to hurt you, and I ain’t going to tell on you, nuther. You

just tell me your secret, and trust me. I’ll keep it; and, what’s

more, I’ll help you. So’ll my old man if you want him to. You

see, you’re a runaway ‘prentice, that’s all. It ain’t anything.

There ain’t no harm in it. You’ve been treated bad, and you

made up your mind to cut. Bless you, child, I wouldn’t tell

on you. Tell me all about it now, that’s a good boy.’

So I said it wouldn’t be no use to try to play it any longer,

and I would just make a clean breast and tell her everything,

but she musn’t go back on her promise. Then I told her my

father and mother was dead, and the law had bound me out

to a mean old farmer in the country thirty mile back from

the river, and he treated me so bad I couldn’t stand it no longer; he went away to be gone a couple of days, and so I took

my chance and stole some of his daughter’s old clothes and

cleared out, and I had been three nights coming the thirty

miles. I traveled nights, and hid daytimes and slept, and the

bag of bread and meat I carried from home lasted me all the

way, and I had a-plenty. I said I believed my uncle Abner

Moore would take care of me, and so that was why I struck

out for this town of Goshen.

‘Goshen, child? This ain’t Goshen. This is St. Petersburg.

Goshen’s ten mile further up the river. Who told you this

was Goshen?’

‘Why, a man I met at daybreak this morning, just as I was

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going to turn into the woods for my regular sleep. He told

me when the roads forked I must take the right hand, and

five mile would fetch me to Goshen.’

‘He was drunk, I reckon. He told you just ex- actly

wrong.’

‘Well,,he did act like he was drunk, but it ain’t no matter now. I got to be moving along. I’ll fetch Goshen before

daylight.’

‘Hold on a minute. I’ll put you up a snack to eat. You

might want it.’

So she put me up a snack, and says:

‘Say, when a cow’s laying down, which end of her gets up

first? Answer up prompt now — don’t stop to study over it.

Which end gets up first?’

‘The hind end, mum.’

‘Well, then, a horse?’

‘The for’rard end, mum.’

‘Which side of a tree does the moss grow on?’

‘North side.’

‘If fifteen cows is browsing on a hillside, how many of

them eats with their heads pointed the same direction?’

‘The whole fifteen, mum.’

‘Well, I reckon you HAVE lived in the country. I thought

maybe you was trying to hocus me again. What’s your real

name, now?’

‘George Peters, mum.’

‘Well, try to remember it, George. Don’t forget and tell

me it’s Elexander before you go, and then get out by saying

it’s George Elexander when I catch you. And don’t go about

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women in that old calico. You do a girl tolerable poor, but

you might fool men, maybe. Bless you, child, when you set

out to thread a needle don’t hold the thread still and fetch

the needle up to it; hold the needle still and poke the thread

at it; that’s the way a woman most always does, but a man

always does t’other way. And when you throw at a rat or

anything, hitch yourself up a tiptoe and fetch your hand up

over your head as awkward as you can, and miss your rat

about six or seven foot. Throw stiff-armed from the shoulder, like there was a pivot there for it to turn on, like a girl;

not from the wrist and elbow, with your arm out to one

side, like a boy. And, mind you, when a girl tries to catch

anything in her lap she throws her knees apart; she don’t

clap them together, the way you did when you catched the

lump of lead. Why, I spotted you for a boy when you was

threading the needle; and I contrived the other things just

to make certain. Now trot along to your uncle, Sarah Mary

Williams George Elexander Peters, and if you get into trouble you send word to Mrs. Judith Loftus, which is me, and

I’ll do what I can to get you out of it. Keep the river road

all the way, and next time you tramp take shoes and socks

with you. The river road’s a rocky one, and your feet’ll be in

a condition when you get to Goshen, I reckon.’

I went up the bank about fifty yards, and then I doubled

on my tracks and slipped back to where my canoe was, a

good piece below the house. I jumped in, and was off in a

hurry. I went up-stream far enough to make the head of the

island, and then started across. I took off the sun-bonnet,

for I didn’t want no blinders on then. When I was about the

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middle I heard the clock begin to strike, so I stops and listens; the sound come faint over the water but clear — eleven.

When I struck the head of the island I never waited to blow,

though I was most winded, but I shoved right into the timber where my old camp used to be, and started a good fire

there on a high and dry spot.

Then I jumped in the canoe and dug out for our place, a

mile and a half below, as hard as I could go. I landed, and

slopped through the timber and up the ridge and into the

cavern. There Jim laid, sound asleep on the ground. I roused

him out and says:

‘Git up and hump yourself, Jim! There ain’t a minute to

lose. They’re after us!’

Jim never asked no questions, he never said a word; but

the way he worked for the next half an hour showed about

how he was scared. By that time every- thing we had in the

world was on our raft, and she was ready to be shoved out

from the willow cove where she was hid. We put out the

camp fire at the cavern the first thing, and didn’t show a

candle outside after that.

I took the canoe out from the shore a little piece, and

took a look; but if there was a boat around I couldn’t see it,

for stars and shadows ain’t good to see by. Then we got out

the raft and slipped along down in the shade, past the foot

of the island dead still — never saying a word.

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Chapter XII

I

T must a been close on to one o’clock when we got below

the island at last, and the raft did seem to go mighty slow.

If a boat was to come along we was going to take to the canoe and break for the Illinois shore; and it was well a boat

didn’t come, for we hadn’t ever thought to put the gun in

the canoe, or a fishing-line, or anything to eat. We was in

ruther too much of a sweat to think of so many things. It

warn’t good judgment to put EVERYTHING on the raft.

If the men went to the island I just expect they found the

camp fire I built, and watched it all night for Jim to come.

Anyways, they stayed away from us, and if my building the

fire never fooled them it warn’t no fault of mine. I played it

as low down on them as I could.

When the first streak of day began to show we tied up to

a towhead in a big bend on the Illinois side, and hacked off

cottonwood branches with the hatchet, and covered up the

raft with them so she looked like there had been a cave-in

in the bank there. A tow- head is a sandbar that has cottonwoods on it as thick as harrow-teeth.

We had mountains on the Missouri shore and heavy

timber on the Illinois side, and the channel was down the

Missouri shore at that place, so we warn’t afraid of anybody

running across us. We laid there all day, and watched the

rafts and steamboats spin down the Missouri shore, and up-

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bound steamboats fight the big river in the middle. I told

Jim all about the time I had jabbering with that woman;

and Jim said she was a smart one, and if she was to start after us herself she wouldn’t set down and watch a camp fire

— no, sir, she’d fetch a dog. Well, then, I said, why couldn’t

she tell her husband to fetch a dog? Jim said he bet she did

think of it by the time the men was ready to start, and he

believed they must a gone up-town to get a dog and so they

lost all that time, or else we wouldn’t be here on a towhead

sixteen or seventeen mile below the village — no, indeedy,

we would be in that same old town again. So I said I didn’t

care what was the reason they didn’t get us as long as they

didn’t.

When it was beginning to come on dark we poked our

heads out of the cottonwood thicket, and looked up and

down and across; nothing in sight; so Jim took up some of

the top planks of the raft and built a snug wigwam to get

under in blazing weather and rainy, and to keep the things

dry. Jim made a floor for the wigwam, and raised it a foot

or more above the level of the raft, so now the blankets and

all the traps was out of reach of steamboat waves. Right in

the middle of the wigwam we made a layer of dirt about

five or six inches deep with a frame around it for to hold

it to its place; this was to build a fire on in sloppy weather

or chilly; the wigwam would keep it from being seen. We

made an extra steering-oar, too, because one of the others might get broke on a snag or something. We fixed up

a short forked stick to hang the old lantern on, because we

must always light the lantern whenever we see a steamboat

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coming down-stream, to keep from getting run over; but

we wouldn’t have to light it for up-stream boats unless we

see we was in what they call a ‘crossing”; for the river was

pretty high yet, very low banks being still a little under water; so up-bound boats didn’t always run the channel, but

hunted easy water.

This second night we run between seven and eight hours,

with a current that was making over four mile an hour. We

catched fish and talked, and we took a swim now and then

to keep off sleepiness. It was kind of solemn, drifting down

the big, still river, lay- ing on our backs looking up at the

stars, and we didn’t ever feel like talking loud, and it warn’t

often that we laughed — only a little kind of a low chuckle.

We had mighty good weather as a general thing, and nothing ever happened to us at all — that night, nor the next,

nor the next.

Every night we passed towns, some of them away up on

black hillsides, nothing but just a shiny bed of lights; not

a house could you see. The fifth night we passed St. Louis,

and it was like the whole world lit up. In St. Petersburg they

used to say there was twenty or thirty thousand people in St.

Louis, but I never believed it till I see that wonderful spread

of lights at two o’clock that still night. There warn’t a sound

there; everybody was asleep.

Every night now I used to slip ashore towards ten o’clock

at some little village, and buy ten or fifteen cents’ worth of

meal or bacon or other stuff to eat; and sometimes I lifted a chicken that warn’t roosting comfortable, and took

him along. Pap always said, take a chicken when you get a

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chance, because if you don’t want him yourself you can easy

find somebody that does, and a good deed ain’t ever forgot. I

never see pap when he didn’t want the chicken himself, but

that is what he used to say, anyway.

Mornings before daylight I slipped into cornfields and

borrowed a watermelon, or a mushmelon, or a punkin, or

some new corn, or things of that kind. Pap always said it

warn’t no harm to borrow things if you was meaning to pay

them back some time; but the widow said it warn’t anything

but a soft name for stealing, and no decent body would do

it. Jim said he reckoned the widow was partly right and pap

was partly right; so the best way would be for us to pick

out two or three things from the list and say we wouldn’t

borrow them any more — then he reckoned it wouldn’t be

no harm to borrow the others. So we talked it over all one

night, drifting along down the river, trying to make up our

minds whether to drop the watermelons, or the cantelopes,

or the mushmelons, or what. But towards daylight we got

it all settled satisfactory, and concluded to drop crabapples

and p’simmons. We warn’t feeling just right before that, but

it was all comfortable now. I was glad the way it come out,

too, because crabapples ain’t ever good, and the p’simmons

wouldn’t be ripe for two or three months yet.

We shot a water-fowl now and then that got up too early

in the morning or didn’t go to bed early enough in the evening. Take it all round, we lived pretty high.

The fifth night below St. Louis we had a big storm after

midnight, with a power of thunder and lightning, and the

rain poured down in a solid sheet. We stayed in the wig-

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wam and let the raft take care of itself. When the lightning

glared out we could see a big straight river ahead, and high,

rocky bluffs on both sides. By and by says I, ‘Hel-LO, Jim,

looky yon- der!’ It was a steamboat that had killed herself

on a rock. We was drifting straight down for her. The lightning showed her very distinct. She was leaning over, with

part of her upper deck above water, and you could see every

little chimbly-guy clean and clear, and a chair by the big

bell, with an old slouch hat hanging on the back of it, when

the flashes come.

Well, it being away in the night and stormy, and all so

mysterious-like, I felt just the way any other boy would a felt

when I see that wreck laying there so mournful and lonesome in the middle of the river. I wanted to get aboard of

her and slink around a little, and see what there was there.

So I says:

‘Le’s land on her, Jim.’

But Jim was dead against it at first. He says:

‘I doan’ want to go fool’n ‘long er no wrack. We’s doin’

blame’ well, en we better let blame’ well alone, as de good

book says. Like as not dey’s a watchman on dat wrack.’

‘Watchman your grandmother,’ I says; ‘there ain’t nothing to watch but the texas and the pilot- house; and do you

reckon anybody’s going to resk his life for a texas and a pilot-house such a night as this, when it’s likely to break up

and wash off down the river any minute?’ Jim couldn’t say

nothing to that, so he didn’t try. ‘And besides,’ I says, ‘we

might borrow something worth having out of the captain’s

stateroom. Seegars, I bet you — and cost five cents apiece,

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solid cash. Steamboat captains is always rich, and get sixty

dollars a month, and THEY don’t care a cent what a thing

costs, you know, long as they want it. Stick a candle in your

pocket; I can’t rest, Jim, till we give her a rummaging. Do

you reckon Tom Sawyer would ever go by this thing? Not

for pie, he wouldn’t. He’d call it an adventure — that’s what

he’d call it; and he’d land on that wreck if it was his last act.

And wouldn’t he throw style into it? — wouldn’t he spread

himself, nor nothing? Why, you’d think it was Christopher

C’lumbus discovering Kingdom-Come. I wish Tom Sawyer

WAS here.’

Jim he grumbled a little, but give in. He said we mustn’t

talk any more than we could help, and then talk mighty low.

The lightning showed us the wreck again just in time, and

we fetched the stabboard derrick, and made fast there.

The deck was high out here. We went sneaking down the

slope of it to labboard, in the dark, towards the texas, feeling our way slow with our feet, and spreading our hands

out to fend off the guys, for it was so dark we couldn’t see no

sign of them. Pretty soon we struck the forward end of the

skylight, and clumb on to it; and the next step fetched us in

front of the captain’s door, which was open, and by Jimminy,

away down through the texas-hall we see a light! and all in

the same second we seem to hear low voices in yonder!

Jim whispered and said he was feeling powerful sick, and

told me to come along. I says, all right, and was going to

start for the raft; but just then I heard a voice wail out and

say:

‘Oh, please don’t, boys; I swear I won’t ever tell!’

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Another voice said, pretty loud:

‘It’s a lie, Jim Turner. You’ve acted this way before. You always want more’n your share of the truck, and you’ve always

got it, too, because you’ve swore ‘t if you didn’t you’d tell.

But this time you’ve said it jest one time too many. You’re

the meanest, treacherousest hound in this country.’

By this time Jim was gone for the raft. I was just a-biling

with curiosity; and I says to myself, Tom Sawyer wouldn’t

back out now, and so I won’t either; I’m a-going to see what’s

going on here. So I dropped on my hands and knees in the

little passage, and crept aft in the dark till there warn’t but

one stateroom betwixt me and the cross-hall of the texas.

Then in there I see a man stretched on the floor and tied

hand and foot, and two men standing over him, and one of

them had a dim lantern in his hand, and the other one had

a pistol. This one kept pointing the pistol at the man’s head

on the floor, and saying:

‘I’d LIKE to! And I orter, too — a mean skunk!’

The man on the floor would shrivel up and say, ‘Oh,

please don’t, Bill; I hain’t ever goin’ to tell.’

And every time he said that the man with the lantern

would laugh and say:

‘Deed you AIN’T! You never said no truer thing ‘n that,

you bet you.’ And once he said: ‘Hear him beg! and yit if

we hadn’t got the best of him and tied him he’d a killed us

both. And what FOR? Jist for noth’n. Jist because we stood

on our RIGHTS — that’s what for. But I lay you ain’t a-goin’

to threaten nobody any more, Jim Turner. Put UP that pistol, Bill.’

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Bill says:

‘I don’t want to, Jake Packard. I’m for killin’ him — and

didn’t he kill old Hatfield jist the same way — and don’t he

deserve it?’

‘But I don’t WANT him killed, and I’ve got my reasons

for it.’

‘Bless yo’ heart for them words, Jake Packard! I’ll never

forgit you long’s I live!’ says the man on the floor, sort of

blubbering.

Packard didn’t take no notice of that, but hung up his

lantern on a nail and started towards where I was there in

the dark, and motioned Bill to come. I crawfished as fast

as I could about two yards, but the boat slanted so that I

couldn’t make very good time; so to keep from getting run

over and catched I crawled into a stateroom on the upper

side. The man came a- pawing along in the dark, and when

Packard got to my stateroom, he says:

‘Here — come in here.’

And in he come, and Bill after him. But before they got

in I was up in the upper berth, cornered, and sorry I come.

Then they stood there, with their hands on the ledge of the

berth, and talked. I couldn’t see them, but I could tell where

they was by the whisky they’d been having. I was glad I

didn’t drink whisky; but it wouldn’t made much difference

anyway, because most of the time they couldn’t a treed me

because I didn’t breathe. I was too scared. And, besides, a

body COULDN’T breathe and hear such talk. They talked

low and earnest. Bill wanted to kill Turner. He says:

‘He’s said he’ll tell, and he will. If we was to give both our

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shares to him NOW it wouldn’t make no difference after

the row and the way we’ve served him. Shore’s you’re born,

he’ll turn State’s evidence; now you hear ME. I’m for putting him out of his troubles.’

‘So’m I,’ says Packard, very quiet.

‘Blame it, I’d sorter begun to think you wasnUt. Well,

then, that’s all right. Le’s go and do it.’

‘Hold on a minute; I hain’t had my say yit. You listen to

me. Shooting’s good, but there’s quieter ways if the thing’s

GOT to be done. But what I say is this: it ain’t good sense to

go court’n around after a halter if you can git at what you’re

up to in some way that’s jist as good and at the same time

don’t bring you into no resks. Ain’t that so?’

‘You bet it is. But how you goin’ to manage it this time?’

‘Well, my idea is this: we’ll rustle around and gather up

whatever pickins we’ve overlooked in the state- rooms, and

shove for shore and hide the truck. Then we’ll wait. Now I

say it ain’t a-goin’ to be more’n two hours befo’ this wrack

breaks up and washes off down the river. See? He’ll be

drownded, and won’t have nobody to blame for it but his

own self. I reckon that’s a considerble sight better ‘n killin’

of him. I’m unfavorable to killin’ a man as long as you can

git aroun’ it; it ain’t good sense, it ain’t good morals. Ain’t

I right?’

‘Yes, I reck’n you are. But s’pose she DON’T break up and

wash off?’

‘Well, we can wait the two hours anyway and see, can’t

we?’

‘All right, then; come along.’

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So they started, and I lit out, all in a cold sweat, and

scrambled forward. It was dark as pitch there; but I said, in

a kind of a coarse whisper, ‘Jim !’ and he answered up, right

at my elbow, with a sort of a moan, and I says:

‘Quick, Jim, it ain’t no time for fooling around and moaning; there’s a gang of murderers in yonder, and if we don’t

hunt up their boat and set her drifting down the river so

these fellows can’t get away from the wreck there’s one of

‘em going to be in a bad fix. But if we find their boat we

can put ALL of ‘em in a bad fix — for the sheriff ‘ll get ‘em.

Quick — hurry! I’ll hunt the labboard side, you hunt the

stabboard. You start at the raft, and —‘

‘Oh, my lordy, lordy! RAF’? Dey ain’ no raf’ no mo’; she

done broke loose en gone I — en here we is!’

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Chapter XIII

WELL, I catched my breath and most fainted. Shut up

on a wreck with such a gang as that! But it warn’t no

time to be sentimentering. We’d GOT to find that boat now

— had to have it for ourselves. So we went a-quaking and

shaking down the stabboard side, and slow work it was, too

— seemed a week be- fore we got to the stern. No sign of a

boat. Jim said he didn’t believe he could go any further — so

scared he hadn’t hardly any strength left, he said. But I said,

come on, if we get left on this wreck we are in a fix, sure. So

on we prowled again. We struck for the stern of the texas,

and found it, and then scrabbled along forwards on the skylight, hanging on from shutter to shutter, for the edge of the

skylight was in the water. When we got pretty close to the

cross-hall door there was the skiff, sure enough! I could just

barely see her. I felt ever so thankful. In another second I

would a been aboard of her, but just then the door opened.

One of the men stuck his head out only about a couple of

foot from me, and I thought I was gone; but he jerked it in

again, and says:

‘Heave that blame lantern out o’ sight, Bill!’

He flung a bag of something into the boat, and then got

in himself and set down. It was Packard. Then Bill HE come

out and got in. Packard says, in a low voice:

‘All ready — shove off!’

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I couldn’t hardly hang on to the shutters, I was so weak.

But Bill says:

‘Hold on — ‘d you go through him?’

‘No. Didn’t you?’

‘No. So he’s got his share o’ the cash yet.’

‘Well, then, come along; no use to take truck and leave

money.’

‘Say, won’t he suspicion what we’re up to?’

‘Maybe he won’t. But we got to have it anyway. Come

along.’

So they got out and went in.

The door slammed to because it was on the careened side;

and in a half second I was in the boat, and Jim come tumbling after me. I out with my knife and cut the rope, and

away we went!

We didn’t touch an oar, and we didn’t speak nor whisper,

nor hardly even breathe. We went gliding swift along, dead

silent, past the tip of the paddle- box, and past the stern;

then in a second or two more we was a hundred yards below

the wreck, and the darkness soaked her up, every last sign

of her, and we was safe, and knowed it.

When we was three or four hundred yards down- stream

we see the lantern show like a little spark at the texas door

for a second, and we knowed by that that the rascals had

missed their boat, and was beginning to understand that

they was in just as much trouble now as Jim Turner was.

Then Jim manned the oars, and we took out after our raft.

Now was the first time that I begun to worry about the men

— I reckon I hadn’t had time to before. I begun to think how

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dreadful it was, even for mur- derers, to be in such a fix. I

says to myself, there ain’t no telling but I might come to be

a murderer myself yet, and then how would I like it? So says

I to Jim:

‘The first light we see we’ll land a hundred yards below it

or above it, in a place where it’s a good hiding-place for you

and the skiff, and then I’ll go and fix up some kind of a yarn,

and get somebody to go for that gang and get them out of

their scrape, so they can be hung when their time comes.’

But that idea was a failure; for pretty soon it begun to

storm again, and this time worse than ever. The rain poured

down, and never a light showed; every- body in bed, I reckon. We boomed along down the river, watching for lights

and watching for our raft. After a long time the rain let up,

but the clouds stayed, and the lightning kept whimpering,

and by and by a flash showed us a black thing ahead, floating, and we made for it.

It was the raft, and mighty glad was we to get aboard of

it again. We seen a light now away down to the right, on

shore. So I said I would go for it. The skiff was half full of

plunder which that gang had stole there on the wreck. We

hustled it on to the raft in a pile, and I told Jim to float along

down, and show a light when he judged he had gone about

two mile, and keep it burning till I come; then I manned

my oars and shoved for the light. As I got down towards it

three or four more showed — up on a hillside. It was a village. I closed in above the shore light, and laid on my oars

and floated. As I went by I see it was a lantern hanging on

the jackstaff of a double-hull ferryboat. I skimmed around

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for the watchman, a- wondering whereabouts he slept; and

by and by I found him roosting on the bitts forward, with

his head down between his knees. I gave his shoulder two or

three little shoves, and begun to cry.

He stirred up in a kind of a startlish way; but when he

see it was only me he took a good gap and stretch, and then

he says:

‘Hello, what’s up? Don’t cry, bub. What’s the trouble?’

I says:

‘Pap, and mam, and sis, and —‘

Then I broke down. He says:

‘Oh, dang it now, DON’T take on so; we all has to have

our troubles, and this ‘n ‘ll come out all right. What’s the

matter with ‘em?’

‘They’re — they’re — are you the watchman of the boat?’

‘Yes,’ he says, kind of pretty-well-satisfied like. ‘I’m the

captain and the owner and the mate and the pilot and

watchman and head deck-hand; and some- times I’m the

freight and passengers. I ain’t as rich as old Jim Hornback,

and I can’t be so blame’ gener- ous and good to Tom, Dick,

and Harry as what he is, and slam around money the way

he does; but I’ve told him a many a time ‘t I wouldn’t trade

places with him; for, says I, a sailor’s life’s the life for me,

and I’m derned if I’D live two mile out o’ town, where there

ain’t nothing ever goin’ on, not for all his spon- dulicks and

as much more on top of it. Says I —‘

I broke in and says:

‘They’re in an awful peck of trouble, and —‘

‘WHO is?’

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‘Why, pap and mam and sis and Miss Hooker; and if

you’d take your ferryboat and go up there —‘

‘Up where? Where are they?’

‘On the wreck.’

‘What wreck?’

‘Why, there ain’t but one.’

‘What, you don’t mean the Walter Scott?’

‘Yes.’

‘Good land! what are they doin’ THERE, for gracious

sakes?’

‘Well, they didn’t go there a-purpose.’

‘I bet they didn’t! Why, great goodness, there ain’t no

chance for ‘em if they don’t git off mighty quick! Why, how

in the nation did they ever git into such a scrape?’

‘Easy enough. Miss Hooker was a-visiting up there to the

town —‘

‘Yes, Booth’s Landing — go on.’

‘She was a-visiting there at Booth’s Landing, and just

in the edge of the evening she started over with her nigger

woman in the horse-ferry to stay all night at her friend’s

house, Miss What-you-may-call-herQI disremember her

name — and they lost their steering- oar, and swung around

and went a-floating down, stern first, about two mile, and

saddle-baggsed on the wreck, and the ferryman and the nigger woman and the horses was all lost, but Miss Hooker she

made a grab and got aboard the wreck. Well, about an hour

after dark we come along down in our trading-scow, and it

was so dark we didn’t notice the wreck till we was right on

it; and so WE saddle-baggsed; but all of us was saved but

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Bill Whipple — and oh, he WAS the best cretur ! — I most

wish ‘t it had been me, I do.’

‘My George! It’s the beatenest thing I ever struck. And

THEN what did you all do?’

‘Well, we hollered and took on, but it’s so wide there we

couldn’t make nobody hear. So pap said somebody got to

get ashore and get help somehow. I was the only one that

could swim, so I made a dash for it, and Miss Hooker she

said if I didn’t strike help sooner, come here and hunt up her

uncle, and he’d fix the thing. I made the land about a mile

below, and been fooling along ever since, trying to get people to do something, but they said, ‘What, in such a night

and such a current? There ain’t no sense in it; go for the

steam ferry.’ Now if you’ll go and —‘

‘By Jackson, I’d LIKE to, and, blame it, I don’t know but I

will; but who in the dingnation’s a-going’ to PAY for it? Do

you reckon your pap —‘

‘Why THAT’S all right. Miss Hooker she tole me, PARTICULAR, that her uncle Hornback —‘

‘Great guns! is HE her uncle? Looky here, you break for

that light over yonder-way, and turn out west when you git

there, and about a quarter of a mile out you’ll come to the

tavern; tell ‘em to dart you out to Jim Hornback’s, and he’ll

foot the bill. And don’t you fool around any, because he’ll

want to know the news. Tell him I’ll have his niece all safe

before he can get to town. Hump yourself, now; I’m a- going

up around the corner here to roust out my engineer.’

I struck for the light, but as soon as he turned the corner

I went back and got into my skiff and bailed her out, and

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then pulled up shore in the easy water about six hundred

yards, and tucked myself in among some woodboats; for I

couldn’t rest easy till I could see the ferryboat start. But take

it all around, I was feel- ing ruther comfortable on accounts

of taking all this trouble for that gang, for not many would

a done it. I wished the widow knowed about it. I judged she

would be proud of me for helping these rapscallions, because rapscallions and dead beats is the kind the widow and

good people takes the most interest in.

Well, before long here comes the wreck, dim and dusky,

sliding along down! A kind of cold shiver went through me,

and then I struck out for her. She was very deep, and I see

in a minute there warn’t much chance for anybody being

alive in her. I pulled all around her and hollered a little, but

there wasn’t any answer; all dead still. I felt a little bit heavyhearted about the gang, but not much, for I reckoned if they

could stand it I could.

Then here comes the ferryboat; so I shoved for the middle of the river on a long down-stream slant; and when I

judged I was out of eye-reach I laid on my oars, and looked

back and see her go and smell around the wreck for Miss

Hooker’s remainders, because the captain would know her

uncle Hornback would want them; and then pretty soon the

ferryboat give it up and went for the shore, and I laid into

my work and went a-booming down the river.

It did seem a powerful long time before Jim’s light showed

up; and when it did show it looked like it was a thousand

mile off. By the time I got there the sky was beginning to

get a little gray in the east; so we struck for an island, and

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hid the raft, and sunk the skiff, and turned in and slept like

dead people.

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Chapter XIV

BY and by, when we got up, we turned over the truck the

gang had stole off of the wreck, and found boots, and

blankets, and clothes, and all sorts of other things, and a

lot of books, and a spyglass, and three boxes of seegars. We

hadn’t ever been this rich before in neither of our lives. The

seegars was prime. We laid off all the afternoon in the woods

talking, and me reading the books, and having a general

good time. I told Jim all about what happened inside the

wreck and at the ferryboat, and I said these kinds of things

was adventures; but he said he didn’t want no more adventures. He said that when I went in the texas and he crawled

back to get on the raft and found her gone he nearly died,

because he judged it was all up with HIM anyway it could

be fixed; for if he didn’t get saved he would get drownded;

and if he did get saved, whoever saved him would send him

back home so as to get the reward, and then Miss Watson

would sell him South, sure. Well, he was right; he was most

always right; he had an uncommon level head for a nigger.

I read considerable to Jim about kings and dukes and

earls and such, and how gaudy they dressed, and how much

style they put on, and called each other your majesty, and

your grace, and your lordship, and so on, ‘stead of mister;

and Jim’s eyes bugged out, and he was interested. He says:

‘I didn’ know dey was so many un um. I hain’t hearn

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‘bout none un um, skasely, but ole King Soller- mun, onless

you counts dem kings dat’s in a pack er k’yards. How much

do a king git?’

‘Get?’ I says; ‘why, they get a thousand dollars a month if

they want it; they can have just as much as they want; everything belongs to them.’

‘AIN’ dat gay? En what dey got to do, Huck?’

‘THEY don’t do nothing! Why, how you talk! They just

set around.’

‘No; is dat so?’

‘Of course it is. They just set around — except, maybe,

when there’s a war; then they go to the war. But other times

they just lazy around; or go hawking — just hawking and sp

— Sh! — d’ you hear a noise?’

We skipped out and looked; but it warn’t nothing but the

flutter of a steamboat’s wheel away down, coming around

the point; so we come back.

‘Yes,’ says I, ‘and other times, when things is dull, they

fuss with the parlyment; and if everybody don’t go just so

he whacks their heads off. But mostly they hang round the

harem.’

‘Roun’ de which?’

‘Harem.’

‘What’s de harem?’

‘The place where he keeps his wives. Don’t you know

about the harem? Solomon had one; he had about a million wives.’

‘Why, yes, dat’s so; I — I’d done forgot it. A harem’s a

bo’d’n-house, I reck’n. Mos’ likely dey has rackety times in

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de nussery. En I reck’n de wives quarrels considable; en dat

‘crease de racket. Yit dey say Sollermun de wises’ man dat

ever live’. I doan’ take no stock in dat. Bekase why: would a

wise man want to live in de mids’ er sich a blim-blammin’

all de time? No — ‘deed he wouldn’t. A wise man ‘ud take

en buil’ a biler-factry; en den he could shet DOWN de bilerfactry when he want to res’.’

‘Well, but he WAS the wisest man, anyway; be- cause the

widow she told me so, her own self.’

‘I doan k’yer what de widder say, he WARN’T no wise

man nuther. He had some er de dad-fetchedes’ ways I ever

see. Does you know ‘bout dat chile dat he ‘uz gwyne to chop

in two?’

‘Yes, the widow told me all about it.’

‘WELL, den! Warn’ dat de beatenes’ notion in de worl’?

You jes’ take en look at it a minute. Dah’s de stump, dah

— dat’s one er de women; heah’s you — dat’s de yuther one;

I’s Sollermun; en dish yer dollar bill’s de chile. Bofe un you

claims it. What does I do? Does I shin aroun’ mongs’ de

neighbors en fine out which un you de bill DO b’long to,

en han’ it over to de right one, all safe en soun’, de way dat

anybody dat had any gumption would? No; I take en whack

de bill in TWO, en give half un it to you, en de yuther half

to de yuther woman. Dat’s de way Sollermun was gwyne to

do wid de chile. Now I want to ast you: what’s de use er dat

half a bill? — can’t buy noth’n wid it. En what use is a half a

chile? I wouldn’ give a dern for a million un um.’

‘But hang it, Jim, you’ve clean missed the point — blame

it, you’ve missed it a thousand mile.’

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‘Who? Me? Go ‘long. Doan’ talk to me ‘bout yo’ pints. I

reck’n I knows sense when I sees it; en dey ain’ no sense in

sich doin’s as dat. De ‘spute warn’t ‘bout a half a chile, de

‘spute was ‘bout a whole chile; en de man dat think he kin

settle a ‘spute ‘bout a whole chile wid a half a chile doan’

know enough to come in out’n de rain. Doan’ talk to me

‘bout Sollermun, Huck, I knows him by de back.’

‘But I tell you you don’t get the point.’

‘Blame de point! I reck’n I knows what I knows. En mine

you, de REAL pint is down furder — it’s down deeper. It

lays in de way Sollermun was raised. You take a man dat’s

got on’y one or two chillen; is dat man gwyne to be waseful o’ chillen? No, he ain’t; he can’t ‘ford it. HE know how

to value ‘em. But you take a man dat’s got ‘bout five million chillen runnin’ roun’ de house, en it’s diffunt. HE as

soon chop a chile in two as a cat. Dey’s plenty mo’. A chile

er two, mo’ er less, warn’t no consekens to Sollermun, dad

fatch him!’

I never see such a nigger. If he got a notion in his head

once, there warn’t no getting it out again. He was the most

down on Solomon of any nigger I ever see. So I went to talking about other kings, and let Solomon slide. I told about

Louis Sixteenth that got his head cut off in France long time

ago; and about his little boy the dolphin, that would a been

a king, but they took and shut him up in jail, and some say

he died there.

‘Po’ little chap.’

‘But some says he got out and got away, and come to

America.’

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‘Dat’s good! But he’ll be pooty lonesome — dey ain’ no

kings here, is dey, Huck?’

‘No.’

‘Den he cain’t git no situation. What he gwyne to do?’

‘Well, I don’t know. Some of them gets on the police, and

some of them learns people how to talk French.’

‘Why, Huck, doan’ de French people talk de same way

we does?’

‘NO, Jim; you couldn’t understand a word they said —

not a single word.’

‘Well, now, I be ding-busted! How do dat come?’

‘I don’t know; but it’s so. I got some of their jabber out of

a book. S’pose a man was to come to you and say Polly-voofranzy — what would you think?’

‘I wouldn’ think nuff’n; I’d take en bust him over de head

— dat is, if he warn’t white. I wouldn’t ‘low no nigger to call

me dat.’

‘Shucks, it ain’t calling you anything. It’s only saying, do

you know how to talk French?’

‘Well, den, why couldn’t he SAY it?’

‘Why, he IS a-saying it. That’s a Frenchman’s WAY of saying it.’

‘Well, it’s a blame ridicklous way, en I doan’ want to hear

no mo’ ‘bout it. Dey ain’ no sense in it.’

‘Looky here, Jim; does a cat talk like we do?’

‘No, a cat don’t.’

‘Well, does a cow?’

‘No, a cow don’t, nuther.’

‘Does a cat talk like a cow, or a cow talk like a cat?’

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‘No, dey don’t.’

‘It’s natural and right for ‘em to talk different from each

other, ain’t it?’

‘Course.’

‘And ain’t it natural and right for a cat and a cow to talk

different from US?’

‘Why, mos’ sholy it is.’

‘Well, then, why ain’t it natural and right for a FRENCHMAN to talk different from us? You answer me that.’

‘Is a cat a man, Huck?’

‘No.’

‘Well, den, dey ain’t no sense in a cat talkin’ like a man. Is

a cow a man? — er is a cow a cat?’

‘No, she ain’t either of them.’

‘Well, den, she ain’t got no business to talk like either one

er the yuther of ‘em. Is a Frenchman a man?’

‘Yes.’

‘WELL, den! Dad blame it, why doan’ he TALK like a

man? You answer me DAT!’

I see it warn’t no use wasting words — you can’t learn a

nigger to argue. So I quit.

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Chapter XV

WE judged that three nights more would fetch us to

Cairo, at the bottom of Illinois, where the Ohio River

comes in, and that was what we was after. We would sell

the raft and get on a steamboat and go way up the Ohio

amongst the free States, and then be out of trouble.

Well, the second night a fog begun to come on, and we

made for a towhead to tie to, for it wouldn’t do to try to run

in a fog; but when I paddled ahead in the canoe, with the

line to make fast, there warn’t any- thing but little saplings

to tie to. I passed the line around one of them right on the

edge of the cut bank, but there was a stiff current, and the

raft come boom- ing down so lively she tore it out by the

roots and away she went. I see the fog closing down, and it

made me so sick and scared I couldn’t budge for most a half

a minute it seemed to me — and then there warn’t no raft

in sight; you couldn’t see twenty yards. I jumped into the

canoe and run back to the stern, and grabbed the paddle

and set her back a stroke. But she didn’t come. I was in such

a hurry I hadn’t untied her. I got up and tried to untie her,

but I was so excited my hands shook so I couldn’t hardly do

anything with them.

As soon as I got started I took out after the raft, hot and

heavy, right down the towhead. That was all right as far as

it went, but the towhead warn’t sixty yards long, and the

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minute I flew by the foot of it I shot out into the solid white

fog, and hadn’t no more idea which way I was going than a

dead man.

Thinks I, it won’t do to paddle; first I know I’ll run into

the bank or a towhead or something; I got to set still and

float, and yet it’s mighty fidgety busi- ness to have to hold

your hands still at such a time. I whooped and listened.

Away down there somewheres I hears a small whoop, and

up comes my spirits. I went tearing after it, listening sharp

to hear it again. The next time it come I see I warn’t heading

for it, but heading away to the right of it. And the next time

I was heading away to the left of it — and not gaining on it

much either, for I was flying around, this way and that and

t’other, but it was going straight ahead all the time.

I did wish the fool would think to beat a tin pan, and beat

it all the time, but he never did, and it was the still places between the whoops that was making the trouble for me. Well,

I fought along, and directly I hears the whoop BEHIND me.

I was tangled good now. That was somebody else’s whoop,

or else I was turned around.

I throwed the paddle down. I heard the whoop again; it

was behind me yet, but in a different place; it kept coming,

and kept changing its place, and I kept answering, till by

and by it was in front of me again, and I knowed the current had swung the canoe’s head down-stream, and I was

all right if that was Jim and not some other raftsman hollering. I couldn’t tell nothing about voices in a fog, for nothing

don’t look natural nor sound natural in a fog.

The whooping went on, and in about a minute I come a-

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booming down on a cut bank with smoky ghosts of big trees

on it, and the current throwed me off to the left and shot by,

amongst a lot of snags that fairly roared, the currrent was

tearing by them so swift.

In another second or two it was solid white and still

again. I set perfectly still then, listening to my heart thump,

and I reckon I didn’t draw a breath while it thumped a hundred.

I just give up then. I knowed what the matter was. That

cut bank was an island, and Jim had gone down t’other side

of it. It warn’t no towhead that you could float by in ten

minutes. It had the big timber of a regular island; it might

be five or six miles long and more than half a mile wide.

I kept quiet, with my ears cocked, about fifteen minutes,

I reckon. I was floating along, of course, four or five miles

an hour; but you don’t ever think of that. No, you FEEL

like you are laying dead still on the water; and if a little

glimpse of a snag slips by you don’t think to yourself how

fast YOU’RE going, but you catch your breath and think,

my! how that snag’s tearing along. If you think it ain’t dismal and lone- some out in a fog that way by yourself in the

night, you try it once — you’ll see.

Next, for about a half an hour, I whoops now and then; at

last I hears the answer a long ways off, and tries to follow it,

but I couldn’t do it, and directly I judged I’d got into a nest

of towheads, for I had little dim glimpses of them on both

sides of me — sometimes just a narrow channel between,

and some that I couldn’t see I knowed was there because I’d

hear the wash of the current against the old dead brush and

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trash that hung over the banks. Well, I warn’t long loosing

the whoops down amongst the towheads; and I only tried

to chase them a little while, anyway, be- cause it was worse

than chasing a Jack-o’-lantern. You never knowed a sound

dodge around so, and swap places so quick and so much.

I had to claw away from the bank pretty lively four or five

times, to keep from knocking the islands out of the river;

and so I judged the raft must be butting into the bank every

now and then, or else it would get further ahead and clear

out of hearing — it was floating a little faster than what I

was.

Well, I seemed to be in the open river again by and by,

but I couldn’t hear no sign of a whoop nowheres. I reckoned

Jim had fetched up on a snag, maybe, and it was all up with

him. I was good and tired, so I laid down in the canoe and

said I wouldn’t bother no more. I didn’t want to go to sleep,

of course; but I was so sleepy I couldn’t help it; so I thought

I would take jest one little cat-nap.

But I reckon it was more than a cat-nap, for when I waked

up the stars was shining bright, the fog was all gone, and I

was spinning down a big bend stern first. First I didn’t know

where I was; I thought I was dreaming; and when things

began to come back to me they seemed to come up dim out

of last week.

It was a monstrous big river here, with the tallest and the

thickest kind of timber on both banks; just a solid wall, as

well as I could see by the stars. I looked away down-stream,

and seen a black speck on the water. I took after it; but when

I got to it it warn’t nothing but a couple of sawlogs made fast

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together. Then I see another speck, and chased that; then

another, and this time I was right. It was the raft.

When I got to it Jim was setting there with his head down

between his knees, asleep, with his right arm hanging over

the steering-oar. The other oar was smashed off, and the raft

was littered up with leaves and branches and dirt. So she’d

had a rough time.

I made fast and laid down under Jim’s nose on the raft,

and began to gap, and stretch my fists out against Jim, and

says:

‘Hello, Jim, have I been asleep? Why didn’t you stir me

up?’

‘Goodness gracious, is dat you, Huck? En you ain’ dead

— you ain’ drownded — you’s back agin? It’s too good for

true, honey, it’s too good for true. Lemme look at you chile,

lemme feel o’ you. No, you ain’ dead! you’s back agin, ‘live

en soun’, jis de same ole Huck — de same ole Huck, thanks

to good- ness!’

‘What’s the matter with you, Jim? You been a- drinking?’

‘Drinkin’? Has I ben a-drinkin’? Has I had a chance to

be a-drinkin’?’

‘Well, then, what makes you talk so wild?’

‘How does I talk wild?’

‘HOW? Why, hain’t you been talking about my coming

back, and all that stuff, as if I’d been gone away?’

‘Huck — Huck Finn, you look me in de eye; look me in de

eye. HAIN’T you ben gone away?’

‘Gone away? Why, what in the nation do you mean? I

hain’t been gone anywheres. Where would I go to?’

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‘Well, looky here, boss, dey’s sumf’n wrong, dey is. Is I

ME, or who IS I? Is I heah, or whah IS I? Now dat’s what I

wants to know.’

‘Well, I think you’re here, plain enough, but I think you’re

a tangle-headed old fool, Jim.’

‘I is, is I? Well, you answer me dis: Didn’t you tote out de

line in de canoe fer to make fas’ to de tow- head?’

‘No, I didn’t. What tow-head? I hain’t see no tow-head.’

‘You hain’t seen no towhead? Looky here, didn’t de line

pull loose en de raf’ go a-hummin’ down de river, en leave

you en de canoe behine in de fog?’

‘What fog?’

‘Why, de fog! — de fog dat’s been aroun’ all night. En

didn’t you whoop, en didn’t I whoop, tell we got mix’ up

in de islands en one un us got los’ en t’other one was jis’ as

good as los’, ‘kase he didn’ know whah he wuz? En didn’t I

bust up agin a lot er dem islands en have a turrible time en

mos’ git drownded? Now ain’ dat so, boss — ain’t it so? You

answer me dat.’

‘Well, this is too many for me, Jim. I hain’t seen no fog,

nor no islands, nor no troubles, nor nothing. I been setting

here talking with you all night till you went to sleep about

ten minutes ago, and I reckon I done the same. You couldn’t

a got drunk in that time, so of course you’ve been dreaming.’

‘Dad fetch it, how is I gwyne to dream all dat in ten minutes?’

‘Well, hang it all, you did dream it, because there didn’t

any of it happen.’

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‘But, Huck, it’s all jis’ as plain to me as —‘

‘It don’t make no difference how plain it is; there ain’t

nothing in it. I know, because I’ve been here all the time.’

Jim didn’t say nothing for about five minutes, but set

there studying over it. Then he says:

‘Well, den, I reck’n I did dream it, Huck; but dog my cats

ef it ain’t de powerfullest dream I ever see. En I hain’t ever

had no dream b’fo’ dat’s tired me like dis one.’

‘Oh, well, that’s all right, because a dream does tire a

body like everything sometimes. But this one was a staving

dream; tell me all about it, Jim.’

So Jim went to work and told me the whole thing right

through, just as it happened, only he painted it up considerable. Then he said he must start in and ‘terpret’ it, because it

was sent for a warning. He said the first towhead stood for a

man that would try to do us some good, but the current was

another man that would get us away from him. The whoops

was warnings that would come to us every now and then,

and if we didn’t try hard to make out to understand them

they’d just take us into bad luck, ‘stead of keep- ing us out of

it. The lot of towheads was troubles we was going to get into

with quarrelsome people and all kinds of mean folks, but if

we minded our business and didn’t talk back and aggravate

them, we would pull through and get out of the fog and into

the big clear river, which was the free States, and wouldn’t

have no more trouble.

It had clouded up pretty dark just after I got on to the raft,

but it was clearing up again now.

‘Oh, well, that’s all interpreted well enough as far as it

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goes, Jim,’ I says; ‘but what does THESE things stand for?’

It was the leaves and rubbish on the raft and the smashed

oar. You could see them first-rate now.

Jim looked at the trash, and then looked at me, and back

at the trash again. He had got the dream fixed so strong in

his head that he couldn’t seem to shake it loose and get the

facts back into its place again right away. But when he did

get the thing straightened around he looked at me steady

without ever smiling, and says:

‘What do dey stan’ for? I’se gwyne to tell you. When I got

all wore out wid work, en wid de callin’ for you, en went to

sleep, my heart wuz mos’ broke bekase you wuz los’, en I

didn’ k’yer no’ mo’ what become er me en de raf’. En when

I wake up en fine you back agin, all safe en soun’, de tears

come, en I could a got down on my knees en kiss yo’ foot,

I’s so thankful. En all you wuz thinkin’ ‘bout wuz how you

could make a fool uv ole Jim wid a lie. Dat truck dah is

TRASH; en trash is what people is dat puts dirt on de head

er dey fren’s en makes ‘em ashamed.’

Then he got up slow and walked to the wigwam, and

went in there without saying anything but that. But that

was enough. It made me feel so mean I could almost kissed

HIS foot to get him to take it back.

It was fifteen minutes before I could work myself up to

go and humble myself to a nigger; but I done it, and I warn’t

ever sorry for it afterwards, neither. I didn’t do him no more

mean tricks, and I wouldn’t done that one if I’d a knowed it

would make him feel that way.

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Chapter XVI

WE slept most all day, and started out at night, a little

ways behind a monstrous long raft that was as long

going by as a procession. She had four long sweeps at each

end, so we judged she carried as many as thirty men, likely.

She had five big wigwams aboard, wide apart, and an open

camp fire in the mid- dle, and a tall flag-pole at each end.

There was a power of style about her. It AMOUNTED to

something being a raftsman on such a craft as that.

We went drifting down into a big bend, and the night

clouded up and got hot. The river was very wide, and was

walled with solid timber on both sides; you couldn’t see a

break in it hardly ever, or a light. We talked about Cairo,

and wondered whether we would know it when we got to it. I

said likely we wouldn’t, because I had heard say there warn’t

but about a dozen houses there, and if they didn’t happen to

have them lit up, how was we going to know we was passing

a town? Jim said if the two big rivers joined together there,

that would show. But I said maybe we might think we was

passing the foot of an island and coming into the same old

river again. That disturbed Jim — and me too. So the question was, what to do? I said, paddle ashore the first time a

light showed, and tell them pap was behind, coming along

with a trading-scow, and was a green hand at the business,

and wanted to know how far it was to Cairo. Jim thought it

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was a good idea, so we took a smoke on it and waited.

There warn’t nothing to do now but to look out sharp for

the town, and not pass it without seeing it. He said he’d be

mighty sure to see it, because he’d be a free man the minute he seen it, but if he missed it he’d be in a slave country

again and no more show for freedom. Every little while he

jumps up and says:

‘Dah she is?’

But it warn’t. It was Jack-o’-lanterns, or lightning bugs;

so he set down again, and went to watching, same as before.

Jim said it made him all over trembly and feverish to be so

close to freedom. Well, I can tell you it made me all over

trembly and feverish, too, to hear him, because I begun to

get it through my head that he WAS most free — and who

was to blame for it? Why, ME. I couldn’t get that out of my

con- science, no how nor no way. It got to troubling me so I

couldn’t rest; I couldn’t stay still in one place. It hadn’t ever

come home to me before, what this thing was that I was doing. But now it did; and it stayed with me, and scorched me

more and more. I tried to make out to myself that I warn’t

to blame, because I didn’t run Jim off from his rightful owner; but it warn’t no use, conscience up and says, every time,

‘But you knowed he was running for his free- dom, and you

could a paddled ashore and told some- body.’ That was so —

I couldn’t get around that noway. That was where it pinched.

Conscience says to me, ‘What had poor Miss Watson done

to you that you could see her nigger go off right under your

eyes and never say one single word? What did that poor old

woman do to you that you could treat her so mean? Why,

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she tried to learn you your book, she tried to learn you your

manners, she tried to be good to you every way she knowed

how. THAT’S what she done.’

I got to feeling so mean and so miserable I most wished

I was dead. I fidgeted up and down the raft, abusing myself

to myself, and Jim was fidgeting up and down past me. We

neither of us could keep still. Every time he danced around

and says, ‘Dah’s Cairo!’ it went through me like a shot, and

I thought if it WAS Cairo I reckoned I would die of miserableness.

Jim talked out loud all the time while I was talking to

myself. He was saying how the first thing he would do when

he got to a free State he would go to saving up money and

never spend a single cent, and when he got enough he would

buy his wife, which was owned on a farm close to where

Miss Watson lived; and then they would both work to buy

the two chil- dren, and if their master wouldn’t sell them,

they’d get an Ab’litionist to go and steal them.

It most froze me to hear such talk. He wouldn’t ever

dared to talk such talk in his life before. Just see what a difference it made in him the minute he judged he was about

free. It was according to the old saying, ‘Give a nigger an

inch and he’ll take an ell.’ Thinks I, this is what comes of

my not thinking. Here was this nigger, which I had as good

as helped to run away, coming right out flat-footed and saying he would steal his children — children that belonged to

a man I didn’t even know; a man that hadn’t ever done me

no harm.

I was sorry to hear Jim say that, it was such a lowering of

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him. My conscience got to stirring me up hotter than ever,

until at last I says to it, ‘Let up on me — it ain’t too late yet

— I’ll paddle ashore at the first light and tell.’ I felt easy and

happy and light as a feather right off. All my troubles was

gone. I went to looking out sharp for a light, and sort of singing to myself. By and by one showed. Jim sings out:

‘We’s safe, Huck, we’s safe! Jump up and crack yo’ heels!

Dat’s de good ole Cairo at las’, I jis knows it!’

I says:

‘I’ll take the canoe and go and see, Jim. It mightn’t be,

you know.’

He jumped and got the canoe ready, and put his old coat

in the bottom for me to set on, and give me the paddle; and

as I shoved off, he says:

‘Pooty soon I’ll be a-shout’n’ for joy, en I’ll say, it’s all on

accounts o’ Huck; I’s a free man, en I couldn’t ever ben free

ef it hadn’ ben for Huck; Huck done it. Jim won’t ever forgit you, Huck; you’s de bes’ fren’ Jim’s ever had; en you’s de

ONLY fren’ ole Jim’s got now.’

I was paddling off, all in a sweat to tell on him; but when

he says this, it seemed to kind of take the tuck all out of

me. I went along slow then, and I warn’t right down certain

whether I was glad I started or whether I warn’t. When I

was fifty yards off, Jim says:

‘Dah you goes, de ole true Huck; de on’y white genlman

dat ever kep’ his promise to ole Jim.’

Well, I just felt sick. But I says, I GOT to do it — I can’t

get OUT of it. Right then along comes a skiff with two men

in it with guns, and they stopped and I stopped. One of

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them says:

‘What’s that yonder?’

‘A piece of a raft,’ I says.

‘Do you belong on it?’

‘Yes, sir.’

‘Any men on it?’

‘Only one, sir.’

‘Well, there’s five niggers run off to-night up yon- der,

above the head of the bend. Is your man white or black?’

I didn’t answer up prompt. I tried to, but the words

wouldn’t come. I tried for a second or two to brace up and

out with it, but I warn’t man enough — hadn’t the spunk of

a rabbit. I see I was weakening; so I just give up trying, and

up and says:

‘He’s white.’

‘I reckon we’ll go and see for ourselves.’

‘I wish you would,’ says I, ‘because it’s pap that’s there,

and maybe you’d help me tow the raft ashore where the

light is. He’s sick — and so is mam and Mary Ann.’

‘Oh, the devil! we’re in a hurry, boy. But I s’pose we’ve got

to. Come, buckle to your paddle, and let’s get along.’

I buckled to my paddle and they laid to their oars. When

we had made a stroke or two, I says:

‘Pap’ll be mighty much obleeged to you, I can tell you.

Everybody goes away when I want them to help me tow the

raft ashore, and I can’t do it by myself.’

‘Well, that’s infernal mean. Odd, too. Say, boy, what’s the

matter with your father?’

‘It’s the — a — the — well, it ain’t anything much.’

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They stopped pulling. It warn’t but a mighty little ways to

the raft now. One says:

‘Boy, that’s a lie. What IS the matter with your pap? Answer up square now, and it’ll be the better for you.’

‘I will, sir, I will, honest — but don’t leave us, please. It’s

the — the — Gentlemen, if you’ll only pull ahead, and let

me heave you the headline, you won’t have to come a-near

the raft — please do.’

‘Set her back, John, set her back!’ says one. They backed

water. ‘Keep away, boy — keep to looard. Confound it, I just

expect the wind has blowed it to us. Your pap’s got the smallpox, and you know it precious well. Why didn’t you come

out and say so? Do you want to spread it all over?’

‘Well,’ says I, a-blubbering, ‘I’ve told every- body before,

and they just went away and left us.’

‘Poor devil, there’s something in that. We are right down

sorry for you, but we — well, hang it, we don’t want the

small-pox, you see. Look here, I’ll tell you what to do. Don’t

you try to land by your- self, or you’ll smash everything to

pieces. You float along down about twenty miles, and you’ll

come to a town on the left-hand side of the river. It will be

long after sun-up then, and when you ask for help you tell

them your folks are all down with chills and fever. Don’t be

a fool again, and let people guess what is the matter. Now

we’re trying to do you a kindness; so you just put twenty

miles between us, that’s a good boy. It wouldn’t do any good

to land yonder where the light is — it’s only a wood-yard.

Say, I reckon your father’s poor, and I’m bound to say he’s

in pretty hard luck. Here, I’ll put a twenty- dollar gold piece

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on this board, and you get it when it floats by. I feel mighty

mean to leave you; but my kingdom! it won’t do to fool with

small-pox, don’t you see?’

‘Hold on, Parker,’ says the other man, ‘here’s a twenty

to put on the board for me. Good-bye, boy; you do as Mr.

Parker told you, and you’ll be all right.’

‘That’s so, my boy — good-bye, good-bye. If you see any

runaway niggers you get help and nab them, and you can

make some money by it.’

‘Good-bye, sir,’ says I; ‘I won’t let no runaway niggers get

by me if I can help it.’

They went off and I got aboard the raft, feeling bad and

low, because I knowed very well I had done wrong, and I

see it warn’t no use for me to try to learn to do right; a body

that don’t get STARTED right when he’s little ain’t got no

show — when the pinch comes there ain’t nothing to back

him up and keep him to his work, and so he gets beat. Then

I thought a minute, and says to myself, hold on; s’pose you’d

a done right and give Jim up, would you felt better than

what you do now? No, says I, I’d feel bad — I’d feel just the

same way I do now. Well, then, says I, what’s the use you

learning to do right when it’s troublesome to do right and

ain’t no trouble to do wrong, and the wages is just the same?

I was stuck. I couldn’t answer that. So I reckoned I wouldn’t

bother no more about it, but after this always do whichever

come handiest at the time.

I went into the wigwam; Jim warn’t there. I looked all

around; he warn’t anywhere. I says:

‘Jim!’

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‘Here I is, Huck. Is dey out o’ sight yit? Don’t talk loud.’

He was in the river under the stern oar, with just his nose

out. I told him they were out of sight, so he come aboard.

He says:

‘I was a-listenin’ to all de talk, en I slips into de river en

was gwyne to shove for sho’ if dey come aboard. Den I was

gwyne to swim to de raf’ agin when dey was gone. But lawsy,

how you did fool ‘em, Huck! Dat WUZ de smartes’ dodge! I

tell you, chile, I’spec it save’ ole Jim — ole Jim ain’t going to

forgit you for dat, honey.’

Then we talked about the money. It was a pretty good

raise — twenty dollars apiece. Jim said we could take deck

passage on a steamboat now, and the money would last us

as far as we wanted to go in the free States. He said twenty

mile more warn’t far for the raft to go, but he wished we was

already there.

Towards daybreak we tied up, and Jim was mighty particular about hiding the raft good. Then he worked all day

fixing things in bundles, and getting all ready to quit rafting.

That night about ten we hove in sight of the lights of a

town away down in a left-hand bend.

I went off in the canoe to ask about it. Pretty soon I

found a man out in the river with a skiff, setting a trot- line.

I ranged up and says:

‘Mister, is that town Cairo?’

‘Cairo? no. You must be a blame’ fool.’

‘What town is it, mister?’

‘If you want to know, go and find out. If you stay here

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botherin’ around me for about a half a minute longer you’ll

get something you won’t want.’

I paddled to the raft. Jim was awful disappointed, but

I said never mind, Cairo would be the next place, I reckoned.

We passed another town before daylight, and I was going out again; but it was high ground, so I didn’t go. No high

ground about Cairo, Jim said. I had forgot it. We laid up for

the day on a towhead tolerable close to the left-hand bank. I

begun to suspicion something. So did Jim. I says:

‘Maybe we went by Cairo in the fog that night.’

He says:

‘Doan’ le’s talk about it, Huck. Po’ niggers can’t have no

luck. I awluz ‘spected dat rattlesnake-skin warn’t done wid

its work.’

‘I wish I’d never seen that snake-skin, Jim — I do wish I’d

never laid eyes on it.’

‘It ain’t yo’ fault, Huck; you didn’ know. Don’t you blame

yo’self ‘bout it.’

When it was daylight, here was the clear Ohio water inshore, sure enough, and outside was the old regular Muddy!

So it was all up with Cairo.

We talked it all over. It wouldn’t do to take to the shore;

we couldn’t take the raft up the stream, of course. There

warn’t no way but to wait for dark, and start back in the canoe and take the chances. So we slept all day amongst the

cottonwood thicket, so as to be fresh for the work, and when

we went back to the raft about dark the canoe was gone!

We didn’t say a word for a good while. There warn’t any-

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thing to say. We both knowed well enough it was some more

work of the rattlesnake-skin; so what was the use to talk

about it? It would only look like we was finding fault, and

that would be bound to fetch more bad luck — and keep on

fetching it, too, till we knowed enough to keep still.

By and by we talked about what we better do, and found

there warn’t no way but just to go along down with the raft

till we got a chance to buy a canoe to go back in. We warn’t

going to borrow it when there warn’t anybody around, the

way pap would do, for that might set people after us.

So we shoved out after dark on the raft.

Anybody that don’t believe yet that it’s foolishness to

handle a snake-skin, after all that that snake-skin done for

us, will believe it now if they read on and see what more it

done for us.

The place to buy canoes is off of rafts laying up at shore.

But we didn’t see no rafts laying up; so we went along during

three hours and more. Well, the night got gray and ruther

thick, which is the next meanest thing to fog. You can’t tell

the shape of the river, and you can’t see no distance. It got

to be very late and still, and then along comes a steamboat

up the river. We lit the lantern, and judged she would see it.

Up-stream boats didn’t generly come close to us; they go out

and follow the bars and hunt for easy water under the reefs;

but nights like this they bull right up the channel against

the whole river.

We could hear her pounding along, but we didn’t see her

good till she was close. She aimed right for us. Often they do

that and try to see how close they can come without touch-

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ing; sometimes the wheel bites off a sweep, and then the

pilot sticks his head out and laughs, and thinks he’s mighty

smart. Well, here she comes, and we said she was going to

try and shave us; but she didn’t seem to be sheering off a bit.

She was a big one, and she was coming in a hurry, too, looking like a black cloud with rows of glow-worms around it;

but all of a sudden she bulged out, big and scary, with a long

row of wide-open furnace doors shining like red-hot teeth,

and her monstrous bows and guards hanging right over us.

There was a yell at us, and a jingling of bells to stop the engines, a powwow of cussing, and whistling of steam — and

as Jim went overboard on one side and I on the other, she

come smashing straight through the raft.

I dived — and I aimed to find the bottom, too, for a thirty-foot wheel had got to go over me, and I wanted it to have

plenty of room. I could always stay under water a minute;

this time I reckon I stayed under a minute and a half. Then

I bounced for the top in a hurry, for I was nearly busting. I

popped out to my armpits and blowed the water out of my

nose, and puffed a bit. Of course there was a booming current; and of course that boat started her engines again ten

seconds after she stopped them, for they never cared much

for raftsmen; so now she was churning along up the river,

out of sight in the thick weather, though I could hear her.

I sung out for Jim about a dozen times, but I didn’t get

any answer; so I grabbed a plank that touched me while

I was ‘treading water,’ and struck out for shore, shoving it

ahead of me. But I made out to see that the drift of the current was towards the left- hand shore, which meant that I

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was in a crossing; so I changed off and went that way.

It was one of these long, slanting, two-mile cross- ings;

so I was a good long time in getting over. I made a safe landing, and clumb up the bank. I couldn’t see but a little ways,

but I went poking along over rough ground for a quarter of

a mile or more, and then I run across a big old-fashioned

double log-house before I noticed it. I was going to rush by

and get away, but a lot of dogs jumped out and went to howling and barking at me, and I knowed better than to move

another peg.

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Chapter XVII

I

N about a minute somebody spoke out of a window without putting his head out, and says:

‘Be done, boys! Who’s there?’

I says:

‘It’s me.’

‘Who’s me?’

‘George Jackson, sir.’

‘What do you want?’

‘I don’t want nothing, sir. I only want to go along by, but

the dogs won’t let me.’

‘What are you prowling around here this time of night

for — hey?’

‘I warn’t prowling around, sir, I fell overboard off of the

steamboat.’

‘Oh, you did, did you? Strike a light there, some- body.

What did you say your name was?’

‘George Jackson, sir. I’m only a boy.’

‘Look here, if you’re telling the truth you needn’t be

afraid — nobody’ll hurt you. But don’t try to budge; stand

right where you are. Rouse out Bob and Tom, some of you,

and fetch the guns. George Jackson, is there anybody with

you?’

‘No, sir, nobody.’

I heard the people stirring around in the house now, and

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see a light. The man sung out:

‘Snatch that light away, Betsy, you old fool — ain’t you got

any sense? Put it on the floor behind the front door. Bob, if

you and Tom are ready, take your places.’

‘All ready.’

‘Now, George Jackson, do you know the Shepherdsons?’

‘No, sir; I never heard of them.’

‘Well, that may be so, and it mayn’t. Now, all ready.

Step forward, George Jackson. And mind, don’t you hurry — come mighty slow. If there’s any- body with you, let

him keep back — if he shows him- self he’ll be shot. Come

along now. Come slow; push the door open yourself — just

enough to squeeze in, d’ you hear?’

I didn’t hurry; I couldn’t if I’d a wanted to. I took one

slow step at a time and there warn’t a sound, only I thought

I could hear my heart. The dogs were as still as the humans,

but they followed a little behind me. When I got to the three

log doorsteps I heard them unlocking and unbarring and

unbolting. I put my hand on the door and pushed it a little

and a little more till somebody said, ‘There, that’s enough

— put your head in.’ I done it, but I judged they would take

it off.

The candle was on the floor, and there they all was, looking at me, and me at them, for about a quarter of a minute:

Three big men with guns pointed at me, which made me

wince, I tell you; the oldest, gray and about sixty, the other two thirty or more — all of them fine and handsome

— and the sweetest old gray-headed lady, and back of her

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two young women which I couldn’t see right well. The old

gentleman says:

‘There; I reckon it’s all right. Come in.’

As soon as I was in the old gentleman he locked the door

and barred it and bolted it, and told the young men to come

in with their guns, and they all went in a big parlor that

had a new rag carpet on the floor, and got together in a corner that was out of the range of the front windows — there

warn’t none on the side. They held the candle, and took a

good look at me, and all said, ‘Why, HE ain’t a Shepherdson — no, there ain’t any Shepherdson about him.’ Then the

old man said he hoped I wouldn’t mind being searched for

arms, because he didn’t mean no harm by it — it was only

to make sure. So he didn’t pry into my pockets, but only felt

outside with his hands, and said it was all right. He told me

to make myself easy and at home, and tell all about myself;

but the old lady says:

‘Why, bless you, Saul, the poor thing’s as wet as he can be;

and don’t you reckon it may be he’s hungry?’

‘True for you, Rachel — I forgot.’

So the old lady says:

‘Betsy’ (this was a nigger woman), you fly around and get

him something to eat as quick as you can, poor thing; and

one of you girls go and wake up Buck and tell him — oh,

here he is himself. Buck, take this little stranger and get the

wet clothes off from him and dress him up in some of yours

that’s dry.’

Buck looked about as old as me — thirteen or four- teen

or along there, though he was a little bigger than me. He

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hadn’t on anything but a shirt, and he was very frowzyheaded. He came in gaping and digging one fist into his

eyes, and he was dragging a gun along with the other one.

He says:

‘Ain’t they no Shepherdsons around?’

They said, no, ‘twas a false alarm.

‘Well,’ he says, ‘if they’d a ben some, I reckon I’d a got

one.’

They all laughed, and Bob says:

‘Why, Buck, they might have scalped us all, you’ve been

so slow in coming.’

‘Well, nobody come after me, and it ain’t right I’m always

kept down; I don’t get no show.’

‘Never mind, Buck, my boy,’ says the old man, ‘you’ll have

show enough, all in good time, don’t you fret about that. Go

‘long with you now, and do as your mother told you.’

When we got up-stairs to his room he got me a coarse

shirt and a roundabout and pants of his, and I put them on.

While I was at it he asked me what my name was, but before

I could tell him he started to tell me about a bluejay and a

young rabbit he had catched in the woods day before yesterday, and he asked me where Moses was when the candle

went out. I said I didn’t know; I hadn’t heard about it before,

no way.

‘Well, guess,’ he says.

‘How’m I going to guess,’ says I, ‘when I never heard tell

of it before?’

‘But you can guess, can’t you? It’s just as easy.’

‘WHICH candle?’ I says.

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‘Why, any candle,’ he says.

‘I don’t know where he was,’ says I; ‘where was he?’

‘Why, he was in the DARK! That’s where he was!’

‘Well, if you knowed where he was, what did you ask me

for?’

‘Why, blame it, it’s a riddle, don’t you see? Say, how long

are you going to stay here? You got to stay always. We can

just have booming times — they don’t have no school now.

Do you own a dog? I’ve got a dog — and he’ll go in the river

and bring out chips that you throw in. Do you like to comb

up Sundays, and all that kind of foolishness? You bet I don’t,

but ma she makes me. Confound these ole britches! I reckon I’d better put ‘em on, but I’d ruther not, it’s so warm. Are

you all ready? All right. Come along, old hoss.’

Cold corn-pone, cold corn-beef, butter and butter- milk

— that is what they had for me down there, and there ain’t

nothing better that ever I’ve come across yet. Buck and his

ma and all of them smoked cob pipes, except the nigger

woman, which was gone, and the two young women. They

all smoked and talked, and I eat and talked. The young women had quilts around them, and their hair down their backs.

They all asked me questions, and I told them how pap and

me and all the family was living on a little farm down at the

bottom of Arkansaw, and my sister Mary Ann run off and

got married and never was heard of no more, and Bill went

to hunt them and he warn’t heard of no more, and Tom and

Mort died, and then there warn’t nobody but just me and

pap left, and he was just trimmed down to nothing, on account of his troubles; so when he died I took what there was

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left, because the farm didn’t belong to us, and started up the

river, deck passage, and fell overboard; and that was how I

come to be here. So they said I could have a home there as

long as I wanted it. Then it was most daylight and everybody went to bed, and I went to bed with Buck, and when I

waked up in the morning, drat it all, I had forgot what my

name was. So I laid there about an hour trying to think, and

when Buck waked up I says:

‘Can you spell, Buck?’

‘Yes,’ he says.

‘I bet you can’t spell my name,’ says I.

‘I bet you what you dare I can,’ says he.

‘All right,’ says I, ‘go ahead.’

‘G-e-o-r-g-e J-a-x-o-n — there now,’ he says.

‘Well,’ says I, ‘you done it, but I didn’t think you could. It

ain’t no slouch of a name to spell — right off without studying.’

I set it down, private, because somebody might want ME

to spell it next, and so I wanted to be handy with it and rattle it off like I was used to it.

It was a mighty nice family, and a mighty nice house, too.

I hadn’t seen no house out in the country before that was

so nice and had so much style. It didn’t have an iron latch

on the front door, nor a wooden one with a buckskin string,

but a brass knob to turn, the same as houses in town. There

warn’t no bed in the parlor, nor a sign of a bed; but heaps

of parlors in towns has beds in them. There was a big fireplace that was bricked on the bottom, and the bricks was

kept clean and red by pouring water on them and scrubbing

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them with another brick; some- times they wash them over

with red water-paint that they call Spanish-brown, same as

they do in town. They had big brass dog-irons that could

hold up a saw- log. There was a clock on the middle of the

mantel- piece, with a picture of a town painted on the bottom half of the glass front, and a round place in the middle

of it for the sun, and you could see the pendulum swinging behind it. It was beautiful to hear that clock tick; and

sometimes when one of these peddlers had been along and

scoured her up and got her in good shape, she would start in

and strike a hundred and fifty before she got tuckered out.

They wouldn’t took any money for her.

Well, there was a big outlandish parrot on each side of

the clock, made out of something like chalk, and painted up

gaudy. By one of the parrots was a cat made of crockery, and

a crockery dog by the other; and when you pressed down

on them they squeaked, but didn’t open their mouths nor

look different nor interested. They squeaked through underneath. There was a couple of big wild-turkey-wing fans

spread out behind those things. On the table in the middle

of the room was a kind of a lovely crockery basket that bad

apples and oranges and peaches and grapes piled up in it,

which was much redder and yellower and prettier than real

ones is, but they warn’t real because you could see where

pieces had got chipped off and showed the white chalk, or

whatever it was, under- neath.

This table had a cover made out of beautiful oilcloth, with

a red and blue spread-eagle painted on it, and a painted border all around. It come all the way from Philadelphia, they

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said. There was some books, too, piled up perfectly exact,

on each corner of the table. One was a big family Bible full

of pictures. One was Pilgrim’s Progress, about a man that

left his family, it didn’t say why. I read considerable in it now

and then. The statements was interesting, but tough. Another was Friendship’s Offering, full of beautiful stuff and

poetry; but I didn’t read the poetry. An- other was Henry

Clay’s Speeches, and another was Dr. Gunn’s Family Medicine, which told you all about what to do if a body was sick

or dead. There was a hymn book, and a lot of other books.

And there was nice split-bottom chairs, and perfectly sound,

too — not bagged down in the middle and busted, like an

old basket.

They had pictures hung on the walls — mainly Washingtons and Lafayettes, and battles, and High- land Marys,

and one called ‘Signing the Declaration.’ There was some

that they called crayons, which one of the daughters which

was dead made her own self when she was only fifteen years

old. They was different from any pictures I ever see before

— blacker, mostly, than is common. One was a woman in a

slim black dress, belted small under the armpits, with bulges like a cabbage in the middle of the sleeves, and a large

black scoop-shovel bonnet with a black veil, and white

slim ankles crossed about with black tape, and very wee

black slippers, like a chisel, and she was leaning pensive on

a tombstone on her right elbow, under a weeping willow,

and her other hand hanging down her side holding a white

handkerchief and a reticule, and underneath the picture it

said ‘Shall I Never See Thee More Alas.’ Another one was

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a young lady with her hair all combed up straight to the

top of her head, and knotted there in front of a comb like

a chair-back, and she was crying into a handkerchief and

had a dead bird laying on its back in her other hand with its

heels up, and underneath the picture it said ‘I Shall Never

Hear Thy Sweet Chirrup More Alas.’ There was one where

a young lady was at a window looking up at the moon, and

tears running down her cheeks; and she had an open letter

in one hand with black sealing wax showing on one edge of

it, and she was mashing a locket with a chain to it against

her mouth, and under- neath the picture it said ‘And Art

Thou Gone Yes Thou Art Gone Alas.’ These was all nice pictures, I reckon, but I didn’t somehow seem to take to them,

because if ever I was down a little they always give me the

fan-tods. Everybody was sorry she died, because she had

laid out a lot more of these pictures to do, and a body could

see by what she had done what they had lost. But I reckoned that with her disposition she was having a better time

in the graveyard. She was at work on what they said was

her greatest picture when she took sick, and every day and

every night it was her prayer to be allowed to live till she

got it done, but she never got the chance. It was a picture

of a young woman in a long white gown, standing on the

rail of a bridge all ready to jump off, with her hair all down

her back, and looking up to the moon, with the tears running down her face, and she had two arms folded across

her breast, and two arms stretched out in front, and two

more reaching up towards the moon — and the idea was

to see which pair would look best, and then scratch out all

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the other arms; but, as I was saying, she died before she got

her mind made up, and now they kept this picture over the

head of the bed in her room, and every time her birthday

come they hung flowers on it. Other times it was hid with a

little curtain. The young woman in the picture had a kind

of a nice sweet face, but there was so many arms it made her

look too spidery, seemed to me.

This young girl kept a scrap-book when she was alive,

and used to paste obituaries and accidents and cases of patient suffering in it out of the Presbyterian Observer, and

write poetry after them out of her own head. It was very

good poetry. This is what she wrote about a boy by the

name of Stephen Dowling Bots that fell down a well and

was drownded:

ODE TO STEPHEN DOWLING BOTS, DEC’D

And did young Stephen sicken,

And did young Stephen die?

And did the sad hearts thicken,

And did the mourners cry?

No; such was not the fate of

Young Stephen Dowling Bots;

Though sad hearts round him thickened,

‘Twas not from sickness’ shots.

No whooping-cough did rack his frame,

Nor measles drear with spots;

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Not these impaired the sacred name

Of Stephen Dowling Bots.

Despised love struck not with woe

That head of curly knots,

Nor stomach troubles laid him low,

Young Stephen Dowling Bots.

O no. Then list with tearful eye,

Whilst I his fate do tell.

His soul did from this cold world fly

By falling down a well.

They got him out and emptied him;

Alas it was too late;

His spirit was gone for to sport aloft

In the realms of the good and great.

If Emmeline Grangerford could make poetry like that

before she was fourteen, there ain’t no telling what she could

a done by and by. Buck said she could rattle off poetry like

nothing. She didn’t ever have to stop to think. He said she

would slap down a line, and if she couldn’t find anything to

rhyme with it would just scratch it out and slap down another one, and go ahead. She warn’t particular; she could

write about anything you choose to give her to write about

just so it was sadful. Every time a man died, or a woman

died, or a child died, she would be on hand with her ‘tribute’

before he was cold. She called them tributes. The neighbors

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said it was the doctor first, then Emmeline, then the undertaker — the under- taker never got in ahead of Emmeline

but once, and then she hung fire on a rhyme for the dead

person’s name, which was Whistler. She warn’t ever the

same after that; she never complained, but she kinder pined

away and did not live long. Poor thing, many’s the time I

made myself go up to the little room that used to be hers

and get out her poor old scrap-book and read in it when her

pictures had been aggravating me and I had soured on her

a little. I liked all that family, dead ones and all, and warn’t

going to let any- thing come between us. Poor Emmeline

made poetry about all the dead people when she was alive,

and it didn’t seem right that there warn’t nobody to make

some about her now she was gone; so I tried to sweat out a

verse or two myself, but I couldn’t seem to make it go somehow. They kept Emmeline’s room trim and nice, and all the

things fixed in it just the way she liked to have them when

she was alive, and nobody ever slept there. The old lady took

care of the room herself, though there was plenty of niggers,

and she sewed there a good deal and read her Bible there

mostly.

Well, as I was saying about the parlor, there was beautiful curtains on the windows: white, with pictures painted

on them of castles with vines all down the walls, and cattle

coming down to drink. There was a little old piano, too, that

had tin pans in it, I reckon, and nothing was ever so lovely

as to hear the young ladies sing ‘The Last Link is Broken’

and play ‘The Battle of Prague’ on it. The walls of all the

rooms was plastered, and most had carpets on the floors,

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and the whole house was whitewashed on the outside.

It was a double house, and the big open place be- twixt

them was roofed and floored, and sometimes the table was

set there in the middle of the day, and it was a cool, comfortable place. Nothing couldn’t be better. And warn’t the

cooking good, and just bushels of it too!

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Chapter XVIII

COL. GRANGERFORD was a gentleman, you see. He

was a gentleman all over; and so was his family. He was

well born, as the saying is, and that’s worth as much in a

man as it is in a horse, so the Widow Douglas said, and nobody ever denied that she was of the first aristocracy in our

town; and pap he always said it, too, though he warn’t no

more quality than a mudcat himself. Col. Grangerford was

very tall and very slim, and had a darkish-paly complexion,

not a sign of red in it anywheres; he was clean shaved every

morning all over his thin face, and he had the thinnest kind

of lips, and the thinnest kind of nostrils, and a high nose,

and heavy eyebrows, and the blackest kind of eyes, sunk

so deep back that they seemed like they was looking out of

caverns at you, as you may say. His forehead was high, and

his hair was black and straight and hung to his shoulders.

His hands was long and thin, and every day of his life he

put on a clean shirt and a full suit from head to foot made

out of linen so white it hurt your eyes to look at it; and on

Sundays he wore a blue tail-coat with brass buttons on it.

He carried a mahogany cane with a silver head to it. There

warn’t no frivolishness about him, not a bit, and he warn’t

ever loud. He was as kind as he could be — you could feel

that, you know, and so you had confidence. Sometimes he

smiled, and it was good to see; but when he straightened

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him- self up like a liberty-pole, and the lightning begun to

flicker out from under his eyebrows, you wanted to climb

a tree first, and find out what the matter was afterwards.

He didn’t ever have to tell anybody to mind their manners

— everybody was always good- mannered where he was. Everybody loved to have him around, too; he was sunshine

most always — I mean he made it seem like good weather.

When he turned into a cloudbank it was awful dark for half

a minute, and that was enough; there wouldn’t nothing go

wrong again for a week.

When him and the old lady come down in the morn- ing

all the family got up out of their chairs and give them goodday, and didn’t set down again till they had set down. Then

Tom and Bob went to the sideboard where the decanter

was, and mixed a glass of bitters and handed it to him, and

he held it in his hand and waited till Tom’s and Bob’s was

mixed, and then they bowed and said, ‘Our duty to you, sir,

and madam;’ and THEY bowed the least bit in the world

and said thank you, and so they drank, all three, and Bob

and Tom poured a spoonful of water on the sugar and the

mite of whisky or apple brandy in the bottom of their tumblers, and give it to me and Buck, and we drank to the old

people too.

Bob was the oldest and Tom next — tall, beautiful men

with very broad shoulders and brown faces, and long black

hair and black eyes. They dressed in white linen from head

to foot, like the old gentleman, and wore broad Panama

hats.

Then there was Miss Charlotte; she was twenty- five, and

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tall and proud and grand, but as good as she could be when

she warn’t stirred up; but when she was she had a look that

would make you wilt in your tracks, like her father. She was

beautiful.

So was her sister, Miss Sophia, but it was a different

kind. She was gentle and sweet like a dove, and she was only

twenty.

Each person had their own nigger to wait on them —

Buck too. My nigger had a monstrous easy time, be- cause

I warn’t used to having anybody do anything for me, but

Buck’s was on the jump most of the time.

This was all there was of the family now, but there used

to be more — three sons; they got killed; and Emmeline

that died.

The old gentleman owned a lot of farms and over a hundred niggers. Sometimes a stack of people would come

there, horseback, from ten or fifteen mile around, and stay

five or six days, and have such junketings round about and

on the river, and dances and picnics in the woods daytimes,

and balls at the house nights. These people was mostly kinfolks of the family. The men brought their guns with them.

It was a hand- some lot of quality, I tell you.

There was another clan of aristocracy around there —

five or six families — mostly of the name of Shep- herdson.

They was as high-toned and well born and rich and grand as

the tribe of Grangerfords. The Shepherdsons and Grangerfords used the same steam- boat landing, which was about

two mile above our house; so sometimes when I went up

there with a lot of our folks I used to see a lot of the Shep-

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herdsons there on their fine horses.

One day Buck and me was away out in the woods hunting, and heard a horse coming. We was crossing the road.

Buck says:

‘Quick! Jump for the woods!’

We done it, and then peeped down the woods through

the leaves. Pretty soon a splendid young man come galloping down the road, setting his horse easy and looking like a

soldier. He had his gun across his pommel. I had seen him

before. It was young Harney Shepherdson. I heard Buck’s

gun go off at my ear, and Harney’s hat tumbled off from

his head. He grabbed his gun and rode straight to the place

where we was hid. But we didn’t wait. We started through

the woods on a run. The woods warn’t thick, so I looked

over my shoulder to dodge the bullet, and twice I seen Harney cover Buck with his gun; and then he rode away the

way he come — to get his hat, I reckon, but I couldn’t see.

We never stopped run- ning till we got home. The old gentleman’s eyes blazed a minute — ‘twas pleasure, mainly, I

judged — then his face sort of smoothed down, and he says,

kind of gentle:

‘I don’t like that shooting from behind a bush. Why didn’t

you step into the road, my boy?’

‘The Shepherdsons don’t, father. They always take advantage.’

Miss Charlotte she held her head up like a queen while

Buck was telling his tale, and her nostrils spread and her

eyes snapped. The two young men looked dark, but never said nothing. Miss Sophia she turned pale, but the color

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come back when she found the man warn’t hurt.

Soon as I could get Buck down by the corn-cribs under

the trees by ourselves, I says:

‘Did you want to kill him, Buck?’

‘Well, I bet I did.’

‘What did he do to you?’

‘Him? He never done nothing to me.’

‘Well, then, what did you want to kill him for?’

‘Why, nothing — only it’s on account of the feud.’

‘What’s a feud?’

‘Why, where was you raised? Don’t you know what a feud

is?’

‘Never heard of it before — tell me about it.’

‘Well,’ says Buck, ‘a feud is this way: A man has a quarrel with another man, and kills him; then that other man’s

brother kills HIM; then the other brothers, on both sides,

goes for one another; then the COUSINS chip in — and by

and by everybody’s killed off, and there ain’t no more feud.

But it’s kind of slow, and takes a long time.’

‘Has this one been going on long, Buck?’

‘Well, I should RECKON! It started thirty year ago, or

som’ers along there. There was trouble ‘bout something,

and then a lawsuit to settle it; and the suit went agin one of

the men, and so he up and shot the man that won the suit

— which he would naturally do, of course. Anybody would.’

‘What was the trouble about, Buck? — land?’

‘I reckon maybe — I don’t know.’

‘Well, who done the shooting? Was it a Granger- ford or

a Shepherdson?’

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‘Laws, how do I know? It was so long ago.’

‘Don’t anybody know?’

‘Oh, yes, pa knows, I reckon, and some of the other old

people; but they don’t know now what the row was about in

the first place.’

‘Has there been many killed, Buck?’

‘Yes; right smart chance of funerals. But they don’t always kill. Pa’s got a few buckshot in him; but he don’t mind

it ‘cuz he don’t weigh much, any- way. Bob’s been carved up

some with a bowie, and Tom’s been hurt once or twice.’

‘Has anybody been killed this year, Buck?’

‘Yes; we got one and they got one. ‘Bout three months

ago my cousin Bud, fourteen year old, was riding through

the woods on t’other side of the river, and didn’t have no

weapon with him, which was blame’ foolishness, and in a

lonesome place he hears a horse a-coming behind him, and

sees old Baldy Shepherdson a-linkin’ after him with his gun

in his hand and his white hair a-flying in the wind; and

‘stead of jumping off and taking to the brush, Bud ‘lowed

he could out- run him; so they had it, nip and tuck, for five

mile or more, the old man a-gaining all the time; so at last

Bud seen it warn’t any use, so he stopped and faced around

so as to have the bullet holes in front, you know, and the old

man he rode up and shot him down. But he didn’t git much

chance to enjoy his luck, for inside of a week our folks laid

HIM out.’

‘I reckon that old man was a coward, Buck.’

‘I reckon he WARN’T a coward. Not by a blame’ sight.

There ain’t a coward amongst them Shepherd- sons — not

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a one. And there ain’t no cowards amongst the Grangerfords either. Why, that old man kep’ up his end in a fight

one day for half an hour against three Grangerfords, and

come out winner. They was all a-horseback; he lit off of his

horse and got behind a little woodpile, and kep’ his horse

before him to stop the bullets; but the Grangerfords stayed

on their horses and capered around the old man, and peppered away at him, and he peppered away at them. Him and

his horse both went home pretty leaky and crip- pled, but

the Grangerfords had to be FETCHED home — and one

of ‘em was dead, and another died the next day. No, sir; if a

body’s out hunting for cowards he don’t want to fool away

any time amongst them Shep- herdsons, becuz they don’t

breed any of that KIND.’

Next Sunday we all went to church, about three mile, everybody a-horseback. The men took their guns along, so

did Buck, and kept them between their knees or stood them

handy against the wall. The Shepherdsons done the same. It

was pretty ornery preaching — all about brotherly love, and

such-like tiresomeness; but everybody said it was a good

ser- mon, and they all talked it over going home, and had

such a powerful lot to say about faith and good works and

free grace and preforeordestination, and I don’t know what

all, that it did seem to me to be one of the roughest Sundays

I had run across yet.

About an hour after dinner everybody was dozing around,

some in their chairs and some in their rooms, and it got

to be pretty dull. Buck and a dog was stretched out on the

grass in the sun sound asleep. I went up to our room, and

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judged I would take a nap myself. I found that sweet Miss

Sophia standing in her door, which was next to ours, and

she took me in her room and shut the door very soft, and

asked me if I liked her, and I said I did; and she asked me if I

would do something for her and not tell anybody, and I said

I would. Then she said she’d forgot her Testament, and left

it in the seat at church between two other books, and would

I slip out quiet and go there and fetch it to her, and not say

nothing to nobody. I said I would. So I slid out and slipped

off up the road, and there warn’t anybody at the church, except maybe a hog or two, for there warn’t any lock on the

door, and hogs likes a puncheon floor in summer-time because it’s cool. If you notice, most folks don’t go to church

only when they’ve got to; but a hog is different.

Says I to myself, something’s up; it ain’t natural for a girl

to be in such a sweat about a Testament. So I give it a shake,

and out drops a little piece of paper with ‘HALF-PAST

TWO’ wrote on it with a pencil. I ransacked it, but couldn’t

find anything else. I couldn’t make anything out of that, so

I put the paper in the book again, and when I got home and

upstairs there was Miss Sophia in her door waiting for me.

She pulled me in and shut the door; then she looked in the

Testament till she found the paper, and as soon as she read it

she looked glad; and before a body could think she grabbed

me and give me a squeeze, and said I was the best boy in

the world, and not to tell anybody. She was mighty red in

the face for a minute, and her eyes lighted up, and it made

her powerful pretty. I was a good deal astonished, but when

I got my breath I asked her what the paper was about, and

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she asked me if I had read it, and I said no, and she asked

me if I could read writing, and I told her ‘no, only coarsehand,’ and then she said the paper warn’t anything but a

book-mark to keep her place, and I might go and play now.

I went off down to the river, studying over this thing, and

pretty soon I noticed that my nigger was following along

behind. When we was out of sight of the house he looked

back and around a second, and then comes a-running, and

says:

‘Mars Jawge, if you’ll come down into de swamp I’ll show

you a whole stack o’ water-moccasins.’

Thinks I, that’s mighty curious; he said that yester- day.

He oughter know a body don’t love water- moccasins

enough to go around hunting for them. What is he up to,

anyway? So I says:

‘All right; trot ahead.’

I followed a half a mile; then he struck out over the

swamp, and waded ankle deep as much as another half-mile.

We come to a little flat piece of land which was dry and very

thick with trees and bushes and vines, and he says:

‘You shove right in dah jist a few steps, Mars Jawge; dah’s

whah dey is. I’s seed ‘m befo’; I don’t k’yer to see ‘em no

mo’.’

Then he slopped right along and went away, and pretty

soon the trees hid him. I poked into the place a-ways and

come to a little open patch as big as a bedroom all hung

around with vines, and found a man laying there asleep —

and, by jings, it was my old Jim!

I waked him up, and I reckoned it was going to be a

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grand surprise to him to see me again, but it warn’t. He

nearly cried he was so glad, but he warn’t sur- prised. Said

he swum along behind me that night, and heard me yell every time, but dasn’t answer, be- cause he didn’t want nobody

to pick HIM up and take him into slavery again. Says he:

‘I got hurt a little, en couldn’t swim fas’, so I wuz a considable ways behine you towards de las’; when you landed

I reck’ned I could ketch up wid you on de lan’ ‘dout havin’

to shout at you, but when I see dat house I begin to go slow.

I ‘uz off too fur to hear what dey say to you — I wuz ‘fraid

o’ de dogs; but when it ‘uz all quiet agin I knowed you’s in

de house, so I struck out for de woods to wait for day. Early

in de mawnin’ some er de niggers come along, gwyne to

de fields, en dey tuk me en showed me dis place, whah de

dogs can’t track me on accounts o’ de water, en dey brings

me truck to eat every night, en tells me how you’s a-gitt’n

along.’

‘Why didn’t you tell my Jack to fetch me here sooner,

Jim?’

‘Well, ‘twarn’t no use to ‘sturb you, Huck, tell we could

do sumfn — but we’s all right now. I ben a- buyin’ pots en

pans en vittles, as I got a chanst, en a- patchin’ up de raf’

nights when —‘

‘WHAT raft, Jim?’

‘Our ole raf’.’

‘You mean to say our old raft warn’t smashed all to

flinders?’

‘No, she warn’t. She was tore up a good deal — one en’ of

her was; but dey warn’t no great harm done, on’y our traps

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was mos’ all los’. Ef we hadn’ dive’ so deep en swum so fur

under water, en de night hadn’ ben so dark, en we warn’t

so sk’yerd, en ben sich punkin-heads, as de sayin’ is, we’d a

seed de raf’. But it’s jis’ as well we didn’t, ‘kase now she’s all

fixed up agin mos’ as good as new, en we’s got a new lot o’

stuff, in de place o’ what ‘uz los’.’

‘Why, how did you get hold of the raft again, Jim — did

you catch her?’

‘How I gwyne to ketch her en I out in de woods? No; some

er de niggers foun’ her ketched on a snag along heah in de

ben’, en dey hid her in a crick ‘mongst de willows, en dey

wuz so much jawin’ ‘bout which un ‘um she b’long to de

mos’ dat I come to heah ‘bout it pooty soon, so I ups en settles de trouble by tellin’ ‘um she don’t b’long to none uv um,

but to you en me; en I ast ‘m if dey gwyne to grab a young

white genlman’s propaty, en git a hid’n for it? Den I gin ‘m

ten cents apiece, en dey ‘uz mighty well satis- fied, en wisht

some mo’ raf’s ‘ud come along en make ‘m rich agin. Dey’s

mighty good to me, dese niggers is, en whatever I wants ‘m

to do fur me I doan’ have to ast ‘m twice, honey. Dat Jack’s

a good nigger, en pooty smart.’

‘Yes, he is. He ain’t ever told me you was here; told me to

come, and he’d show me a lot of water- moccasins. If anything happens HE ain’t mixed up in it. He can say he never

seen us together, and it ‘ll be the truth.’

I don’t want to talk much about the next day. I reckon I’ll

cut it pretty short. I waked up about dawn, and was a-going

to turn over and go to sleep again when I noticed how still it

was — didn’t seem to be anybody stirring. That warn’t usu-

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al. Next I noticed that Buck was up and gone. Well, I gets up,

a-wondering, and goes down stairs — nobody around; everything as still as a mouse. Just the same outside. Thinks I,

what does it mean? Down by the wood- pile I comes across

my Jack, and says:

‘What’s it all about?’

Says he:

‘Don’t you know, Mars Jawge?’

‘No,’ says I, ‘I don’t.’

‘Well, den, Miss Sophia’s run off! ‘deed she has. She run

off in de night some time — nobody don’t know jis’ when;

run off to get married to dat young Harney Shepherdson,

you know — leastways, so dey ‘spec. De fambly foun’ it out

‘bout half an hour ago — maybe a little mo’ — en’ I TELL

you dey warn’t no time los’. Sich another hurryin’ up guns

en hosses YOU never see! De women folks has gone for to

stir up de relations, en ole Mars Saul en de boys tuck dey

guns en rode up de river road for to try to ketch dat young

man en kill him ‘fo’ he kin git acrost de river wid Miss Sophia. I reck’n dey’s gwyne to be mighty rough times.’

‘Buck went off ‘thout waking me up.’

‘Well, I reck’n he DID! Dey warn’t gwyne to mix you up

in it. Mars Buck he loaded up his gun en ‘lowed he’s gwyne

to fetch home a Shepherdson or bust. Well, dey’ll be plenty

un ‘m dah, I reck’n, en you bet you he’ll fetch one ef he gits

a chanst.’

I took up the river road as hard as I could put. By and by I

begin to hear guns a good ways off. When I came in sight of

the log store and the woodpile where the steamboats lands

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I worked along under the trees and brush till I got to a good

place, and then I clumb up into the forks of a cottonwood

that was out of reach, and watched. There was a wood-rank

four foot high a little ways in front of the tree, and first I was

going to hide behind that; but maybe it was luckier I didn’t.

There was four or five men cavorting around on their

horses in the open place before the log store, cussing and

yelling, and trying to get at a couple of young chaps that was

behind the wood-rank alongside of the steamboat landing;

but they couldn’t come it. Every time one of them showed

himself on the river side of the woodpile he got shot at. The

two boys was squatting back to back behind the pile, so they

could watch both ways.

By and by the men stopped cavorting around and yelling. They started riding towards the store; then up gets one

of the boys, draws a steady bead over the wood-rank, and

drops one of them out of his saddle. All the men jumped

off of their horses and grabbed the hurt one and started to

carry him to the store; and that minute the two boys started

on the run. They got half way to the tree I was in before the

men noticed. Then the men see them, and jumped on their

horses and took out after them. They gained on the boys,

but it didn’t do no good, the boys had too good a start; they

got to the woodpile that was in front of my tree, and slipped

in behind it, and so they had the bulge on the men again.

One of the boys was Buck, and the other was a slim young

chap about nineteen years old.

The men ripped around awhile, and then rode away. As

soon as they was out of sight I sung out to Buck and told

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him. He didn’t know what to make of my voice coming out

of the tree at first. He was awful surprised. He told me to

watch out sharp and let him know when the men come in

sight again; said they was up to some devilment or other

— wouldn’t be gone long. I wished I was out of that tree, but

I dasn’t come down. Buck begun to cry and rip, and ‘lowed

that him and his cousin Joe (that was the other young chap)

would make up for this day yet. He said his father and his

two brothers was killed, and two or three of the enemy. Said

the Shepherdsons laid for them in ambush. Buck said his father and brothers ought to waited for their relations — the

Shepherdsons was too strong for them. I asked him what

was be- come of young Harney and Miss Sophia. He said

they’d got across the river and was safe. I was glad of that;

but the way Buck did take on because he didn’t manage to

kill Harney that day he shot at him — I hain’t ever heard

anything like it.

All of a sudden, bang! bang! bang! goes three or four

guns — the men had slipped around through the woods

and come in from behind without their horses! The boys

jumped for the river — both of them hurt — and as they

swum down the current the men run along the bank shooting at them and singing out, ‘Kill them, kill them!’ It made

me so sick I most fell out of the tree. I ain’t a-going to tell

ALL that happened — it would make me sick again if I was

to do that. I wished I hadn’t ever come ashore that night to

see such things. I ain’t ever going to get shut of them — lots

of times I dream about them.

I stayed in the tree till it begun to get dark, afraid to

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come down. Sometimes I heard guns away off in the woods;

and twice I seen little gangs of men gallop past the log

store with guns; so I reckoned the trouble was still a-going on. I was mighty downhearted; so I made up my mind I

wouldn’t ever go anear that house again, because I reckoned

I was to blame, somehow. I judged that that piece of paper

meant that Miss Sophia was to meet Harney somewheres at

half-past two and run off; and I judged I ought to told her

father about that paper and the curious way she acted, and

then maybe he would a locked her up, and this awful mess

wouldn’t ever happened.

When I got down out of the tree I crept along down the

river bank a piece, and found the two bodies laying in the

edge of the water, and tugged at them till I got them ashore;

then I covered up their faces, and got away as quick as I

could. I cried a little when I was covering up Buck’s face, for

he was mighty good to me.

It was just dark now. I never went near the house, but

struck through the woods and made for the swamp. Jim

warn’t on his island, so I tramped off in a hurry for the crick,

and crowded through the willows, red-hot to jump aboard

and get out of that awful country. The raft was gone! My

souls, but I was scared! I couldn’t get my breath for most

a minute. Then I raised a yell. A voice not twenty-five foot

from me says:

‘Good lan’! is dat you, honey? Doan’ make no noise.’

It was Jim’s voice — nothing ever sounded so good before. I run along the bank a piece and got aboard, and Jim

he grabbed me and hugged me, he was so glad to see me.

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He says:

‘Laws bless you, chile, I ‘uz right down sho’ you’s dead

agin. Jack’s been heah; he say he reck’n you’s ben shot, kase

you didn’ come home no mo’; so I’s jes’ dis minute a startin’ de raf’ down towards de mouf er de crick, so’s to be all

ready for to shove out en leave soon as Jack comes agin en

tells me for certain you IS dead. Lawsy, I’s mighty glad to git

you back again, honey.

I says:

‘All right — that’s mighty good; they won’t find me, and

they’ll think I’ve been killed, and floated down the river —

there’s something up there that ‘ll help them think so — so

don’t you lose no time, Jim, but just shove off for the big water as fast as ever you can.’

I never felt easy till the raft was two mile below there and

out in the middle of the Mississippi. Then we hung up our

signal lantern, and judged that we was free and safe once

more. I hadn’t had a bite to eat since yesterday, so Jim he

got out some corn-dodgers and buttermilk, and pork and

cabbage and greens — there ain’t nothing in the world so

good when it’s cooked right — and whilst I eat my supper

we talked and had a good time. I was powerful glad to get

away from the feuds, and so was Jim to get away from the

swamp. We said there warn’t no home like a raft, after all.

Other places do seem so cramped up and smothery, but a

raft don’t. You feel mighty free and easy and comfortable

on a raft.

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Chapter XIX

TWO or three days and nights went by; I reckon I might

say they swum by, they slid along so quiet and smooth

and lovely. Here is the way we put in the time. It was a monstrous big river down there — sometimes a mile and a half

wide; we run nights, and laid up and hid daytimes; soon as

night was most gone we stopped navigating and tied up —

nearly always in the dead water under a towhead; and then

cut young cottonwoods and willows, and hid the raft with

them. Then we set out the lines. Next we slid into the river

and had a swim, so as to freshen up and cool off; then we

set down on the sandy bottom where the water was about

knee deep, and watched the day- light come. Not a sound

anywheres — perfectly still — just like the whole world was

asleep, only sometimes the bullfrogs a-cluttering, maybe.

The first thing to see, looking away over the water, was a

kind of dull line — that was the woods on t’other side; you

couldn’t make nothing else out; then a pale place in the sky;

then more paleness spreading around; then the river softened up away off, and warn’t black any more, but gray; you

could see little dark spots drifting along ever so far away

— trading scows, and such things; and long black streaks

— rafts; sometimes you could hear a sweep screaking; or

jumbled up voices, it was so still, and sounds come so far;

and by and by you could see a streak on the water which you

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know by the look of the streak that there’s a snag there in a

swift current which breaks on it and makes that streak look

that way; and you see the mist curl up off of the water, and

the east reddens up, and the river, and you make out a logcabin in the edge of the woods, away on the bank on t’other

side of the river, being a woodyard, likely, and piled by them

cheats so you can throw a dog through it anywheres; then

the nice breeze springs up, and comes fanning you from

over there, so cool and fresh and sweet to smell on account

of the woods and the flowers; but sometimes not that way,

because they’ve left dead fish laying around, gars and such,

and they do get pretty rank; and next you’ve got the full day,

and every- thing smiling in the sun, and the song-birds just

going it!

A little smoke couldn’t be noticed now, so we would take

some fish off of the lines and cook up a hot break- fast. And

afterwards we would watch the lonesome- ness of the river, and kind of lazy along, and by and by lazy off to sleep.

Wake up by and by, and look to see what done it, and maybe

see a steamboat coughing along up-stream, so far off towards the other side you couldn’t tell nothing about her

only whether she was a stern-wheel or side-wheel; then for

about an hour there wouldn’t be nothing to hear nor nothing to see — just solid lonesomeness. Next you’d see a raft

sliding by, away off yonder, and maybe a galoot on it chopping, because they’re most always doing it on a raft; you’d

see the axe flash and come down — you don’t hear nothing;

you see that axe go up again, and by the time it’s above the

man’s head then you hear the K’CHUNK! — it had took all

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that time to come over the water. So we would put in the day,

lazying around, listening to the stillness. Once there was a

thick fog, and the rafts and things that went by was beating

tin pans so the steamboats wouldn’t run over them. A scow

or a raft went by so close we could hear them talking and

cussing and laughing — heard them plain; but we couldn’t

see no sign of them; it made you feel crawly; it was like spirits carrying on that way in the air. Jim said he believed it

was spirits; but I says:

‘No; spirits wouldn’t say, ‘Dern the dern fog.’’

Soon as it was night out we shoved; when we got her out

to about the middle we let her alone, and let her float wherever the current wanted her to; then we lit the pipes, and

dangled our legs in the water, and talked about all kinds

of things — we was always naked, day and night, whenever

the mosquitoes would let us — the new clothes Buck’s folks

made for me was too good to be comfortable, and besides I

didn’t go much on clothes, nohow.

Sometimes we’d have that whole river all to ourselves

for the longest time. Yonder was the banks and the islands,

across the water; and maybe a spark — which was a candle

in a cabin window; and sometimes on the water you could

see a spark or two — on a raft or a scow, you know; and

maybe you could hear a fiddle or a song coming over from

one of them crafts. It’s lovely to live on a raft. We had the sky

up there, all speckled with stars, and we used to lay on our

backs and look up at them, and discuss about whether they

was made or only just happened. Jim he allowed they was

made, but I allowed they happened; I judged it would have

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took too long to MAKE so many. Jim said the moon could a

LAID them; well, that looked kind of reasonable, so I didn’t

say nothing against it, because I’ve seen a frog lay most as

many, so of course it could be done. We used to watch the

stars that fell, too, and see them streak down. Jim allowed

they’d got spoiled and was hove out of the nest.

Once or twice of a night we would see a steamboat slipping along in the dark, and now and then she would belch

a whole world of sparks up out of her chimbleys, and they

would rain down in the river and look awful pretty; then

she would turn a corner and her lights would wink out and

her powwow shut off and leave the river still again; and by

and by her waves would get to us, a long time after she was

gone, and joggle the raft a bit, and after that you wouldn’t

hear nothing for you couldn’t tell how long, except maybe

frogs or something.

After midnight the people on shore went to bed, and

then for two or three hours the shores was black — no more

sparks in the cabin windows. These sparks was our clock —

the first one that showed again meant morning was coming,

so we hunted a place to hide and tie up right away.

One morning about daybreak I found a canoe and crossed

over a chute to the main shore — it was only two hundred

yards — and paddled about a mile up a crick amongst the

cypress woods, to see if I couldn’t get some berries. Just as

I was passing a place where a kind of a cowpath crossed the

crick, here comes a couple of men tearing up the path as

tight as they could foot it. I thought I was a goner, for whenever anybody was after anybody I judged it was ME — or

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maybe Jim. I was about to dig out from there in a hurry, but

they was pretty close to me then, and sung out and begged

me to save their lives — said they hadn’t been doing nothing, and was being chased for it — said there was men and

dogs a-coming. They wanted to jump right in, but I says:

‘Don’t you do it. I don’t hear the dogs and horses yet;

you’ve got time to crowd through the brush and get up the

crick a little ways; then you take to the water and wade down

to me and get in — that’ll throw the dogs off the scent.’

They done it, and soon as they was aboard I lit out for

our towhead, and in about five or ten minutes we heard the

dogs and the men away off, shouting. We heard them come

along towards the crick, but couldn’t see them; they seemed

to stop and fool around a while; then, as we got further and

further away all the time, we couldn’t hardly hear them at

all; by the time we had left a mile of woods behind us and

struck the river, everything was quiet, and we paddled over

to the towhead and hid in the cottonwoods and was safe.

One of these fellows was about seventy or upwards, and

had a bald head and very gray whiskers. He had an old battered-up slouch hat on, and a greasy blue woollen shirt, and

ragged old blue jeans britches stuffed into his boot-tops,

and home-knit galluses — no, he only had one. He had an

old long-tailed blue jeans coat with slick brass buttons flung

over his arm, and both of them had big, fat, ratty-looking

carpet-bags.

The other fellow was about thirty, and dressed about as

ornery. After breakfast we all laid off and talked, and the

first thing that come out was that these chaps didn’t know

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one another.

‘What got you into trouble?’ says the baldhead to t’other

chap.

‘Well, I’d been selling an article to take the tartar off the

teeth — and it does take it off, too, and generly the enamel

along with it — but I stayed about one night longer than I

ought to, and was just in the act of sliding out when I ran

across you on the trail this side of town, and you told me

they were coming, and begged me to help you to get off. So I

told you I was ex- pecting trouble myself, and would scatter

out WITH you. That’s the whole yarn — what’s yourn?

‘Well, I’d ben a-running’ a little temperance revival thar

‘bout a week, and was the pet of the women folks, big and

little, for I was makin’ it mighty warm for the rummies, I

TELL you, and takin’ as much as five or six dollars a night —

ten cents a head, children and niggers free — and business

a-growin’ all the time, when somehow or another a little report got around last night that I had a way of puttin’ in my

time with a private jug on the sly. A nigger rousted me out

this mornin’, and told me the people was getherin’ on the

quiet with their dogs and horses, and they’d be along pretty

soon and give me ‘bout half an hour’s start, and then run

me down if they could; and if they got me they’d tar and

feather me and ride me on a rail, sure. I didn’t wait for no

breakfast — I warn’t hungry.’

‘Old man,’ said the young one, ‘I reckon we might doubleteam it together; what do you think?’

‘I ain’t undisposed. What’s your line — mainly?’

‘Jour printer by trade; do a little in patent medi- cines; the-

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ater-actor — tragedy, you know; take a turn to mesmerism

and phrenology when there’s a chance; teach singing-geography school for a change; sling a lecture sometimes — oh,

I do lots of things — most anything that comes handy, so it

ain’t work. What’s your lay?’

‘I’ve done considerble in the doctoring way in my time.

Layin’ on o’ hands is my best holt — for cancer and paralysis, and sich things; and I k’n tell a fortune pretty good

when I’ve got somebody along to find out the facts for me.

Preachin’s my line, too, and workin’ camp-meetin’s, and

missionaryin’ around.’

Nobody never said anything for a while; then the young

man hove a sigh and says:

‘Alas!’

‘What ‘re you alassin’ about?’ says the bald- head.

‘To think I should have lived to be leading such a life, and

be degraded down into such company.’ And he begun to

wipe the corner of his eye with a rag.

‘Dern your skin, ain’t the company good enough for you?’

says the baldhead, pretty pert and uppish.

‘ Yes, it IS good enough for me; it’s as good as I deserve;

for who fetched me so low when I was so high? I did myself.

I don’t blame YOU, gentlemen — far from it; I don’t blame

anybody. I deserve it all. Let the cold world do its worst;

one thing I know — there’s a grave somewhere for me. The

world may go on just as it’s always done, and take everything from me — loved ones, property, everything; but it

can’t take that. Some day I’ll lie down in it and for- get it

all, and my poor broken heart will be at rest.’ He went on

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a-wiping.

‘Drot your pore broken heart,’ says the baldhead; ‘what

are you heaving your pore broken heart at US f’r? WE hain’t

done nothing.’

‘No, I know you haven’t. I ain’t blaming you, gentlemen.

I brought myself down — yes, I did it myself. It’s right I

should suffer — perfectly right — I don’t make any moan.’

‘Brought you down from whar? Whar was you brought

down from?’

‘Ah, you would not believe me; the world never believes

— let it pass — ‘tis no matter. The secret of my birth —‘

‘The secret of your birth! Do you mean to say —‘

‘Gentlemen,’ says the young man, very solemn, ‘I will reveal it to you, for I feel I may have confi- dence in you. By

rights I am a duke!’

Jim’s eyes bugged out when he heard that; and I reckon

mine did, too. Then the baldhead says: ‘No! you can’t mean

it?’

‘Yes. My great-grandfather, eldest son of the Duke of

Bridgewater, fled to this country about the end of the last

century, to breathe the pure air of free- dom; married here,

and died, leaving a son, his own father dying about the

same time. The second son of the late duke seized the titles

and estates — the infant real duke was ignored. I am the

lineal descendant of that infant — I am the rightful Duke

of Bridgewater; and here am I, forlorn, torn from my high

estate, hunted of men, despised by the cold world, ragged,

worn, heart-broken, and degraded to the companion- ship

of felons on a raft!’

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Jim pitied him ever so much, and so did I. We tried to

comfort him, but he said it warn’t much use, he couldn’t be

much comforted; said if we was a mind to acknowledge him,

that would do him more good than most anything else; so

we said we would, if he would tell us how. He said we ought

to bow when we spoke to him, and say ‘Your Grace,’ or ‘My

Lord,’ or ‘Your Lordship’ — and he wouldn’t mind it if we

called him plain ‘Bridgewater,’ which, he said, was a title

anyway, and not a name; and one of us ought to wait on him

at dinner, and do any little thing for him he wanted done.

Well, that was all easy, so we done it. All through dinner Jim stood around and waited on him, and says, ‘Will

yo’ Grace have some o’ dis or some o’ dat?’ and so on, and a

body could see it was mighty pleasing to him.

But the old man got pretty silent by and by — didn’t have

much to say, and didn’t look pretty comfortable over all that

petting that was going on around that duke. He seemed to

have something on his mind. So, along in the afternoon, he

says:

‘Looky here, Bilgewater,’ he says, ‘I’m nation sorry for you,

but you ain’t the only person that’s had troubles like that.’

‘No?’

‘No you ain’t. You ain’t the only person that’s ben snaked

down wrongfully out’n a high place.’

‘Alas!’

‘No, you ain’t the only person that’s had a secret of his

birth.’ And, by jings, HE begins to cry.

‘Hold! What do you mean?’

‘Bilgewater, kin I trust you?’ says the old man, still sort

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of sobbing.

‘To the bitter death!’ He took the old man by the hand and

squeezed it, and says, ‘That secret of your being: speak!’

‘Bilgewater, I am the late Dauphin!’

You bet you, Jim and me stared this time. Then the duke

says:

‘You are what?’

‘Yes, my friend, it is too true — your eyes is look- in’ at

this very moment on the pore disappeared Dauphin, Looy

the Seventeen, son of Looy the Six- teen and Marry Antonette.’

‘You! At your age! No! You mean you’re the late Charlemagne; you must be six or seven hun- dred years old, at

the very least.’

‘Trouble has done it, Bilgewater, trouble has done it;

trouble has brung these gray hairs and this prema- ture balditude. Yes, gentlemen, you see before you, in blue jeans and

misery, the wanderin’, exiled, tram- pled-on, and sufferin’

rightful King of France.’

Well, he cried and took on so that me and Jim didn’t

know hardly what to do, we was so sorry — and so glad and

proud we’d got him with us, too. So we set in, like we done

before with the duke, and tried to comfort HIM. But he said

it warn’t no use, nothing but to be dead and done with it all

could do him any good; though he said it often made him

feel easier and better for a while if people treated him according to his rights, and got down on one knee to speak to

him, and always called him ‘Your Majesty,’ and waited on

him first at meals, and didn’t set down in his presence till

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he asked them. So Jim and me set to majestying him, and

doing this and that and t’other for him, and standing up

till he told us we might set down. This done him heaps of

good, and so he got cheerful and comfortable. But the duke

kind of soured on him, and didn’t look a bit satisfied with

the way things was going; still, the king acted real friendly

towards him, and said the duke’s great-grandfather and all

the other Dukes of Bilgewater was a good deal thought of by

HIS father, and was allowed to come to the palace considerable; but the duke stayed huffy a good while, till by and by

the king says:

‘Like as not we got to be together a blamed long time on

this h-yer raft, Bilgewater, and so what’s the use o’ your bein’

sour? It ‘ll only make things on- comfortable. It ain’t my

fault I warn’t born a duke, it ain’t your fault you warn’t born

a king — so what’s the use to worry? Make the best o’ things

the way you find ‘em, says I — that’s my motto. This ain’t

no bad thing that we’ve struck here — plenty grub and an

easy life — come, give us your hand, duke, and le’s all be

friends.’

The duke done it, and Jim and me was pretty glad to see

it. It took away all the uncomfortableness and we felt mighty

good over it, because it would a been a miserable business

to have any unfriendliness on the raft; for what you want,

above all things, on a raft, is for everybody to be satisfied,

and feel right and kind towards the others.

It didn’t take me long to make up my mind that these

liars warn’t no kings nor dukes at all, but just low-down

humbugs and frauds. But I never said nothing, never let on;

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kept it to myself; it’s the best way; then you don’t have no

quarrels, and don’t get into no trouble. If they wanted us to

call them kings and dukes, I hadn’t no objections, ‘long as it

would keep peace in the family; and it warn’t no use to tell

Jim, so I didn’t tell him. If I never learnt nothing else out of

pap, I learnt that the best way to get along with his kind of

people is to let them have their own way.

CHAPTER XX.

THEY asked us considerable many questions; wanted to

know what we covered up the raft that way for, and laid by

in the daytime instead of running — was Jim a runaway

nigger? Says I:

‘Goodness sakes! would a runaway nigger run SOUTH?’

No, they allowed he wouldn’t. I had to account for things

some way, so I says:

‘My folks was living in Pike County, in Missouri, where I

was born, and they all died off but me and pa and my brother Ike. Pa, he ‘lowed he’d break up and go down and live

with Uncle Ben, who’s got a little one-horse place on the river, forty-four mile below Orleans. Pa was pretty poor, and

had some debts; so when he’d squared up there warn’t nothing left but sixteen dollars and our nigger, Jim. That warn’t

enough to take us fourteen hundred mile, deck passage nor

no other way. Well, when the river rose pa had a streak of

luck one day; he ketched this piece of a raft; so we reckoned

we’d go down to Orleans on it. Pa’s luck didn’t hold out; a

steamboat run over the forrard corner of the raft one night,

and we all went overboard and dove under the wheel; Jim

and me come up all right, but pa was drunk, and Ike was

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only four years old, so they never come up no more. Well,

for the next day or two we had considerable trouble, because people was always coming out in skiffs and trying to

take Jim away from me, saying they be- lieved he was a runaway nigger. We don’t run day- times no more now; nights

they don’t bother us.’

The duke says:

‘Leave me alone to cipher out a way so we can run in the

daytime if we want to. I’ll think the thing over — I’ll invent

a plan that’ll fix it. We’ll let it alone for to-day, because of

course we don’t want to go by that town yonder in daylight

— it mightn’t be healthy.’

Towards night it begun to darken up and look like rain;

the heat lightning was squirting around low down in the

sky, and the leaves was beginning to shiver — it was going

to be pretty ugly, it was easy to see that. So the duke and the

king went to overhauling our wigwam, to see what the beds

was like. My bed was a straw tickQbetter than Jim’s, which

was a corn- shuck tick; there’s always cobs around about in

a shuck tick, and they poke into you and hurt; and when

you roll over the dry shucks sound like you was rolling over

in a pile of dead leaves; it makes such a rustling that you

wake up. Well, the duke allowed he would take my bed; but

the king allowed he wouldn’t. He says:

‘I should a reckoned the difference in rank would a sejested to you that a corn-shuck bed warn’t just fitten for me to

sleep on. Your Grace ‘ll take the shuck bed yourself.’

Jim and me was in a sweat again for a minute, being

afraid there was going to be some more trouble amongst

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them; so we was pretty glad when the duke says:

‘Tis my fate to be always ground into the mire under the

iron heel of oppression. Misfortune has broken my once

haughty spirit; I yield, I submit; ‘tis my fate. I am alone in

the world — let me suffer; can bear it.’

We got away as soon as it was good and dark. The king

told us to stand well out towards the middle of the river, and

not show a light till we got a long ways below the town. We

come in sight of the little bunch of lights by and by — that

was the town, you know — and slid by, about a half a mile

out, all right. When we was three-quarters of a mile below

we hoisted up our signal lantern; and about ten o’clock it

come on to rain and blow and thunder and lighten like every- thing; so the king told us to both stay on watch till the

weather got better; then him and the duke crawled into the

wigwam and turned in for the night. It was my watch below

till twelve, but I wouldn’t a turned in anyway if I’d had a

bed, because a body don’t see such a storm as that every day

in the week, not by a long sight. My souls, how the wind did

scream along! And every second or two there’d come a glare

that lit up the white-caps for a half a mile around, and you’d

see the islands looking dusty through the rain, and the trees

thrashing around in the wind; then comes a H-WHACK!

— bum! bum! bumble-umble-um-bum-bum- bum-bum —

and the thunder would go rumbling and grumbling away,

and quit — and then RIP comes an- other flash and another sockdolager. The waves most washed me off the raft

sometimes, but I hadn’t any clothes on, and didn’t mind.

We didn’t have no trouble about snags; the lightning was

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glaring and flittering around so constant that we could see

them plenty soon enough to throw her head this way or that

and miss them.

I had the middle watch, you know, but I was pretty sleepy

by that time, so Jim he said he would stand the first half of

it for me; he was always mighty good that way, Jim was. I

crawled into the wigwam, but the king and the duke had

their legs sprawled around so there warn’t no show for me;

so I laid outside — I didn’t mind the rain, because it was

warm, and the waves warn’t running so high now. About

two they come up again, though, and Jim was going to call

me; but he changed his mind, because he reckoned they

warn’t high enough yet to do any harm; but he was mistaken about that, for pretty soon all of a sudden along comes

a regular ripper and washed me over- board. It most killed

Jim a-laughing. He was the easiest nigger to laugh that ever

was, anyway.

I took the watch, and Jim he laid down and snored away;

and by and by the storm let up for good and all; and the first

cabin-light that showed I rousted him out, and we slid the

raft into hiding quarters for the day.

The king got out an old ratty deck of cards after breakfast,

and him and the duke played seven-up a while, five cents a

game. Then they got tired of it, and allowed they would ‘lay

out a campaign,’ as they called it. The duke went down into

his carpet- bag, and fetched up a lot of little printed bills

and read them out loud. One bill said, ‘The celebrated Dr.

Armand de Montalban, of Paris,’ would ‘lecture on the Science of Phrenology’ at such and such a place, on the blank

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day of blank, at ten cents admis- sion, and ‘furnish charts

of character at twenty-five cents apiece.’ The duke said that

was HIM. In an- other bill he was the ‘world-renowned

Shakespearian tragedian, Garrick the Younger, of Drury

Lane, Lon- don.’ In other bills he had a lot of other names

and done other wonderful things, like finding water and

gold with a ‘divining-rod,’ ‘dissipating witch spells,’ and so

on. By and by he says:

‘But the histrionic muse is the darling. Have you ever

trod the boards, Royalty?’

‘No,’ says the king.

‘You shall, then, before you’re three days older, Fallen

Grandeur,’ says the duke. ‘The first good town we come to

we’ll hire a hall and do the sword fight in Richard III. and

the balcony scene in Romeo and Juliet. How does that strike

you?’

‘I’m in, up to the hub, for anything that will pay, Bilgewater; but, you see, I don’t know nothing about play-actin’, and

hain’t ever seen much of it. I was too small when pap used to

have ‘em at the palace. Do you reckon you can learn me?’

‘Easy!’

‘All right. I’m jist a-freezn’ for something fresh, anyway.

Le’s commence right away.’

So the duke he told him all about who Romeo was and

who Juliet was, and said he was used to being Romeo, so the

king could be Juliet.

‘But if Juliet’s such a young gal, duke, my peeled head

and my white whiskers is goin’ to look oncommon odd on

her, maybe.’

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‘No, don’t you worry; these country jakes won’t ever

think of that. Besides, you know, you’ll be in costume, and

that makes all the difference in the world; Juliet’s in a balcony, enjoying the moonlight before she goes to bed, and

she’s got on her night- gown and her ruffled nightcap. Here

are the costumes for the parts.’

He got out two or three curtain-calico suits, which he

said was meedyevil armor for Richard III. and t’other chap,

and a long white cotton nightshirt and a ruffled nightcap to

match. The king was satisfied; so the duke got out his book

and read the parts over in the most splendid spread-eagle

way, prancing around and acting at the same time, to show

how it had got to be done; then he give the book to the king

and told him to get his part by heart.

There was a little one-horse town about three mile down

the bend, and after dinner the duke said he had ciphered

out his idea about how to run in daylight without it being

dangersome for Jim; so he allowed he would go down to

the town and fix that thing. The king allowed he would go,

too, and see if he couldn’t strike something. We was out of

coffee, so Jim said I better go along with them in the canoe

and get some.

When we got there there warn’t nobody stirring; streets

empty, and perfectly dead and still, like Sun- day. We found

a sick nigger sunning himself in a back yard, and he said

everybody that warn’t too young or too sick or too old was

gone to camp- meeting, about two mile back in the woods.

The king got the directions, and allowed he’d go and work

that camp-meeting for all it was worth, and I might go, too.

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The duke said what he was after was a printing- office.

We found it; a little bit of a concern, up over a carpenter

shop — carpenters and printers all gone to the meeting, and

no doors locked. It was a dirty, littered-up place, and had

ink marks, and handbills with pictures of horses and runaway niggers on them, all over the walls. The duke shed his

coat and said he was all right now. So me and the king lit out

for the camp-meeting.

We got there in about a half an hour fairly dripping, for it

was a most awful hot day. There was as much as a thousand

people there from twenty mile around. The woods was full

of teams and wagons, hitched everywheres, feeding out of

the wagon-troughs and stomping to keep off the flies. There

was sheds made out of poles and roofed over with branches,

where they had lemonade and gingerbread to sell, and piles

of watermelons and green corn and such-like truck.

The preaching was going on under the same kinds of

sheds, only they was bigger and held crowds of people. The

benches was made out of outside slabs of logs, with holes

bored in the round side to drive sticks into for legs. They

didn’t have no backs. The preachers had high platforms

to stand on at one end of the sheds. The women had on

sun-bonnets; and some had linsey-woolsey frocks, some

gingham ones, and a few of the young ones had on calico. Some of the young men was barefooted, and some of

the children didn’t have on any clothes but just a tow- linen

shirt. Some of the old women was knitting, and some of the

young folks was courting on the sly.

The first shed we come to the preacher was lining out a

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hymn. He lined out two lines, everybody sung it, and it was

kind of grand to hear it, there was so many of them and they

done it in such a rousing way; then he lined out two more

for them to sing — and so on. The people woke up more

and more, and sung louder and louder; and towards the end

some begun to groan, and some begun to shout. Then the

preacher begun to preach, and begun in earnest, too; and

went weaving first to one side of the platform and then the

other, and then a-leaning down over the front of it, with

his arms and his body going all the time, and shouting his

words out with all his might; and every now and then he

would hold up his Bible and spread it open, and kind of pass

it around this way and that, shouting, ‘It’s the brazen serpent in the wilderness! Look upon it and live!’ And people

would shout out, ‘Glory! — A-a-MEN!’ And so he went on,

and the people groaning and crying and saying amen:

‘Oh, come to the mourners’ bench! come, black with sin!

(AMEN!) come, sick and sore! (AMEN!) come, lame and

halt and blind! (AMEN!) come, pore and needy, sunk in

shame! (A-A-MEN!) come, all that’s worn and soiled and

suffering! — come with a broken spirit! come with a contrite heart! come in your rags and sin and dirt! the waters

that cleanse is free, the door of heaven stands open — oh,

enter in and be at rest!’ (A-A-MEN! GLORY, GLORY HALLELUJAH!)

And so on. You couldn’t make out what the preacher said

any more, on account of the shouting and crying. Folks got

up everywheres in the crowd, and worked their way just

by main strength to the mourners’ bench, with the tears

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running down their faces; and when all the mourners had

got up there to the front benches in a crowd, they sung and

shouted and flung themselves down on the straw, just crazy

and wild.

Well, the first I knowed the king got a-going, and you

could hear him over everybody; and next he went a-charging up on to the platform, and the preacher he begged him

to speak to the people, and he done it. He told them he was

a pirate — been a pirate for thirty years out in the Indian

Ocean — and his crew was thinned out considerable last

spring in a fight, and he was home now to take out some

fresh men, and thanks to goodness he’d been robbed last

night and put ashore off of a steamboat without a cent, and

he was glad of it; it was the blessedest thing that ever happened to him, because he was a changed man now, and

happy for the first time in his life; and, poor as he was, he

was going to start right off and work his way back to the

Indian Ocean, and put in the rest of his life trying to turn

the pirates into the true path; for he could do it better than

anybody else, being acquainted with all pirate crews in that

ocean; and though it would take him a long time to get

there without money, he would get there anyway, and every

time he convinced a pirate he would say to him, ‘Don’t you

thank me, don’t you give me no credit; it all belongs to them

dear people in Pokeville camp- meeting, natural brothers

and benefactors of the race, and that dear preacher there,

the truest friend a pirate ever had!’

And then he busted into tears, and so did everybody.

Then somebody sings out, ‘Take up a collection for him,

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take up a collection!’ Well, a half a dozen made a jump to do

it, but somebody sings out, ‘Let HIM pass the hat around!’

Then everybody said it, the preacher too.

So the king went all through the crowd with his hat

swabbing his eyes, and blessing the people and praising

them and thanking them for being so good to the poor pirates away off there; and every little while the prettiest kind

of girls, with the tears running down their cheeks, would

up and ask him would he let them kiss him for to remember

him by; and he always done it; and some of them he hugged

and kissed as many as five or six times — and he was invited

to stay a week; and everybody wanted him to live in their

houses, and said they’d think it was an honor; but he said

as this was the last day of the camp-meeting he couldn’t do

no good, and besides he was in a sweat to get to the Indian

Ocean right off and go to work on the pirates.

When we got back to the raft and he come to count up

he found he had collected eighty-seven dollars and seventyfive cents. And then he had fetched away a three-gallon jug

of whisky, too, that he found under a wagon when he was

starting home through the woods. The king said, take it all

around, it laid over any day he’d ever put in in the missionarying line. He said it warn’t no use talking, heathens

don’t amount to shucks alongside of pirates to work a campmeeting with.

The duke was thinking HE’D been doing pretty well till

the king come to show up, but after that he didn’t think so

so much. He had set up and printed off two little jobs for

farmers in that printing-office — horse bills — and took the

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money, four dollars. And he had got in ten dollars’ worth of

advertisements for the paper, which he said he would put

in for four dollars if they would pay in advance — so they

done it. The price of the paper was two dollars a year, but he

took in three subscriptions for half a dollar apiece on condition of them paying him in advance; they were going to

pay in cordwood and onions as usual, but he said he had

just bought the concern and knocked down the price as low

as he could afford it, and was going to run it for cash. He set

up a little piece of poetry, which he made, himself, out of

his own head — three verses — kind of sweet and saddish

— the name of it was, ‘Yes, crush, cold world, this breaking heart’ — and he left that all set up and ready to print in

the paper, and didn’t charge nothing for it. Well, he took in

nine dollars and a half, and said he’d done a pretty square

day’s work for it.

Then he showed us another little job he’d printed and

hadn’t charged for, because it was for us. It had a picture of

a runaway nigger with a bundle on a stick over his shoulder,

and ‘$200 reward’ under it. The reading was all about Jim,

and just described him to a dot. It said he run away from

St. Jacques’ planta- tion, forty mile below New Orleans, last

winter, and likely went north, and whoever would catch him

and send him back he could have the reward and expenses.

‘Now,’ says the duke, ‘after to-night we can run in the

daytime if we want to. Whenever we see any- body coming

we can tie Jim hand and foot with a rope, and lay him in the

wigwam and show this handbill and say we captured him

up the river, and were too poor to travel on a steamboat, so

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we got this little raft on credit from our friends and are going down to get the reward. Handcuffs and chains would

look still better on Jim, but it wouldn’t go well with the story

of us being so poor. Too much like jewelry. Ropes are the

correct thing — we must preserve the unities, as we say on

the boards.’

We all said the duke was pretty smart, and there couldn’t

be no trouble about running daytimes. We judged we could

make miles enough that night to get out of the reach of the

powwow we reckoned the duke’s work in the printing office

was going to make in that little town; then we could boom

right along if we wanted to.

We laid low and kept still, and never shoved out till nearly ten o’clock; then we slid by, pretty wide away from the

town, and didn’t hoist our lantern till we was clear out of

sight of it.

When Jim called me to take the watch at four in the

morning, he says:

‘Huck, does you reck’n we gwyne to run acrost any mo’

kings on dis trip?’

‘No,’ I says, ‘I reckon not.’

‘Well,’ says he, ‘dat’s all right, den. I doan’ mine one er

two kings, but dat’s enough. Dis one’s powerful drunk, en

de duke ain’ much better.’

I found Jim had been trying to get him to talk French,

so he could hear what it was like; but he said he had been

in this country so long, and had so much trouble, he’d forgot it.

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Chapter XXI

I

T was after sun-up now, but we went right on and didn’t

tie up. The king and the duke turned out by and by looking pretty rusty; but after they’d jumped overboard and

took a swim it chippered them up a good deal. After breakfast the king he took a seat on the corner of the raft, and

pulled off his boots and rolled up his britches, and let his

legs dangle in the water, so as to be comfortable, and lit his

pipe, and went to getting his Romeo and Juliet by heart.

When he had got it pretty good him and the duke begun

to practice it together. The duke had to learn him over and

over again how to say every speech; and he made him sigh,

and put his hand on his heart, and after a while he said he

done it pretty well; ‘only,’ he says, ‘you mustn’t bellow out

ROMEO! that way, like a bull — you must say it soft and

sick and languishy, so — R-o-o-meo! that is the idea; for

Juliet’s a dear sweet mere child of a girl, you know, and she

doesn’t bray like a jackass.’

Well, next they got out a couple of long swords that the

duke made out of oak laths, and begun to practice the

sword fight — the duke called himself Richard III.; and the

way they laid on and pranced around the raft was grand to

see. But by and by the king tripped and fell overboard, and

after that they took a rest, and had a talk about all kinds of

adventures they’d had in other times along the river.

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After dinner the duke says:

‘Well, Capet, we’ll want to make this a first-class show,

you know, so I guess we’ll add a little more to it. We want a

little something to answer encores with, anyway.’

‘What’s onkores, Bilgewater?’

The duke told him, and then says:

‘I’ll answer by doing the Highland fling or the sailor’s

hornpipe; and you — well, let me see — oh, I’ve got it — you

can do Hamlet’s soliloquy.’

‘Hamlet’s which?’

‘Hamlet’s soliloquy, you know; the most celebrated thing

in Shakespeare. Ah, it’s sublime, sublime! Al- ways fetches

the house. I haven’t got it in the book — I’ve only got one

volume — but I reckon I can piece it out from memory. I’ll

just walk up and down a minute, and see if I can call it back

from recollec- tion’s vaults.’

So he went to marching up and down, thinking, and

frowning horrible every now and then; then he would hoist

up his eyebrows; next he would squeeze his hand on his

forehead and stagger back and kind of moan; next he would

sigh, and next he’d let on to drop a tear. It was beautiful to

see him. By and by he got it. He told us to give attention.

Then he strikes a most noble attitude, with one leg shoved

forwards, and his arms stretched away up, and his head tilted back, looking up at the sky; and then he begins to rip

and rave and grit his teeth; and after that, all through his

speech, he howled, and spread around, and swelled up his

chest, and just knocked the spots out of any acting ever I see

before. This is the speech — I learned it, easy enough, while

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he was learning it to the king:

To be, or not to be; that is the bare bodkin

That makes calamity of so long life;

For who would fardels bear, till Birnam Wood do come to

Dunsinane,

But that the fear of something after death

Murders the innocent sleep,

Great nature’s second course,

And makes us rather sling the arrows of outrageous fortune

Than fly to others that we know not of.

There’s the respect must give us pause:

Wake Duncan with thy knocking! I would thou couldst;

For who would bear the whips and scorns of time,

The oppressor’s wrong, the proud man’s contumely,

The law’s delay, and the quietus which his pangs might take,

In the dead waste and middle of the night, when churchyards

yawn

In customary suits of solemn black,

But that the undiscovered country from whose bourne no

traveler returns,

Breathes forth contagion on the world,

And thus the native hue of resolution, like the poor cat i’ the

adage,

Is sicklied o’er with care,

And all the clouds that lowered o’er our housetops,

With this regard their currents turn awry,

And lose the name of action.

‘Tis a consummation devoutly to be wished. But soft you, the

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fair Ophelia:

Ope not thy ponderous and marble jaws,

But get thee to a nunnery — go!

Well, the old man he liked that speech, and he mighty

soon got it so he could do it first-rate. It seemed like he was

just born for it; and when he had his hand in and was excited, it was perfectly lovely the way he would rip and tear

and rair up behind when he was getting it off.

The first chance we got the duke he had some show- bills

printed; and after that, for two or three days as we floated

along, the raft was a most uncommon lively place, for there

warn’t nothing but sword fighting and rehearsing — as the

duke called it — going on all the time. One morning, when

we was pretty well down the State of Arkansaw, we come

in sight of a little one-horse town in a big bend; so we tied

up about three-quarters of a mile above it, in the mouth of

a crick which was shut in like a tunnel by the cypress trees,

and all of us but Jim took the canoe and went down there to

see if there was any chance in that place for our show.

We struck it mighty lucky; there was going to be a circus

there that afternoon, and the country people was already

beginning to come in, in all kinds of old shackly wagons,

and on horses. The circus would leave before night, so our

show would have a pretty good chance. The duke he hired

the courthouse, and we went around and stuck up our bills.

They read like this:

Shaksperean Revival ! ! !

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Wonderful Attraction!

For One Night Only!

The world renowned tragedians, David Garrick the Younger,

of Drury Lane Theatre London,

and

Edmund Kean the elder, of the Royal Haymarket Theatre,

Whitechapel, Pudding Lane, Piccadilly, London, and the

Royal Continental Theatres, in their sublime Shaksperean

Spectacle entitled

The Balcony Scene

in

Romeo and Juliet ! ! !

Romeo...................Mr. Garrick

Juliet..................Mr. Kean

Assisted by the whole strength of the company! New costumes,

new scenes, new appointments!

Also:

The thrilling, masterly, and blood-curdling Broad-sword

conflict

In Richard III. ! ! !

Richard III.............Mr. Garrick

Richmond................Mr. Kean

Also:

(by special request)

Hamlet’s Immortal Soliloquy ! !

By The Illustrious Kean!

Done by him 300 consecutive nights in Paris!

For One Night Only,

On account of imperative European engagements!

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Admission 25 cents; children and servants, 10 cents.

Then we went loafing around town. The stores and houses was most all old, shackly, dried up frame con- cerns that

hadn’t ever been painted; they was set up three or four foot

above ground on stilts, so as to be out of reach of the water when the river was over- flowed. The houses had little

gardens around them, but they didn’t seem to raise hardly

anything in them but jimpson-weeds, and sunflowers, and

ash piles, and old curled-up boots and shoes, and pieces of

bottles, and rags, and played-out tinware. The fences was

made of different kinds of boards, nailed on at dif- ferent

times; and they leaned every which way, and had gates that

didn’t generly have but one hinge — a leather one. Some

of the fences had been white- washed some time or another, but the duke said it was in Clumbus’ time, like enough.

There was generly hogs in the garden, and people driving

them out.

All the stores was along one street. They had white domestic awnings in front, and the country peo- ple hitched

their horses to the awning-posts. There was empty drygoods boxes under the awnings, and loafers roosting on

them all day long, whittling them with their Barlow knives;

and chawing tobacco, and gaping and yawning and stretching — a mighty ornery lot. They generly had on yellow straw

hats most as wide as an umbrella, but didn’t wear no coats

nor waistcoats, they called one another Bill, and Buck, and

Hank, and Joe, and Andy, and talked lazy and drawly, and

used considerable many cuss words. There was as many

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as one loafer leaning up against every awning-post, and

he most always had his hands in his britches-pockets, except when he fetched them out to lend a chaw of tobacco

or scratch. What a body was hearing amongst them all the

time was:

‘Gimme a chaw ‘v tobacker, Hank ‘

‘Cain’t; I hain’t got but one chaw left. Ask Bill.’

Maybe Bill he gives him a chaw; maybe he lies and says

he ain’t got none. Some of them kinds of loafers never has a

cent in the world, nor a chaw of tobacco of their own. They

get all their chawing by borrowing; they say to a fellow, ‘I

wisht you’d len’ me a chaw, Jack, I jist this minute give Ben

Thompson the last chaw I had’ — which is a lie pretty much

everytime; it don’t fool nobody but a stranger; but Jack ain’t

no stranger, so he says:

‘YOU give him a chaw, did you? So did your sister’s cat’s

grandmother. You pay me back the chaws you’ve awready

borry’d off’n me, Lafe Buckner, then I’ll loan you one or

two ton of it, and won’t charge you no back intrust, nuther.’

‘Well, I DID pay you back some of it wunst.’

‘Yes, you did — ‘bout six chaws. You borry’d store tobacker and paid back nigger-head.’

Store tobacco is flat black plug, but these fellows mostly

chaws the natural leaf twisted. When they borrow a chaw

they don’t generly cut it off with a knife, but set the plug in

between their teeth, and gnaw with their teeth and tug at

the plug with their hands till they get it in two; then sometimes the one that owns the tobacco looks mournful at it

when it’s handed back, and says, sarcastic:

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‘Here, gimme the CHAW, and you take the PLUG.’

All the streets and lanes was just mud; they warn’t nothing else BUT mud — mud as black as tar and nigh about a

foot deep in some places, and two or three inches deep in

ALL the places. The hogs loafed and grunted around everywheres. You’d see a muddy sow and a litter of pigs come

lazying along the street and whollop herself right down

in the way, where folks had to walk around her, and she’d

stretch out and shut her eyes and wave her ears whilst the

pigs was milking her, and look as happy as if she was on salary. And pretty soon you’d hear a loafer sing out, ‘Hi! SO

boy! sick him, Tige!’ and away the sow would go, squealing

most horrible, with a dog or two swinging to each ear, and

three or four dozen more a-coming; and then you would see

all the loafers get up and watch the thing out of sight, and

laugh at the fun and look grateful for the noise. Then they’d

settle back again till there was a dog fight. There couldn’t

anything wake them up all over, and make them happy all

over, like a dog fight — unless it might be putting turpentine on a stray dog and setting fire to him, or tying a tin pan

to his tail and see him run himself to death.

On the river front some of the houses was sticking out

over the bank, and they was bowed and bent, and about

ready to tumble in, The people had moved out of them. The

bank was caved away under one corner of some others, and

that corner was hanging over. People lived in them yet, but

it was dangersome, be- cause sometimes a strip of land as

wide as a house caves in at a time. Sometimes a belt of land a

quarter of a mile deep will start in and cave along and cave

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along till it all caves into the river in one summer. Such a

town as that has to be always moving back, and back, and

back, because the river’s always gnawing at it.

The nearer it got to noon that day the thicker and thicker

was the wagons and horses in the streets, and more coming

all the time. Families fetched their dinners with them from

the country, and eat them in the wagons. There was considerable whisky drinking going on, and I seen three fights. By

and by some- body sings out:

‘Here comes old Boggs! — in from the country for his

little old monthly drunk; here he comes, boys!’

All the loafers looked glad; I reckoned they was used to

having fun out of Boggs. One of them says:

‘Wonder who he’s a-gwyne to chaw up this time. If he’d

a-chawed up all the men he’s ben a-gwyne to chaw up in the

last twenty year he’d have considerable ruputation now.’

Another one says, ‘I wisht old Boggs ‘d threaten me, ‘cuz

then I’d know I warn’t gwyne to die for a thousan’ year.’

Boggs comes a-tearing along on his horse, whooping and

yelling like an Injun, and singing out:

‘Cler the track, thar. I’m on the waw-path, and the price

uv coffins is a-gwyne to raise.’

He was drunk, and weaving about in his saddle; he was

over fifty year old, and had a very red face. Everybody yelled

at him and laughed at him and sassed him, and he sassed

back, and said he’d attend to them and lay them out in their

regular turns, but he couldn’t wait now because he’d come

to town to kill old Colonel Sherburn, and his motto was,

‘Meat first, and spoon vittles to top off on.’

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He see me, and rode up and says:

‘Whar’d you come f’m, boy? You prepared to die?’

Then he rode on. I was scared, but a man says:

‘He don’t mean nothing; he’s always a-carryin’ on like

that when he’s drunk. He’s the best natured- est old fool in

Arkansaw — never hurt nobody, drunk nor sober.’

Boggs rode up before the biggest store in town, and bent

his head down so he could see under the curtain of the awning and yells:

‘Come out here, Sherburn! Come out and meet the man

you’ve swindled. You’re the houn’ I’m after, and I’m a-gwyne

to have you, too!’

And so he went on, calling Sherburn everything he could

lay his tongue to, and the whole street packed with people

listening and laughing and going on. By and by a proudlooking man about fifty-five — and he was a heap the best

dressed man in that town, too — steps out of the store, and

the crowd drops back on each side to let him come. He says

to Boggs, mighty ca’m and slow — he says:

‘I’m tired of this, but I’ll endure it till one o’clock. Till one

o’clock, mind — no longer. If you open your mouth against

me only once after that time you can’t travel so far but I will

find you.’

Then he turns and goes in. The crowd looked mighty

sober; nobody stirred, and there warn’t no more laughing.

Boggs rode off blackguarding Sher- burn as loud as he could

yell, all down the street; and pretty soon back he comes

and stops before the store, still keeping it up. Some men

crowded around him and tried to get him to shut up, but

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he wouldn’t; they told him it would be one o’clock in about

fifteen min- utes, and so he MUST go home — he must go

right away. But it didn’t do no good. He cussed away with

all his might, and throwed his hat down in the mud and

rode over it, and pretty soon away he went a-raging down

the street again, with his gray hair a- flying. Everybody that

could get a chance at him tried their best to coax him off of

his horse so they could lock him up and get him sober; but it

warn’t no use — up the street he would tear again, and give

Sherburn another cussing. By and by somebody says:

‘Go for his daughter! — quick, go for his daughter; sometimes he’ll listen to her. If anybody can persuade him, she

can.’

So somebody started on a run. I walked down street a

ways and stopped. In about five or ten min- utes here comes

Boggs again, but not on his horse. He was a-reeling across

the street towards me, bare- headed, with a friend on both

sides of him a-holt of his arms and hurrying him along. He

was quiet, and looked uneasy; and he warn’t hanging back

any, but was doing some of the hurrying himself. Somebody

sings out:

‘Boggs!’

I looked over there to see who said it, and it was that Colonel Sherburn. He was standing perfectly still in the street,

and had a pistol raised in his right hand — not aiming it,

but holding it out with the barrel tilted up towards the sky.

The same second I see a young girl coming on the run, and

two men with her. Boggs and the men turned round to

see who called him, and when they see the pistol the men

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jumped to one side, and the pistol-barrel come down slow

and steady to a level — both barrels cocked. Boggs throws

up both of his hands and says, ‘O Lord, don’t shoot!’ Bang!

goes the first shot, and he staggers back, clawing at the air —

bang! goes the second one, and he tumbles backwards on to

the ground, heavy and solid, with his arms spread out. That

young girl screamed out and comes rushing, and down she

throws herself on her father, crying, and saying, ‘Oh, he’s

killed him, he’s killed him!’ The crowd closed up around

them, and shouldered and jammed one another, with their

necks stretched, trying to see, and people on the inside trying to shove them back and shouting, ‘Back, back! give him

air, give him air!’

Colonel Sherburn he tossed his pistol on to the ground,

and turned around on his heels and walked off.

They took Boggs to a little drug store, the crowd pressing

around just the same, and the whole town following, and

I rushed and got a good place at the window, where I was

close to him and could see in. They laid him on the floor and

put one large Bible under his head, and opened another one

and spread it on his breast; but they tore open his shirt first,

and I seen where one of the bullets went in. He made about

a dozen long gasps, his breast lifting the Bible up when he

drawed in his breath, and letting it down again when he

breathed it out — and after that he laid still; he was dead.

Then they pulled his daughter away from him, screaming

and crying, and took her off. She was about sixteen, and

very sweet and gentle looking, but awful pale and scared.

Well, pretty soon the whole town was there, squirm-

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ing and scrouging and pushing and shoving to get at the

window and have a look, but people that had the places

wouldn’t give them up, and folks behind them was saying

all the time, ‘Say, now, you’ve looked enough, you fellows;

‘tain’t right and ‘tain’t fair for you to stay thar all the time,

and never give nobody a chance; other folks has their rights

as well as you.’

There was considerable jawing back, so I slid out, thinking maybe there was going to be trouble. The streets was

full, and everybody was excited. Every- body that seen the

shooting was telling how it hap- pened, and there was a big

crowd packed around each one of these fellows, stretching

their necks and listen- ing. One long, lanky man, with long

hair and a big white fur stovepipe hat on the back of his

head, and a crooked-handled cane, marked out the places on the ground where Boggs stood and where Sherburn

stood, and the people following him around from one place

to t’other and watching everything he done, and bob- bing

their heads to show they understood, and stoop- ing a little

and resting their hands on their thighs to watch him mark

the places on the ground with his cane; and then he stood

up straight and stiff where Sherburn had stood, frowning

and having his hat-brim down over his eyes, and sung out,

‘Boggs!’ and then fetched his cane down slow to a level, and

says ‘Bang!’ staggered backwards, says ‘Bang!’ again, and

fell down flat on his back. The people that had seen the

thing said he done it perfect; said it was just exactly the way

it all happened. Then as much as a dozen people got out

their bottles and treated him.

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Well, by and by somebody said Sherburn ought to be

lynched. In about a minute everybody was saying it; so

away they went, mad and yelling, and snatching down every clothes-line they come to to do the hang- ing with.

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Chapter XXII

THEY swarmed up towards Sherburn’s house, a- whooping and raging like Injuns, and everything had to

clear the way or get run over and tromped to mush, and

it was awful to see. Children was heeling it ahead of the

mob, screaming and trying to get out of the way; and every window along the road was full of women’s heads, and

there was nigger boys in every tree, and bucks and wenches

looking over every fence; and as soon as the mob would get

nearly to them they would break and skaddle back out of

reach. Lots of the women and girls was crying and taking

on, scared most to death.

They swarmed up in front of Sherburn’s palings as thick

as they could jam together, and you couldn’t hear yourself

think for the noise. It was a little twenty-foot yard. Some

sung out ‘Tear down the fence! tear down the fence!’ Then

there was a racket of ripping and tearing and smashing, and

down she goes, and the front wall of the crowd begins to roll

in like a wave.

Just then Sherburn steps out on to the roof of his little

front porch, with a double-barrel gun in his hand, and takes

his stand, perfectly ca’m and deliberate, not saying a word.

The racket stopped, and the wave sucked back.

Sherburn never said a word — just stood there, look- ing

down. The stillness was awful creepy and uncom- fortable.

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Sherburn run his eye slow along the crowd; and wherever

it struck the people tried a little to out- gaze him, but they

couldn’t; they dropped their eyes and looked sneaky. Then

pretty soon Sherburn sort of laughed; not the pleasant kind,

but the kind that makes you feel like when you are eating

bread that’s got sand in it.

Then he says, slow and scornful:

‘The idea of YOU lynching anybody! It’s amusing. The

idea of you thinking you had pluck enough to lynch a

MAN! Because you’re brave enough to tar and feather poor

friendless cast-out women that come along here, did that

make you think you had grit enough to lay your hands on a

MAN? Why, a MAN’S safe in the hands of ten thousand of

your kind — as long as it’s daytime and you’re not behind

him.

‘Do I know you? I know you clear through was born and

raised in the South, and I’ve lived in the North; so I know

the average all around. The average man’s a coward. In the

North he lets anybody walk over him that wants to, and

goes home and prays for a humble spirit to bear it. In the

South one man all by himself, has stopped a stage full of

men in the daytime, and robbed the lot. Your newspapers

call you a brave people so much that you think you are braver than any other people — whereas you’re just AS brave,

and no braver. Why don’t your juries hang murderers? Because they’re afraid the man’s friends will shoot them in the

back, in the dark — and it’s just what they WOULD do.

‘So they always acquit; and then a MAN goes in the night,

with a hundred masked cowards at his back and lynches the

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rascal. Your mistake is, that you didn’t bring a man with

you; that’s one mistake, and the other is that you didn’t

come in the dark and fetch your masks. You brought PART

of a man — Buck Harkness, there — and if you hadn’t had

him to start you, you’d a taken it out in blowing.

‘You didn’t want to come. The average man don’t like

trouble and danger. YOU don’t like trouble and danger. But

if only HALF a man — like Buck Harkness, there — shouts

‘Lynch him! lynch him!’ you’re afraid to back down — afraid

you’ll be found out to be what you are — COWARDS — and

so you raise a yell, and hang yourselves on to that half-aman’s coat-tail, and come raging up here, swearing what

big things you’re going to do. The pitifulest thing out is a

mob; that’s what an army is — a mob; they don’t fight with

courage that’s born in them, but with cour- age that’s borrowed from their mass, and from their officers. But a mob

without any MAN at the head of it is BENEATH pitifulness.

Now the thing for YOU to do is to droop your tails and go

home and crawl in a hole. If any real lynching’s going to

be done it will be done in the dark, Southern fashion; and

when they come they’ll bring their masks, and fetch a MAN

along. Now LEAVE — and take your half-a-man with you’

— tossing his gun up across his left arm and cocking it when

he says this.

The crowd washed back sudden, and then broke all apart,

and went tearing off every which way, and Buck Harkness

he heeled it after them, looking tolerable cheap. I could a

stayed if I wanted to, but I didn’t want to.

I went to the circus and loafed around the back side till

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the watchman went by, and then dived in under the tent. I

had my twenty-dollar gold piece and some other money, but

I reckoned I better save it, because there ain’t no telling how

soon you are going to need it, away from home and amongst

strangers that way. You can’t be too careful. I ain’t opposed

to spending money on circuses when there ain’t no other

way, but there ain’t no use in WASTING it on them.

It was a real bully circus. It was the splendidest sight

that ever was when they all come riding in, two and two, a

gentleman and lady, side by side, the men just in their drawers and undershirts, and no shoes nor stirrups, and resting

their hands on their thighs easy and comfortable — there

must a been twenty of them — and every lady with a lovely

complexion, and per- fectly beautiful, and looking just like

a gang of real sure-enough queens, and dressed in clothes

that cost millions of dollars, and just littered with diamonds. It was a powerful fine sight; I never see anything so

lovely. And then one by one they got up and stood, and went

a-weaving around the ring so gentle and wavy and graceful, the men looking ever so tall and airy and straight, with

their heads bobbing and skimming along, away up there

under the tent-roof, and every lady’s rose-leafy dress flapping soft and silky around her hips, and she looking like the

most loveliest parasol.

And then faster and faster they went, all of them dancing,

first one foot out in the air and then the other, the horses

leaning more and more, and the ringmaster going round

and round the center-pole, cracking his whip and shouting ‘Hi! — hi!’ and the clown crack- ing jokes behind him;

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and by and by all hands dropped the reins, and every lady

put her knuckles on her hips and every gentleman folded

his arms, and then how the horses did lean over and hump

themselves! And so one after the other they all skipped off

into the ring, and made the sweetest bow I ever see, and

then scampered out, and everybody clapped their hands

and went just about wild.

Well, all through the circus they done the most astonishing things; and all the time that clown carried on so it most

killed the people. The ringmaster couldn’t ever say a word to

him but he was back at him quick as a wink with the funniest things a body ever said; and how he ever COULD think

of so many of them, and so sudden and so pat, was what I

couldn’t noway understand. Why, I couldn’t a thought of

them in a year. And by and by a drunk man tried to get into

the ring — said he wanted to ride; said he could ride as well

as anybody that ever was. They argued and tried to keep

him out, but he wouldn’t listen, and the whole show come

to a standstill. Then the people begun to holler at him and

make fun of him, and that made him mad, and he begun to

rip and tear; so that stirred up the people, and a lot of men

begun to pile down off of the benches and swarm towards

the ring, saying, ‘Knock him down! throw him out!’ and one

or two women begun to scream. So, then, the ringmaster he

made a little speech, and said he hoped there wouldn’t be

no disturbance, and if the man would promise he wouldn’t

make no more trouble he would let him ride if he thought

he could stay on the horse. So everybody laughed and said

all right, and the man got on. The minute he was on, the

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horse begun to rip and tear and jump and cavort around,

with two circus men hanging on to his bridle trying to hold

him, and the drunk man hanging on to his neck, and his

heels flying in the air every jump, and the whole crowd of

people standing up shouting and laughing till tears rolled

down. And at last, sure enough, all the circus men could do,

the horse broke loose, and away he went like the very nation, round and round the ring, with that sot laying down

on him and hanging to his neck, with first one leg hanging

most to the ground on one side, and then t’other one on

t’other side, and the people just crazy. It warn’t funny to me,

though; I was all of a tremble to see his danger. But pretty

soon he struggled up astraddle and grabbed the bridle, areeling this way and that; and the next minute he sprung

up and dropped the bridle and stood! and the horse a-going like a house afire too. He just stood up there, a-sailing

around as easy and comfortable as if he warn’t ever drunk

in his life — and then he begun to pull off his clothes and

sling them. He shed them so thick they kind of clogged up

the air, and altogether he shed seventeen suits. And, then,

there he was, slim and handsome, and dressed the gaudiest

and prettiest you ever saw, and he lit into that horse with his

whip and made him fairly hum — and finally skipped off,

and made his bow and danced off to the dressing-room, and

everybody just a-howling with pleasure and astonishment.

Then the ringmaster he see how he had been fooled, and

he WAS the sickest ringmaster you ever see, I reckon. Why,

it was one of his own men! He had got up that joke all out of

his own head, and never let on to nobody. Well, I felt sheep-

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ish enough to be took in so, but I wouldn’t a been in that

ringmaster’s place, not for a thousand dollars. I don’t know;

there may be bullier circuses than what that one was, but I

never struck them yet. Anyways, it was plenty good enough

for ME; and wherever I run across it, it can have all of MY

custom every time.

Well, that night we had OUR show; but there warn’t only

about twelve people there — just enough to pay expenses.

And they laughed all the time, and that made the duke mad;

and everybody left, anyway, before the show was over, but

one boy which was asleep. So the duke said these Arkansaw lunkheads couldn’t come up to Shakespeare; what they

wanted was low comedy — and maybe something ruther

worse than low comedy, he reckoned. He said he could size

their style. So next morning he got some big sheets of wrapping paper and some black paint, and drawed off some

handbills, and stuck them up all over the village. The bills

said:

AT THE COURT HOUSE!

FOR 3 NIGHTS ONLY!

The World-Renowned Tragedians

DAVID GARRICK THE YOUNGER!

AND

EDMUND KEAN THE ELDER!

Of the London and Continental Theatres,

In their Thrilling Tragedy of

THE KING’S CAMELEOPARD,

OR

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THE ROYAL NONESUCH ! ! !

Admission 50 cents.

Then at the bottom was the biggest line of all, which

said:

LADIES AND CHILDREN NOT ADMITTED.

‘There,’ says he, ‘if that line don’t fetch them, I don’t know

Arkansaw!’

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Chapter XXIII

WELL, all day him and the king was hard at it, rigging

up a stage and a curtain and a row of candles for footlights; and that night the house was jam full of men in no

time. When the place couldn’t hold no more, the duke he

quit tending door and went around the back way and come

on to the stage and stood up before the curtain and made

a little speech, and praised up this tragedy, and said it was

the most thrillingest one that ever was; and so he went on

a- bragging about the tragedy, and about Edmund Kean the

Elder, which was to play the main principal part in it; and

at last when he’d got everybody’s expecta- tions up high

enough, he rolled up the curtain, and the next minute the

king come a-prancing out on all fours, naked; and he was

painted all over, ring- streaked-and-striped, all sorts of colors, as splendid as a rainbow. And — but never mind the

rest of his outfit; it was just wild, but it was awful funny. The

people most killed themselves laughing; and when the king

got done capering and capered off behind the scenes, they

roared and clapped and stormed and haw- hawed till he

come back and done it over again, and after that they made

him do it another time. Well, it would make a cow laugh to

see the shines that old idiot cut.

Then the duke he lets the curtain down, and bows to the

people, and says the great tragedy will be per- formed only

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two nights more, on accounts of pressing London engagements, where the seats is all sold already for it in Drury

Lane; and then he makes them another bow, and says if

he has succeeded in pleasing them and instructing them,

he will be deeply obleeged if they will mention it to their

friends and get them to come and see it.

Twenty people sings out:

‘What, is it over? Is that ALL?’

The duke says yes. Then there was a fine time. Everybody sings out, ‘Sold!’ and rose up mad, and was a-going for

that stage and them tragedians. But a big, fine looking man

jumps up on a bench and shouts:

‘Hold on! Just a word, gentlemen.’ They stopped to listen.

‘We are sold — mighty badly sold. But we don’t want to be

the laughing stock of this whole town, I reckon, and never

hear the last of this thing as long as we live. NO. What we

want is to go out of here quiet, and talk this show up, and

sell the REST of the town! Then we’ll all be in the same boat.

Ain’t that sensible?’ (“You bet it is! — the jedge is right!’ everybody sings out.) ‘All right, then — not a word about any

sell. Go along home, and ad- vise everybody to come and

see the tragedy.’

Next day you couldn’t hear nothing around that town

but how splendid that show was. House was jammed again

that night, and we sold this crowd the same way. When me

and the king and the duke got home to the raft we all had a

supper; and by and by, about midnight, they made Jim and

me back her out and float her down the middle of the river,

and fetch her in and hide her about two mile below town.

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The third night the house was crammed again — and

they warn’t new-comers this time, but people that was at

the show the other two nights. I stood by the duke at the

door, and I see that every man that went in had his pockets bulging, or something muffled up under his coat — and

I see it warn’t no perfumery, neither, not by a long sight.

I smelt sickly eggs by the barrel, and rotten cabbages, and

such things; and if I know the signs of a dead cat being

around, and I bet I do, there was sixty-four of them went

in. I shoved in there for a minute, but it was too various

for me; I couldn’t stand it. Well, when the place couldn’t

hold no more people the duke he give a fellow a quarter and

told him to tend door for him a minute, and then he started

around for the stage door, I after him; but the minute we

turned the corner and was in the dark he says:

‘Walk fast now till you get away from the houses, and

then shin for the raft like the dickens was after you!’

I done it, and he done the same. We struck the raft at

the same time, and in less than two seconds we was gliding down stream, all dark and still, and edging towards the

middle of the river, nobody saying a word. I reckoned the

poor king was in for a gaudy time of it with the audience,

but nothing of the sort; pretty soon he crawls out from under the wigwam, and says:

‘Well, how’d the old thing pan out this time, duke?’ He

hadn’t been up-town at all.

We never showed a light till we was about ten mile below

the village. Then we lit up and had a supper, and the king

and the duke fairly laughed their bones loose over the way

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they’d served them people. The duke says:

‘Greenhorns, flatheads! I knew the first house would keep

mum and let the rest of the town get roped in; and I knew

they’d lay for us the third night, and consider it was THEIR

turn now. Well, it IS their turn, and I’d give something to

know how much they’d take for it. I WOULD just like to

know how they’re putting in their opportunity. They can

turn it into a picnic if they want to — they brought plenty

provisions.’

Them rapscallions took in four hundred and sixty- five

dollars in that three nights. I never see money hauled in by

the wagon-load like that before. By and by, when they was

asleep and snoring, Jim says:

‘Don’t it s’prise you de way dem kings carries on, Huck?’

‘No,’ I says, ‘it don’t.’

‘Why don’t it, Huck?’

‘Well, it don’t, because it’s in the breed. I reckon they’re

all alike,’

‘But, Huck, dese kings o’ ourn is reglar rapscal- lions;

dat’s jist what dey is; dey’s reglar rapscallions.’

‘Well, that’s what I’m a-saying; all kings is mostly rapscallions, as fur as I can make out.’

‘Is dat so?’

‘You read about them once — you’ll see. Look at Henry the Eight; this ‘n ‘s a Sunday-school Super- intendent

to HIM. And look at Charles Second, and Louis Fourteen,

and Louis Fifteen, and James Second, and Edward Second,

and Richard Third, and forty more; besides all them Saxon heptarchies that used to rip around so in old times and

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raise Cain. My, you ought to seen old Henry the Eight when

he was in bloom. He WAS a blossom. He used to marry a

new wife every day, and chop off her head next morn- ing.

And he would do it just as indifferent as if he was ordering up eggs. ‘Fetch up Nell Gwynn,’ he says. They fetch her

up. Next morning, ‘Chop off her head!’ And they chop it

off. ‘Fetch up Jane Shore,’ he says; and up she comes, Next

morning, ‘Chop off her head’ — and they chop it off. ‘Ring

up Fair Rosamun.’ Fair Rosamun answers the bell. Next

morning, ‘Chop off her head.’ And he made every one of

them tell him a tale every night; and he kept that up till he

had hogged a thousand and one tales that way, and then

he put them all in a book, and called it Domesday Book —

which was a good name and stated the case. You don’t know

kings, Jim, but I know them; and this old rip of ourn is one

of the cleanest I’ve struck in history. Well, Henry he takes

a notion he wants to get up some trouble with this country.

How does he go at it — give notice? — give the country a

show? No. All of a sudden he heaves all the tea in Boston

Harbor overboard, and whacks out a declaration of independence, and dares them to come on. That was HIS style

— he never give anybody a chance. He had suspicions of his

father, the Duke of Wellington. Well, what did he do? Ask

him to show up? No — drownded him in a butt of mamsey,

like a cat. S’pose people left money laying around where he

was — what did he do? He collared it. S’pose he contracted to do a thing, and you paid him, and didn’t set down

there and see that he done it — what did he do? He always

done the other thing. S’pose he opened his mouth — what

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then? If he didn’t shut it up powerful quick he’d lose a lie

every time. That’s the kind of a bug Henry was; and if we’d

a had him along ‘stead of our kings he’d a fooled that town

a heap worse than ourn done. I don’t say that ourn is lambs,

because they ain’t, when you come right down to the cold

facts; but they ain’t nothing to THAT old ram, anyway. All I

say is, kings is kings, and you got to make allowances. Take

them all around, they’re a mighty ornery lot. It’s the way

they’re raised.’

‘But dis one do SMELL so like de nation, Huck.’

‘Well, they all do, Jim. We can’t help the way a king

smells; history don’t tell no way.’

‘Now de duke, he’s a tolerble likely man in some ways.’

‘Yes, a duke’s different. But not very different. This one’s

a middling hard lot for a duke. When he’s drunk there ain’t

no near-sighted man could tell him from a king.’

‘Well, anyways, I doan’ hanker for no mo’ un um, Huck.

Dese is all I kin stan’.’

‘It’s the way I feel, too, Jim. But we’ve got them on our

hands, and we got to remember what they are, and make

allowances. Sometimes I wish we could hear of a country

that’s out of kings.’

What was the use to tell Jim these warn’t real kings and

dukes? It wouldn’t a done no good; and, be- sides, it was just

as I said: you couldn’t tell them from the real kind.

I went to sleep, and Jim didn’t call me when it was my

turn. He often done that. When I waked up just at daybreak

he was sitting there with his head down betwixt his knees,

moaning and mourning to himself. I didn’t take notice

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nor let on. I knowed what it was about. He was thinking

about his wife and his children, away up yonder, and he

was low and homesick; because he hadn’t ever been away

from home before in his life; and I do believe he cared just

as much for his people as white folks does for their’n. It

don’t seem natural, but I reckon it’s so. He was often moaning and mourning that way nights, when he judged I was

asleep, and saying, ‘Po’ little ‘Liza- beth! po’ little Johnny!

it’s mighty hard; I spec’ I ain’t ever gwyne to see you no mo’,

no mo’!’ He was a mighty good nigger, Jim was.

But this time I somehow got to talking to him about his

wife and young ones; and by and by he says:

‘What makes me feel so bad dis time ‘uz bekase I hear

sumpn over yonder on de bank like a whack, er a slam,

while ago, en it mine me er de time I treat my little ‘Lizabeth so ornery. She warn’t on’y ‘bout fo’ year ole, en she

tuck de sk’yarlet fever, en had a powful rough spell; but she

got well, en one day she was a-stannin’ aroun’, en I says to

her, I says:

‘Shet de do’.’

‘She never done it; jis’ stood dah, kiner smilin’ up at me.

It make me mad; en I says agin, mighty loud, I says:

‘Doan’ you hear me? Shet de do’!’

‘She jis stood de same way, kiner smilin’ up. I was a-bilin’! I says:

‘I lay I MAKE you mine!’

‘En wid dat I fetch’ her a slap side de head dat sont her

a-sprawlin’. Den I went into de yuther room, en ‘uz gone

‘bout ten minutes; en when I come back dah was dat do’

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a-stannin’ open YIT, en dat chile stannin’ mos’ right in it, alookin’ down and mournin’, en de tears runnin’ down. My,

but I WUZ mad! I was a-gwyne for de chile, but jis’ den — it

was a do’ dat open innerds — jis’ den, ‘long come de wind

en slam it to, behine de chile, ker-BLAM! — en my lan’, de

chile never move’! My breff mos’ hop outer me; en I feel so

— so — I doan’ know HOW I feel. I crope out, all a-tremblin’, en crope aroun’ en open de do’ easy en slow, en poke

my head in behine de chile, sof’ en still, en all uv a sudden I

says POW! jis’ as loud as I could yell. SHE NEVER BUDGE!

Oh, Huck, I bust out a-cryin’ en grab her up in my arms, en

say, ‘Oh, de po’ little thing! De Lord God Amighty fogive po’

ole Jim, kaze he never gwyne to fogive his- self as long’s he

live!’ Oh, she was plumb deef en dumb, Huck, plumb deef

en dumb — en I’d ben a- treat’n her so!’

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Chapter XXIV

NEXT day, towards night, we laid up under a little willow

towhead out in the middle, where there was a village

on each side of the river, and the duke and the king begun

to lay out a plan for working them towns. Jim he spoke to

the duke, and said he hoped it wouldn’t take but a few hours,

because it got mighty heavy and tiresome to him when he

had to lay all day in the wigwam tied with the rope. You

see, when we left him all alone we had to tie him, because if

any- body happened on to him all by himself and not tied it

wouldn’t look much like he was a runaway nigger, you know.

So the duke said it WAS kind of hard to have to lay roped all

day, and he’d cipher out some way to get around it.

He was uncommon bright, the duke was, and he soon

struck it. He dressed Jim up in King Lear’s outfit — it was

a long curtain-calico gown, and a white horse-hair wig and

whiskers; and then he took his theater paint and painted Jim’s face and hands and ears and neck all over a dead,

dull, solid blue, like a man that’s been drownded nine days.

Blamed if he warn’t the horriblest looking outrage I ever see.

Then the duke took and wrote out a sign on a shingle so:

Sick Arab — but harmless when not out of his head.

And he nailed that shingle to a lath, and stood the lath

up four or five foot in front of the wigwam. Jim was satisfied. He said it was a sight better than lying tied a couple of

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years every day, and trembling all over every time there was

a sound. The duke told him to make himself free and easy,

and if anybody ever come meddling around, he must hop

out of the wigwam, and carry on a little, and fetch a howl

or two like a wild beast, and he reckoned they would light

out and leave him alone. Which was sound enough judgment; but you take the average man, and he wouldn’t wait

for him to howl. Why, he didn’t only look like he was dead,

he looked considerable more than that.

These rapscallions wanted to try the Nonesuch again,

because there was so much money in it, but they judged it

wouldn’t be safe, because maybe the news might a worked

along down by this time. They couldn’t hit no project that

suited exactly; so at last the duke said he reckoned he’d lay

off and work his brains an hour or two and see if he couldn’t

put up something on the Arkansaw village; and the king he

allowed he would drop over to t’other village without any

plan, but just trust in Providence to lead him the profitable

way — meaning the devil, I reckon. We had all bought store

clothes where we stopped last; and now the king put his’n

on, and he told me to put mine on. I done it, of course. The

king’s duds was all black, and he did look real swell and

starchy. I never knowed how clothes could change a body

be- fore. Why, before, he looked like the orneriest old rip

that ever was; but now, when he’d take off his new white

beaver and make a bow and do a smile, he looked that

grand and good and pious that you’d say he had walked

right out of the ark, and maybe was old Leviticus himself.

Jim cleaned up the canoe, and I got my paddle ready. There

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was a big steamboat lay- ing at the shore away up under the

point, about three mile above the town — been there a couple of hours, taking on freight. Says the king:

‘Seein’ how I’m dressed, I reckon maybe I better arrive

down from St. Louis or Cincinnati, or some other big place.

Go for the steamboat, Huckleberry; we’ll come down to the

village on her.’

I didn’t have to be ordered twice to go and take a steamboat ride. I fetched the shore a half a mile above the village,

and then went scooting along the bluff bank in the easy water. Pretty soon we come to a nice innocent-looking young

country jake setting on a log swabbing the sweat off of his

face, for it was powerful warm weather; and he had a couple

of big carpet-bags by him.

‘Run her nose in shore,’ says the king. I done it. ‘Wher’

you bound for, young man?’

‘For the steamboat; going to Orleans.’

‘Git aboard,’ says the king. ‘Hold on a minute, my servant

‘ll he’p you with them bags. Jump out and he’p the gentleman, Adolphus’ — meaning me, I see.

I done so, and then we all three started on again. The

young chap was mighty thankful; said it was tough work

toting his baggage such weather. He asked the king where

he was going, and the king told him he’d come down the

river and landed at the other village this morning, and now

he was going up a few mile to see an old friend on a farm up

there. The young fellow says:

‘When I first see you I says to myself, ‘It’s Mr. Wilks, sure,

and he come mighty near getting here in time.’ But then I

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says again, ‘No, I reckon it ain’t him, or else he wouldn’t be

paddling up the river.’ You AIN’T him, are you?’

‘No, my name’s Blodgett — Elexander Blodgett — REVEREND Elexander Blodgett, I s’pose I must say, as I’m one o’

the Lord’s poor servants. But still I’m jist as able to be sorry

for Mr. Wilks for not arriving in time, all the same, if he’s

missed anything by it — which I hope he hasn’t.’

‘Well, he don’t miss any property by it, because he’ll get

that all right; but he’s missed seeing his brother Peter die

— which he mayn’t mind, nobody can tell as to that — but

his brother would a give anything in this world to see HIM

before he died; never talked about nothing else all these

three weeks; hadn’t seen him since they was boys together

— and hadn’t ever seen his brother William at all — that’s

the deef and dumb one — William ain’t more than thirty or thirty-five. Peter and George were the only ones that

come out here; George was the married brother; him and

his wife both died last year. Harvey and William’s the only

ones that’s left now; and, as I was saying, they haven’t got

here in time.’

‘Did anybody send ‘em word?’

‘Oh, yes; a month or two ago, when Peter was first took;

because Peter said then that he sorter felt like he warn’t going to get well this time. You see, he was pretty old, and

George’s g’yirls was too young to be much company for him,

except Mary Jane, the red-headed one; and so he was kinder

lonesome after George and his wife died, and didn’t seem to

care much to live. He most desperately wanted to see Harvey — and William, too, for that matter — because he was

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one of them kind that can’t bear to make a will. He left a

letter behind for Harvey, and said he’d told in it where his

money was hid, and how he wanted the rest of the property divided up so George’s g’yirls would be all right — for

George didn’t leave nothing. And that letter was all they

could get him to put a pen to.’

‘Why do you reckon Harvey don’t come? Wher’ does he

live?’

‘Oh, he lives in England — Sheffield — preaches there

— hasn’t ever been in this country. He hasn’t had any too

much time — and besides he mightn’t a got the letter at all,

you know.’

‘Too bad, too bad he couldn’t a lived to see his brothers,

poor soul. You going to Orleans, you say?’

‘Yes, but that ain’t only a part of it. I’m going in a ship,

next Wednesday, for Ryo Janeero, where my uncle lives.’

‘It’s a pretty long journey. But it’ll be lovely; wisht I was agoing. Is Mary Jane the oldest? How old is the others?’

‘Mary Jane’s nineteen, Susan’s fifteen, and Joanna’s about

fourteen — that’s the one that gives herself to good works

and has a hare-lip.’

‘Poor things! to be left alone in the cold world so.’

‘Well, they could be worse off. Old Peter had friends, and

they ain’t going to let them come to no harm. There’s Hobson, the Babtis’ preacher; and Deacon Lot Hovey, and Ben

Rucker, and Abner Shackleford, and Levi Bell, the lawyer;

and Dr. Rob- inson, and their wives, and the widow Bartley, and — well, there’s a lot of them; but these are the ones

that Peter was thickest with, and used to write about some-

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times, when he wrote home; so Harvey ‘ll know where to

look for friends when he gets here.’

Well, the old man went on asking questions till he just

fairly emptied that young fellow. Blamed if he didn’t inquire

about everybody and everything in that blessed town, and

all about the Wilkses; and about Peter’s business — which

was a tanner; and about George’s — which was a carpenter;

and about Har- vey’s — which was a dissentering minister;

and so on, and so on. Then he says:

‘What did you want to walk all the way up to the steamboat for?’

‘Because she’s a big Orleans boat, and I was afeard she

mightn’t stop there. When they’re deep they won’t stop for a

hail. A Cincinnati boat will, but this is a St. Louis one.’

‘Was Peter Wilks well off?’

‘Oh, yes, pretty well off. He had houses and land, and

it’s reckoned he left three or four thousand in cash hid up

som’ers.’

‘When did you say he died?’

‘I didn’t say, but it was last night.’

‘Funeral to-morrow, likely?’

‘Yes, ‘bout the middle of the day.’

‘Well, it’s all terrible sad; but we’ve all got to go, one time

or another. So what we want to do is to be prepared; then

we’re all right.’

‘Yes, sir, it’s the best way. Ma used to always say that.’

When we struck the boat she was about done load- ing,

and pretty soon she got off. The king never said nothing

about going aboard, so I lost my ride, after all. When the

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boat was gone the king made me pad- dle up another mile

to a lonesome place, and then he got ashore and says:

‘Now hustle back, right off, and fetch the duke up here,

and the new carpet-bags. And if he’s gone over to t’other

side, go over there and git him. And tell him to git himself

up regardless. Shove along, now.’

I see what HE was up to; but I never said nothing, of

course. When I got back with the duke we hid the canoe,

and then they set down on a log, and the king told him everything, just like the young fellow had said it — every last

word of it. And all the time he was a-doing it he tried to talk

like an Englishman; and he done it pretty well, too, for a

slouch. I can’t imitate him, and so I ain’t a-going to try to;

but he really done it pretty good. Then he says:

‘How are you on the deef and dumb, Bilgewater?’

The duke said, leave him alone for that; said he had

played a deef and dumb person on the histronic boards. So

then they waited for a steamboat.

About the middle of the afternoon a couple of little boats

come along, but they didn’t come from high enough up the

river; but at last there was a big one, and they hailed her.

She sent out her yawl, and we went aboard, and she was

from Cincinnati; and when they found we only wanted to

go four or five mile they was booming mad, and gave us a

cussing, and said they wouldn’t land us. But the king was

ca’m. He says:

‘If gentlemen kin afford to pay a dollar a mile apiece to

be took on and put off in a yawl, a steam- boat kin afford to

carry ‘em, can’t it?’

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So they softened down and said it was all right; and when

we got to the village they yawled us ashore. About two dozen men flocked down when they see the yawl a-coming, and

when the king says:

‘Kin any of you gentlemen tell me wher’ Mr. Peter Wilks

lives?’ they give a glance at one another, and nodded their

heads, as much as to say, ‘What d’ I tell you?’ Then one of

them says, kind of soft and gentle:

‘I’m sorry. sir, but the best we can do is to tell you where

he DID live yesterday evening.’

Sudden as winking the ornery old cretur went an to

smash, and fell up against the man, and put his chin on his

shoulder, and cried down his back, and says:

‘Alas, alas, our poor brother — gone, and we never got to

see him; oh, it’s too, too hard!’

Then he turns around, blubbering, and makes a lot of idiotic signs to the duke on his hands, and blamed if he didn’t

drop a carpet-bag and bust out a-crying. If they warn’t the

beatenest lot, them two frauds, that ever I struck.

Well, the men gathered around and sympathized with

them, and said all sorts of kind things to them, and carried

their carpet-bags up the hill for them, and let them lean on

them and cry, and told the king all about his brother’s last

moments, and the king he told it all over again on his hands

to the duke, and both of them took on about that dead tanner like they’d lost the twelve disciples. Well, if ever I struck

anything like it, I’m a nigger. It was enough to make a body

ashamed of the human race.

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Chapter XXV

THE news was all over town in two minutes, and you

could see the people tearing down on the run from every which way, some of them putting on their coats as they

come. Pretty soon we was in the middle of a crowd, and the

noise of the tramping was like a soldier march. The windows and dooryards was full; and every minute somebody

would say, over a fence:

‘Is it THEM?’

And somebody trotting along with the gang would answer back and say:

‘You bet it is.’

When we got to the house the street in front of it was

packed, and the three girls was standing in the door. Mary

Jane WAS red-headed, but that don’t make no difference,

she was most awful beautiful, and her face and her eyes was

all lit up like glory, she was so glad her uncles was come.

The king he spread his arms, and Marsy Jane she jumped for

them, and the hare-lip jumped for the duke, and there they

HAD it! Everybody most, leastways women, cried for joy to

see them meet again at last and have such good times.

Then the king he hunched the duke private — I see him

do it — and then he looked around and see the coffin, over

in the corner on two chairs; so then him and the duke, with

a hand across each other’s shoul- der, and t’other hand to

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their eyes, walked slow and solemn over there, everybody

dropping back to give them room, and all the talk and noise

stopping, people saying ‘Sh!’ and all the men taking their

hats off and drooping their heads, so you could a heard a

pin fall. And when they got there they bent over and looked

in the coffin, and took one sight, and then they bust out

a-crying so you could a heard them to Orleans, most; and

then they put their arms around each other’s necks, and

hung their chins over each other’s shoul- ders; and then for

three minutes, or maybe four, I never see two men leak the

way they done. And, mind you, everybody was doing the

same; and the place was that damp I never see anything

like it. Then one of them got on one side of the coffin, and

t’other on t’other side, and they kneeled down and rested

their foreheads on the coffin, and let on to pray all to themselves. Well, when it come to that it worked the crowd like

you never see anything like it, and everybody broke down

and went to sobbing right out loud — the poor girls, too;

and every woman, nearly, went up to the girls, without saying a word, and kissed them, solemn, on the forehead, and

then put their hand on their head, and looked up towards

the sky, with the tears running down, and then busted out

and went off sobbing and swabbing, and give the next woman a show. I never see anything so dis- gusting.

Well, by and by the king he gets up and comes for- ward

a little, and works himself up and slobbers out a speech, all

full of tears and flapdoodle about its being a sore trial for

him and his poor brother to lose the diseased, and to miss

seeing diseased alive after the long journey of four thousand

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mile, but it’s a trial that’s sweetened and sanctified to us by

this dear sym- pathy and these holy tears, and so he thanks

them out of his heart and out of his brother’s heart, because

out of their mouths they can’t, words being too weak and

cold, and all that kind of rot and slush, till it was just sickening; and then he blubbers out a pious goody- goody Amen,

and turns himself loose and goes to cry- ing fit to bust.

And the minute the words were out of his mouth

somebody over in the crowd struck up the doxolojer, and

everybody joined in with all their might, and it just warmed

you up and made you feel as good as church letting out.

Music is a good thing; and after all that soul-butter and

hogwash I never see it freshen up things so, and sound so

honest and bully.

Then the king begins to work his jaw again, and says how

him and his nieces would be glad if a few of the main principal friends of the family would take supper here with them

this evening, and help set up with the ashes of the diseased;

and says if his poor brother laying yonder could speak he

knows who he would name, for they was names that was

very dear to him, and mentioned often in his letters; and so

he will name the same, to wit, as follows, vizz.: — Rev. Mr.

Hobson, and Deacon Lot Hovey, and Mr. Ben Rucker, and

Abner Shackleford, and Levi Bell, and Dr. Robin- son, and

their wives, and the widow Bartley.

Rev. Hobson and Dr. Robinson was down to the end of

the town a-hunting together — that is, I mean the doctor

was shipping a sick man to t’other world, and the preacher

was pinting him right. Lawyer Bell was away up to Louis-

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ville on business. But the rest was on hand, and so they all

come and shook hands with the king and thanked him and

talked to him; and then they shook hands with the duke

and didn’t say nothing, but just kept a-smiling and bobbing

their heads like a passel of sapheads whilst he made all sorts

of signs with his hands and said ‘Goo-goo — goo-goo- goo’

all the time, like a baby that can’t talk.

So the king he blattered along, and managed to inquire

about pretty much everybody and dog in town, by his name,

and mentioned all sorts of little things that happened one

time or another in the town, or to George’s family, or to Peter. And he always let on that Peter wrote him the things;

but that was a lie: he got every blessed one of them out of

that young flathead that we canoed up to the steamboat.

Then Mary Jane she fetched the letter her father left behind, and the king he read it out loud and cried over it. It

give the dwelling-house and three thousand dollars, gold,

to the girls; and it give the tanyard (which was doing a good

business), along with some other houses and land (worth

about seven thousand), and three thousand dollars in gold

to Harvey and William, and told where the six thousand

cash was hid down cellar. So these two frauds said they’d

go and fetch it up, and have everything square and aboveboard; and told me to come with a candle. We shut the

cellar door behind us, and when they found the bag they

spilt it out on the floor, and it was a lovely sight, all them

yaller-boys. My, the way the king’s eyes did shine! He slaps

the duke on the shoulder and says:

‘Oh, THIS ain’t bully nor noth’n! Oh, no, I reckon not!

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Why, Biljy, it beats the Nonesuch, DON’T it?’

The duke allowed it did. They pawed the yaller- boys, and

sifted them through their fingers and let them jingle down

on the floor; and the king says:

‘It ain’t no use talkin’; bein’ brothers to a rich dead man

and representatives of furrin heirs that’s got left is the line

for you and me, Bilge. Thish yer comes of trust’n to Providence. It’s the best way, in the long run. I’ve tried ‘em all,

and ther’ ain’t no better way.’

Most everybody would a been satisfied with the pile, and

took it on trust; but no, they must count it. So they counts

it, and it comes out four hundred and fifteen dollars short.

Says the king:

‘Dern him, I wonder what he done with that four hundred and fifteen dollars?’

They worried over that awhile, and ransacked all around

for it. Then the duke says:

‘Well, he was a pretty sick man, and likely he made a mistake — I reckon that’s the way of it. The best way’s to let it

go, and keep still about it. We can spare it.’

‘Oh, shucks, yes, we can SPARE it. I don’t k’yer noth’n

‘bout that — it’s the COUNT I’m thinkin’ about. We want to

be awful square and open and above-board here, you know.

We want to lug this h-yer money up stairs and count it before everybody — then ther’ ain’t noth’n suspicious. But

when the dead man says ther’s six thous’n dollars, you know,

we don’t want to —‘

‘Hold on,’ says the duke. ‘Le’s make up the deffisit,’ and

he begun to haul out yaller-boys out of his pocket.

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‘It’s a most amaz’n’ good idea, duke — you HAVE got a

rattlin’ clever head on you,’ says the king. ‘Blest if the old

Nonesuch ain’t a heppin’ us out agin,’ and HE begun to haul

out yaller-jackets and stack them up.

It most busted them, but they made up the six thousand

clean and clear.

‘Say,’ says the duke, ‘I got another idea. Le’s go up stairs

and count this money, and then take and GIVE IT TO THE

GIRLS.’

‘Good land, duke, lemme hug you! It’s the most dazzling

idea ‘at ever a man struck. You have cert’nly got the most

astonishin’ head I ever see. Oh, this is the boss dodge, ther’

ain’t no mistake ‘bout it. Let ‘em fetch along their suspicions now if they want to — this ‘ll lay ‘em out.’

When we got up-stairs everybody gethered around the

table, and the king he counted it and stacked it up, three

hundred dollars in a pile — twenty elegant little piles. Everybody looked hungry at it, and licked their chops. Then

they raked it into the bag again, and I see the king begin to

swell himself up for another speech. He says:

‘Friends all, my poor brother that lays yonder has done

generous by them that’s left behind in the vale of sorrers.

He has done generous by these yer poor little lambs that he

loved and sheltered, and that’s left fatherless and motherless.

Yes, and we that knowed him knows that he would a done

MORE generous by ‘em if he hadn’t ben afeard o’ woundin’

his dear William and me. Now, WOULDN’T he? Ther’ ain’t

no question ‘bout it in MY mind. Well, then, what kind o’

brothers would it be that ‘d stand in his way at sech a time?

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And what kind o’ uncles would it be that ‘d rob — yes, ROB

— sech poor sweet lambs as these ‘at he loved so at sech a

time? If I know William — and I THINK I do — he — well,

I’ll jest ask him.’ He turns around and begins to make a lot

of signs to the duke with his hands, and the duke he looks at

him stupid and leather- headed a while; then all of a sudden

he seems to catch his meaning, and jumps for the king, googooing with all his might for joy, and hugs him about fifteen

times before he lets up. Then the king says, ‘I knowed it; I

reckon THAT ‘ll convince anybody the way HE feels about

it. Here, Mary Jane, Susan, Joanner, take the money — take

it ALL. It’s the gift of him that lays yonder, cold but joyful.’

Mary Jane she went for him, Susan and the hare-lip went

for the duke, and then such another hugging and kissing

I never see yet. And everybody crowded up with the tears

in their eyes, and most shook the hands off of them frauds,

saying all the time:

‘You DEAR good souls! — how LOVELY! — how COULD

you!’

Well, then, pretty soon all hands got to talking about

the diseased again, and how good he was, and what a loss

he was, and all that; and before long a big iron-jawed man

worked himself in there from outside, and stood a-listening

and looking, and not saying any- thing; and nobody saying

anything to him either, because the king was talking and

they was all busy listening. The king was saying — in the

middle of something he’d started in on —

‘— they bein’ partickler friends o’ the diseased. That’s

why they’re invited here this evenin’; but to- morrow we

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want ALL to come — everybody; for he respected everybody, he liked everybody, and so it’s fitten that his funeral

orgies sh’d be public.’

And so he went a-mooning on and on, liking to hear

himself talk, and every little while he fetched in his funeral

orgies again, till the duke he couldn’t stand it no more; so

he writes on a little scrap of paper, ‘OBSEQUIES, you old

fool,’ and folds it up, and goes to goo-gooing and reaching it

over people’s heads to him. The king he reads it and puts it

in his pocket, and says:

‘Poor William, afflicted as he is, his HEART’S aluz right.

Asks me to invite everybody to come to the funeral — wants

me to make ‘em all welcome. But he needn’t a worried — it

was jest what I was at.’

Then he weaves along again, perfectly ca’m, and goes to

dropping in his funeral orgies again every now and then,

just like he done before. And when he done it the third time

he says:

‘I say orgies, not because it’s the common term, because

it ain’t — obsequies bein’ the common term — but because

orgies is the right term. Obsequies ain’t used in England

no more now — it’s gone out. We say orgies now in England. Orgies is better, because it means the thing you’re

after more exact. It’s a word that’s made up out’n the Greek

ORGO, outside, open, abroad; and the Hebrew JEESUM, to

plant, cover up; hence inTER. So, you see, funeral orgies is

an open er public funeral.’

He was the WORST I ever struck. Well, the iron- jawed

man he laughed right in his face. Everybody was shocked.

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Everybody says, ‘Why, DOCTOR!’ and Abner Shackleford

says:

‘Why, Robinson, hain’t you heard the news? This is Harvey Wilks.’

The king he smiled eager, and shoved out his flapper, and

says:

‘Is it my poor brother’s dear good friend and phy- sician?

I —‘

‘Keep your hands off of me!’ says the doctor. ‘YOU talk

like an Englishman, DON’T you? It’s the worst imitation

I ever heard. YOU Peter Wilks’s brother! You’re a fraud,

that’s what you are!’

Well, how they all took on! They crowded around the

doctor and tried to quiet him down, and tried to explain to

him and tell him how Harvey ‘d showed in forty ways that

he WAS Harvey, and knowed every- body by name, and the

names of the very dogs, and begged and BEGGED him not

to hurt Harvey’s feelings and the poor girl’s feelings, and all

that. But it warn’t no use; he stormed right along, and said

any man that pretended to be an Englishman and couldn’t

imitate the lingo no better than what he did was a fraud and

a liar. The poor girls was hanging to the king and cry- ing;

and all of a sudden the doctor ups and turns on THEM. He

says:

‘I was your father’s friend, and I’m your friend; and I warn

you as a friend, and an honest one that wants to protect you

and keep you out of harm and trouble, to turn your backs

on that scoundrel and have nothing to do with him, the

ignorant tramp, with his idiotic Greek and Hebrew, as he

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calls it. He is the thinnest kind of an impostor — has come

here with a lot of empty names and facts which he picked

up somewheres, and you take them for PROOFS, and are

helped to fool yourselves by these foolish friends here, who

ought to know better. Mary Jane Wilks, you know me for

your friend, and for your unselfish friend, too. Now listen

to me; turn this pitiful rascal out — I BEG you to do it. Will

you?’

Mary Jane straightened herself up, and my, but she was

handsome! She says:

‘HERE is my answer.’ She hove up the bag of money and

put it in the king’s hands, and says, ‘Take this six thousand

dollars, and invest for me and my sisters any way you want

to, and don’t give us no receipt for it.’

Then she put her arm around the king on one side, and

Susan and the hare-lip done the same on the other. Everybody clapped their hands and stomped on the floor like a

perfect storm, whilst the king held up his head and smiled

proud. The doctor says:

‘All right; I wash MY hands of the matter. But I warn

you all that a time ‘s coming when you’re going to feel sick

whenever you think of this day.’ And away he went.

‘All right, doctor,’ says the king, kinder mocking him;

‘we’ll try and get ‘em to send for you;’ which made them all

laugh, and they said it was a prime good hit.

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Chapter XXVI

WELL, when they was all gone the king he asks Mary

Jane how they was off for spare rooms, and she said

she had one spare room, which would do for Uncle William,

and she’d give her own room to Uncle Harvey, which was

a little bigger, and she would turn into the room with her

sisters and sleep on a cot; and up garret was a little cubby,

with a pallet in it. The king said the cubby would do for his

valley — meaning me.

So Mary Jane took us up, and she showed them their

rooms, which was plain but nice. She said she’d have her

frocks and a lot of other traps took out of her room if they

was in Uncle Harvey’s way, but he said they warn’t. The

frocks was hung along the wall, and before them was a curtain made out of calico that hung down to the floor. There

was an old hair trunk in one corner, and a guitar-box in

another, and all sorts of little knickknacks and jimcracks

around, like girls brisken up a room with. The king said it

was all the more homely and more pleasanter for these fixings, and so don’t disturb them. The duke’s room was pretty

small, but plenty good enough, and so was my cubby.

That night they had a big supper, and all them men and

women was there, and I stood behind the king and the

duke’s chairs and waited on them, and the niggers waited on

the rest. Mary Jane she set at the head of the table, with Su-

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san alongside of her, and said how bad the biscuits was, and

how mean the preserves was, and how ornery and tough the

fried chickens was — and all that kind of rot, the way women always do for to force out compliments; and the people

all knowed everything was tiptop, and said so — said ‘How

DO you get biscuits to brown so nice?’ and ‘Where, for the

land’s sake, DID you get these amaz’n pickles?’ and all that

kind of humbug talky-talk, just the way people always does

at a supper, you know.

And when it was all done me and the hare-lip had supper

in the kitchen off of the leavings, whilst the others was helping the niggers clean up the things. The hare-lip she got to

pumping me about England, and blest if I didn’t think the

ice was getting mighty thin sometimes. She says:

‘Did you ever see the king?’

‘Who? William Fourth? Well, I bet I have — he goes to

our church.’ I knowed he was dead years ago, but I never let

on. So when I says he goes to our church, she says:

‘What — regular?’

‘Yes — regular. His pew’s right over opposite ourn — on

t’other side the pulpit.’

‘I thought he lived in London?’

‘Well, he does. Where WOULD he live?’

‘But I thought YOU lived in Sheffield?’

I see I was up a stump. I had to let on to get choked with

a chicken bone, so as to get time to think how to get down

again. Then I says:

‘I mean he goes to our church regular when he’s in Sheffield. That’s only in the summer time, when he comes there

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to take the sea baths.’

‘Why, how you talk — Sheffield ain’t on the sea.’

‘Well, who said it was?’

‘Why, you did.’

‘I DIDN’T nuther.’

‘You did!’

‘I didn’t.’

‘You did.’

‘I never said nothing of the kind.’

‘Well, what DID you say, then?’

‘Said he come to take the sea BATHS — that’s what I

said.’

‘Well, then, how’s he going to take the sea baths if it ain’t

on the sea?’

‘Looky here,’ I says; ‘did you ever see any Congress-water?’

‘Yes.’

‘Well, did you have to go to Congress to get it?’

‘Why, no.’

‘Well, neither does William Fourth have to go to the sea

to get a sea bath.’

‘How does he get it, then?’

‘Gets it the way people down here gets Congress- water — in barrels. There in the palace at Sheffield they’ve got

furnaces, and he wants his water hot. They can’t bile that

amount of water away off there at the sea. They haven’t got

no conveniences for it.’

‘Oh, I see, now. You might a said that in the first place

and saved time.’

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When she said that I see I was out of the woods again,

and so I was comfortable and glad. Next, she says:

‘Do you go to church, too?’

‘Yes — regular.’

‘Where do you set?’

‘Why, in our pew.’

‘WHOSE pew?’

‘Why, OURN — your Uncle Harvey’s.’

‘His’n? What does HE want with a pew?’

‘Wants it to set in. What did you RECKON he wanted

with it?’

‘Why, I thought he’d be in the pulpit.’

Rot him, I forgot he was a preacher. I see I was up a

stump again, so I played another chicken bone and got another think. Then I says:

‘Blame it, do you suppose there ain’t but one preacher to

a church?’

‘Why, what do they want with more?’

‘What! — to preach before a king? I never did see such a

girl as you. They don’t have no less than seventeen.’

‘Seventeen! My land! Why, I wouldn’t set out such a

string as that, not if I NEVER got to glory. It must take ‘em

a week.’

‘Shucks, they don’t ALL of ‘em preach the same day —

only ONE of ‘em.’

‘Well, then, what does the rest of ‘em do?’

‘Oh, nothing much. Loll around, pass the plate — and

one thing or another. But mainly they don’t do nothing.’

‘Well, then, what are they FOR?’

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‘Why, they’re for STYLE. Don’t you know noth- ing?’

‘Well, I don’t WANT to know no such foolishness as that.

How is servants treated in England? Do they treat ‘em better ‘n we treat our niggers?’

‘NO! A servant ain’t nobody there. They treat them worse

than dogs.’

‘Don’t they give ‘em holidays, the way we do, Christmas

and New Year’s week, and Fourth of July?’

‘Oh, just listen! A body could tell YOU hain’t ever been

to England by that. Why, Hare-l — why, Joanna, they never

see a holiday from year’s end to year’s end; never go to the

circus, nor theater, nor nigger shows, nor nowheres.’

‘Nor church?’

‘Nor church.’

‘But YOU always went to church.’

Well, I was gone up again. I forgot I was the old man’s

servant. But next minute I whirled in on a kind of an explanation how a valley was different from a common servant

and HAD to go to church whether he wanted to or not, and

set with the family, on ac- count of its being the law. But

I didn’t do it pretty good, and when I got done I see she

warn’t satisfied. She says:

‘Honest injun, now, hain’t you been telling me a lot of

lies?’

‘Honest injun,’ says I.

‘None of it at all?’

‘None of it at all. Not a lie in it,’ says I.

‘Lay your hand on this book and say it.’

I see it warn’t nothing but a dictionary, so I laid my hand

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on it and said it. So then she looked a little better satisfied,

and says:

‘Well, then, I’ll believe some of it; but I hope to gracious

if I’ll believe the rest.’

‘What is it you won’t believe, Joe?’ says Mary Jane, stepping in with Susan behind her. ‘It ain’t right nor kind for

you to talk so to him, and him a stranger and so far from his

people. How would you like to be treated so?’

‘That’s always your way, Maim — always sailing in to help

somebody before they’re hurt. I hain’t done nothing to him.

He’s told some stretchers, I reckon, and I said I wouldn’t

swallow it all; and that’s every bit and grain I DID say. I

reckon he can stand a little thing like that, can’t he?’

‘I don’t care whether ‘twas little or whether ‘twas big;

he’s here in our house and a stranger, and it wasn’t good of

you to say it. If you was in his place it would make you feel

ashamed; and so you oughtn’t to say a thing to another person that will make THEM feel ashamed.’

‘Why, Maim, he said —‘

‘It don’t make no difference what he SAID — that ain’t

the thing. The thing is for you to treat him KIND, and not

be saying things to make him remember he ain’t in his own

country and amongst his own folks.’

I says to myself, THIS is a girl that I’m letting that old

reptle rob her of her money!

Then Susan SHE waltzed in; and if you’ll believe me, she

did give Hare-lip hark from the tomb!

Says I to myself, and this is ANOTHER one that I’m letting him rob her of her money!

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Then Mary Jane she took another inning, and went in

sweet and lovely again — which was her way; but when she

got done there warn’t hardly anything left o’ poor Hare-lip.

So she hollered.

‘All right, then,’ says the other girls; ‘you just ask his pardon.’

She done it, too; and she done it beautiful. She done it so

beautiful it was good to hear; and I wished I could tell her a

thousand lies, so she could do it again.

I says to myself, this is ANOTHER one that I’m letting

him rob her of her money. And when she got through they

all jest laid theirselves out to make me feel at home and

know I was amongst friends. I felt so ornery and low down

and mean that I says to myself, my mind’s made up; I’ll hive

that money for them or bust.

So then I lit out — for bed, I said, meaning some time or

another. When I got by myself I went to thinking the thing

over. I says to myself, shall I go to that doctor, private, and

blow on these frauds? No — that won’t do. He might tell

who told him; then the king and the duke would make it

warm for me. Shall I go, private, and tell Mary Jane? No — I

dasn’t do it. Her face would give them a hint, sure; they’ve

got the money, and they’d slide right out and get away with

it. If she was to fetch in help I’d get mixed up in the business before it was done with, I judge. No; there ain’t no good

way but one. I got to steal that money, somehow; and I got

to steal it some way that they won’t suspicion that I done it.

They’ve got a good thing here, and they ain’t a-going to leave

till they’ve played this family and this town for all they’re

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worth, so I’ll find a chance time enough. I’ll steal it and hide

it; and by and by, when I’m away down the river, I’ll write

a letter and tell Mary Jane where it’s hid. But I better hive

it to- night if I can, because the doctor maybe hasn’t let up

as much as he lets on he has; he might scare them out of

here yet.

So, thinks I, I’ll go and search them rooms. Up- stairs the

hall was dark, but I found the duke’s room, and started to

paw around it with my hands; but I recollected it wouldn’t

be much like the king to let anybody else take care of that

money but his own self; so then I went to his room and

begun to paw around there. But I see I couldn’t do nothing without a candle, and I dasn’t light one, of course. So

I judged I’d got to do the other thing — lay for them and

eavesdrop. About that time I hears their footsteps coming,

and was going to skip under the bed; I reached for it, but it

wasn’t where I thought it would be; but I touched the curtain that hid Mary Jane’s frocks, so I jumped in behind that

and snuggled in amongst the gowns, and stood there perfectly still.

They come in and shut the door; and the first thing the

duke done was to get down and look under the bed. Then I

was glad I hadn’t found the bed when I wanted it. And yet,

you know, it’s kind of natural to hide under the bed when

you are up to anything private. They sets down then, and

the king says:

‘Well, what is it? And cut it middlin’ short, be- cause it’s

better for us to be down there a-whoopin’ up the mournin’

than up here givin’ ‘em a chance to talk us over.’

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‘Well, this is it, Capet. I ain’t easy; I ain’t com- fortable.

That doctor lays on my mind. I wanted to know your plans.

I’ve got a notion, and I think it’s a sound one.’

‘What is it, duke?’

‘That we better glide out of this before three in the morning, and clip it down the river with what we’ve got. Specially,

seeing we got it so easy — GIVEN back to us, flung at our

heads, as you may say, when of course we allowed to have to

steal it back. I’m for knocking off and lighting out.’

That made me feel pretty bad. About an hour or two ago

it would a been a little different, but now it made me feel bad

and disappointed, The king rips out and says:

‘What! And not sell out the rest o’ the property? March

off like a passel of fools and leave eight or nine thous’n’ dollars’ worth o’ property layin’ around jest sufferin’ to be

scooped in? — and all good, salable stuff, too.’

The duke he grumbled; said the bag of gold was enough,

and he didn’t want to go no deeper — didn’t want to rob a

lot of orphans of EVERYTHING they had.

‘Why, how you talk!’ says the king. ‘We sha’n’t rob ‘em

of nothing at all but jest this money. The people that BUYS

the property is the suff’rers; because as soon ‘s it’s found out

‘at we didn’t own it — which won’t be long after we’ve slid

— the sale won’t be valid, and it ‘ll all go back to the estate.

These yer orphans ‘ll git their house back agin, and that’s

enough for THEM; they’re young and spry, and k’n easy

earn a livin’. THEY ain’t a-goin to suffer. Why, jest think

— there’s thous’n’s and thous’n’s that ain’t nigh so well off.

Bless you, THEY ain’t got noth’n’ to complain of.’

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Well, the king he talked him blind; so at last he give in,

and said all right, but said he believed it was blamed foolishness to stay, and that doctor hanging over them. But the

king says:

‘Cuss the doctor! What do we k’yer for HIM? Hain’t we

got all the fools in town on our side? And ain’t that a big

enough majority in any town?’

So they got ready to go down stairs again. The duke

says:

‘I don’t think we put that money in a good place.’

That cheered me up. I’d begun to think I warn’t going to

get a hint of no kind to help me. The king says:

‘Why?’

‘Because Mary Jane ‘ll be in mourning from this out; and

first you know the nigger that does up the rooms will get

an order to box these duds up and put ‘em away; and do

you reckon a nigger can run across money and not borrow

some of it?’

‘Your head’s level agin, duke,’ says the king; and he comes

a-fumbling under the curtain two or three foot from where

I was. I stuck tight to the wall and kept mighty still, though

quivery; and I wondered what them fellows would say to me

if they catched me; and I tried to think what I’d better do if

they did catch me. But the king he got the bag before I could

think more than about a half a thought, and he never suspicioned I was around. They took and shoved the bag through

a rip in the straw tick that was under the feather-bed, and

crammed it in a foot or two amongst the straw and said it

was all right now, because a nigger only makes up the feath-

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er-bed, and don’t turn over the straw tick only about twice a

year, and so it warn’t in no danger of getting stole now.

But I knowed better. I had it out of there before they was

half-way down stairs. I groped along up to my cubby, and

hid it there till I could get a chance to do better. I judged I

better hide it outside of the house somewheres, because if

they missed it they would give the house a good ransacking:

I knowed that very well. Then I turned in, with my clothes

all on; but I couldn’t a gone to sleep if I’d a wanted to, I was

in such a sweat to get through with the business. By and by I

heard the king and the duke come up; so I rolled off my pallet and laid with my chin at the top of my ladder, and waited

to see if anything was going to happen. But nothing did.

So I held on till all the late sounds had quit and the early

ones hadn’t begun yet; and then I slipped down the ladder.

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Chapter XXVII

I CREPT to their doors and listened; they was snor- ing.

So I tiptoed along, and got down stairs all right. There

warn’t a sound anywheres. I peeped through a crack of the

dining-room door, and see the men that was watching the

corpse all sound asleep on their chairs. The door was open

into the parlor, where the corpse was laying, and there was

a candle in both rooms. I passed along, and the parlor door

was open; but I see there warn’t nobody in there but the remainders of Peter; so I shoved on by; but the front door was

locked, and the key wasn’t there. Just then I heard somebody coming down the stairs, back behind me. I run in the

parlor and took a swift look around, and the only place I

see to hide the bag was in the coffin. The lid was shoved

along about a foot, show- ing the dead man’s face down in

there, with a wet cloth over it, and his shroud on. I tucked

the money- bag in under the lid, just down beyond where

his hands was crossed, which made me creep, they was so

cold, and then I run back across the room and in behind

the door.

The person coming was Mary Jane. She went to the coffin, very soft, and kneeled down and looked in; then she put

up her handkerchief, and I see she begun to cry, though I

couldn’t hear her, and her back was to me. I slid out, and

as I passed the dining-room I thought I’d make sure them

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watchers hadn’t seen me; so I looked through the crack, and

everything was all right. They hadn’t stirred.

I slipped up to bed, feeling ruther blue, on accounts of

the thing playing out that way after I had took so much

trouble and run so much resk about it. Says I, if it could

stay where it is, all right; because when we get down the

river a hundred mile or two I could write back to Mary Jane,

and she could dig him up again and get it; but that ain’t the

thing that’s going to happen; the thing that’s going to happen is, the money ‘ll be found when they come to screw on

the lid. Then the king ‘ll get it again, and it ‘ll be a long day

before he gives anybody another chance to smouch it from

him. Of course I WANTED to slide down and get it out of

there, but I dasn’t try it. Every minute it was getting earlier

now, and pretty soon some of them watchers would begin

to stir, and I might get catched — catched with six thousand

dollars in my hands that nobody hadn’t hired me to take

care of. I don’t wish to be mixed up in no such business as

that, I says to myself.

When I got down stairs in the morning the parlor was

shut up, and the watchers was gone. There warn’t nobody

around but the family and the widow Bartley and our tribe.

I watched their faces to see if anything had been happening,

but I couldn’t tell.

Towards the middle of the day the undertaker come with

his man, and they set the coffin in the middle of the room

on a couple of chairs, and then set all our chairs in rows,

and borrowed more from the neighbors till the hall and the

parlor and the dining-room was full. I see the coffin lid was

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the way it was before, but I dasn’t go to look in under it, with

folks around.

Then the people begun to flock in, and the beats and the

girls took seats in the front row at the head of the coffin, and

for a half an hour the people filed around slow, in single

rank, and looked down at the dead man’s face a minute, and

some dropped in a tear, and it was all very still and solemn,

only the girls and the beats holding handkerchiefs to their

eyes and keep- ing their heads bent, and sobbing a little.

There warn’t no other sound but the scraping of the feet on

the floor and blowing noses — because people always blows

them more at a funeral than they do at other places except

church.

When the place was packed full the undertaker he slid

around in his black gloves with his softy soother- ing ways,

putting on the last touches, and getting people and things

all ship-shape and comfortable, and making no more sound

than a cat. He never spoke; he moved people around, he

squeezed in late ones, he opened up passageways, and done

it with nods, and signs with his hands. Then he took his

place over against the wall. He was the softest, glidingest,

stealthiest man I ever see; and there warn’t no more smile

to him than there is to a ham.

They had borrowed a melodeum — a sick one; and when

everything was ready a young woman set down and worked

it, and it was pretty skreeky and colicky, and everybody

joined in and sung, and Peter was the only one that had

a good thing, according to my notion. Then the Reverend

Hobson opened up, slow and solemn, and begun to talk; and

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straight off the most outrageous row busted out in the cellar

a body ever heard; it was only one dog, but he made a most

powerful racket, and he kept it up right along; the parson he

had to stand there, over the coffin, and wait — you couldn’t

hear yourself think. It was right down awkward, and nobody didn’t seem to know what to do. But pretty soon they

see that long-legged undertaker make a sign to the preacher

as much as to say, ‘Don’t you worry — just depend on me.’

Then he stooped down and begun to glide along the wall,

just his shoulders showing over the people’s heads. So he

glided along, and the powwow and racket get- ting more

and more outrageous all the time; and at last, when he had

gone around two sides of the room, he disappears down cellar. Then in about two seconds we heard a whack, and the

dog he finished up with a most amazing howl or two, and

then everything was dead still, and the parson begun his

solemn talk where he left off. In a minute or two here comes

this under- taker’s back and shoulders gliding along the

wall again; and so he glided and glided around three sides

of the room, and then rose up, and shaded his mouth with

his hands, and stretched his neck out towards the preacher,

over the people’s heads, and says, in a kind of a coarse whisper, ‘HE HAD A RAT!’ Then he drooped down and glided

along the wall again to his place. You could see it was a great

satisfaction to the people, because naturally they wanted to

know. A little thing like that don’t cost nothing, and it’s

just the little things that makes a man to be looked up to

and liked. There warn’t no more popular man in town than

what that undertaker was.

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Well, the funeral sermon was very good, but pison long

and tiresome; and then the king he shoved in and got off

some of his usual rubbage, and at last the job was through,

and the undertaker begun to sneak up on the coffin with his

screw-driver. I was in a sweat then, and watched him pretty

keen. But he never meddled at all; just slid the lid along as

soft as mush, and screwed it down tight and fast. So there I

was! I didn’t know whether the money was in there or not.

So, says I, s’pose somebody has hogged that bag on the sly?

— now how do I know whether to write to Mary Jane or not?

S’pose she dug him up and didn’t find nothing, what would

she think of me? Blame it, I says, I might get hunted up and

jailed; I’d better lay low and keep dark, and not write at all;

the thing’s awful mixed now; trying to better it, I’ve worsened it a hundred times, and I wish to goodness I’d just let

it alone, dad fetch the whole business!

They buried him, and we come back home, and I went

to watching faces again — I couldn’t help it, and I couldn’t

rest easy. But nothing come of it; the faces didn’t tell me

nothing.

The king he visited around in the evening, and sweetened everybody up, and made himself ever so friendly; and

he give out the idea that his congrega- tion over in England would be in a sweat about him, so he must hurry and

settle up the estate right away and leave for home. He was

very sorry he was so pushed, and so was everybody; they

wished he could stay longer, but they said they could see it

couldn’t be done. And he said of course him and William

would take the girls home with them; and that pleased ev-

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ery- body too, because then the girls would be well fixed

and amongst their own relations; and it pleased the girls,

too — tickled them so they clean forgot they ever had a

trouble in the world; and told him to sell out as quick as he

wanted to, they would be ready. Them poor things was that

glad and happy it made my heart ache to see them getting

fooled and lied to so, but I didn’t see no safe way for me to

chip in and change the general tune.

Well, blamed if the king didn’t bill the house and the niggers and all the property for auction straight off — sale two

days after the funeral; but anybody could buy private beforehand if they wanted to.

So the next day after the funeral, along about noon- time,

the girls’ joy got the first jolt. A couple of nigger traders

come along, and the king sold them the niggers reasonable,

for three-day drafts as they called it, and away they went,

the two sons up the river to Memphis, and their mother

down the river to Orleans. I thought them poor girls and

them niggers would break their hearts for grief; they cried

around each other, and took on so it most made me down

sick to see it. The girls said they hadn’t ever dreamed of seeing the family separated or sold away from the town. I can’t

ever get it out of my memory, the sight of them poor miserable girls and niggers hanging around each other’s necks

and crying; and I reckon I couldn’t a stood it all, but would

a had to bust out and tell on our gang if I hadn’t knowed the

sale warn’t no account and the niggers would be back home

in a week or two.

The thing made a big stir in the town, too, and a good

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many come out flatfooted and said it was scandal- ous to

separate the mother and the children that way. It injured

the frauds some; but the old fool he bulled right along, spite

of all the duke could say or do, and I tell you the duke was

powerful uneasy.

Next day was auction day. About broad day in the morning the king and the duke come up in the garret and woke

me up, and I see by their look that there was trouble. The

king says:

‘Was you in my room night before last?’

‘No, your majesty’ — which was the way I always called

him when nobody but our gang warn’t around.

‘Was you in there yisterday er last night?’

‘No, your majesty.’

‘Honor bright, now — no lies.’

‘Honor bright, your majesty, I’m telling you the truth. I

hain’t been a-near your room since Miss Mary Jane took

you and the duke and showed it to you.’

The duke says:

‘Have you seen anybody else go in there?’

‘No, your grace, not as I remember, I believe.’

‘Stop and think.’

I studied awhile and see my chance; then I says:

‘Well, I see the niggers go in there several times.’

Both of them gave a little jump, and looked like they

hadn’t ever expected it, and then like they HAD. Then the

duke says:

‘What, all of them?’

‘No — leastways, not all at once — that is, I don’t think I

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ever see them all come OUT at once but just one time.’

‘Hello! When was that?’

‘It was the day we had the funeral. In the morn- ing. It

warn’t early, because I overslept. I was just starting down

the ladder, and I see them.’

‘Well, go on, GO on! What did they do? How’d they act?’

‘They didn’t do nothing. And they didn’t act anyway

much, as fur as I see. They tiptoed away; so I seen, easy

enough, that they’d shoved in there to do up your majesty’s room, or something, s’posing you was up; and found

you WARN’T up, and so they was hoping to slide out of the

way of trouble without waking you up, if they hadn’t already

waked you up.’

‘Great guns, THIS is a go!’ says the king; and both of

them looked pretty sick and tolerable silly. They stood there

a-thinking and scratching their heads a minute, and the

duke he bust into a kind of a little raspy chuckle, and says:

‘It does beat all how neat the niggers played their hand.

They let on to be SORRY they was going out of this region!

And I believed they WAS sorry, and so did you, and so did

everybody. Don’t ever tell ME any more that a nigger ain’t

got any histrionic talent. Why, the way they played that

thing it would fool ANYBODY. In my opinion, there’s a fortune in ‘em. If I had capital and a theater, I wouldn’t want a

better lay-out than that — and here we’ve gone and sold ‘em

for a song. Yes, and ain’t privileged to sing the song yet. Say,

where IS that song — that draft?’

‘In the bank for to be collected. Where WOULD it be?’

‘Well, THAT’S all right then, thank goodness.’

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Says I, kind of timid-like:

‘Is something gone wrong?’

The king whirls on me and rips out:

‘None o’ your business! You keep your head shet, and

mind y’r own affairs — if you got any. Long as you’re in this

town don’t you forgit THAT — you hear?’ Then he says to

the duke, ‘We got to jest swaller it and say noth’n’: mum’s

the word for US.’

As they was starting down the ladder the duke he chuckles again, and says:

‘Quick sales AND small profits! It’s a good busi- ness —

yes.’

The king snarls around on him and says:

‘I was trying to do for the best in sellin’ ‘em out so quick.

If the profits has turned out to be none, lackin’ considable,

and none to carry, is it my fault any more’n it’s yourn?’

‘Well, THEY’D be in this house yet and we WOULDN’T

if I could a got my advice listened to.’

The king sassed back as much as was safe for him, and

then swapped around and lit into ME again. He give me

down the banks for not coming and TELLING him I see

the niggers come out of his room acting that way — said

any fool would a KNOWED something was up. And then

waltzed in and cussed HIMSELF awhile, and said it all

come of him not laying late and taking his natural rest that

morning, and he’d be blamed if he’d ever do it again. So

they went off a-jawing; and I felt dreadful glad I’d worked

it all off on to the niggers, and yet hadn’t done the niggers

no harm by it.

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Chapter XXVIII

BY and by it was getting-up time. So I come down the

ladder and started for down-stairs; but as I come to the

girls’ room the door was open, and I see Mary Jane setting

by her old hair trunk, which was open and she’d been packing things in it — getting ready to go to England. But she

had stopped now with a folded gown in her lap, and had her

face in her hands, crying. I felt awful bad to see it; of course

anybody would. I went in there and says:

‘Miss Mary Jane, you can’t a-bear to see people in trouble,

and I can’t — most always. Tell me about it.’

So she done it. And it was the niggers — I just expected

it. She said the beautiful trip to England was most about

spoiled for her; she didn’t know HOW she was ever going

to be happy there, knowing the mother and the children

warn’t ever going to see each other no more — and then

busted out bitterer than ever, and flung up her hands, and

says:

‘Oh, dear, dear, to think they ain’t EVER going to see

each other any more!’

‘But they WILL — and inside of two weeks — and I

KNOW it!’ says I.

Laws, it was out before I could think! And before I could

budge she throws her arms around my neck and told me to

say it AGAIN, say it AGAIN, say it AGAIN!

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I see I had spoke too sudden and said too much, and was

in a close place. I asked her to let me think a minute; and

she set there, very impatient and ex- cited and handsome,

but looking kind of happy and eased-up, like a person that’s

had a tooth pulled out. So I went to studying it out. I says to

myself, I reckon a body that ups and tells the truth when he

is in a tight place is taking considerable many resks, though

I ain’t had no experience, and can’t say for certain; but it

looks so to me, anyway; and yet here’s a case where I’m blest

if it don’t look to me like the truth is better and actuly SAFER than a lie. I must lay it by in my mind, and think it over

some time or other, it’s so kind of strange and unregular. I

never see nothing like it. Well, I says to myself at last, I’m agoing to chance it; I’ll up and tell the truth this time, though

it does seem most like setting down on a kag of powder and

touching it off just to see where you’ll go to. Then I says:

‘Miss Mary Jane, is there any place out of town a little

ways where you could go and stay three or four days?’

‘Yes; Mr. Lothrop’s. Why?’

‘Never mind why yet. If I’ll tell you how I know the niggers will see each other again inside of two weeks — here in

this house — and PROVE how I know it — will you go to

Mr. Lothrop’s and stay four days?’

‘Four days!’ she says; ‘I’ll stay a year!’

‘All right,’ I says, ‘I don’t want nothing more out of YOU

than just your word — I druther have it than another man’s

kiss-the-Bible.’ She smiled and red- dened up very sweet,

and I says, ‘If you don’t mind it, I’ll shut the door — and

bolt it.’

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Then I come back and set down again, and says:

‘Don’t you holler. Just set still and take it like a man. I got

to tell the truth, and you want to brace up, Miss Mary, because it’s a bad kind, and going to be hard to take, but there

ain’t no help for it. These uncles of yourn ain’t no uncles at

all; they’re a couple of frauds — regular dead-beats. There,

now we’re over the worst of it, you can stand the rest middling easy.’

It jolted her up like everything, of course; but I was over

the shoal water now, so I went right along, her eyes a-blazing higher and higher all the time, and told her every blame

thing, from where we first struck that young fool going up

to the steamboat, clear through to where she flung herself

on to the king’s breast at the front door and he kissed her

sixteen or seventeen times — and then up she jumps, with

her face afire like sunset, and says:

‘The brute! Come, don’t waste a minute — not a SECOND — we’ll have them tarred and feathered, and flung in

the river!’

Says I:

‘Cert’nly. But do you mean BEFORE you go to Mr.

Lothrop’s, or —‘

‘Oh,’ she says, ‘what am I THINKING about!’ she says,

and set right down again. ‘Don’t mind what I said — please

don’t — you WON’T, now, WILL you?’ Laying her silky

hand on mine in that kind of a way that I said I would die

first. ‘I never thought, I was so stirred up,’ she says; ‘now go

on, and I won’t do so any more. You tell me what to do, and

whatever you say I’ll do it.’

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‘Well,’ I says, ‘it’s a rough gang, them two frauds, and I’m

fixed so I got to travel with them a while longer, whether I

want to or not — I druther not tell you why; and if you was

to blow on them this town would get me out of their claws,

and I’d be all right; but there’d be another person that you

don’t know about who’d be in big trouble. Well, we got to

save HIM, hain’t we? Of course. Well, then, we won’t blow

on them.’

Saying them words put a good idea in my head. I see how

maybe I could get me and Jim rid of the frauds; get them

jailed here, and then leave. But I didn’t want to run the raft

in the daytime without any- body aboard to answer questions but me; so I didn’t want the plan to begin working till

pretty late to-night. I says:

‘Miss Mary Jane, I’ll tell you what we’ll do, and you won’t

have to stay at Mr. Lothrop’s so long, nuther. How fur is it?’

‘A little short of four miles — right out in the country,

back here.’

‘Well, that ‘ll answer. Now you go along out there, and

lay low till nine or half-past to-night, and then get them to

fetch you home again — tell them you’ve thought of something. If you get here before eleven put a candle in this

window, and if I don’t turn up wait TILL eleven, and THEN

if I don’t turn up it means I’m gone, and out of the way, and

safe. Then you come out and spread the news around, and

get these beats jailed.’

‘Good,’ she says, ‘I’ll do it.’

‘And if it just happens so that I don’t get away, but get

took up along with them, you must up and say I told you

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the whole thing beforehand, and you must stand by me all

you can.’

‘Stand by you! indeed I will. They sha’n’t touch a hair of

your head!’ she says, and I see her nostrils spread and her

eyes snap when she said it, too.

‘If I get away I sha’n’t be here,’ I says, ‘to prove these rapscallions ain’t your uncles, and I couldn’t do it if I WAS

here. I could swear they was beats and bummers, that’s all,

though that’s worth something. Well, there’s others can do

that better than what I can, and they’re people that ain’t going to be doubted as quick as I’d be. I’ll tell you how to find

them. Gimme a pencil and a piece of paper. There — ‘Royal

Nonesuch, Bricksville.’ Put it away, and don’t lose it. When

the court wants to find out some- thing about these two, let

them send up to Bricksville and say they’ve got the men that

played the Royal Nonesuch, and ask for some witnesses —

why, you’ll have that entire town down here before you can

hardly wink, Miss Mary. And they’ll come a-biling, too.’

I judged we had got everything fixed about right now. So

I says:

‘Just let the auction go right along, and don’t worry. Nobody don’t have to pay for the things they buy till a whole

day after the auction on accounts of the short notice, and

they ain’t going out of this till they get that money; and the

way we’ve fixed it the sale ain’t going to count, and they ain’t

going to get no money. It’s just like the way it was with the

niggers — it warn’t no sale, and the niggers will be back

before long. Why, they can’t collect the money for the NIGGERS yet — they’re in the worst kind of a fix, Miss Mary.’

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‘Well,’ she says, ‘I’ll run down to breakfast now, and then

I’ll start straight for Mr. Lothrop’s.’

‘Deed, THAT ain’t the ticket, Miss Mary Jane,’ I says, ‘by

no manner of means; go BEFORE breakfast.’

‘Why?’

‘What did you reckon I wanted you to go at all for, Miss

Mary?’

‘Well, I never thought — and come to think, I don’t know.

What was it?’

‘Why, it’s because you ain’t one of these leather- face people. I don’t want no better book than what your face is. A

body can set down and read it off like coarse print. Do you

reckon you can go and face your uncles when they come to

kiss you good- morning, and never —‘

‘There, there, don’t! Yes, I’ll go before break- fast — I’ll be

glad to. And leave my sisters with them?’

‘Yes; never mind about them. They’ve got to stand it yet

a while. They might suspicion something if all of you was

to go. I don’t want you to see them, nor your sisters, nor

nobody in this town; if a neigh- bor was to ask how is your

uncles this morning your face would tell something. No,

you go right along, Miss Mary Jane, and I’ll fix it with all

of them. I’ll tell Miss Susan to give your love to your uncles

and say you’ve went away for a few hours for to get a little

rest and change, or to see a friend, and you’ll be back tonight or early in the morning.’

‘Gone to see a friend is all right, but I won’t have my love

given to them.’

‘Well, then, it sha’n’t be.’ It was well enough to tell HER

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so — no harm in it. It was only a little thing to do, and no

trouble; and it’s the little things that smooths people’s roads

the most, down here below; it would make Mary Jane comfortable, and it wouldn’t cost nothing. Then I says: ‘There’s

one more thing — that bag of money.’

‘Well, they’ve got that; and it makes me feel pretty silly to

think HOW they got it.’

‘No, you’re out, there. They hain’t got it.’

‘Why, who’s got it?’

‘I wish I knowed, but I don’t. I HAD it, because I stole it

from them; and I stole it to give to you; and I know where I

hid it, but I’m afraid it ain’t there no more. I’m awful sorry,

Miss Mary Jane, I’m just as sorry as I can be; but I done the

best I could; I did honest. I come nigh getting caught, and I

had to shove it into the first place I come to, and run — and

it warn’t a good place.’

‘Oh, stop blaming yourself — it’s too bad to do it, and

I won’t allow it — you couldn’t help it; it wasn’t your fault.

Where did you hide it?’

I didn’t want to set her to thinking about her troubles

again; and I couldn’t seem to get my mouth to tell her what

would make her see that corpse laying in the coffin with

that bag of money on his stomach. So for a minute I didn’t

say nothing; then I says:

‘I’d ruther not TELL you where I put it, Miss Mary Jane,

if you don’t mind letting me off; but I’ll write it for you on

a piece of paper, and you can read it along the road to Mr.

Lothrop’s, if you want to. Do you reckon that ‘ll do?’

‘Oh, yes.’

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So I wrote: ‘I put it in the coffin. It was in there when you

was crying there, away in the night. I was behind the door,

and I was mighty sorry for you, Miss Mary Jane.’

It made my eyes water a little to remember her cry- ing

there all by herself in the night, and them devils laying

there right under her own roof, shaming her and robbing

her; and when I folded it up and give it to her I see the water come into her eyes, too; and she shook me by the hand,

hard, and says:

‘GOOD-bye. I’m going to do everything just as you’ve

told me; and if I don’t ever see you again, I sha’n’t ever forget

you. and I’ll think of you a many and a many a time, and I’ll

PRAY for you, too!’ — and she was gone.

Pray for me! I reckoned if she knowed me she’d take a job

that was more nearer her size. But I bet she done it, just the

same — she was just that kind. She had the grit to pray for

Judus if she took the notion — there warn’t no back-down

to her, I judge. You may say what you want to, but in my

opinion she had more sand in her than any girl I ever see; in

my opinion she was just full of sand. It sounds like flattery,

but it ain’t no flattery. And when it comes to beauty — and

goodness, too — she lays over them all. I hain’t ever seen

her since that time that I see her go out of that door; no, I

hain’t ever seen her since, but I reckon I’ve thought of her

a many and a many a million times, and of her saying she

would pray for me; and if ever I’d a thought it would do any

good for me to pray for HER, blamed if I wouldn’t a done

it or bust.

Well, Mary Jane she lit out the back way, I reckon; be-

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cause nobody see her go. When I struck Susan and the

hare-lip, I says:

‘What’s the name of them people over on t’other side of

the river that you all goes to see sometimes?’

They says:

‘There’s several; but it’s the Proctors, mainly.’

‘That’s the name,’ I says; ‘I most forgot it. Well, Miss Mary

Jane she told me to tell you she’s gone over there in a dreadful hurry — one of them’s sick.’

‘Which one?’

‘I don’t know; leastways, I kinder forget; but I thinks it’s

—‘

‘Sakes alive, I hope it ain’t HANNER?’

‘I’m sorry to say it,’ I says, ‘but Hanner’s the very one.’

‘My goodness, and she so well only last week! Is she took

bad?’

‘It ain’t no name for it. They set up with her all night,

Miss Mary Jane said, and they don’t think she’ll last many

hours.’

‘Only think of that, now! What’s the matter with her?’

I couldn’t think of anything reasonable, right off that

way, so I says:

‘Mumps.’

‘Mumps your granny! They don’t set up with people

that’s got the mumps.’

‘They don’t, don’t they? You better bet they do with

THESE mumps. These mumps is different. It’s a new kind,

Miss Mary Jane said.’

‘How’s it a new kind?’

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‘Because it’s mixed up with other things.’

‘What other things?’

‘Well, measles, and whooping-cough, and erysiplas, and

consumption, and yaller janders, and brain-fever, and I

don’t know what all.’

‘My land! And they call it the MUMPS?’

‘That’s what Miss Mary Jane said.’

‘Well, what in the nation do they call it the MUMPS

for?’

‘Why, because it IS the mumps. That’s what it starts

with.’

‘Well, ther’ ain’t no sense in it. A body might stump his

toe, and take pison, and fall down the well, and break his

neck, and bust his brains out, and some- body come along

and ask what killed him, and some numskull up and say,

‘Why, he stumped his TOE.’ Would ther’ be any sense in

that? NO. And ther’ ain’t no sense in THIS, nuther. Is it

ketching?’

‘Is it KETCHING? Why, how you talk. Is a HARROW

catching — in the dark? If you don’t hitch on to one tooth,

you’re bound to on another, ain’t you? And you can’t get

away with that tooth without fetching the whole harrow

along, can you? Well, these kind of mumps is a kind of a

harrow, as you may say — and it ain’t no slouch of a harrow,

nuther, you come to get it hitched on good.’

‘Well, it’s awful, I think,’ says the hare-lip. ‘I’ll go to Uncle Harvey and —‘

‘Oh, yes,’ I says, ‘I WOULD. Of COURSE I would. I

wouldn’t lose no time.’

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‘Well, why wouldn’t you?’

‘Just look at it a minute, and maybe you can see. Hain’t

your uncles obleegd to get along home to Eng- land as fast as

they can? And do you reckon they’d be mean enough to go

off and leave you to go all that journey by yourselves? YOU

know they’ll wait for you. So fur, so good. Your uncle Harvey’s a preacher, ain’t he? Very well, then; is a PREACHER

going to deceive a steamboat clerk? is he going to deceive a

SHIP CLERK? — so as to get them to let Miss Mary Jane

go aboard? Now YOU know he ain’t. What WILL he do,

then? Why, he’ll say, ‘It’s a great pity, but my church matters has got to get along the best way they can; for my niece

has been exposed to the dreadful pluribus-unum mumps,

and so it’s my bounden duty to set down here and wait the

three months it takes to show on her if she’s got it.’ But never

mind, if you think it’s best to tell your uncle Harvey —‘

‘Shucks, and stay fooling around here when we could all

be having good times in England whilst we was waiting to

find out whether Mary Jane’s got it or not? Why, you talk

like a muggins.’

‘Well, anyway, maybe you’d better tell some of the neighbors.’

‘Listen at that, now. You do beat all for natural stupidness. Can’t you SEE that THEY’D go and tell? Ther’ ain’t no

way but just to not tell anybody at ALL.’

‘Well, maybe you’re right — yes, I judge you ARE right.’

‘But I reckon we ought to tell Uncle Harvey she’s gone out

a while, anyway, so he won’t be uneasy about her?’

‘Yes, Miss Mary Jane she wanted you to do that. She says,

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‘Tell them to give Uncle Harvey and William my love and

a kiss, and say I’ve run over the river to see Mr.’ — Mr. —

what IS the name of that rich family your uncle Peter used

to think so much of? — I mean the one that —‘

‘Why, you must mean the Apthorps, ain’t it?’

‘Of course; bother them kind of names, a body can’t ever

seem to remember them, half the time, somehow. Yes, she

said, say she has run over for to ask the Apthorps to be

sure and come to the auction and buy this house, because

she allowed her uncle Peter would ruther they had it than

anybody else; and she’s going to stick to them till they say

they’ll come, and then, if she ain’t too tired, she’s coming

home; and if she is, she’ll be home in the morning anyway.

She said, don’t say nothing about the Proc- tors, but only

about the Apthorps — which ‘ll be per- fectly true, because

she is going there to speak about their buying the house; I

know it, because she told me so herself.’

‘All right,’ they said, and cleared out to lay for their uncles, and give them the love and the kisses, and tell them

the message.

Everything was all right now. The girls wouldn’t say

nothing because they wanted to go to England; and the

king and the duke would ruther Mary Jane was off working

for the auction than around in reach of Doctor Robinson. I

felt very good; I judged I had done it pretty neat — I reckoned Tom Sawyer couldn’t a done it no neater himself. Of

course he would a throwed more style into it, but I can’t do

that very handy, not being brung up to it.

Well, they held the auction in the public square, along

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towards the end of the afternoon, and it strung along, and

strung along, and the old man he was on hand and looking his level pisonest, up there longside of the auctioneer,

and chipping in a little Scripture now and then, or a little goody-goody saying of some kind, and the duke he was

around goo-gooing for sym- pathy all he knowed how, and

just spreading himself generly.

But by and by the thing dragged through, and everything was sold — everything but a little old trifling lot in

the graveyard. So they’d got to work that off — I never see

such a girafft as the king was for want- ing to swallow EVERYTHING. Well, whilst they was at it a steamboat landed,

and in about two minutes up comes a crowd a-whooping

and yelling and laughing and carrying on, and singing out:

‘HERE’S your opposition line! here’s your two sets o’

heirs to old Peter Wilks — and you pays your money and

you takes your choice!’

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Chapter XXIX

THEY was fetching a very nice-looking old gentle- man

along, and a nice-looking younger one, with his right

arm in a sling. And, my souls, how the people yelled and

laughed, and kept it up. But I didn’t see no joke about it, and

I judged it would strain the duke and the king some to see

any. I reckoned they’d turn pale. But no, nary a pale did

THEY turn. The duke he never let on he suspicioned what

was up, but just went a goo-gooing around, happy and satisfied, like a jug that’s googling out buttermilk; and as for the

king, he just gazed and gazed down sorrowful on them newcomers like it give him the stomach-ache in his very heart

to think there could be such frauds and rascals in the world.

Oh, he done it admirable. Lots of the principal people gethered around the king, to let him see they was on his side.

That old gentleman that had just come looked all puz- zled

to death. Pretty soon he begun to speak, and I see straight

off he pronounced LIKE an Englishman — not the king’s

way, though the king’s WAS pretty good for an imitation. I

can’t give the old gent’s words, nor I can’t imitate him; but

he turned around to the crowd, and says, about like this:

‘This is a surprise to me which I wasn’t looking for; and

I’ll acknowledge, candid and frank, I ain’t very well fixed to

meet it and answer it; for my brother and me has had misfortunes; he’s broke his arm, and our baggage got put off at

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a town above here last night in the night by a mistake. I am

Peter Wilks’ brother Harvey, and this is his brother William, which can’t hear nor speak — and can’t even make

signs to amount to much, now’t he’s only got one hand to

work them with. We are who we say we are; and in a day or

two, when I get the baggage, I can prove it. But up till then I

won’t say nothing more, but go to the hotel and wait.’

So him and the new dummy started off; and the king he

laughs, and blethers out:

‘Broke his arm — VERY likely, AIN’T it? — and very

convenient, too, for a fraud that’s got to make signs, and

ain’t learnt how. Lost their baggage! That’s MIGHTY good!

— and mighty ingenious — under the CIRCUMSTANCES!

So he laughed again; and so did everybody else, except

three or four, or maybe half a dozen. One of these was that

doctor; another one was a sharp- looking gentleman, with

a carpet-bag of the old- fashioned kind made out of carpet-stuff, that had just come off of the steamboat and was

talking to him in a low voice, and glancing towards the king

now and then and nodding their heads — it was Levi Bell,

the lawyer that was gone up to Louisville; and another one

was a big rough husky that come along and listened to all

the old gentleman said, and was listening to the king now.

And when the king got done this husky up and says:

‘Say, looky here; if you are Harvey Wilks, when’d you

come to this town?’

‘The day before the funeral, friend,’ says the king.

‘But what time o’ day?’

‘In the evenin’ — ‘bout an hour er two before sun-

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down.’

‘HOW’D you come?’

‘I come down on the Susan Powell from Cincin- nati.’

‘Well, then, how’d you come to be up at the Pint in the

MORNIN’ — in a canoe?’

‘I warn’t up at the Pint in the mornin’.’

‘It’s a lie.’

Several of them jumped for him and begged him not to

talk that way to an old man and a preacher.

‘Preacher be hanged, he’s a fraud and a liar. He was up at

the Pint that mornin’. I live up there, don’t I? Well, I was up

there, and he was up there. I see him there. He come in a canoe, along with Tim Collins and a boy.’

The doctor he up and says:

‘Would you know the boy again if you was to see him,

Hines?’

‘I reckon I would, but I don’t know. Why, yonder he is,

now. I know him perfectly easy.’

It was me he pointed at. The doctor says:

‘Neighbors, I don’t know whether the new couple is frauds

or not; but if THESE two ain’t frauds, I am an idiot, that’s

all. I think it’s our duty to see that they don’t get away from

here till we’ve looked into this thing. Come along, Hines;

come along, the rest of you. We’ll take these fellows to the

tavern and affront them with t’other couple, and I reckon

we’ll find out SOMETHING before we get through.’

It was nuts for the crowd, though maybe not for the

king’s friends; so we all started. It was about sundown. The

doctor he led me along by the hand, and was plenty kind

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enough, but he never let go my hand.

We all got in a big room in the hotel, and lit up some candles, and fetched in the new couple. First, the doctor says:

‘I don’t wish to be too hard on these two men, but I think

they’re frauds, and they may have complices that we don’t

know nothing about. If they have, won’t the complices get

away with that bag of gold Peter Wilks left? It ain’t unlikely.

If these men ain’t frauds, they won’t object to sending for

that money and letting us keep it till they prove they’re all

right — ain’t that so?’

Everybody agreed to that. So I judged they had our gang

in a pretty tight place right at the outstart. But the king he

only looked sorrowful, and says:

‘Gentlemen, I wish the money was there, for I ain’t got no

disposition to throw anything in the way of a fair, open, outand-out investigation o’ this misable business; but, alas, the

money ain’t there; you k’n send and see, if you want to.’

‘Where is it, then?’

‘Well, when my niece give it to me to keep for her I took

and hid it inside o’ the straw tick o’ my bed, not wishin’ to

bank it for the few days we’d be here, and considerin’ the

bed a safe place, we not bein’ used to niggers, and suppos’n’

‘em honest, like servants in England. The niggers stole it the

very next mornin’ after I had went down stairs; and when

I sold ‘em I hadn’t missed the money yit, so they got clean

away with it. My servant here k’n tell you ‘bout it, gentlemen.’

The doctor and several said ‘Shucks!’ and I see nobody

didn’t altogether believe him. One man asked me if I see

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the niggers steal it. I said no, but I see them sneaking out of

the room and hustling away, and I never thought nothing,

only I reckoned they was afraid they had waked up my master and was trying to get away before he made trouble with

them. That was all they asked me. Then the doctor whirls

on me and says:

‘Are YOU English, too?’

I says yes; and him and some others laughed, and said,

‘Stuff!’

Well, then they sailed in on the general investiga- tion,

and there we had it, up and down, hour in, hour out, and

nobody never said a word about supper, nor ever seemed to

think about it — and so they kept it up, and kept it up; and

it WAS the worst mixed-up thing you ever see. They made

the king tell his yarn, and they made the old gentleman tell

his’n; and any- body but a lot of prejudiced chuckleheads

would a SEEN that the old gentleman was spinning truth

and t’other one lies. And by and by they had me up to tell

what I knowed. The king he give me a left-handed look out

of the corner of his eye, and so I knowed enough to talk on

the right side. I begun to tell about Sheffield, and how we

lived there, and all about the English Wilkses, and so on;

but I didn’t get pretty fur till the doctor begun to laugh; and

Levi Bell, the lawyer, says:

‘Set down, my boy; I wouldn’t strain myself if I was you. I

reckon you ain’t used to lying, it don’t seem to come handy;

what you want is practice. You do it pretty awkward.’

I didn’t care nothing for the compliment, but I was glad

to be let off, anyway.

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The doctor he started to say something, and turns and

says:

‘If you’d been in town at first, Levi Bell — ‘ The king

broke in and reached out his hand, and says:

‘Why, is this my poor dead brother’s old friend that he’s

wrote so often about?’

The lawyer and him shook hands, and the lawyer smiled

and looked pleased, and they talked right along awhile, and

then got to one side and talked low; and at last the lawyer

speaks up and says:

‘That ‘ll fix it. I’ll take the order and send it, along with

your brother’s, and then they’ll know it’s all right.’

So they got some paper and a pen, and the king he set

down and twisted his head to one side, and chawed his

tongue, and scrawled off something; and then they give

the pen to the duke — and then for the first time the duke

looked sick. But he took the pen and wrote. So then the lawyer turns to the new old gentleman and says:

‘You and your brother please write a line or two and sign

your names.’

The old gentleman wrote, but nobody couldn’t read it.

The lawyer looked powerful astonished, and says:

‘Well, it beats ME — and snaked a lot of old letters out of

his pocket, and examined them, and then ex- amined the

old man’s writing, and then THEM again; and then says:

‘These old letters is from Harvey Wilks; and here’s THESE

two handwritings, and any- body can see they didn’t write

them’ (the king and the duke looked sold and foolish, I tell

you, to see how the lawyer had took them in), ‘and here’s

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THIS old gentleman’s hand writing, and anybody can tell,

easy enough, HE didn’t write them — fact is, the scratches

he makes ain’t properly WRITING at all. Now, here’s some

letters from —‘

The new old gentleman says:

‘If you please, let me explain. Nobody can read my hand

but my brother there — so he copies for me. It’s HIS hand

you’ve got there, not mine.’

‘WELL!’ says the lawyer, ‘this IS a state of things. I’ve got

some of William’s letters, too; so if you’ll get him to write a

line or so we can com —‘

‘He CAN’T write with his left hand,’ says the old gentleman. ‘If he could use his right hand, you would see that he

wrote his own letters and mine too. Look at both, please

— they’re by the same hand.’

The lawyer done it, and says:

‘I believe it’s so — and if it ain’t so, there’s a heap stronger resemblance than I’d noticed before, anyway. Well, well,

well! I thought we was right on the track of a slution, but

it’s gone to grass, partly. But any- way, one thing is proved

— THESE two ain’t either of ‘em Wilkses’ — and he wagged

his head towards the king and the duke.

Well, what do you think? That muleheaded old fool

wouldn’t give in THEN! Indeed he wouldn’t. Said it warn’t

no fair test. Said his brother William was the cussedest

joker in the world, and hadn’t tried to write — HE see William was going to play one of his jokes the minute he put

the pen to paper. And so he warmed up and went warbling

right along till he was actuly beginning to believe what he

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was saying HIM- SELF; but pretty soon the new gentleman

broke in, and says:

‘I’ve thought of something. Is there anybody here that

helped to lay out my br — helped to lay out the late Peter

Wilks for burying?’

‘Yes,’ says somebody, ‘me and Ab Turner done it. We’re

both here.’

Then the old man turns towards the king, and says:

‘Peraps this gentleman can tell me what was tattooed on

his breast?’

Blamed if the king didn’t have to brace up mighty quick,

or he’d a squshed down like a bluff bank that the river has

cut under, it took him so sudden; and, mind you, it was a

thing that was calculated to make most ANYBODY sqush

to get fetched such a solid one as that without any notice,

because how was HE going to know what was tattooed

on the man? He whitened a little; he couldn’t help it; and

it was mighty still in there, and everybody bending a little

forwards and gazing at him. Says I to myself, NOW he’ll

throw up the sponge — there ain’t no more use. Well, did

he? A body can’t hardly believe it, but he didn’t. I reckon he

thought he’d keep the thing up till he tired them people out,

so they’d thin out, and him and the duke could break loose

and get away. Anyway, he set there, and pretty soon he begun to smile, and says:

‘Mf! It’s a VERY tough question, AIN’T it! YES, sir, I k’n

tell you what’s tattooed on his breast. It’s jest a small, thin,

blue arrow — that’s what it is; and if you don’t look clost,

you can’t see it. NOW what do you say — hey?’

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Well, I never see anything like that old blister for clean

out-and-out cheek.

The new old gentleman turns brisk towards Ab Turner

and his pard, and his eye lights up like he judged he’d got

the king THIS time, and says:

‘There — you’ve heard what he said! Was there any such

mark on Peter Wilks’ breast?’

Both of them spoke up and says:

‘We didn’t see no such mark.’

‘Good!’ says the old gentleman. ‘Now, what you DID see

on his breast was a small dim P, and a B (which is an initial

he dropped when he was young), and a W, with dashes between them, so: P — B — W’ — and he marked them that

way on a piece of paper. ‘Come, ain’t that what you saw?’

Both of them spoke up again, and says:

‘No, we DIDN’T. We never seen any marks at all.’

Well, everybody WAS in a state of mind now, and they

sings out:

‘The whole BILIN’ of ‘m ‘s frauds! Le’s duck ‘em! le’s drown

‘em! le’s ride ‘em on a rail!’ and everybody was whooping at

once, and there was a rat- tling powwow. But the lawyer he

jumps on the table and yells, and says:

‘Gentlemen — gentleMEN! Hear me just a word — just a

SINGLE word — if you PLEASE! There’s one way yet — let’s

go and dig up the corpse and look.’

That took them.

‘Hooray!’ they all shouted, and was starting right off; but

the lawyer and the doctor sung out:

‘Hold on, hold on! Collar all these four men and the boy,

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and fetch THEM along, too!’

‘We’ll do it!’ they all shouted; ‘and if we don’t find them

marks we’ll lynch the whole gang!’

I WAS scared, now, I tell you. But there warn’t no getting

away, you know. They gripped us all, and marched us right

along, straight for the graveyard, which was a mile and a

half down the river, and the whole town at our heels, for we

made noise enough, and it was only nine in the evening.

As we went by our house I wished I hadn’t sent Mary

Jane out of town; because now if I could tip her the wink

she’d light out and save me, and blow on our dead-beats.

Well, we swarmed along down the river road, just carrying on like wildcats; and to make it more scary the sky

was darking up, and the lightning beginning to wink and

flitter, and the wind to shiver amongst the leaves. This was

the most awful trouble and most dangersome I ever was in;

and I was kinder stunned; everything was going so different from what I had allowed for; stead of being fixed so I

could take my own time if I wanted to, and see all the fun,

and have Mary Jane at my back to save me and set me free

when the close-fit come, here was nothing in the world betwixt me and sudden death but just them tattoo-marks. If

they didn’t find them —

I couldn’t bear to think about it; and yet, some- how, I

couldn’t think about nothing else. It got darker and darker,

and it was a beautiful time to give the crowd the slip; but

that big husky had me by the wrist — Hines — and a body

might as well try to give Goliar the slip. He dragged me

right along, he was so excited, and I had to run to keep up.

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When they got there they swarmed into the grave- yard

and washed over it like an overflow. And when they got to

the grave they found they had about a hundred times as

many shovels as they wanted, but nobody hadn’t thought

to fetch a lantern. But they sailed into digging anyway by

the flicker of the light- ning, and sent a man to the nearest

house, a half a mile off, to borrow one.

So they dug and dug like everything; and it got awful dark, and the rain started, and the wind swished and

swushed along, and the lightning come brisker and brisker,

and the thunder boomed; but them people never took no

notice of it, they was so full of this business; and one minute

you could see everything and every face in that big crowd,

and the shovelfuls of dirt sailing up out of the grave, and

the next second the dark wiped it all out, and you couldn’t

see nothing at all.

At last they got out the coffin and begun to unscrew the

lid, and then such another crowding and shoulder- ing and

shoving as there was, to scrouge in and get a sight, you never see; and in the dark, that way, it was awful. Hines he hurt

my wrist dreadful pulling and tugging so, and I reckon he

clean forgot I was in the world, he was so excited and panting.

All of a sudden the lightning let go a perfect sluice of

white glare, and somebody sings out:

‘By the living jingo, here’s the bag of gold on his breast!’

Hines let out a whoop, like everybody else, and dropped

my wrist and give a big surge to bust his way in and get a

look, and the way I lit out and shinned for the road in the

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dark there ain’t nobody can tell.

I had the road all to myself, and I fairly flew — leastways,

I had it all to myself except the solid dark, and the now-andthen glares, and the buzzing of the rain, and the thrashing

of the wind, and the splitting of the thunder; and sure as

you are born I did clip it along!

When I struck the town I see there warn’t nobody out in

the storm, so I never hunted for no back streets, but humped

it straight through the main one; and when I begun to get

towards our house I aimed my eye and set it. No light there;

the house all dark — which made me feel sorry and disappointed, I didn’t know why. But at last, just as I was sailing

by, FLASH comes the light in Mary Jane’s window! and my

heart swelled up sudden, like to bust; and the same second

the house and all was behind me in the dark, and wasn’t

ever going to be before me no more in this world. She WAS

the best girl I ever see, and had the most sand.

The minute I was far enough above the town to see I

could make the towhead, I begun to look sharp for a boat to

borrow, and the first time the lightning showed me one that

wasn’t chained I snatched it and shoved. It was a canoe, and

warn’t fastened with nothing but a rope. The towhead was a

rattling big distance off, away out there in the middle of the

river, but I didn’t lose no time; and when I struck the raft

at last I was so fagged I would a just laid down to blow and

gasp if I could afforded it. But I didn’t. As I sprung aboard

I sung out:

‘Out with you, Jim, and set her loose! Glory be to goodness, we’re shut of them!’

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Jim lit out, and was a-coming for me with both arms

spread, he was so full of joy; but when I glimpsed him in the

lightning my heart shot up in my mouth and I went overboard backwards; for I forgot he was old King Lear and a

drownded A-rab all in one, and it most scared the livers

and lights out of me. But Jim fished me out, and was going

to hug me and bless me, and so on, he was so glad I was back

and we was shut of the king and the duke, but I says:

‘Not now; have it for breakfast, have it for break- fast! Cut

loose and let her slide!’

So in two seconds away we went a-sliding down the river,

and it DID seem so good to be free again and all by ourselves on the big river, and nobody to bother us. I had to skip

around a bit, and jump up and crack my heels a few times

— I couldn’t help it; but about the third crack I noticed a

sound that I knowed mighty well, and held my breath and

listened and waited; and sure enough, when the next flash

busted out over the water, here they come! — and just alaying to their oars and making their skiff hum! It was the

king and the duke.

So I wilted right down on to the planks then, and give up;

and it was all I could do to keep from crying.

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Chapter XXX

WHEN they got aboard the king went for me, and shook

me by the collar, and says:

‘Tryin’ to give us the slip, was ye, you pup! Tired of our

company, hey?’

I says:

‘No, your majesty, we warn’t — PLEASE don’t, your majesty!’

‘Quick, then, and tell us what WAS your idea, or I’ll shake

the insides out o’ you!’

‘Honest, I’ll tell you everything just as it hap- pened, your

majesty. The man that had a-holt of me was very good to me,

and kept saying he had a boy about as big as me that died

last year, and he was sorry to see a boy in such a dangerous

fix; and when they was all took by surprise by finding the

gold, and made a rush for the coffin, he lets go of me and

whis- pers, ‘Heel it now, or they’ll hang ye, sure!’ and I lit

out. It didn’t seem no good for ME to stay — I couldn’t do

nothing, and I didn’t want to be hung if I could get away. So

I never stopped running till I found the canoe; and when I

got here I told Jim to hurry, or they’d catch me and hang me

yet, and said I was afeard you and the duke wasn’t alive now,

and I was awful sorry, and so was Jim, and was awful glad

when we see you coming; you may ask Jim if I didn’t.’

Jim said it was so; and the king told him to shut up, and

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said, ‘Oh, yes, it’s MIGHTY likely!’ and shook me up again,

and said he reckoned he’d drownd me. But the duke says:

‘Leggo the boy, you old idiot! Would YOU a done any

different? Did you inquire around for HIM when you got

loose? I don’t remember it.’

So the king let go of me, and begun to cuss that town and

everybody in it. But the duke says:

‘You better a blame’ sight give YOURSELF a good cussing, for you’re the one that’s entitled to it most. You hain’t

done a thing from the start that had any sense in it, except

coming out so cool and cheeky with that imaginary bluearrow mark. That WAS bright — it was right down bully;

and it was the thing that saved us. For if it hadn’t been for

that they’d a jailed us till them Englishmen’s baggage come

— and then — the penitentiary, you bet! But that trick took

‘em to the graveyard, and the gold done us a still bigger

kindness; for if the excited fools hadn’t let go all holts and

made that rush to get a look we’d a slept in our cravats tonight — cravats warranted to WEAR, too — longer than

WE’D need ‘em.’

They was still a minute — thinking; then the king says,

kind of absent-minded like:

‘Mf! And we reckoned the NIGGERS stole it!’

That made me squirm!

‘Yes,’ says the duke, kinder slow and deliberate and sarcastic, ‘WE did.’

After about a half a minute the king drawls out:

‘Leastways, I did.’

The duke says, the same way:

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‘On the contrary, I did.’

The king kind of ruffles up, and says:

‘Looky here, Bilgewater, what’r you referrin’ to?’

The duke says, pretty brisk:

‘When it comes to that, maybe you’ll let me ask, what was

YOU referring to?’

‘Shucks!’ says the king, very sarcastic; ‘but I don’t know

— maybe you was asleep, and didn’t know what you was

about.’

The duke bristles up now, and says:

‘Oh, let UP on this cussed nonsense; do you take me for

a blame’ fool? Don’t you reckon I know who hid that money

in that coffin?’

‘YES, sir! I know you DO know, because you done it

yourself!’

‘It’s a lie!’ — and the duke went for him. The king sings

out:

‘Take y’r hands off! — leggo my throat! — I take it all

back!’

The duke says:

‘Well, you just own up, first, that you DID hide that money there, intending to give me the slip one of these days, and

come back and dig it up, and have it all to yourself.’

‘Wait jest a minute, duke — answer me this one question,

honest and fair; if you didn’t put the money there, say it,

and I’ll b’lieve you, and take back every- thing I said.’

‘You old scoundrel, I didn’t, and you know I didn’t. There,

now!’

‘Well, then, I b’lieve you. But answer me only jest this

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one more — now DON’T git mad; didn’t you have it in your

mind to hook the money and hide it?’

The duke never said nothing for a little bit; then he says:

‘Well, I don’t care if I DID, I didn’t DO it, anyway. But

you not only had it in mind to do it, but you DONE it.’

‘I wisht I never die if I done it, duke, and that’s honest. I

won’t say I warn’t goin’ to do it, because I WAS; but you — I

mean somebody — got in ahead o’ me.’

‘It’s a lie! You done it, and you got to SAY you done it,

or —‘

The king began to gurgle, and then he gasps out:

‘Nough! — I OWN UP!’

I was very glad to hear him say that; it made me feel much

more easier than what I was feeling before. So the duke took

his hands off and says:

‘If you ever deny it again I’ll drown you. It’s WELL for

you to set there and blubber like a baby — it’s fitten for you,

after the way you’ve acted. I never see such an old ostrich

for wanting to gobble every- thing — and I a-trusting you

all the time, like you was my own father. You ought to been

ashamed of your- self to stand by and hear it saddled on to

a lot of poor niggers, and you never say a word for ‘em. It

makes me feel ridiculous to think I was soft enough to BELIEVE that rubbage. Cuss you, I can see now why you was

so anxious to make up the deffisit — you wanted to get what

money I’d got out of the Nonesuch and one thing or another, and scoop it ALL!’

The king says, timid, and still a-snuffling:

‘Why, duke, it was you that said make up the deffisit; it

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warn’t me.’

‘Dry up! I don’t want to hear no more out of you!’ says the

duke. ‘And NOW you see what you GOT by it. They’ve got

all their own money back, and all of OURN but a shekel or

two BESIDES. G’long to bed, and don’t you deffersit ME no

more deffersits, long ‘s YOU live!’

So the king sneaked into the wigwam and took to his

bottle for comfort, and before long the duke tackled HIS

bottle; and so in about a half an hour they was as thick as

thieves again, and the tighter they got the lovinger they got,

and went off a-snoring in each other’s arms. They both got

powerful mellow, but I noticed the king didn’t get mellow

enough to forget to remember to not deny about hiding the

money-bag again. That made me feel easy and satisfied. Of

course when they got to snoring we had a long gabble, and

I told Jim everything.

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Chapter XXXI

WE dasn’t stop again at any town for days and days; kept

right along down the river. We was down south in the

warm weather now, and a mighty long ways from home. We

begun to come to trees with Spanish moss on them, hanging down from the limbs like long, gray beards. It was the

first I ever see it growing, and it made the woods look solemn and dismal. So now the frauds reckoned they was out

of danger, and they begun to work the villages again.

First they done a lecture on temperance; but they didn’t

make enough for them both to get drunk on. Then in another village they started a dancing-school; but they didn’t

know no more how to dance than a kangaroo does; so the

first prance they made the general public jumped in and

pranced them out of town. Another time they tried to go

at yellocution; but they didn’t yellocute long till the audience got up and give them a solid good cussing, and made

them skip out. They tackled missionarying, and mesmeriz- ing, and doctoring, and telling fortunes, and a little of

everything; but they couldn’t seem to have no luck. So at

last they got just about dead broke, and laid around the raft

as she floated along, thinking and thinking, and never saying nothing, by the half a day at a time, and dreadful blue

and desperate.

And at last they took a change and begun to lay their

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heads together in the wigwam and talk low and confidential two or three hours at a time. Jim and me got uneasy. We

didn’t like the look of it. We judged they was studying up

some kind of worse deviltry than ever. We turned it over

and over, and at last we made up our minds they was going to break into somebody’s house or store, or was going

into the counterfeit- money business, or something. So then

we was pretty scared, and made up an agreement that we

wouldn’t have nothing in the world to do with such actions,

and if we ever got the least show we would give them the

cold shake and clear out and leave them behind. Well, early

one morning we hid the raft in a good, safe place about two

mile below a little bit of a shabby village named Pikesville,

and the king he went ashore and told us all to stay hid whilst

he went up to town and smelt around to see if anybody had

got any wind of the Royal Nonesuch there yet. (“House

to rob, you MEAN,’ says I to myself; ‘and when you get

through robbing it you’ll come back here and wonder what

has become of me and Jim and the raft — and you’ll have to

take it out in wondering.’) And he said if he warn’t back by

midday the duke and me would know it was all right, and

we was to come along.

So we stayed where we was. The duke he fretted and

sweated around, and was in a mighty sour way. He scolded us for everything, and we couldn’t seem to do nothing

right; he found fault with every little thing. Something was

a-brewing, sure. I was good and glad when midday come

and no king; we could have a change, anyway — and maybe

a chance for THE chance on top of it. So me and the duke

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went up to the village, and hunted around there for the king,

and by and by we found him in the back room of a little low

doggery, very tight, and a lot of loafers bullyrag- ging him

for sport, and he a-cussing and a-threatening with all his

might, and so tight he couldn’t walk, and couldn’t do nothing to them. The duke he begun to abuse him for an old

fool, and the king begun to sass back, and the minute they

was fairly at it I lit out and shook the reefs out of my hind

legs, and spun down the river road like a deer, for I see our

chance; and I made up my mind that it would be a long day

before they ever see me and Jim again. I got down there all

out of breath but loaded up with joy, and sung out:

‘Set her loose, Jim! we’re all right now!’

But there warn’t no answer, and nobody come out of the

wigwam. Jim was gone! I set up a shout — and then another — and then another one; and run this way and that in

the woods, whooping and screech- ing; but it warn’t no use

— old Jim was gone. Then I set down and cried; I couldn’t

help it. But I couldn’t set still long. Pretty soon I went out on

the road, trying to think what I better do, and I run across

a boy walking, and asked him if he’d seen a strange nigger

dressed so and so, and he says:

‘Yes.’

‘Whereabouts?’ says I.

‘Down to Silas Phelps’ place, two mile below here. He’s a

runaway nigger, and they’ve got him. Was you looking for

him?’

‘You bet I ain’t! I run across him in the woods about an

hour or two ago, and he said if I hollered he’d cut my livers

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out — and told me to lay down and stay where I was; and I

done it. Been there ever since; afeard to come out.’

‘Well,’ he says, ‘you needn’t be afeard no more, becuz

they’ve got him. He run off f’m down South, som’ers.’

‘It’s a good job they got him.’

‘Well, I RECKON! There’s two hunderd dollars re- ward

on him. It’s like picking up money out’n the road.’

‘Yes, it is — and I could a had it if I’d been big enough; I

see him FIRST. Who nailed him?’

‘It was an old fellow — a stranger — and he sold out his

chance in him for forty dollars, becuz he’s got to go up the

river and can’t wait. Think o’ that, now! You bet I’D wait, if

it was seven year.’

‘That’s me, every time,’ says I. ‘But maybe his chance ain’t

worth no more than that, if he’ll sell it so cheap. Maybe

there’s something ain’t straight about it.’

‘But it IS, though — straight as a string. I see the handbill

myself. It tells all about him, to a dot — paints him like a picture, and tells the plantation he’s frum, below NewrLEANS.

No-sirree-BOB, they ain’t no trouble ‘bout THAT speculation, you bet you. Say, gimme a chaw tobacker, won’t ye?’

I didn’t have none, so he left. I went to the raft, and set

down in the wigwam to think. But I couldn’t come to nothing. I thought till I wore my head sore, but I couldn’t see no

way out of the trouble. After all this long journey, and after

all we’d done for them scoundrels, here it was all come to

nothing, everything all busted up and ruined, because they

could have the heart to serve Jim such a trick as that, and

make him a slave again all his life, and amongst strangers,

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too, for forty dirty dollars.

Once I said to myself it would be a thousand times better for Jim to be a slave at home where his family was, as

long as he’d GOT to be a slave, and so I’d better write a letter to Tom Sawyer and tell him to tell Miss Watson where

he was. But I soon give up that notion for two things: she’d

be mad and disgusted at his rascality and ungratefulness

for leaving her, and so she’d sell him straight down the river again; and if she didn’t, everybody naturally despises an

ungrateful nigger, and they’d make Jim feel it all the time,

and so he’d feel ornery and disgraced. And then think of

ME! It would get all around that Huck Finn helped a nigger

to get his freedom; and if I was ever to see anybody from

that town again I’d be ready to get down and lick his boots

for shame. That’s just the way: a person does a low-down

thing, and then he don’t want to take no consequences of it.

Thinks as long as he can hide, it ain’t no disgrace. That was

my fix exactly. The more I studied about this the more my

conscience went to grinding me, and the more wicked and

low-down and ornery I got to feel- ing. And at last, when

it hit me all of a sudden that here was the plain hand of

Providence slapping me in the face and letting me know my

wickedness was being watched all the time from up there

in heaven,whilst I was stealing a poor old woman’s nigger

that hadn’t ever done me no harm, and now was showing

me there’s One that’s always on the lookout, and ain’t a- going to allow no such miserable doings to go only just so fur

and no further, I most dropped in my tracks I was so scared.

Well, I tried the best I could to kinder soften it up somehow

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for myself by saying I was brung up wicked, and so I warn’t

so much to blame; but something inside of me kept saying,

‘There was the Sunday-school, you could a gone to it; and if

you’d a done it they’d a learnt you there that people that acts

as I’d been acting about that nigger goes to everlasting fire.’

It made me shiver. And I about made up my mind to pray,

and see if I couldn’t try to quit being the kind of a boy I was

and be better. So I kneeled down. But the words wouldn’t

come. Why wouldn’t they? It warn’t no use to try and hide

it from Him. Nor from ME, neither. I knowed very well why

they wouldn’t come. It was because my heart warn’t right;

it was because I warn’t square; it was because I was playing

double. I was letting ON to give up sin, but away inside of

me I was holding on to the biggest one of all. I was trying

to make my mouth SAY I would do the right thing and the

clean thing, and go and write to that nigger’s owner and tell

where he was; but deep down in me I knowed it was a lie,

and He knowed it. You can’t pray a lie — I found that out.

So I was full of trouble, full as I could be; and didn’t know

what to do. At last I had an idea; and I says, I’ll go and write

the letter — and then see if I can pray. Why, it was astonishing, the way I felt as light as a feather right straight off, and

my troubles all gone. So I got a piece of paper and a pencil,

all glad and excited, and set down and wrote:

Miss Watson, your runaway nigger Jim is down here two mile

below Pikesville, and Mr. Phelps has got him and he will give

him up for the reward if you send.

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HUCK FINN.

I felt good and all washed clean of sin for the first time

I had ever felt so in my life, and I knowed I could pray now.

But I didn’t do it straight off, but laid the paper down and

set there thinking — thinking how good it was all this happened so, and how near I come to being lost and going to

hell. And went on thinking. And got to thinking over our

trip down the river; and I see Jim before me all the time: in

the day and in the night-time, sometimes moonlight, sometimes storms, and we a-floating along, talking and singing

and laughing. But somehow I couldn’t seem to strike no

places to harden me against him, but only the other kind.

I’d see him standing my watch on top of his’n, ‘stead of calling me, so I could go on sleep- ing; and see him how glad

he was when I come back out of the fog; and when I come to

him again in the swamp, up there where the feud was; and

such-like times; and would always call me honey, and pet

me and do everything he could think of for me, and how

good he always was; and at last I struck the time I saved him

by telling the men we had small-pox aboard, and he was so

grateful, and said I was the best friend old Jim ever had in

the world, and the ONLY one he’s got now; and then I happened to look around and see that paper.

It was a close place. I took it up, and held it in my hand.

I was a-trembling, because I’d got to de- cide, forever, betwixt two things, and I knowed it. I studied a minute, sort

of holding my breath, and then says to myself:

‘All right, then, I’ll GO to hell’ — and tore it up.

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It was awful thoughts and awful words, but they was

said. And I let them stay said; and never thought no more

about reforming. I shoved the whole thing out of my head,

and said I would take up wickedness again, which was in

my line, being brung up to it, and the other warn’t. And

for a starter I would go to work and steal Jim out of slavery

again; and if I could think up anything worse, I would do

that, too; be- cause as long as I was in, and in for good, I

might as well go the whole hog.

Then I set to thinking over how to get at it, and turned

over some considerable many ways in my mind; and at last

fixed up a plan that suited me. So then I took the bearings

of a woody island that was down the river a piece, and as

soon as it was fairly dark I crept out with my raft and went

for it, and hid it there, and then turned in. I slept the night

through, and got up before it was light, and had my breakfast, and put on my store clothes, and tied up some others

and one thing or another in a bundle, and took the canoe

and cleared for shore. I landed below where I judged was

Phelps’s place, and hid my bundle in the woods, and then

filled up the canoe with water, and loaded rocks into her

and sunk her where I could find her again when I wanted

her, about a quarter of a mile below a little steam sawmill

that was on the bank.

Then I struck up the road, and when I passed the mill I

see a sign on it, ‘Phelps’s Sawmill,’ and when I come to the

farm-houses, two or three hundred yards further along, I

kept my eyes peeled, but didn’t see nobody around, though

it was good daylight now. But I didn’t mind, because I didn’t

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want to see nobody just yet — I only wanted to get the lay of

the land. According to my plan, I was going to turn up there

from the village, not from below. So I just took a look, and

shoved along, straight for town. Well, the very first man I

see when I got there was the duke. He was sticking up a

bill for the Royal Nonesuch — three-night performance —

like that other time. They had the cheek, them frauds! I was

right on him be- fore I could shirk. He looked astonished,

and says:

‘Hel-LO! Where’d YOU come from?’ Then he says, kind

of glad and eager, ‘Where’s the raft? — got her in a good

place?’

I says:

‘Why, that’s just what I was going to ask your grace.’

Then he didn’t look so joyful, and says:

‘What was your idea for asking ME?’ he says.

‘Well,’ I says, ‘when I see the king in that dog- gery yesterday I says to myself, we can’t get him home for hours, till

he’s soberer; so I went a-loafing around town to put in the

time and wait. A man up and offered me ten cents to help

him pull a skiff over the river and back to fetch a sheep, and

so I went along; but when we was dragging him to the boat,

and the man left me a-holt of the rope and went behind him

to shove him along, he was too strong for me and jerked

loose and run, and we after him. We didn’t have no dog, and

so we had to chase him all over the country till we tired him

out. We never got him till dark; then we fetched him over,

and I started down for the raft. When I got there and see it

was gone, I says to myself, ‘They’ve got into trouble and had

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to leave; and they’ve took my nigger, which is the only nigger I’ve got in the world, and now I’m in a strange country,

and ain’t got no property no more, nor noth- ing, and no

way to make my living;’ so I set down and cried. I slept in

the woods all night. But what DID become of the raft, then?

— and Jim — poor Jim!’

‘Blamed if I know — that is, what’s become of the raft.

That old fool had made a trade and got forty dollars, and

when we found him in the doggery the loafers had matched

half-dollars with him and got every cent but what he’d

spent for whisky; and when I got him home late last night

and found the raft gone, we said, ‘That little rascal has stole

our raft and shook us, and run off down the river.’’

‘I wouldn’t shake my NIGGER, would I? — the only nigger I had in the world, and the only property.’

‘We never thought of that. Fact is, I reckon we’d come

to consider him OUR nigger; yes, we did consider him so

— goodness knows we had trouble enough for him. So when

we see the raft was gone and we flat broke, there warn’t anything for it but to try the Royal Nonesuch another shake.

And I’ve pegged along ever since, dry as a powder-horn.

Where’s that ten cents? Give it here.’

I had considerable money, so I give him ten cents, but

begged him to spend it for something to eat, and give me

some, because it was all the money I had, and I hadn’t had

nothing to eat since yesterday. He never said nothing. The

next minute he whirls on me and says:

‘Do you reckon that nigger would blow on us? We’d skin

him if he done that!’

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‘How can he blow? Hain’t he run off?’

‘No! That old fool sold him, and never divided with me,

and the money’s gone.’

‘SOLD him?’ I says, and begun to cry; ‘why, he was MY

nigger, and that was my money. Where is he? — I want my

nigger.’

‘Well, you can’t GET your nigger, that’s all — so dry up

your blubbering. Looky here — do you think YOU’D venture to blow on us? Blamed if I think I’d trust you. Why, if

you WAS to blow on us —‘

He stopped, but I never see the duke look so ugly out of

his eyes before. I went on a-whimpering, and says:

‘I don’t want to blow on nobody; and I ain’t got no time to

blow, nohow. I got to turn out and find my nigger.’

He looked kinder bothered, and stood there with his

bills fluttering on his arm, thinking, and wrinkling up his

forehead. At last he says:

‘I’ll tell you something. We got to be here three days. If

you’ll promise you won’t blow, and won’t let the nigger blow,

I’ll tell you where to find him.’

So I promised, and he says:

‘A farmer by the name of Silas Ph——‘ and then he

stopped. You see, he started to tell me the truth; but when

he stopped that way, and begun to study and think again,

I reckoned he was changing his mind. And so he was. He

wouldn’t trust me; he wanted to make sure of having me out

of the way the whole three days. So pretty soon he says:

‘The man that bought him is named Abram Foster —

Abram G. Foster — and he lives forty mile back here in the

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country, on the road to Lafayette.’

‘All right,’ I says, ‘I can walk it in three days. And I’ll start

this very afternoon.’

‘No you wont, you’ll start NOW; and don’t you lose any

time about it, neither, nor do any gabbling by the way. Just

keep a tight tongue in your head and move right along, and

then you won’t get into trouble with US, d’ye hear?’

That was the order I wanted, and that was the one I played

for. I wanted to be left free to work my plans.

‘So clear out,’ he says; ‘and you can tell Mr. Foster whatever you want to. Maybe you can get him to believe that

Jim IS your nigger — some idiots don’t require documents

— leastways I’ve heard there’s such down South here. And

when you tell him the handbill and the reward’s bogus,

maybe he’ll believe you when you explain to him what the

idea was for getting ‘em out. Go ‘long now, and tell him

anything you want to; but mind you don’t work your jaw

any BETWEEN here and there.’

So I left, and struck for the back country. I didn’t look

around, but I kinder felt like he was watching me. But

I knowed I could tire him out at that. I went straight out

in the country as much as a mile before I stopped; then I

doubled back through the woods towards Phelps’. I reckoned I better start in on my plan straight off without fooling

around, because I wanted to stop Jim’s mouth till these fellows could get away. I didn’t want no trouble with their kind.

I’d seen all I wanted to of them, and wanted to get entirely

shut of them.

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Chapter XXXII

WHEN I got there it was all still and Sunday-like, and

hot and sunshiny; the hands was gone to the fields;

and there was them kind of faint dronings of bugs and flies

in the air that makes it seem so lone- some and like everybody’s dead and gone; and if a breeze fans along and quivers

the leaves it makes you feel mournful, because you feel like

it’s spirits whisper- ing — spirits that’s been dead ever so

many years — and you always think they’re talking about

YOU. As a general thing it makes a body wish HE was dead,

too, and done with it all.

Phelps’ was one of these little one-horse cotton plan- tations, and they all look alike. A rail fence round a two-acre

yard; a stile made out of logs sawed off and up-ended in

steps, like barrels of a different length, to climb over the

fence with, and for the women to stand on when they are

going to jump on to a horse; some sickly grass-patches in

the big yard, but mostly it was bare and smooth, like an old

hat with the nap rubbed off; big double log-house for the

white folks — hewed logs, with the chinks stopped up with

mud or mortar, and these mud-stripes been whitewashed

some time or another; round-log kitchen, with a big broad,

open but roofed passage joining it to the house; log smokehouse back of the kitchen; three little log nigger-cabins in a

row t’other side the smoke-house; one little hut all by itself

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away down against the back fence, and some outbuildings

down a piece the other side; ash- hopper and big kettle to

bile soap in by the little hut; bench by the kitchen door, with

bucket of water and a gourd; hound asleep there in the sun;

more hounds asleep round about; about three shade trees

away off in a corner; some currant bushes and gooseberry

bushes in one place by the fence; outside of the fence a garden and a watermelon patch; then the cotton fields begins,

and after the fields the woods.

I went around and clumb over the back stile by the ashhopper, and started for the kitchen. When I got a little ways

I heard the dim hum of a spinning-wheel wailing along up

and sinking along down again; and then I knowed for certain I wished I was dead — for that IS the lonesomest sound

in the whole world.

I went right along, not fixing up any particular plan,

but just trusting to Providence to put the right words in

my mouth when the time come; for I’d noticed that Providence always did put the right words in my mouth if I left

it alone.

When I got half-way, first one hound and then another

got up and went for me, and of course I stopped and faced

them, and kept still. And such another powwow as they

made! In a quarter of a minute I was a kind of a hub of a

wheel, as you may say — spokes made out of dogs — circle

of fifteen of them packed together around me, with their

necks and noses stretched up towards me, a-barking and

howling; and more a-coming; you could see them sail- ing

over fences and around corners from everywheres.

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A nigger woman come tearing out of the kitchen with

a rolling-pin in her hand, singing out, ‘Begone YOU Tige!

you Spot! begone sah!’ and she fetched first one and then

another of them a clip and sent them howling, and then the

rest followed; and the next second half of them come back,

wagging their tails around me, and making friends with me.

There ain’t no harm in a hound, nohow.

And behind the woman comes a little nigger girl and two

little nigger boys without anything on but tow-linen shirts,

and they hung on to their mother’s gown, and peeped out

from behind her at me, bashful, the way they always do.

And here comes the white woman running from the house,

about forty-five or fifty year old, bareheaded, and her spinning-stick in her hand; and behind her comes her little

white children, acting the same way the little niggers was

going. She was smiling all over so she could hardly stand

— and says:

‘It’s YOU, at last! — AIN’T it?’

I out with a ‘Yes’m’ before I thought.

She grabbed me and hugged me tight; and then gripped

me by both hands and shook and shook; and the tears come

in her eyes, and run down over; and she couldn’t seem to

hug and shake enough, and kept saying, ‘You don’t look as

much like your mother as I reckoned you would; but law

sakes, I don’t care for that, I’m so glad to see you! Dear, dear,

it does seem like I could eat you up! Children, it’s your cousin Tom! — tell him howdy.’

But they ducked their heads, and put their fingers in

their mouths, and hid behind her. So she run on:

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‘Lize, hurry up and get him a hot breakfast right away

— or did you get your breakfast on the boat?’

I said I had got it on the boat. So then she started for the

house, leading me by the hand, and the children tagging after. When we got there she set me down in a split-bottomed

chair, and set herself down on a little low stool in front of

me, holding both of my hands, and says:

‘Now I can have a GOOD look at you; and, laws-a- me, I’ve

been hungry for it a many and a many a time, all these long

years, and it’s come at last! We been expecting you a couple

of days and more. What kep’ you? — boat get aground?’

‘Yes’m — she —‘

‘Don’t say yes’m — say Aunt Sally. Where’d she get

aground?’

I didn’t rightly know what to say, because I didn’t know

whether the boat would be coming up the river or down.

But I go a good deal on instinct; and my instinct said she

would be coming up — from down towards Orleans. That

didn’t help me much, though; for I didn’t know the names

of bars down that way. I see I’d got to invent a bar, or forget the name of the one we got aground on — or — Now I

struck an idea, and fetched it out:

‘It warn’t the grounding — that didn’t keep us back but a

little. We blowed out a cylinder-head.’

‘Good gracious! anybody hurt?’

‘No’m. Killed a nigger.’

‘Well, it’s lucky; because sometimes people do get hurt.

Two years ago last Christmas your uncle Silas was coming

up from Newrleans on the old Lally Rook, and she blowed

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out a cylinder-head and crippled a man. And I think he

died afterwards. He was a Baptist. Your uncle Silas knowed

a family in Baton Rouge that knowed his people very well.

Yes, I remember now, he DID die. Mortification set in, and

they had to amputate him. But it didn’t save him. Yes, it was

mortification — that was it. He turned blue all over, and

died in the hope of a glorious resurrection. They say he was

a sight to look at. Your uncle’s been up to the town every day

to fetch you. And he’s gone again, not more’n an hour ago;

he’ll be back any minute now. You must a met him on the

road, didn’t you? — oldish man, with a —‘

‘No, I didn’t see nobody, Aunt Sally. The boat landed just

at daylight, and I left my baggage on the wharf-boat and

went looking around the town and out a piece in the country, to put in the time and not get here too soon; and so I

come down the back way.’

‘Who’d you give the baggage to?’

‘Nobody.’

‘Why, child, it ‘ll be stole!’

‘Not where I hid it I reckon it won’t,’ I says.

‘How’d you get your breakfast so early on the boat?’

It was kinder thin ice, but I says:

‘The captain see me standing around, and told me I better

have something to eat before I went ashore; so he took me in

the texas to the officers’ lunch, and give me all I wanted.’

I was getting so uneasy I couldn’t listen good. I had my

mind on the children all the time; I wanted to get them out

to one side and pump them a little, and find out who I was.

But I couldn’t get no show, Mrs. Phelps kept it up and run

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on so. Pretty soon she made the cold chills streak all down

my back, because she says:

‘But here we’re a-running on this way, and you hain’t

told me a word about Sis, nor any of them. Now I’ll rest my

works a little, and you start up yourn; just tell me EVERYTHING — tell me all about ‘m all every one of ‘m; and how

they are, and what they’re doing, and what they told you to

tell me; and every last thing you can think of.’

Well, I see I was up a stump — and up it good. Providence had stood by me this fur all right, but I was hard and

tight aground now. I see it warn’t a bit of use to try to go

ahead — I’d got to throw up my hand. So I says to myself,

here’s another place where I got to resk the truth. I opened

my mouth to begin; but she grabbed me and hustled me in

behind the bed, and says:

‘Here he comes! Stick your head down lower — there,

that’ll do; you can’t be seen now. Don’t you let on you’re here.

I’ll play a joke on him. Children, don’t you say a word.’

I see I was in a fix now. But it warn’t no use to worry;

there warn’t nothing to do but just hold still, and try and be

ready to stand from under when the lightning struck.

I had just one little glimpse of the old gentleman when

he come in; then the bed hid him. Mrs. Phelps she jumps for

him, and says:

‘Has he come?’

‘No,’ says her husband.

‘Good-NESS gracious!’ she says, ‘what in the warld can

have become of him?’

‘I can’t imagine,’ says the old gentleman; ‘and I must say

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it makes me dreadful uneasy.’

‘Uneasy!’ she says; ‘I’m ready to go distracted! He MUST

a come; and you’ve missed him along the road. I KNOW it’s

so — something tells me so.’

‘Why, Sally, I COULDN’T miss him along the road —

YOU know that.’

‘But oh, dear, dear, what WILL Sis say! He must a come!

You must a missed him. He —‘

‘Oh, don’t distress me any more’n I’m already distressed. I don’t know what in the world to make of it. I’m

at my wit’s end, and I don’t mind acknowledging ‘t I’m

right down scared. But there’s no hope that he’s come; for

he COULDN’T come and me miss him. Sally, it’s terrible

— just terrible — something’s hap- pened to the boat, sure!’

‘Why, Silas! Look yonder! — up the road! — ain’t that

somebody coming?’

He sprung to the window at the head of the bed, and that

give Mrs. Phelps the chance she wanted. She stooped down

quick at the foot of the bed and give me a pull, and out I

come; and when he turned back from the window there she

stood, a-beaming and a-smil- ing like a house afire, and I

standing pretty meek and sweaty alongside. The old gentleman stared, and says:

‘Why, who’s that?’

‘Who do you reckon ‘t is?’

‘I hain’t no idea. Who IS it?’

‘It’s TOM SAWYER!’

By jings, I most slumped through the floor! But there

warn’t no time to swap knives; the old man grabbed me

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by the hand and shook, and kept on shak- ing; and all the

time how the woman did dance around and laugh and cry;

and then how they both did fire off questions about Sid, and

Mary, and the rest of the tribe.

But if they was joyful, it warn’t nothing to what I was; for

it was like being born again, I was so glad to find out who I

was. Well, they froze to me for two hours; and at last, when

my chin was so tired it couldn’t hardly go any more, I had

told them more about my family — I mean the Sawyer family — than ever happened to any six Sawyer families. And I

ex- plained all about how we blowed out a cylinder-head at

the mouth of White River, and it took us three days to fix it.

Which was all right, and worked first-rate; be- cause THEY

didn’t know but what it would take three days to fix it. If I’d

a called it a bolthead it would a done just as well.

Now I was feeling pretty comfortable all down one

side, and pretty uncomfortable all up the other. Be- ing

Tom Sawyer was easy and comfortable, and it stayed easy

and comfortable till by and by I hear a steamboat coughing along down the river. Then I says to myself, s’pose Tom

Sawyer comes down on that boat? And s’pose he steps in

here any minute, and sings out my name before I can throw

him a wink to keep quiet?

Well, I couldn’t HAVE it that way; it wouldn’t do at all.

I must go up the road and waylay him. So I told the folks I

reckoned I would go up to the town and fetch down my baggage. The old gentleman was for going along with me, but

I said no, I could drive the horse myself, and I druther he

wouldn’t take no trouble about me.

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Chapter XXXIII

SO I started for town in the wagon, and when I was halfway I see a wagon coming, and sure enough it was Tom

Sawyer, and I stopped and waited till he come along. I says

‘Hold on!’ and it stopped alongside, and his mouth opened

up like a trunk, and stayed so; and he swallowed two or

three times like a person that’s got a dry throat, and then

says:

‘I hain’t ever done you no harm. You know that. So, then,

what you want to come back and ha’nt ME for?’

I says:

‘I hain’t come back — I hain’t been GONE.’

When he heard my voice it righted him up some, but he

warn’t quite satisfied yet. He says:

‘Don’t you play nothing on me, because I wouldn’t on

you. Honest injun, you ain’t a ghost?’

‘Honest injun, I ain’t,’ I says.

‘Well — I — I — well, that ought to settle it, of course; but

I can’t somehow seem to understand it no way. Looky here,

warn’t you ever murdered AT ALL?’

‘No. I warn’t ever murdered at all — I played it on them.

You come in here and feel of me if you don’t believe me.’

So he done it; and it satisfied him; and he was that glad to

see me again he didn’t know what to do. And he wanted to

know all about it right off, because it was a grand adventure,

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and mysterious, and so it hit him where he lived. But I said,

leave it alone till by and by; and told his driver to wait, and

we drove off a little piece, and I told him the kind of a fix

I was in, and what did he reckon we better do? He said, let

him alone a minute, and don’t disturb him. So he thought

and thought, and pretty soon he says:

‘It’s all right; I’ve got it. Take my trunk in your wagon,

and let on it’s your’n; and you turn back and fool along slow,

so as to get to the house about the time you ought to; and

I’ll go towards town a piece, and take a fresh start, and get

there a quarter or a half an hour after you; and you needn’t

let on to know me at first.’

I says:

‘All right; but wait a minute. There’s one more thing — a

thing that NOBODY don’t know but me. And that is, there’s

a nigger here that I’m a-trying to steal out of slavery, and his

name is JIM — old Miss Wat- son’s Jim.’

He says:

‘ What ! Why, Jim is —‘

He stopped and went to studying. I says:

‘I know what you’ll say. You’ll say it’s dirty, low- down

business; but what if it is? I’m low down; and I’m a-going

to steal him, and I want you keep mum and not let on. Will

you?’

His eye lit up, and he says:

‘I’ll HELP you steal him!’

Well, I let go all holts then, like I was shot. It was the

most astonishing speech I ever heard — and I’m bound to

say Tom Sawyer fell considerable in my estimation. Only I

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couldn’t believe it. Tom Sawyer a NIGGER-STEALER!

‘Oh, shucks!’ I says; ‘you’re joking.’

‘I ain’t joking, either.’

‘Well, then,’ I says, ‘joking or no joking, if you hear

anything said about a runaway nigger, don’t for- get to remember that YOU don’t know nothing about him, and I

don’t know nothing about him.’

Then we took the trunk and put it in my wagon, and he

drove off his way and I drove mine. But of course I forgot

all about driving slow on accounts of being glad and full of

thinking; so I got home a heap too quick for that length of a

trip. The old gentleman was at the door, and he says:

‘Why, this is wonderful! Whoever would a thought it was

in that mare to do it? I wish we’d a timed her. And she hain’t

sweated a hair — not a hair. It’s wonderful. Why, I wouldn’t

take a hundred dollars for that horse now — I wouldn’t,

honest; and yet I’d a sold her for fifteen before, and thought

‘twas all she was worth.’

That’s all he said. He was the innocentest, best old soul I

ever see. But it warn’t surprising; because he warn’t only just

a farmer, he was a preacher, too, and had a little one-horse

log church down back of the plantation, which he built it

himself at his own expense, for a church and schoolhouse,

and never charged noth- ing for his preaching, and it was

worth it, too. There was plenty other farmer-preachers like

that, and done the same way, down South.

In about half an hour Tom’s wagon drove up to the front

stile, and Aunt Sally she see it through the win- dow, because it was only about fifty yards, and says:

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‘Why, there’s somebody come! I wonder who ‘tis? Why, I

do believe it’s a stranger. Jimmy ‘ (that’s one of the children)’

‘run and tell Lize to put on another plate for dinner.’

Everybody made a rush for the front door, because, of

course, a stranger don’t come EVERY year, and so he lays

over the yaller-fever, for interest, when he does come. Tom

was over the stile and starting for the house; the wagon was

spinning up the road for the village, and we was all bunched

in the front door. Tom had his store clothes on, and an audience — and that was always nuts for Tom Sawyer. In them

circum- stances it warn’t no trouble to him to throw in an

amount of style that was suitable. He warn’t a boy to meeky

along up that yard like a sheep; no, he come ca’m and important, like the ram. When he got a-front of us he lifts his

hat ever so gracious and dainty, like it was the lid of a box

that had butterflies asleep in it and he didn’t want to disturb

them, and says:

‘Mr. Archibald Nichols, I presume?’

‘No, my boy,’ says the old gentleman, ‘I’m sorry to say ‘t

your driver has deceived you; Nichols’s place is down a matter of three mile more. Come in, come in.’

Tom he took a look back over his shoulder, and says, ‘Too

late — he’s out of sight.’

‘Yes, he’s gone, my son, and you must come in and eat

your dinner with us; and then we’ll hitch up and take you

down to Nichols’s.’

‘Oh, I CAN’T make you so much trouble; I couldn’t think

of it. I’ll walk — I don’t mind the distance.’

‘But we won’t LET you walk — it wouldn’t be South- ern

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hospitality to do it. Come right in.’

‘Oh, DO,’ says Aunt Sally; ‘it ain’t a bit of trouble to us,

not a bit in the world. You must stay. It’s a long, dusty three

mile, and we can’t let you walk. And, besides, I’ve already

told ‘em to put on another plate when I see you coming; so

you mustn’t disap- point us. Come right in and make yourself at home.’

So Tom he thanked them very hearty and handsome,

and let himself be persuaded, and come in; and when he

was in he said he was a stranger from Hicksville, Ohio, and

his name was William Thompson — and he made another

bow.

Well, he run on, and on, and on, making up stuff about

Hicksville and everybody in it he could invent, and I getting a little nervious, and wondering how this was going to

help me out of my scrape; and at last, still talking along, he

reached over and kissed Aunt Sally right on the mouth, and

then settled back again in his chair comfortable, and was

going on talking; but she jumped up and wiped it off with

the back of her hand, and says:

‘You owdacious puppy!’

He looked kind of hurt, and says:

‘I’m surprised at you, m’am.’

‘You’re s’rp — Why, what do you reckon I am? I’ve a good

notion to take and — Say, what do you mean by kissing

me?’

He looked kind of humble, and says:

‘I didn’t mean nothing, m’am. I didn’t mean no harm. I

— I — thought you’d like it.’

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‘Why, you born fool!’ She took up the spinning stick, and

it looked like it was all she could do to keep from giving him

a crack with it. ‘What made you think I’d like it?’

‘Well, I don’t know. Only, they — they — told me you

would.’

‘THEY told you I would. Whoever told you’s ANOTHER

lunatic. I never heard the beat of it. Who’s THEY?’

‘Why, everybody. They all said so, m’am.’

It was all she could do to hold in; and her eyes snapped,

and her fingers worked like she wanted to scratch him; and

she says:

‘Who’s ‘everybody’? Out with their names, or ther’ll be

an idiot short.’

He got up and looked distressed, and fumbled his hat,

and says:

‘I’m sorry, and I warn’t expecting it. They told me to. They

all told me to. They all said, kiss her; and said she’d like it.

They all said it — every one of them. But I’m sorry, m’am,

and I won’t do it no more — I won’t, honest.’

‘You won’t, won’t you? Well, I sh’d RECKON you won’t!’

‘No’m, I’m honest about it; I won’t ever do it again — till

you ask me.’

‘Till I ASK you! Well, I never see the beat of it in my born

days! I lay you’ll be the Methusalem-num- skull of creation

before ever I ask you — or the likes of you.’

‘Well,’ he says, ‘it does surprise me so. I can’t make it out,

somehow. They said you would, and I thought you would.

But —‘ He stopped and looked around slow, like he wished

he could run across a friendly eye somewheres, and fetched

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up on the old gentleman’s, and says, ‘Didn’t YOU think

she’d like me to kiss her, sir?’

‘Why, no; I — I — well, no, I b’lieve I didn’t.’

Then he looks on around the same way to me, and says:

‘Tom, didn’t YOU think Aunt Sally ‘d open out her arms

and say, ‘Sid Sawyer —‘’

‘My land!’ she says, breaking in and jumping for him,

‘you impudent young rascal, to fool a body so —‘ and was

going to hug him, but he fended her off, and says:

‘No, not till you’ve asked me first.’

So she didn’t lose no time, but asked him; and hugged

him and kissed him over and over again, and then turned

him over to the old man, and he took what was left. And after they got a little quiet again she says:

‘Why, dear me, I never see such a surprise. We warn’t

looking for YOU at all, but only Tom. Sis never wrote to me

about anybody coming but him.’

‘It’s because it warn’t INTENDED for any of us to come

but Tom,’ he says; ‘but I begged and begged, and at the last

minute she let me come, too; so, com- ing down the river, me and Tom thought it would be a first-rate surprise for

him to come here to the house first, and for me to by and

by tag along and drop in, and let on to be a stranger. But it

was a mistake, Aunt Sally. This ain’t no healthy place for a

stranger to come.’

‘No — not impudent whelps, Sid. You ought to had your

jaws boxed; I hain’t been so put out since I don’t know when.

But I don’t care, I don’t mind the terms — I’d be willing to

stand a thousand such jokes to have you here. Well, to think

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of that per- formance! I don’t deny it, I was most putrified

with astonishment when you give me that smack.’

We had dinner out in that broad open passage be- twixt

the house and the kitchen; and there was things enough on

that table for seven families — and all hot, too; none of your

flabby, tough meat that’s laid in a cupboard in a damp cellar

all night and tastes like a hunk of old cold cannibal in the

morning. Uncle Silas he asked a pretty long blessing over it,

but it was worth it; and it didn’t cool it a bit, neither, the way

I’ve seen them kind of interruptions do lots of times. There

was a considerable good deal of talk all the afternoon, and

me and Tom was on the lookout all the time; but it warn’t

no use, they didn’t happen to say nothing about any runaway nigger, and we was afraid to try to work up to it. But at

supper, at night, one of the little boys says:

‘Pa, mayn’t Tom and Sid and me go to the show?’

‘No,’ says the old man, ‘I reckon there ain’t go- ing to be

any; and you couldn’t go if there was; be- cause the runaway nigger told Burton and me all about that scandalous

show, and Burton said he would tell the people; so I reckon

they’ve drove the owdacious loaf- ers out of town before this

time.’

So there it was! — but I couldn’t help it. Tom and me

was to sleep in the same room and bed; so, being tired, we

bid good-night and went up to bed right after supper, and

clumb out of the window and down the lightning-rod, and

shoved for the town; for I didn’t believe anybody was going

to give the king and the duke a hint, and so if I didn’t hurry

up and give them one they’d get into trouble sure.

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On the road Tom he told me all about how it was reckoned I was murdered, and how pap disappeared pretty soon,

and didn’t come back no more, and what a stir there was

when Jim run away; and I told Tom all about our Royal

Nonesuch rapscallions, and as much of the raft voyage as I

had time to; and as we struck into the town and up through

the — here comes a raging rush of people with torches, and

an awful whooping and yelling, and banging tin pans and

blow- ing horns; and we jumped to one side to let them go

by; and as they went by I see they had the king and the duke

astraddle of a rail — that is, I knowed it WAS the king and

the duke, though they was all over tar and feathers, and

didn’t look like nothing in the world that was human — just

looked like a couple of monstrous big soldier-plumes. Well,

it made me sick to see it; and I was sorry for them poor pitiful rascals, it seemed like I couldn’t ever feel any hardness

against them any more in the world. It was a dreadful thing

to see. Human beings CAN be awful cruel to one another.

We see we was too late — couldn’t do no good. We asked

some stragglers about it, and they said everybody went to

the show looking very innocent; and laid low and kept dark

till the poor old king was in the middle of his cavortings on

the stage; then somebody give a signal, and the house rose

up and went for them.

So we poked along back home, and I warn’t feeling so

brash as I was before, but kind of ornery, and humble, and

to blame, somehow — though I hadn’t done nothing. But

that’s always the way; it don’t make no difference whether

you do right or wrong, a person’s conscience ain’t got no

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sense, and just goes for him anyway. If I had a yaller dog

that didn’t know no more than a person’s conscience does I

would pison him. It takes up more room than all the rest of

a person’s insides, and yet ain’t no good, nohow. Tom Sawyer he says the same.

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Chapter XXXIV

WE stopped talking, and got to thinking. By and by

Tom says:

‘Looky here, Huck, what fools we are to not think of it before! I bet I know where Jim is.’

‘No! Where?’

‘In that hut down by the ash-hopper. Why, looky here.

When we was at dinner, didn’t you see a nigger man go in

there with some vittles?’

‘Yes.’

‘What did you think the vittles was for?’

‘For a dog.’

‘So ‘d I. Well, it wasn’t for a dog.’

‘Why?’

‘Because part of it was watermelon.’

‘So it was — I noticed it. Well, it does beat all that I never

thought about a dog not eating water- melon. It shows how

a body can see and don’t see at the same time.’

‘Well, the nigger unlocked the padlock when he went in,

and he locked it again when he came out. He fetched uncle

a key about the time we got up from table — same key, I bet.

Watermelon shows man, lock shows prisoner; and it ain’t

likely there’s two prisoners on such a little plantation, and

where the people’s all so kind and good. Jim’s the prisoner. All right — I’m glad we found it out detective fashion; I

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wouldn’t give shucks for any other way. Now you work your

mind, and study out a plan to steal Jim, and I will study out

one, too; and we’ll take the one we like the best.’

What a head for just a boy to have! If I had Tom Sawyer’s head I wouldn’t trade it off to be a duke, nor mate of a

steamboat, nor clown in a circus, nor nothing I can think

of. I went to thinking out a plan, but only just to be doing

something; I knowed very well where the right plan was going to come from. Pretty soon Tom says:

‘Ready?’

‘Yes,’ I says.

‘All right — bring it out.’

‘My plan is this,’ I says. ‘We can easy find out if it’s Jim

in there. Then get up my canoe to-morrow night, and fetch

my raft over from the island. Then the first dark night that

comes steal the key out of the old man’s britches after he

goes to bed, and shove off down the river on the raft with

Jim, hiding daytimes and running nights, the way me and

Jim used to do be- fore. Wouldn’t that plan work?’

‘WORK? Why, cert’nly it would work, like rats a-fighting.

But it’s too blame’ simple; there ain’t nothing TO it. What’s

the good of a plan that ain’t no more trouble than that? It’s

as mild as goose-milk. Why, Huck, it wouldn’t make no

more talk than break- ing into a soap factory.’

I never said nothing, because I warn’t expecting nothing different; but I knowed mighty well that whenever he

got HIS plan ready it wouldn’t have none of them objections to it.

And it didn’t. He told me what it was, and I see in a min-

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ute it was worth fifteen of mine for style, and would make

Jim just as free a man as mine would, and maybe get us all

killed besides. So I was satisfied, and said we would waltz

in on it. I needn’t tell what it was here, because I knowed

it wouldn’t stay the way, it was. I knowed he would be

changing it around every which way as we went along, and

heaving in new bull- inesses wherever he got a chance. And

that is what he done.

Well, one thing was dead sure, and that was that Tom

Sawyer was in earnest, and was actuly going to help steal

that nigger out of slavery. That was the thing that was too

many for me. Here was a boy that was respectable and well

brung up; and had a character to lose; and folks at home that

had characters; and he was bright and not leather-headed;

and knowing and not ignorant; and not mean, but kind;

and yet here he was, without any more pride, or rightness,

or feel- ing, than to stoop to this business, and make himself a shame, and his family a shame, before everybody. I

COULDN’T understand it no way at all. It was outra- geous,

and I knowed I ought to just up and tell him so; and so be

his true friend, and let him quit the thing right where he

was and save himself. And I DID start to tell him; but he

shut me up, and says:

‘Don’t you reckon I know what I’m about? Don’t I generly

know what I’m about?’

‘Yes.’

‘Didn’t I SAY I was going to help steal the nigger?’

‘Yes.’

‘WELL, then.’

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That’s all he said, and that’s all I said. It warn’t no use to

say any more; because when he said he’d do a thing, he always done it. But I couldn’t make out how he was willing

to go into this thing; so I just let it go, and never bothered

no more about it. If he was bound to have it so, I couldn’t

help it.

When we got home the house was all dark and still; so we

went on down to the hut by the ash-hopper for to examine

it. We went through the yard so as to see what the hounds

would do. They knowed us, and didn’t make no more noise

than country dogs is always doing when anything comes by

in the night. When we got to the cabin we took a look at the

front and the two sides; and on the side I warn’t acquainted with — which was the north side — we found a square

window- hole, up tolerable high, with just one stout board

nailed across it. I says:

‘Here’s the ticket. This hole’s big enough for Jim to get

through if we wrench off the board.’

Tom says:

‘It’s as simple as tit-tat-toe, three-in-a-row, and as easy

as playing hooky. I should HOPE we can find a way that’s a

little more complicated than THAT, Huck Finn.’

‘Well, then,’ I says, ‘how ‘ll it do to saw him out, the way I

done before I was murdered that time?’

‘That’s more LIKE,’ he says. ‘It’s real mysterious, and

troublesome, and good,’ he says; ‘but I bet we can find a way

that’s twice as long. There ain’t no hurry; le’s keep on looking around.’

Betwixt the hut and the fence, on the back side, was a

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lean-to that joined the hut at the eaves, and was made out

of plank. It was as long as the hut, but narrow — only about

six foot wide. The door to it was at the south end, and was

padlocked. Tom he went to the soap-kettle and searched

around, and fetched back the iron thing they lift the lid

with; so he took it and prized out one of the staples. The

chain fell down, and we opened the door and went in, and

shut it, and struck a match, and see the shed was only built

against a cabin and hadn’t no connection with it; and there

warn’t no floor to the shed, nor nothing in it but some old

rusty played-out hoes and spades and picks and a crippled

plow. The match went out, and so did we, and shoved in the

staple again, and the door was locked as good as ever. Tom

was joyful. He says;

‘Now we’re all right. We’ll DIG him out. It ‘ll take about

a week!’

Then we started for the house, and I went in the back

door — you only have to pull a buckskin latch- string, they

don’t fasten the doors — but that warn’t romantical enough

for Tom Sawyer; no way would do him but he must climb

up the lightning-rod. But after he got up half way about

three times, and missed fire and fell every time, and the last

time most busted his brains out, he thought he’d got to give

it up; but after he was rested he allowed he would give her

one more turn for luck, and this time he made the trip.

In the morning we was up at break of day, and down to

the nigger cabins to pet the dogs and make friends with the

nigger that fed Jim — if it WAS Jim that was being fed. The

niggers was just getting through break- fast and starting

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for the fields; and Jim’s nigger was piling up a tin pan with

bread and meat and things; and whilst the others was leaving, the key come from the house.

This nigger had a good-natured, chuckle-headed face,

and his wool was all tied up in little bunches with thread.

That was to keep witches off. He said the witches was pestering him awful these nights, and mak- ing him see all kinds

of strange things, and hear all kinds of strange words and

noises, and he didn’t believe he was ever witched so long

before in his life. He got so worked up, and got to running

on so about his troubles, he forgot all about what he’d been

a-going to do. So Tom says:

‘What’s the vittles for? Going to feed the dogs?’

The nigger kind of smiled around graduly over his face,

like when you heave a brickbat in a mud-puddle, and he

says:

‘Yes, Mars Sid, A dog. Cur’us dog, too. Does you want to

go en look at ‘im?’

‘Yes.’

I hunched Tom, and whispers:

‘You going, right here in the daybreak? THAT warn’t the

plan.’

‘No, it warn’t; but it’s the plan NOW.’

So, drat him, we went along, but I didn’t like it much.

When we got in we couldn’t hardly see any- thing, it was so

dark; but Jim was there, sure enough, and could see us; and

he sings out:

‘Why, HUCK! En good LAN’! ain’ dat Misto Tom?’

I just knowed how it would be; I just expected it. I didn’t

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know nothing to do; and if I had I couldn’t a done it, because that nigger busted in and says:

‘Why, de gracious sakes! do he know you genl- men?’

We could see pretty well now. Tom he looked at the nigger, steady and kind of wondering, and says:

‘Does WHO know us?’

‘Why, dis-yer runaway nigger.’

‘I don’t reckon he does; but what put that into your

head?’

‘What PUT it dar? Didn’ he jis’ dis minute sing out like

he knowed you?’

Tom says, in a puzzled-up kind of way:

‘Well, that’s mighty curious. WHO sung out? WHEN did

he sing out? WHAT did he sing out?’ And turns to me, perfectly ca’m, and says, ‘Did YOU hear anybody sing out?’

Of course there warn’t nothing to be said but the one

thing; so I says:

‘No; I ain’t heard nobody say nothing.’

Then he turns to Jim, and looks him over like he never

see him before, and says:

‘Did you sing out?’

‘No, sah,’ says Jim; ‘ I hain’t said nothing, sah.’

‘Not a word?’

‘No, sah, I hain’t said a word.’

‘Did you ever see us before?’

‘No, sah; not as I knows on.’

So Tom turns to the nigger, which was looking wild and

distressed, and says, kind of severe:

‘What do you reckon’s the matter with you, any- way?

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What made you think somebody sung out?’

‘Oh, it’s de dad-blame’ witches, sah, en I wisht I was dead,

I do. Dey’s awluz at it, sah, en dey do mos’ kill me, dey sk’yers

me so. Please to don’t tell nobody ‘bout it sah, er ole Mars

Silas he’ll scole me; ‘kase he say dey AIN’T no witches. I jis’

wish to good- ness he was heah now — DEN what would he

say! I jis’ bet he couldn’ fine no way to git aroun’ it DIS time.

But it’s awluz jis’ so; people dat’s SOT, stays sot; dey won’t

look into noth’n’en fine it out f’r deyselves, en when YOU

fine it out en tell um ‘bout it, dey doan’ b’lieve you.’

Tom give him a dime, and said we wouldn’t tell no- body;

and told him to buy some more thread to tie up his wool

with; and then looks at Jim, and says:

‘I wonder if Uncle Silas is going to hang this nigger. If

I was to catch a nigger that was ungrateful enough to run

away, I wouldn’t give him up, I’d hang him.’ And whilst the

nigger stepped to the door to look at the dime and bite it to

see if it was good, he whispers to Jim and says:

‘Don’t ever let on to know us. And if you hear any digging going on nights, it’s us; we’re going to set you free.’

Jim only had time to grab us by the hand and squeeze

it; then the nigger come back, and we said we’d come again

some time if the nigger wanted us to; and he said he would,

more particular if it was dark, be- cause the witches went

for him mostly in the dark, and it was good to have folks

around then.

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Chapter XXXV

I

T would be most an hour yet till breakfast, so we left and

struck down into the woods; because Tom said we got to

have SOME light to see how to dig by, and a lantern makes

too much, and might get us into trouble; what we must have

was a lot of them rotten chunks that’s called fox-fire, and

just makes a soft kind of a glow when you lay them in a dark

place. We fetched an armful and hid it in the weeds, and set

down to rest, and Tom says, kind of dissatisfied:

‘Blame it, this whole thing is just as easy and awkward as

it can be. And so it makes it so rotten difficult to get up a difficult plan. There ain’t no watch- man to be drugged — now

there OUGHT to be a watch- man. There ain’t even a dog

to give a sleeping-mix- ture to. And there’s Jim chained by

one leg, with a ten-foot chain, to the leg of his bed: why, all

you got to do is to lift up the bedstead and slip off the chain.

And Uncle Silas he trusts everybody; sends the key to the

punkin-headed nigger, and don’t send nobody to watch the

nigger. Jim could a got out of that window- hole before this,

only there wouldn’t be no use trying to travel with a tenfoot chain on his leg. Why, drat it, Huck, it’s the stupidest

arrangement I ever see. You got to invent ALL the difficulties. Well, we can’t help it; we got to do the best we can with

the materials we’ve got. Anyhow, there’s one thing — there’s

more honor in getting him out through a lot of difficulties

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and dangers, where there warn’t one of them furnished to

you by the people who it was their duty to furnish them,

and you had to contrive them all out of your own head.

Now look at just that one thing of the lantern. When you

come down to the cold facts, we simply got to LET ON that

a lantern’s resky. Why, we could work with a torchlight procession if we wanted to, I believe. Now, whilst I think of it,

we got to hunt up something to make a saw out of the first

chance we get.’

‘What do we want of a saw?’

‘What do we WANT of a saw? Hain’t we got to saw the leg

of Jim’s bed off, so as to get the chain loose?’

‘Why, you just said a body could lift up the bed- stead

and slip the chain off.’

‘Well, if that ain’t just like you, Huck Finn. You CAN

get up the infant-schooliest ways of going at a thing. Why,

hain’t you ever read any books at all? — Baron Trenck, nor

Casanova, nor Benvenuto Chel- leeny, nor Henri IV., nor

none of them heroes? Who ever heard of getting a prisoner

loose in such an old- maidy way as that? No; the way all the

best authori- ties does is to saw the bed-leg in two, and leave

it just so, and swallow the sawdust, so it can’t be found, and

put some dirt and grease around the sawed place so the very

keenest seneskal can’t see no sign of it’s being sawed, and

thinks the bed-leg is perfectly sound. Then, the night you’re

ready, fetch the leg a kick, down she goes; slip off your chain,

and there you are. Nothing to do but hitch your rope ladder

to the battlements, shin down it, break your leg in the moat

— because a rope ladder is nineteen foot too short, you know

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— and there’s your horses and your trusty vassles, and they

scoop you up and fling you across a saddle, and away you go

to your native Langudoc, or Navarre, or wherever it is. It’s

gaudy, Huck. I wish there was a moat to this cabin. If we get

time, the night of the escape, we’ll dig one.’

I says:

‘What do we want of a moat when we’re going to snake

him out from under the cabin?’

But he never heard me. He had forgot me and everything

else. He had his chin in his hand, thinking. Pretty soon he

sighs and shakes his head; then sighs again, and says:

‘No, it wouldn’t do — there ain’t necessity enough for it.’

‘For what?’ I says.

‘Why, to saw Jim’s leg off,’ he says.

‘Good land!’ I says; ‘why, there ain’t NO neces- sity for it.

And what would you want to saw his leg off for, anyway?’

‘Well, some of the best authorities has done it. They

couldn’t get the chain off, so they just cut their hand off and

shoved. And a leg would be better still. But we got to let

that go. There ain’t necessity enough in this case; and, besides, Jim’s a nigger, and wouldn’t understand the reasons

for it, and how it’s the custom in Europe; so we’ll let it go.

But there’s one thing — he can have a rope ladder; we can

tear up our sheets and make him a rope ladder easy enough.

And we can send it to him in a pie; it’s mostly done that way.

And I’ve et worse pies.’

‘Why, Tom Sawyer, how you talk,’ I says; ‘Jim ain’t got no

use for a rope ladder.’

‘He HAS got use for it. How YOU talk, you better say;

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you don’t know nothing about it. He’s GOT to have a rope

ladder; they all do.’

‘What in the nation can he DO with it?’

‘DO with it? He can hide it in his bed, can’t he?’ That’s

what they all do; and HE’S got to, too. Huck, you don’t ever

seem to want to do anything that’s regular; you want to be

starting something fresh all the time. S’pose he DON’T do

nothing with it? ain’t it there in his bed, for a clew, after he’s

gone? and don’t you reckon they’ll want clews? Of course

they will. And you wouldn’t leave them any? That would

be a PRETTY howdy-do, WOULDN’T it! I never heard of

such a thing.’

‘Well,’ I says, ‘if it’s in the regulations, and he’s got to have

it, all right, let him have it; because I don’t wish to go back

on no regulations; but there’s one thing, Tom Sawyer — if

we go to tearing up our sheets to make Jim a rope ladder,

we’re going to get into trouble with Aunt Sally, just as sure

as you’re born. Now, the way I look at it, a hickry-bark ladder don’t cost nothing, and don’t waste nothing, and is just

as good to load up a pie with, and hide in a straw tick, as any

rag ladder you can start; and as for Jim, he ain’t had no experience, and so he don’t care what kind of a —‘

‘Oh, shucks, Huck Finn, if I was as ignorant as you I’d

keep still — that’s what I’D do. Who ever heard of a state

prisoner escaping by a hickry-bark ladder? Why, it’s perfectly ridiculous.’

‘Well, all right, Tom, fix it your own way; but if you’ll take

my advice, you’ll let me borrow a sheet off of the clothesline.’

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He said that would do. And that gave him another idea,

and he says:

‘Borrow a shirt, too.’

‘What do we want of a shirt, Tom?’

‘Want it for Jim to keep a journal on.’

‘Journal your granny — JIM can’t write.’

‘S’pose he CAN’T write — he can make marks on the

shirt, can’t he, if we make him a pen out of an old pewter

spoon or a piece of an old iron barrel- hoop?’

‘Why, Tom, we can pull a feather out of a goose and make

him a better one; and quicker, too.’

‘PRISONERS don’t have geese running around the donjon-keep to pull pens out of, you muggins. They ALWAYS

make their pens out of the hardest, toughest, troublesomest

piece of old brass candlestick or some- thing like that they

can get their hands on; and it takes them weeks and weeks

and months and months to file it out, too, because they’ve

got to do it by rub- bing it on the wall. THEY wouldn’t use

a goose-quill if they had it. It ain’t regular.’

‘Well, then, what’ll we make him the ink out of?’

‘Many makes it out of iron-rust and tears; but that’s the

common sort and women; the best authori- ties uses their

own blood. Jim can do that; and when he wants to send any

little common ordinary mysterious message to let the world

know where he’s captivated, he can write it on the bottom

of a tin plate with a fork and throw it out of the window.

The Iron Mask always done that, and it’s a blame’ good way,

too.’

‘Jim ain’t got no tin plates. They feed him in a pan.’

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‘That ain’t nothing; we can get him some.’

‘Can’t nobody READ his plates.’

‘That ain’t got anything to DO with it, Huck Finn. All

HE’S got to do is to write on the plate and throw it out. You

don’t HAVE to be able to read it. Why, half the time you

can’t read anything a prisoner writes on a tin plate, or anywhere else.’

‘Well, then, what’s the sense in wasting the plates?’

‘Why, blame it all, it ain’t the PRISONER’S plates.’

‘But it’s SOMEBODY’S plates, ain’t it?’

‘Well, spos’n it is? What does the PRISONER care whose

—‘

He broke off there, because we heard the breakfast- horn

blowing. So we cleared out for the house.

Along during the morning I borrowed a sheet and a

white shirt off of the clothes-line; and I found an old sack

and put them in it, and we went down and got the fox-fire,

and put that in too. I called it borrowing, because that was

what pap always called it; but Tom said it warn’t borrowing,

it was stealing. He said we was representing prisoners; and

prisoners don’t care how they get a thing so they get it, and

nobody don’t blame them for it, either. It ain’t no crime in

a prisoner to steal the thing he needs to get away with, Tom

said; it’s his right; and so, as long as we was representing a

prisoner, we had a perfect right to steal anything on this

place we had the least use for to get ourselves out of prison

with. He said if we warn’t prisoners it would be a very different thing, and nobody but a mean, ornery person would

steal when he warn’t a prisoner. So we allowed we would

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steal every- thing there was that come handy. And yet he

made a mighty fuss, one day, after that, when I stole a watermelon out of the nigger-patch and eat it; and he made me

go and give the niggers a dime without telling them what

it was for. Tom said that what he meant was, we could steal

anything we NEEDED. Well, I says, I needed the watermelon. But he said I didn’t need it to get out of prison with;

there’s where the difference was. He said if I’d a wanted it

to hide a knife in, and smuggle it to Jim to kill the seneskal

with, it would a been all right. So I let it go at that, though I

couldn’t see no advantage in my representing a prisoner if I

got to set down and chaw over a lot of gold-leaf distinctions

like that every time I see a chance to hog a watermelon.

Well, as I was saying, we waited that morning till everybody was settled down to business, and nobody in sight

around the yard; then Tom he carried the sack into the leanto whilst I stood off a piece to keep watch. By and by he

come out, and we went and set down on the woodpile to

talk. He says:

‘Everything’s all right now except tools; and that’s easy

fixed.’

‘Tools?’ I says.

‘Yes.’

‘Tools for what?’

‘Why, to dig with. We ain’t a-going to GNAW him out,

are we?’

‘Ain’t them old crippled picks and things in there good

enough to dig a nigger out with?’ I says.

He turns on me, looking pitying enough to make a body

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cry, and says:

‘Huck Finn, did you EVER hear of a prisoner having

picks and shovels, and all the modern conveniences in his

wardrobe to dig himself out with? Now I want to ask you —

if you got any reasonableness in you at all — what kind of a

show would THAT give him to be a hero? Why, they might

as well lend him the key and done with it. Picks and shovels

— why, they wouldn’t furnish ‘em to a king.’

‘Well, then,’ I says, ‘if we don’t want the picks and shovels,

what do we want?’

‘A couple of case-knives.’

‘To dig the foundations out from under that cabin with?’

‘Yes.’

‘Confound it, it’s foolish, Tom.’

‘It don’t make no difference how foolish it is, it’s the

RIGHT way — and it’s the regular way. And there ain’t no

OTHER way, that ever I heard of, and I’ve read all the books

that gives any information about these things. They always

dig out with a case-knife — and not through dirt, mind you;

generly it’s through solid rock. And it takes them weeks and

weeks and weeks, and for ever and ever. Why, look at one of

them prisoners in the bottom dungeon of the Castle Deef,

in the harbor of Marseilles, that dug himself out that way;

how long was HE at it, you reckon?’

‘I don’t know.’

‘Well, guess.’

‘I don’t know. A month and a half.’

‘THIRTY-SEVEN YEAR — and he come out in China.

THAT’S the kind. I wish the bottom of THIS fortress was

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solid rock.’

‘JIM don’t know nobody in China.’

‘What’s THAT got to do with it? Neither did that other fellow. But you’re always a-wandering off on a side issue.

Why can’t you stick to the main point?’

‘All right — I don’t care where he comes out, so he

COMES out; and Jim don’t, either, I reckon. But there’s one

thing, anyway — Jim’s too old to be dug out with a caseknife. He won’t last.’

‘Yes he will LAST, too. You don’t reckon it’s going to take

thirty-seven years to dig out through a DIRT foundation,

do you?’

‘How long will it take, Tom?’

‘Well, we can’t resk being as long as we ought to, because

it mayn’t take very long for Uncle Silas to hear from down

there by New Orleans. He’ll hear Jim ain’t from there. Then

his next move will be to advertise Jim, or something like

that. So we can’t resk being as long digging him out as we

ought to. By rights I reckon we ought to be a couple of years;

but we can’t. Things being so uncertain, what I recommend

is this: that we really dig right in, as quick as we can; and

after that, we can LET ON, to ourselves, that we was at it

thirty-seven years. Then we can snatch him out and rush

him away the first time there’s an alarm. Yes, I reckon that

‘ll be the best way.’

‘Now, there’s SENSE in that,’ I says. ‘Letting on don’t cost

nothing; letting on ain’t no trouble; and if it’s any object, I

don’t mind letting on we was at it a hundred and fifty year.

It wouldn’t strain me none, after I got my hand in. So I’ll

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mosey along now, and smouch a couple of case-knives.’

‘Smouch three,’ he says; ‘we want one to make a saw out

of.’

‘Tom, if it ain’t unregular and irreligious to sejest it,’ I

says, ‘there’s an old rusty saw-blade around yonder sticking

under the weather-boarding behind the smoke-house.’

He looked kind of weary and discouraged-like, and

says:

‘It ain’t no use to try to learn you nothing, Huck. Run

along and smouch the knives — three of them.’ So I done

it.

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Chapter XXXVI

AS soon as we reckoned everybody was asleep that night

we went down the lightning-rod, and shut ourselves

up in the lean-to, and got out our pile of fox-fire, and went

to work. We cleared everything out of the way, about four

or five foot along the mid- dle of the bottom log. Tom said

we was right behind Jim’s bed now, and we’d dig in under

it, and when we got through there couldn’t nobody in the

cabin ever know there was any hole there, because Jim’s

counter- pin hung down most to the ground, and you’d

have to raise it up and look under to see the hole. So we dug

and dug with the case-knives till most midnight; and then

we was dog-tired, and our hands was blistered, and yet you

couldn’t see we’d done anything hardly. At last I says:

‘This ain’t no thirty-seven year job; this is a thirty-eight

year job, Tom Sawyer.’

He never said nothing. But he sighed, and pretty soon he

stopped digging, and then for a good little while I knowed

that he was thinking. Then he says:

‘It ain’t no use, Huck, it ain’t a-going to work. If we was

prisoners it would, because then we’d have as many years

as we wanted, and no hurry; and we wouldn’t get but a few

minutes to dig, every day, while they was changing watches,

and so our hands wouldn’t get blistered, and we could keep

it up right along, year in and year out, and do it right, and

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the way it ought to be done. But WE can’t fool along; we

got to rush; we ain’t got no time to spare. If we was to put

in another night this way we’d have to knock off for a week

to let our hands get well — couldn’t touch a case-knife with

them sooner.’

‘Well, then, what we going to do, Tom?’

‘I’ll tell you. It ain’t right, and it ain’t moral, . and I

wouldn’t like it to get out; but there ain’t only just the one

way: we got to dig him out with the picks, and LET ON it’s

case-knives.’

‘NOW you’re TALKING!’ I says; ‘your head gets leveler

and leveler all the time, Tom Sawyer,’ I says. ‘Picks is the

thing, moral or no moral; and as for me, I don’t care shucks

for the morality of it, nohow. When I start in to steal a nigger, or a water- melon, or a Sunday-school book, I ain’t no

ways particular how it’s done so it’s done. What I want is my

nigger; or what I want is my watermelon; or what I want is

my Sunday-school book; and if a pick’s the handiest thing,

that’s the thing I’m a-going to dig that nigger or that watermelon or that Sunday-school book out with; and I don’t give

a dead rat what the au- thorities thinks about it nuther.’

‘Well,’ he says, ‘there’s excuse for picks and letting-on in

a case like this; if it warn’t so, I wouldn’t approve of it, nor I

wouldn’t stand by and see the rules broke — because right

is right, and wrong is wrong, and a body ain’t got no business doing wrong when he ain’t ignorant and knows better.

It might answer for YOU to dig Jim out with a pick, WITHOUT any letting on, because you don’t know no better; but

it wouldn’t for me, because I do know better. Gimme a case-

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knife.’

He had his own by him, but I handed him mine. He flung

it down, and says:

‘Gimme a CASE-KNIFE.’

I didn’t know just what to do — but then I thought. I

scratched around amongst the old tools, and got a pickaxe

and give it to him, and he took it and went to work, and

never said a word.

He was always just that particular. Full of principle.

So then I got a shovel, and then we picked and shoveled,

turn about, and made the fur fly. We stuck to it about a half

an hour, which was as long as we could stand up; but we had

a good deal of a hole to show for it. When I got up stairs I

looked out at the window and see Tom doing his level best

with the lightning-rod, but he couldn’t come it, his hands

was so sore. At last he says:

‘It ain’t no use, it can’t be done. What you reckon I better

do? Can’t you think of no way?’

‘Yes,’ I says, ‘but I reckon it ain’t regular. Come up the

stairs, and let on it’s a lightning-rod.’

So he done it.

Next day Tom stole a pewter spoon and a brass candlestick in the house, for to make some pens for Jim out of,

and six tallow candles; and I hung around the nigger cabins

and laid for a chance, and stole three tin plates. Tom says

it wasn’t enough; but I said nobody wouldn’t ever see the

plates that Jim throwed out, because they’d fall in the dogfennel and jimpson weeds under the window-hole — then

we could tote them back and he could use them over again.

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So Tom was satisfied. Then he says:

‘Now, the thing to study out is, how to get the things to

Jim.’

‘Take them in through the hole,’ I says, ‘when we get it

done.’

He only just looked scornful, and said something about

nobody ever heard of such an idiotic idea, and then he went

to studying. By and by he said he had ciphered out two or

three ways, but there warn’t no need to decide on any of

them yet. Said we’d got to post Jim first.

That night we went down the lightning-rod a little after

ten, and took one of the candles along, and listened under

the window-hole, and heard Jim snoring; so we pitched it

in, and it didn’t wake him. Then we whirled in with the pick

and shovel, and in about two hours and a half the job was

done. We crept in under Jim’s bed and into the cabin, and

pawed around and found the candle and lit it, and stood

over Jim awhile, and found him looking hearty and healthy,

and then we woke him up gentle and gradual. He was so

glad to see us he most cried; and called us honey, and all

the pet names he could think of; and was for having us hunt

up a cold-chisel to cut the chain off of his leg with right

away, and clearing out without losing any time. But Tom he

showed him how unregular it would be, and set down and

told him all about our plans, and how we could alter them

in a minute any time there was an alarm; and not to be the

least afraid, because we would see he got away, SURE. So

Jim he said it was all right, and we set there and talked over

old times awhile, and then Tom asked a lot of ques- tions,

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and when Jim told him Uncle Silas come in every day or

two to pray with him, and Aunt Sally come in to see if he

was comfortable and had plenty to eat, and both of them

was kind as they could be, Tom says:

‘NOW I know how to fix it. We’ll send you some things

by them.’

I said, ‘Don’t do nothing of the kind; it’s one of the most

jackass ideas I ever struck;’ but he never paid no attention

to me; went right on. It was his way when he’d got his plans

set.

So he told Jim how we’d have to smuggle in the rope-ladder pie and other large things by Nat, the nigger that fed

him, and he must be on the lookout, and not be surprised,

and not let Nat see him open them; and we would put small

things in uncle’s coat- pockets and he must steal them out;

and we would tie things to aunt’s apron-strings or put them

in her apron-pocket, if we got a chance; and told him what

they would be and what they was for. And told him how

to keep a journal on the shirt with his blood, and all that.

He told him everything. Jim he couldn’t see no sense in the

most of it, but he allowed we was white folks and knowed

better than him; so he was satisfied, and said he would do it

all just as Tom said.

Jim had plenty corn-cob pipes and tobacco; so we had a

right down good sociable time; then we crawled out through

the hole, and so home to bed, with hands that looked like

they’d been chawed. Tom was in high spirits. He said it was

the best fun he ever had in his life, and the most intellectural; and said if he only could see his way to it we would keep

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it up all the rest of our lives and leave Jim to our children to

get out; for he believed Jim would come to like it better and

better the more he got used to it. He said that in that way it

could be strung out to as much as eighty year, and would be

the best time on record. And he said it would make us all

celebrated that had a hand in it.

In the morning we went out to the woodpile and chopped

up the brass candlestick into handy sizes, and Tom put

them and the pewter spoon in his pocket. Then we went

to the nigger cabins, and while I got Nat’s notice off, Tom

shoved a piece of candlestick into the middle of a corn-pone

that was in Jim’s pan, and we went along with Nat to see

how it would work, and it just worked noble; when Jim bit

into it it most mashed all his teeth out; and there warn’t

ever any- thing could a worked better. Tom said so himself.

Jim he never let on but what it was only just a piece of rock

or something like that that’s always getting into bread, you

know; but after that he never bit into nothing but what he

jabbed his fork into it in three or four places first.

And whilst we was a-standing there in the dimmish light,

here comes a couple of the hounds bulging in from under

Jim’s bed; and they kept on piling in till there was eleven

of them, and there warn’t hardly room in there to get your

breath. By jings, we forgot to fasten that lean-to door! The

nigger Nat he only just hollered ‘Witches’ once, and keeled

over on to the floor amongst the dogs, and begun to groan

like he was dying. Tom jerked the door open and flung out a

slab of Jim’s meat, and the dogs went for it, and in two seconds he was out himself and back again and shut the door,

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and I knowed he’d fixed the other door too. Then he went to

work on the nigger, coaxing him and petting him, and asking him if he’d been imagining he saw something again. He

raised up, and blinked his eyes around, and says:

‘Mars Sid, you’ll say I’s a fool, but if I didn’t b’lieve I see

most a million dogs, er devils, er some’n, I wisht I may die

right heah in dese tracks. I did, mos’ sholy. Mars Sid, I FELT

um — I FELT um, sah; dey was all over me. Dad fetch it, I jis’

wisht I could git my han’s on one er dem witches jis’ wunst

— on’y jis’ wunst — it’s all I’d ast. But mos’ly I wisht dey’d

lemme ‘lone, I does.’

Tom says:

‘Well, I tell you what I think. What makes them come

here just at this runaway nigger’s breakfast-time? It’s because they’re hungry; that’s the reason. You make them a

witch pie; that’s the thing for YOU to do.’

‘But my lan’, Mars Sid, how’s I gwyne to make ‘m a witch

pie? I doan’ know how to make it. I hain’t ever hearn er sich

a thing b’fo’.’

‘Well, then, I’ll have to make it myself.’

‘Will you do it, honey? — Qwill you? I’ll wusshup de

groun’ und’ yo’ foot, I will!’

‘All right, I’ll do it, seeing it’s you, and you’ve been good

to us and showed us the runaway nigger. But you got to be

mighty careful. When we come around, you turn your back;

and then whatever we’ve put in the pan, don’t you let on you

see it at all. And don’t you look when Jim unloads the pan

— something might happen, I don’t know what. And above

all, don’t you HANDLE the witch-things.’

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‘HANNEL ‘m, Mars Sid? What IS you a-talkin’ ‘bout? I

wouldn’ lay de weight er my finger on um, not f’r ten hund’d

thous’n billion dollars, I wouldn’t.’

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Chapter XXXVII

THAT was all fixed. So then we went away and went to

the rubbage-pile in the back yard, where they keep the

old boots, and rags, and pieces of bottles, and wore-out tin

things, and all such truck, and scratched around and found

an old tin washpan, and stopped up the holes as well as we

could, to bake the pie in, and took it down cellar and stole

it full of flour and started for breakfast, and found a couple

of shingle-nails that Tom said would be handy for a prisoner to scrabble his name and sorrows on the dungeon walls

with, and dropped one of them in Aunt Sally’s apron-pocket

which was hanging on a chair, and t’other we stuck in the

band of Uncle Silas’s hat, which was on the bureau, because

we heard the chil- dren say their pa and ma was going to

the runaway nigger’s house this morning, and then went to

break- fast, and Tom dropped the pewter spoon in Uncle

Silas’s coat-pocket, and Aunt Sally wasn’t come yet, so we

had to wait a little while.

And when she come she was hot and red and cross, and

couldn’t hardly wait for the blessing; and then she went to

sluicing out coffee with one hand and cracking the handiest

child’s head with her thimble with the other, and says:

‘I’ve hunted high and I’ve hunted low, and it does beat all

what HAS become of your other shirt.’

My heart fell down amongst my lungs and livers and

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things, and a hard piece of corn-crust started down my

throat after it and got met on the road with a cough, and

was shot across the table, and took one of the children in the

eye and curled him up like a fishing-worm, and let a cry out

of him the size of a warwhoop, and Tom he turned kinder

blue around the gills, and it all amounted to a considerable

state of things for about a quarter of a minute or as much

as that, and I would a sold out for half price if there was a

bidder. But after that we was all right again — it was the

sudden surprise of it that knocked us so kind of cold. Uncle

Silas he says:

‘It’s most uncommon curious, I can’t understand it. I

know perfectly well I took it OFF, because —‘

‘Because you hain’t got but one ON. Just LISTEN at the

man! I know you took it off, and know it by a better way

than your wool-gethering memory, too, because it was on

the clo’s-line yesterday — I see it there myself. But it’s gone,

that’s the long and the short of it, and you’ll just have to

change to a red flann’l one till I can get time to make a new

one. And it ‘ll be the third I’ve made in two years. It just

keeps a body on the jump to keep you in shirts; and whatever you do manage to DO with ‘m all is more’n I can make

out. A body ‘d think you WOULD learn to take some sort

of care of ‘em at your time of life.’

‘I know it, Sally, and I do try all I can. But it oughtn’t to be

altogether my fault, because, you know, I don’t see them nor

have nothing to do with them except when they’re on me;

and I don’t believe I’ve ever lost one of them OFF of me.’

‘Well, it ain’t YOUR fault if you haven’t, Silas; you’d a

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done it if you could, I reckon. And the shirt ain’t all that’s

gone, nuther. Ther’s a spoon gone; and THAT ain’t all. There

was ten, and now ther’s only nine. The calf got the shirt, I

reckon, but the calf never took the spoon, THAT’S certain.’

‘Why, what else is gone, Sally?’

‘Ther’s six CANDLES gone — that’s what. The rats could

a got the candles, and I reckon they did; I wonder they don’t

walk off with the whole place, the way you’re always going

to stop their holes and don’t do it; and if they warn’t fools

they’d sleep in your hair, Silas — YOU’D never find it out;

but you can’t lay the SPOON on the rats, and that I know.’

‘Well, Sally, I’m in fault, and I acknowledge it; I’ve been

remiss; but I won’t let to-morrow go by without stopping up

them holes.’

‘Oh, I wouldn’t hurry; next year ‘ll do. Matilda Angelina

Araminta PHELPS!’

Whack comes the thimble, and the child snatches her

claws out of the sugar-bowl without fooling around any. Just

then the nigger woman steps on to the passage, and says:

‘Missus, dey’s a sheet gone.’

‘A SHEET gone! Well, for the land’s sake!’

‘I’ll stop up them holes to-day,’ says Uncle Silas, looking

sorrowful.

‘Oh, DO shet up! — s’pose the rats took the SHEET?

WHERE’S it gone, Lize?’

‘Clah to goodness I hain’t no notion, Miss’ Sally. She wuz

on de clo’sline yistiddy, but she done gone: she ain’ dah no

mo’ now.’

‘I reckon the world IS coming to an end. I NEVER see

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the beat of it in all my born days. A shirt, and a sheet, and a

spoon, and six can —‘

‘Missus,’ comes a young yaller wench, ‘dey’s a brass cannelstick miss’n.’

‘Cler out from here, you hussy, er I’ll take a skillet to ye!’

Well, she was just a-biling. I begun to lay for a chance;

I reckoned I would sneak out and go for the woods till the

weather moderated. She kept a-raging right along, running

her insurrection all by herself, and everybody else mighty

meek and quiet; and at last Uncle Silas, looking kind of foolish, fishes up that spoon out of his pocket. She stopped, with

her mouth open and her hands up; and as for me, I wished

I was in Jeruslem or somewheres. But not long, because she

says:

‘It’s JUST as I expected. So you had it in your pocket all

the time; and like as not you’ve got the other things there,

too. How’d it get there?’

‘I reely don’t know, Sally,’ he says, kind of apologizing,

‘or you know I would tell. I was a- studying over my text in

Acts Seventeen before break- fast, and I reckon I put it in

there, not noticing, meaning to put my Testament in, and

it must be so, because my Testament ain’t in; but I’ll go and

see; and if the Testament is where I had it, I’ll know I didn’t

put it in, and that will show that I laid the Testament down

and took up the spoon, and —‘

‘Oh, for the land’s sake! Give a body a rest! Go ‘long now,

the whole kit and biling of ye; and don’t come nigh me again

till I’ve got back my peace of mind.’

I’D a heard her if she’d a said it to herself, let alone speak-

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ing it out; and I’d a got up and obeyed her if I’d a been dead.

As we was passing through the setting-room the old man

he took up his hat, and the shingle-nail fell out on the floor,

and he just merely picked it up and laid it on the mantelshelf, and never said nothing, and went out. Tom see him

do it, and remembered about the spoon, and says:

‘Well, it ain’t no use to send things by HIM no more, he

ain’t reliable.’ Then he says: ‘But he done us a good turn

with the spoon, anyway, without knowing it, and so we’ll

go and do him one without HIM knowing it — stop up his

rat-holes.’

There was a noble good lot of them down cellar, and it

took us a whole hour, but we done the job tight and good and

shipshape. Then we heard steps on the stairs, and blowed

out our light and hid; and here comes the old man, with a

candle in one hand and a bundle of stuff in t’other, looking

as absent-minded as year before last. He went a mooning

around, first to one rat-hole and then another, till he’d been

to them all. Then he stood about five minutes, picking tallow- drip off of his candle and thinking. Then he turns off

slow and dreamy towards the stairs, saying:

‘Well, for the life of me I can’t remember when I done it.

I could show her now that I warn’t to blame on account of

the rats. But never mind — let it go. I reckon it wouldn’t do

no good.’

And so he went on a-mumbling up stairs, and then we

left. He was a mighty nice old man. And always is.

Tom was a good deal bothered about what to do for a

spoon, but he said we’d got to have it; so he took a think.

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When he had ciphered it out he told me how we was to do;

then we went and waited around the spoon-basket till we

see Aunt Sally coming, and then Tom went to counting the

spoons and laying them out to one side, and I slid one of

them up my sleeve, and Tom says:

‘Why, Aunt Sally, there ain’t but nine spoons YET.’

She says:

‘Go ‘long to your play, and don’t bother me. I know better,

I counted ‘m myself.’

‘Well, I’ve counted them twice, Aunty, and I can’t make

but nine.’

She looked out of all patience, but of course she come to

count — anybody would.

‘I declare to gracious ther’ AIN’T but nine!’ she says.

‘Why, what in the world — plague TAKE the things, I’ll

count ‘m again.’

So I slipped back the one I had, and when she got done

counting, she says:

‘Hang the troublesome rubbage, ther’s TEN now!’ and

she looked huffy and bothered both. But Tom says:

‘Why, Aunty, I don’t think there’s ten.’

‘You numskull, didn’t you see me COUNT ‘m?’

‘I know, but —‘

‘Well, I’ll count ‘m AGAIN.’

So I smouched one, and they come out nine, same as the

other time. Well, she WAS in a tearing way — just a-trembling all over, she was so mad. But she counted and counted

till she got that addled she’d start to count in the basket for

a spoon sometimes; and so, three times they come out right,

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and three times they come out wrong. Then she grabbed up

the basket and slammed it across the house and knocked

the cat galley-west; and she said cle’r out and let her have

some peace, and if we come bothering around her again

betwixt that and dinner she’d skin us. So we had the odd

spoon, and dropped it in her apron-pocket whilst she was

a-giving us our sailing orders, and Jim got it all right, along

with her shingle nail, before noon. We was very well satisfied with this business, and Tom allowed it was worth twice

the trouble it took, because he said NOW she couldn’t ever

count them spoons twice alike again to save her life; and

wouldn’t believe she’d counted them right if she DID; and

said that after she’d about counted her head off for the next

three days he judged she’d give it up and offer to kill anybody that wanted her to ever count them any more.

So we put the sheet back on the line that night, and stole

one out of her closet; and kept on putting it back and stealing it again for a couple of days till she didn’t know how

many sheets she had any more, and she didn’t CARE, and

warn’t a-going to bullyrag the rest of her soul out about it,

and wouldn’t count them again not to save her life; she druther die first.

So we was all right now, as to the shirt and the sheet and

the spoon and the candles, by the help of the calf and the

rats and the mixed-up counting; and as to the candlestick, it

warn’t no consequence, it would blow over by and by.

But that pie was a job; we had no end of trouble with that

pie. We fixed it up away down in the woods, and cooked it

there; and we got it done at last, and very satisfactory, too;

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but not all in one day; and we had to use up three wash-pans

full of flour before we got through, and we got burnt pretty

much all over, in places, and eyes put out with the smoke;

because, you see, we didn’t want nothing but a crust, and we

couldn’t prop it up right, and she would always cave in. But

of course we thought of the right way at last — which was to

cook the ladder, too, in the pie. So then we laid in with Jim

the second night, and tore up the sheet all in little strings

and twisted them together, and long before daylight we had

a lovely rope that you could a hung a person with. We let on

it took nine months to make it.

And in the forenoon we took it down to the woods, but it

wouldn’t go into the pie. Being made of a whole sheet, that

way, there was rope enough for forty pies if we’d a wanted

them, and plenty left over for soup, or sausage, or anything

you choose. We could a had a whole dinner.

But we didn’t need it. All we needed was just enough for

the pie, and so we throwed the rest away. We didn’t cook

none of the pies in the wash-pan — afraid the solder would

melt; but Uncle Silas he had a noble brass warming-pan

which he thought consider- able of, because it belonged to

one of his ancesters with a long wooden handle that come

over from Eng- land with William the Conqueror in the

Mayflower or one of them early ships and was hid away up

garret with a lot of other old pots and things that was valuable, not on account of being any account, be- cause they

warn’t, but on account of them being relicts, you know, and

we snaked her out, private, and took her down there, but

she failed on the first pies, because we didn’t know how, but

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she come up smiling on the last one. We took and lined her

with dough, and set her in the coals, and loaded her up with

rag rope, and put on a dough roof, and shut down the lid,

and put hot embers on top, and stood off five foot, with the

long handle, cool and comfortable, and in fifteen minutes

she turned out a pie that was a satisfac- tion to look at. But

the person that et it would want to fetch a couple of kags

of toothpicks along, for if that rope ladder wouldn’t cramp

him down to business I don’t know nothing what I’m talking about, and lay him in enough stomach-ache to last him

till next time, too.

Nat didn’t look when we put the witch pie in Jim’s pan;

and we put the three tin plates in the bottom of the pan

under the vittles; and so Jim got everything all right, and

as soon as he was by himself he busted into the pie and

hid the rope ladder inside of his straw tick, and scratched

some marks on a tin plate and throwed it out of the window-hole.

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Chapter XXXVIII

MAKING them pens was a distressid tough job, and so

was the saw; and Jim allowed the in- scription was

going to be the toughest of all. That’s the one which the prisoner has to scrabble on the wall. But he had to have it; Tom

said he’d GOT to; there warn’t no case of a state prisoner

not scrabbling his inscription to leave behind, and his coat

of arms.

‘Look at Lady Jane Grey,’ he says; ‘look at Gilford Dudley;

look at old Northumberland! Why, Huck, s’pose it IS considerble trouble? — what you going to do? — how you going

to get around it? Jim’s GOT to do his inscription and coat of

arms. They all do.’

Jim says:

‘Why, Mars Tom, I hain’t got no coat o’ arm; I hain’t got

nuffn but dish yer ole shirt, en you knows I got to keep de

journal on dat.’

‘Oh, you don’t understand, Jim; a coat of arms is very different.’

‘Well,’ I says, ‘Jim’s right, anyway, when he says he ain’t

got no coat of arms, because he hain’t.’

‘I reckon I knowed that,’ Tom says, ‘but you bet he’ll

have one before he goes out of this — because he’s going out

RIGHT, and there ain’t going to be no flaws in his record.’

So whilst me and Jim filed away at the pens on a brickbat

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apiece, Jim a-making his’n out of the brass and I making

mine out of the spoon, Tom set to work to think out the

coat of arms. By and by he said he’d struck so many good

ones he didn’t hardly know which to take, but there was one

which he reckoned he’d decide on. He says:

‘On the scutcheon we’ll have a bend OR in the dexter base,

a saltire MURREY in the fess, with a dog, couchant, for

common charge, and under his foot a chain embattled, for

slavery, with a chevron VERT in a chief engrailed, and three

invected lines on a field AZURE, with the nombril points

rampant on a dancette indented; crest, a runaway nigger,

SABLE, with his bundle over his shoulder on a bar sinister;

and a couple of gules for supporters, which is you and me;

motto, MAGGIORE FRETTA, MINORE OTTO. Got it out

of a book — means the more haste the less speed.’

‘Geewhillikins,’ I says, ‘but what does the rest of it

mean?’

‘We ain’t got no time to bother over that,’ he says; ‘we got

to dig in like all git-out.’

‘Well, anyway,’ I says, ‘what’s SOME of it? What’s a fess?’

‘A fess — a fess is — YOU don’t need to know what a fess

is. I’ll show him how to make it when he gets to it.’

‘Shucks, Tom,’ I says, ‘I think you might tell a person.

What’s a bar sinister?’

‘Oh, I don’t know. But he’s got to have it. All the nobility does.’

That was just his way. If it didn’t suit him to ex- plain a

thing to you, he wouldn’t do it. You might pump at him a

week, it wouldn’t make no difference.

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He’d got all that coat of arms business fixed, so now he

started in to finish up the rest of that part of the work, which

was to plan out a mournful inscrip- tion — said Jim got to

have one, like they all done. He made up a lot, and wrote

them out on a paper, and read them off, so:

1. Here a captive heart busted.

2. Here a poor prisoner, forsook by the world and friends,

fretted his sorrowful life.

3. Here a lonely heart broke, and a worn spirit went to its rest,

after thirty-seven years of solitary captivity.

4. Here, homeless and friendless, after thirty-seven years of

bitter captivity, perished a noble stranger, natural son of

Louis XIV.

Tom’s voice trembled whilst he was reading them, and

he most broke down. When he got done he couldn’t no way

make up his mind which one for Jim to scrabble on to the

wall, they was all so good; but at last he allowed he would

let him scrabble them all on. Jim said it would take him

a year to scrabble such a lot of truck on to the logs with a

nail, and he didn’t know how to make letters, besides; but

Tom said he would block them out for him, and then he

wouldn’t have nothing to do but just follow the lines. Then

pretty soon he says:

‘Come to think, the logs ain’t a-going to do; they don’t

have log walls in a dungeon: we got to dig the inscriptions

into a rock. We’ll fetch a rock.’

Jim said the rock was worse than the logs; he said it

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would take him such a pison long time to dig them into a

rock he wouldn’t ever get out. But Tom said he would let me

help him do it. Then he took a look to see how me and Jim

was getting along with the pens. It was most pesky tedious

hard work and slow, and didn’t give my hands no show to

get well of the sores, and we didn’t seem to make no headway, hardly; so Tom says:

‘I know how to fix it. We got to have a rock for the coat of

arms and mournful inscriptions, and we can kill two birds

with that same rock. There’s a gaudy big grindstone down at

the mill, and we’ll smouch it, and carve the things on it, and

file out the pens and the saw on it, too.’

It warn’t no slouch of an idea; and it warn’t no slouch of

a grindstone nuther; but we allowed we’d tackle it. It warn’t

quite midnight yet, so we cleared out for the mill, leaving

Jim at work. We smouched the grindstone, and set out to

roll her home, but it was a most nation tough job. Sometimes, do what we could, we couldn’t keep her from falling

over, and she come mighty near mashing us every time.

Tom said she was going to get one of us, sure, before we

got through. We got her half way; and then we was plumb

played out, and most drownded with sweat. We see it warn’t

no use; we got to go and fetch Jim So he raised up his bed

and slid the chain off of the bed-leg, and wrapt it round and

round his neck, and we crawled out through our hole and

down there, and Jim and me laid into that grindstone and

walked her along like nothing; and Tom superintended. He

could out-superintend any boy I ever see. He knowed how

to do everything.

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Our hole was pretty big, but it warn’t big enough to get

the grindstone through; but Jim he took the pick and soon

made it big enough. Then Tom marked out them things on

it with the nail, and set Jim to work on them, with the nail

for a chisel and an iron bolt from the rubbage in the leanto for a hammer, and told him to work till the rest of his

candle quit on him, and then he could go to bed, and hide

the grindstone under his straw tick and sleep on it. Then we

helped him fix his chain back on the bed-leg, and was ready

for bed ourselves. But Tom thought of something, and says:

‘You got any spiders in here, Jim?’

‘No, sah, thanks to goodness I hain’t, Mars Tom.’

‘All right, we’ll get you some.’

‘But bless you, honey, I doan’ WANT none. I’s afeard un

um. I jis’ ‘s soon have rattlesnakes aroun’.’

Tom thought a minute or two, and says:

‘It’s a good idea. And I reckon it’s been done. It MUST a

been done; it stands to reason. Yes, it’s a prime good idea.

Where could you keep it?’

‘Keep what, Mars Tom?’

‘Why, a rattlesnake.’

‘De goodness gracious alive, Mars Tom! Why, if dey was

a rattlesnake to come in heah I’d take en bust right out thoo

dat log wall, I would, wid my head.’

Why, Jim, you wouldn’t be afraid of it after a little. You

could tame it.’

‘TAME it!’

‘Yes — easy enough. Every animal is grateful for kindness and petting, and they wouldn’t THINK of hurt- ing a

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person that pets them. Any book will tell you that. You try

— that’s all I ask; just try for two or three days. Why, you

can get him so in a little while that he’ll love you; and sleep

with you; and won’t stay away from you a minute; and will

let you wrap him round your neck and put his head in your

mouth.’

‘PLEASE, Mars Tom — DOAN’ talk so! I can’t STAN’

it! He’d LET me shove his head in my mouf — fer a favor,

hain’t it? I lay he’d wait a pow’ful long time ‘fo’ I AST him.

En mo’ en dat, I doan’ WANT him to sleep wid me.’

‘Jim, don’t act so foolish. A prisoner’s GOT to have some

kind of a dumb pet, and if a rattlesnake hain’t ever been

tried, why, there’s more glory to be gained in your being the

first to ever try it than any other way you could ever think

of to save your life.’

‘Why, Mars Tom, I doan’ WANT no sich glory. Snake

take ‘n bite Jim’s chin off, den WHAH is de glory? No, sah, I

doan’ want no sich doin’s.’

‘Blame it, can’t you TRY? I only WANT you to try — you

needn’t keep it up if it don’t work.’

‘But de trouble all DONE ef de snake bite me while I’s a

tryin’ him. Mars Tom, I’s willin’ to tackle mos’ anything ‘at

ain’t onreasonable, but ef you en Huck fetches a rattlesnake

in heah for me to tame, I’s gwyne to LEAVE, dat’s SHORE.’

‘Well, then, let it go, let it go, if you’re so bull- headed

about it. We can get you some garter-snakes, and you can

tie some buttons on their tails, and let on they’re rattlesnakes, and I reckon that ‘ll have to do.’

‘I k’n stan’ DEM, Mars Tom, but blame’ ‘f I couldn’ get

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along widout um, I tell you dat. I never knowed b’fo’ ‘t was

so much bother and trouble to be a prisoner.’

‘Well, it ALWAYS is when it’s done right. You got any rats

around here?’

‘No, sah, I hain’t seed none.’

‘Well, we’ll get you some rats.’

‘Why, Mars Tom, I doan’ WANT no rats. Dey’s de

dadblamedest creturs to ‘sturb a body, en rustle roun’ over

‘im, en bite his feet, when he’s tryin’ to sleep, I ever see. No,

sah, gimme g’yarter-snakes, ‘f I’s got to have ‘m, but doan’

gimme no rats; I hain’ got no use f’r um, skasely.’

‘But, Jim, you GOT to have ‘em — they all do. So don’t

make no more fuss about it. Prisoners ain’t ever without

rats. There ain’t no instance of it. And they train them, and

pet them, and learn them tricks, and they get to be as sociable as flies. But you got to play music to them. You got

anything to play music on?’

‘I ain’ got nuffn but a coase comb en a piece o’ paper, en

a juice-harp; but I reck’n dey wouldn’ take no stock in a

juice-harp.’

‘Yes they would. THEY don’t care what kind of music ‘tis.

A jews-harp’s plenty good enough for a rat. All animals like

music — in a prison they dote on it. Specially, painful music; and you can’t get no other kind out of a jews-harp. It

always interests them; they come out to see what’s the matter with you. Yes, you’re all right; you’re fixed very well. You

want to set on your bed nights before you go to sleep, and

early in the mornings, and play your jews- harp; play ‘The

Last Link is Broken’ — that’s the thing that ‘ll scoop a rat

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quicker ‘n anything else; and when you’ve played about two

minutes you’ll see all the rats, and the snakes, and spiders,

and things begin to feel worried about you, and come. And

they’ll just fairly swarm over you, and have a noble good

time.’

‘Yes, DEY will, I reck’n, Mars Tom, but what kine er time

is JIM havin’? Blest if I kin see de pint. But I’ll do it ef I got

to. I reck’n I better keep de animals satisfied, en not have no

trouble in de house.’

Tom waited to think it over, and see if there wasn’t nothing else; and pretty soon he says:

‘Oh, there’s one thing I forgot. Could you raise a flower

here, do you reckon?’

‘I doan know but maybe I could, Mars Tom; but it’s

tolable dark in heah, en I ain’ got no use f’r no flower, nohow, en she’d be a pow’ful sight o’ trouble.’

‘Well, you try it, anyway. Some other prisoners has done

it.’

‘One er dem big cat-tail-lookin’ mullen-stalks would

grow in heah, Mars Tom, I reck’n, but she wouldn’t be wuth

half de trouble she’d coss.’

‘Don’t you believe it. We’ll fetch you a little one and you

plant it in the corner over there, and raise it. And don’t call

it mullen, call it Pitchiola — that’s its right name when it’s

in a prison. And you want to water it with your tears.’

‘Why, I got plenty spring water, Mars Tom.’

‘You don’t WANT spring water; you want to water it with

your tears. It’s the way they always do.’

‘Why, Mars Tom, I lay I kin raise one er dem mul-

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len-stalks twyste wid spring water whiles another man’s a

START’N one wid tears.’

‘That ain’t the idea. You GOT to do it with tears.’

‘She’ll die on my han’s, Mars Tom, she sholy will; kase I

doan’ skasely ever cry.’

So Tom was stumped. But he studied it over, and then

said Jim would have to worry along the best he could with

an onion. He promised he would go to the nigger cabins

and drop one, private, in Jim’s coffee- pot, in the morning.

Jim said he would ‘jis’ ‘s soon have tobacker in his coffee;’

and found so much fault with it, and with the work and

bother of raising the mullen, and jews-harping the rats,

and petting and flattering up the snakes and spiders and

things, on top of all the other work he had to do on pens,

and in- scriptions, and journals, and things, which made

it more trouble and worry and responsibility to be a prisoner than anything he ever undertook, that Tom most lost

all patience with him; and said he was just loadened down

with more gaudier chances than a prisoner ever had in the

world to make a name for himself, and yet he didn’t know

enough to appreciate them, and they was just about wasted

on him. So Jim he was sorry, and said he wouldn’t behave so

no more, and then me and Tom shoved for bed.

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Chapter XXXIX

I

N the morning we went up to the village and bought a

wire rat-trap and fetched it down, and unstopped the best

rat-hole, and in about an hour we had fifteen of the bulliest kind of ones; and then we took it and put it in a safe

place under Aunt Sally’s bed. But while we was gone for spiders little Thomas Franklin Benjamin Jefferson Elexander

Phelps found it there, and opened the door of it to see if the

rats would come out, and they did; and Aunt Sally she come

in, and when we got back she was a-standing on top of the

bed raising Cain, and the rats was doing what they could

to keep off the dull times for her. So she took and dusted

us both with the hickry, and we was as much as two hours

catching another fifteen or sixteen, drat that meddlesome

cub, and they warn’t the likeliest, nuther, because the first

haul was the pick of the flock. I never see a likelier lot of rats

than what that first haul was.

We got a splendid stock of sorted spiders, and bugs, and

frogs, and caterpillars, and one thing or another; and we

like to got a hornet’s nest, but we didn’t. The family was at

home. We didn’t give it right up, but stayed with them as

long as we could; because we allowed we’d tire them out or

they’d got to tire us out, and they done it. Then we got allycumpain and rubbed on the places, and was pretty near

all right again, but couldn’t set down convenient. And so

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we went for the snakes, and grabbed a couple of dozen garters and house-snakes, and put them in a bag, and put it

in our room, and by that time it was supper- time, and a

rattling good honest day’s work: and hungry? — oh, no, I

reckon not! And there warn’t a blessed snake up there when

we went back — we didn’t half tie the sack, and they worked

out somehow, and left. But it didn’t matter much, because

they was still on the premises somewheres. So we judged

we could get some of them again. No, there warn’t no real

scarcity of snakes about the house for a consider- able spell.

You’d see them dripping from the rafters and places every

now and then; and they generly landed in your plate, or

down the back of your neck, and most of the time where

you didn’t want them. Well, they was handsome and striped,

and there warn’t no harm in a million of them; but that never made no difference to Aunt Sally; she despised snakes, be

the breed what they might, and she couldn’t stand them no

way you could fix it; and every time one of them flopped

down on her, it didn’t make no difference what she was doing, she would just lay that work down and light out. I never

see such a woman. And you could hear her whoop to Jericho. You couldn’t get her to take a-holt of one of them with

the tongs. And if she turned over and found one in bed she

would scramble out and lift a howl that you would think

the house was afire. She disturbed the old man so that he

said he could most wish there hadn’t ever been no snakes

created. Why, after every last snake had been gone clear out

of the house for as much as a week Aunt Sally warn’t over

it yet; she warn’t near over it; when she was setting think-

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ing about something you could touch her on the back of

her neck with a feather and she would jump right out of her

stockings. It was very curious. But Tom said all women was

just so. He said they was made that way for some reason or

other.

We got a licking every time one of our snakes come in

her way, and she allowed these lickings warn’t noth- ing

to what she would do if we ever loaded up the place again

with them. I didn’t mind the lickings, because they didn’t

amount to nothing; but I minded the trouble we had to lay

in another lot. But we got them laid in, and all the other

things; and you never see a cabin as blithesome as Jim’s was

when they’d all swarm out for music and go for him. Jim

didn’t like the spiders, and the spiders didn’t like Jim; and

so they’d lay for him, and make it mighty warm for him.

And he said that between the rats and the snakes and the

grindstone there warn’t no room in bed for him, skasely;

and when there was, a body couldn’t sleep, it was so lively,

and it was always lively, he said, because THEY never all

slept at one time, but took turn about, so when the snakes

was asleep the rats was on deck, and when the rats turned

in the snakes come on watch, so he always had one gang

under him, in his way, and t’other gang having a circus over

him, and if he got up to hunt a new place the spiders would

take a chance at him as he crossed over. He said if he ever

got out this time he wouldn’t ever be a prisoner again, not

for a salary.

Well, by the end of three weeks everything was in pretty

good shape. The shirt was sent in early, in a pie, and every

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time a rat bit Jim he would get up and write a little in his

journal whilst the ink was fresh; the pens was made, the inscriptions and so on was all carved on the grindstone; the

bed-leg was sawed in two, and we had et up the sawdust,

and it give us a most amazing stomach-ache. We reckoned

we was all going to die, but didn’t. It was the most undigestible sawdust I ever see; and Tom said the same. But as I

was saying, we’d got all the work done now, at last; and we

was all pretty much fagged out, too, but mainly Jim. The old

man had wrote a couple of times to the plantation below

Orleans to come and get their run- away nigger, but hadn’t

got no answer, because there warn’t no such plantation; so

he allowed he would ad- vertise Jim in the St. Louis and

New Orleans papers; and when he mentioned the St. Louis

ones it give me the cold shivers, and I see we hadn’t no time

to lose. So Tom said, now for the nonnamous letters.

‘What’s them?’ I says.

‘Warnings to the people that something is up. Sometimes

it’s done one way, sometimes another. But there’s always

somebody spying around that gives notice to the governor

of the castle. When Louis XVI. was going to light out of the

Tooleries a servant- girl done it. It’s a very good way, and

so is the nonnamous letters. We’ll use them both. And it’s

usual for the prisoner’s mother to change clothes with him,

and she stays in, and he slides out in her clothes. We’ll do

that, too.’

‘But looky here, Tom, what do we want to WARN anybody

for that something’s up? Let them find it out for themselves

— it’s their lookout.’

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‘Yes, I know; but you can’t depend on them. It’s the way

they’ve acted from the very start — left us to do EVERYTHING. They’re so confiding and mullet- headed they don’t

take notice of nothing at all. So if we don’t GIVE them notice there won’t be nobody nor nothing to interfere with us,

and so after all our hard work and trouble this escape ‘ll go

off perfectly flat; won’t amount to nothing — won’t be nothing TO it.’

‘Well, as for me, Tom, that’s the way I’d like.’

‘Shucks!’ he says, and looked disgusted. So I says:

‘But I ain’t going to make no complaint. Any way that

suits you suits me. What you going to do about the servantgirl?’

‘You’ll be her. You slide in, in the middle of the night, and

hook that yaller girl’s frock.’

‘Why, Tom, that ‘ll make trouble next morning; because,

of course, she prob’bly hain’t got any but that one.’

‘I know; but you don’t want it but fifteen minutes, to carry the nonnamous letter and shove it under the front door.’

‘All right, then, I’ll do it; but I could carry it just as handy

in my own togs.’

‘You wouldn’t look like a servant-girl THEN, would

you?’

‘No, but there won’t be nobody to see what I look like,

ANYWAY.’

‘That ain’t got nothing to do with it. The thing for us to

do is just to do our DUTY, and not worry about whether

anybody SEES us do it or not. Hain’t you got no principle

at all?’

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‘All right, I ain’t saying nothing; I’m the servant- girl.

Who’s Jim’s mother?’

‘I’m his mother. I’ll hook a gown from Aunt Sally.’

‘Well, then, you’ll have to stay in the cabin when me and

Jim leaves.’

‘Not much. I’ll stuff Jim’s clothes full of straw and lay it

on his bed to represent his mother in dis- guise, and Jim ‘ll

take the nigger woman’s gown off of me and wear it, and

we’ll all evade together. When a prisoner of style escapes

it’s called an evasion. It’s always called so when a king escapes, f’rinstance. And the same with a king’s son; it don’t

make no differ- ence whether he’s a natural one or an unnatural one.’

So Tom he wrote the nonnamous letter, and I smouched

the yaller wench’s frock that night, and put it on, and shoved

it under the front door, the way Tom told me to. It said:

Beware. Trouble is brewing. Keep a sharp lookout.

UNKNOWN FRIEND.

Next night we stuck a picture, which Tom drawed in

blood, of a skull and crossbones on the front door; and next

night another one of a coffin on the back door. I never see

a family in such a sweat. They couldn’t a been worse scared

if the place had a been full of ghosts laying for them behind everything and under the beds and shivering through

the air. If a door banged, Aunt Sally she jumped and said

‘ouch!’ if anything fell, she jumped and said ‘ouch!’ if you

happened to touch her, when she warn’t noticing, she done

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the same; she couldn’t face noway and be satisfied, because

she allowed there was something behind her every time

— so she was always a-whirling around sudden, and saying

‘ouch,’ and before she’d got two-thirds around she’d whirl

back again, and say it again; and she was afraid to go to bed,

but she dasn’t set up. So the thing was working very well,

Tom said; he said he never see a thing work more satisfactory. He said it showed it was done right.

So he said, now for the grand bulge! So the very next

morning at the streak of dawn we got another letter ready,

and was wondering what we better do with it, because we

heard them say at supper they was going to have a nigger on

watch at both doors all night. Tom he went down the lightning-rod to spy around; and the nigger at the back door was

asleep, and he stuck it in the back of his neck and come

back. This letter said:

Don’t betray me, I wish to be your friend. There is a desprate

gang of cut-throats from over in the Indian Territory going to

steal your runaway nigger to-night, and they have been trying

to scare you so as you will stay in the house and not bother

them. I am one of the gang, but have got religgion and wish to

quit it and lead an honest life again, and will betray the helish

design. They will sneak down from northards, along the fence,

at midnight exact, with a false key, and go in the nigger’s

cabin to get him. I am to be off a piece and blow a tin horn if

I see any danger; but stead of that I will BA like a sheep soon

as they get in and not blow at all; then whilst they are getting

his chains loose, you slip there and lock them in, and can kill

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them at your leasure. Don’t do anything but just the way I am

telling you; if you do they will suspicion something and raise

whoop-jamboreehoo. I do not wish any reward but to know I

have done the right thing.

UNKNOWN FRIEND.

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Chapter XL

WE was feeling pretty good after breakfast, and took

my canoe and went over the river a-fishing, with a

lunch, and had a good time, and took a look at the raft and

found her all right, and got home late to supper, and found

them in such a sweat and worry they didn’t know which end

they was standing on, and made us go right off to bed the

minute we was done supper, and wouldn’t tell us what the

trouble was, and never let on a word about the new letter,

but didn’t need to, because we knowed as much about it as

anybody did, and as soon as we was half up stairs and her

back was turned we slid for the cellar cubboard and loaded

up a good lunch and took it up to our room and went to bed,

and got up about half-past eleven, and Tom put on Aunt

Sally’s dress that he stole and was going to start with the

lunch, but says:

‘Where’s the butter?’

‘I laid out a hunk of it,’ I says, ‘on a piece of a corn-pone.’

‘Well, you LEFT it laid out, then — it ain’t here.’

‘We can get along without it,’ I says.

‘We can get along WITH it, too,’ he says; ‘just you slide

down cellar and fetch it. And then mosey right down the

lightning-rod and come along. I’ll go and stuff the straw

into Jim’s clothes to represent his mother in disguise, and be

ready to BA like a sheep and shove soon as you get there.’

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So out he went, and down cellar went I. The hunk of butter, big as a person’s fist, was where I had left it, so I took up

the slab of corn-pone with it on, and blowed out my light,

and started up stairs very stealthy, and got up to the main

floor all right, but here comes Aunt Sally with a candle, and

I clapped the truck in my hat, and clapped my hat on my

head, and the next second she see me; and she says:

‘You been down cellar?’

‘Yes’m.’

‘What you been doing down there?’

‘Noth’n.’

‘NOTH’N!’

‘No’m.’

‘Well, then, what possessed you to go down there this

time of night?’

‘I don’t know ‘m.’

‘You don’t KNOW? Don’t answer me that way. Tom, I

want to know what you been DOING down there.’

‘I hain’t been doing a single thing, Aunt Sally, I hope to

gracious if I have.’

I reckoned she’d let me go now, and as a generl thing she

would; but I s’pose there was so many strange things going

on she was just in a sweat about every little thing that warn’t

yard-stick straight; so she says, very decided:

‘You just march into that setting-room and stay there till

I come. You been up to something you no business to, and I

lay I’ll find out what it is before I’M done with you.’

So she went away as I opened the door and walked into

the setting-room. My, but there was a crowd there! Fifteen

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farmers, and every one of them had a gun. I was most powerful sick, and slunk to a chair and set down. They was

setting around, some of them talking a little, in a low voice,

and all of them fidgety and uneasy, but trying to look like

they warn’t; but I knowed they was, because they was always

taking off their hats, and putting them on, and scratching

their heads, and changing their seats, and fumbling with

their buttons. I warn’t easy myself, but I didn’t take my hat

off, all the same.

I did wish Aunt Sally would come, and get done with me,

and lick me, if she wanted to, and let me get away and tell

Tom how we’d overdone this thing, and what a thundering

hornet’s-nest we’d got ourselves into, so we could stop fooling around straight off, and clear out with Jim before these

rips got out of patience and come for us.

At last she come and begun to ask me questions, but I

COULDN’T answer them straight, I didn’t know which

end of me was up; because these men was in such a fidget

now that some was wanting to start right NOW and lay for

them desperadoes, and saying it warn’t but a few minutes to

midnight; and others was trying to get them to hold on and

wait for the sheep-signal; and here was Aunty pegging away

at the questions, and me a-shaking all over and ready to

sink down in my tracks I was that scared; and the place getting hotter and hotter, and the butter beginning to melt and

run down my neck and behind my ears; and pretty soon,

when one of them says, ‘I’M for going and getting in the

cabin FIRST and right NOW, and catching them when they

come,’ I most dropped; and a streak of butter come a-trick-

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ling down my forehead, and Aunt Sally she see it, and turns

white as a sheet, and says:

‘For the land’s sake, what IS the matter with the child?

He’s got the brain-fever as shore as you’re born, and they’re

oozing out!’

And everybody runs to see, and she snatches off my hat,

and out comes the bread and what was left of the butter, and

she grabbed me, and hugged me, and says:

‘Oh, what a turn you did give me! and how glad and grateful I am it ain’t no worse; for luck’s against us, and it never

rains but it pours, and when I see that truck I thought we’d

lost you, for I knowed by the color and all it was just like

your brains would be if — Dear, dear, whyd’nt you TELL

me that was what you’d been down there for, I wouldn’t a

cared. Now cler out to bed, and don’t lemme see no more of

you till morning!’

I was up stairs in a second, and down the lightning- rod

in another one, and shinning through the dark for the leanto. I couldn’t hardly get my words out, I was so anxious; but

I told Tom as quick as I could we must jump for it now, and

not a minute to lose — the house full of men, yonder, with

guns!

His eyes just blazed; and he says:

‘No! — is that so? AIN’T it bully! Why, Huck, if it was to

do over again, I bet I could fetch two hun- dred! If we could

put it off till —‘

‘Hurry! HURRY!’ I says. ‘Where’s Jim?’

‘Right at your elbow; if you reach out your arm you can

touch him. He’s dressed, and everything’s ready. Now we’ll

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slide out and give the sheep- signal.’

But then we heard the tramp of men coming to the door,

and heard them begin to fumble with the pad- lock, and

heard a man say:

‘I TOLD you we’d be too soon; they haven’t come — the

door is locked. Here, I’ll lock some of you into the cabin,

and you lay for ‘em in the dark and kill ‘em when they come;

and the rest scatter around a piece, and listen if you can

hear ‘em coming.’

So in they come, but couldn’t see us in the dark, and

most trod on us whilst we was hustling to get under the

bed. But we got under all right, and out through the hole,

swift but soft — Jim first, me next, and Tom last, which was

according to Tom’s orders. Now we was in the lean-to, and

heard trampings close by out- side. So we crept to the door,

and Tom stopped us there and put his eye to the crack, but

couldn’t make out nothing, it was so dark; and whispered

and said he would listen for the steps to get further, and

when he nudged us Jim must glide out first, and him last.

So he set his ear to the crack and listened, and listened, and

listened, and the steps a-scraping around out there all the

time; and at last he nudged us, and we slid out, and stooped

down, not breathing, and not making the least noise, and

slipped stealthy towards the fence in Injun file, and got to it

all right, and me and Jim over it; but Tom’s britches catched

fast on a splinter on the top rail, and then he hear the steps

coming, so he had to pull loose, which snapped the splinter and made a noise; and as he dropped in our tracks and

started somebody sings out:

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‘Who’s that? Answer, or I’ll shoot!’

But we didn’t answer; we just unfurled our heels and

shoved. Then there was a rush, and a BANG, BANG, BANG!

and the bullets fairly whizzed around us! We heard them

sing out:

‘Here they are! They’ve broke for the river! After ‘em,

boys, and turn loose the dogs!’

So here they come, full tilt. We could hear them because

they wore boots and yelled, but we didn’t wear no boots and

didn’t yell. We was in the path to the mill; and when they

got pretty close on to us we dodged into the bush and let

them go by, and then dropped in behind them. They’d had

all the dogs shut up, so they wouldn’t scare off the robbers;

but by this time somebody had let them loose, and here

they come, making powwow enough for a million; but they

was our dogs; so we stopped in our tracks till they catched

up; and when they see it warn’t nobody but us, and no excitement to offer them, they only just said howdy, and tore

right ahead towards the shouting and clattering; and then

we up-steam again, and whizzed along after them till we

was nearly to the mill, and then struck up through the bush

to where my canoe was tied, and hopped in and pulled for

dear life towards the middle of the river, but didn’t make

no more noise than we was obleeged to. Then we struck out,

easy and comfortable, for the island where my raft was; and

we could hear them yelling and barking at each other all

up and down the bank, till we was so far away the sounds

got dim and died out. And when we stepped on to the raft

I says:

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‘NOW, old Jim, you’re a free man again, and I bet you

won’t ever be a slave no more.’

‘En a mighty good job it wuz, too, Huck. It ‘uz planned

beautiful, en it ‘uz done beautiful; en dey ain’t NOBODY

kin git up a plan dat’s mo’ mixed-up en splendid den what

dat one wuz.’

We was all glad as we could be, but Tom was the gladdest

of all because he had a bullet in the calf of his leg.

When me and Jim heard that we didn’t feel so brash as

what we did before. It was hurting him consider- able, and

bleeding; so we laid him in the wigwam and tore up one of

the duke’s shirts for to bandage him, but he says:

‘Gimme the rags; I can do it myself. Don’t stop now; don’t

fool around here, and the evasion booming along so handsome; man the sweeps, and set her loose! Boys, we done it

elegant! — ‘deed we did. I wish WE’D a had the handling

of Louis XVI., there wouldn’t a been no ‘Son of Saint Louis,

ascend to heaven!’ wrote down in HIS biography; no, sir,

we’d a whooped him over the BORDER — that’s what we’d

a done with HIM — and done it just as slick as nothing at

all, too. Man the sweeps — man the sweeps!’

But me and Jim was consulting — and thinking. And after we’d thought a minute, I says:

‘Say it, Jim.’

So he says:

‘Well, den, dis is de way it look to me, Huck. Ef it wuz

HIM dat ‘uz bein’ sot free, en one er de boys wuz to git shot,

would he say, ‘Go on en save me, nemmine ‘bout a doctor

f’r to save dis one?’ Is dat like Mars Tom Sawyer? Would he

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say dat? You BET he wouldn’t! WELL, den, is JIM gywne to

say it? No, sah — I doan’ budge a step out’n dis place ‘dout a

DOCTOR, not if it’s forty year!’

I knowed he was white inside, and I reckoned he’d say

what he did say — so it was all right now, and I told Tom I

was a-going for a doctor. He raised con- siderable row about

it, but me and Jim stuck to it and wouldn’t budge; so he was

for crawling out and set- ting the raft loose himself; but we

wouldn’t let him. Then he give us a piece of his mind, but it

didn’t do no good.

So when he sees me getting the canoe ready, he says:

‘Well, then, if you re bound to go, I’ll tell you the way to

do when you get to the village. Shut the door and blindfold

the doctor tight and fast, and make him swear to be silent

as the grave, and put a purse full of gold in his hand, and

then take and lead him all around the back alleys and everywheres in the dark, and then fetch him here in the canoe,

in a roundabout way amongst the islands, and search him

and take his chalk away from him, and don’t give it back to

him till you get him back to the village, or else he will chalk

this raft so he can find it again. It’s the way they all do.’

So I said I would, and left, and Jim was to hide in the

woods when he see the doctor coming till he was gone

again.

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Chapter XLI

THE doctor was an old man; a very nice, kind-look- ing

old man when I got him up. I told him me and my brother was over on Spanish Island hunt- ing yesterday afternoon,

and camped on a piece of a raft we found, and about midnight he must a kicked his gun in his dreams, for it went

off and shot him in the leg, and we wanted him to go over

there and fix it and not say nothing about it, nor let anybody

know, be- cause we wanted to come home this evening and

sur- prise the folks.

‘Who is your folks?’ he says.

‘The Phelpses, down yonder.’

‘Oh,’ he says. And after a minute, he says:

‘How’d you say he got shot?’

‘He had a dream,’ I says, ‘and it shot him.’

‘Singular dream,’ he says.

So he lit up his lantern, and got his saddle-bags, and we

started. But when he sees the canoe he didn’t like the look

of her — said she was big enough for one, but didn’t look

pretty safe for two. I says:

‘Oh, you needn’t be afeard, sir, she carried the three of us

easy enough.’

‘What three?’

‘Why, me and Sid, and — and — and THE GUNS; that’s

what I mean.’

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‘Oh,’ he says.

But he put his foot on the gunnel and rocked her, and

shook his head, and said he reckoned he’d look around for

a bigger one. But they was all locked and chained; so he

took my canoe, and said for me to wait till he come back,

or I could hunt around further, or maybe I better go down

home and get them ready for the surprise if I wanted to. But

I said I didn’t; so I told him just how to find the raft, and

then he started.

I struck an idea pretty soon. I says to myself, spos’n he

can’t fix that leg just in three shakes of a sheep’s tail, as the

saying is? spos’n it takes him three or four days? What are

we going to do? — lay around there till he lets the cat out of

the bag? No, sir; I know what I’LL do. I’ll wait, and when he

comes back if he says he’s got to go any more I’ll get down

there, too, if I swim; and we’ll take and tie him, and keep

him, and shove out down the river; and when Tom’s done

with him we’ll give him what it’s worth, or all we got, and

then let him get ashore.

So then I crept into a lumber-pile to get some sleep; and

next time I waked up the sun was away up over my head! I

shot out and went for the doctor’s house, but they told me

he’d gone away in the night some time or other, and warn’t

back yet. Well, thinks I, that looks powerful bad for Tom,

and I’ll dig out for the island right off. So away I shoved, and

turned the corner, and nearly rammed my head into Uncle

Silas’s stomach! He says:

‘Why, TOM! Where you been all this time, you rascal?’

‘I hain’t been nowheres,’ I says, ‘only just hunt- ing for the

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runaway nigger — me and Sid.’

‘Why, where ever did you go?’ he says. ‘Your aunt’s been

mighty uneasy.’

‘She needn’t,’ I says, ‘because we was all right. We followed the men and the dogs, but they outrun us, and we

lost them; but we thought we heard them on the water, so

we got a canoe and took out after them and crossed over, but

couldn’t find nothing of them; so we cruised along up-shore

till we got kind of tired and beat out; and tied up the canoe

and went to sleep, and never waked up till about an hour

ago; then we paddled over here to hear the news, and Sid’s

at the post-office to see what he can hear, and I’m a-branching out to get something to eat for us, and then we’re going

home.’

So then we went to the post-office to get ‘Sid”; but just as

I suspicioned, he warn’t there; so the old man he got a letter out of the office, and we waited awhile longer, but Sid

didn’t come; so the old man said, come along, let Sid foot it

home, or canoe it, when he got done fooling around — but

we would ride. I couldn’t get him to let me stay and wait for

Sid; and he said there warn’t no use in it, and I must come

along, and let Aunt Sally see we was all right.

When we got home Aunt Sally was that glad to see me

she laughed and cried both, and hugged me, and give me

one of them lickings of hern that don’t amount to shucks,

and said she’d serve Sid the same when he come.

And the place was plum full of farmers and farmers’

wives, to dinner; and such another clack a body never heard.

Old Mrs. Hotchkiss was the worst; her tongue was a-going

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all the time. She says:

‘Well, Sister Phelps, I’ve ransacked that-air cabin over,

an’ I b’lieve the nigger was crazy. I says to Sister Damrell

— didn’t I, Sister Damrell? — s’I, he’s crazy, s’I — them’s the

very words I said. You all hearn me: he’s crazy, s’I; everything shows it, s’I. Look at that-air grindstone, s’I; want to

tell ME’t any cretur ‘t’s in his right mind ‘s a goin’ to scrabble all them crazy things onto a grindstone, s’I? Here sich ‘n’

sich a person busted his heart; ‘n’ here so ‘n’ so pegged along

for thirty-seven year, ‘n’ all that — natcherl son o’ Louis

somebody, ‘n’ sich everlast’n rubbage. He’s plumb crazy, s’I;

it’s what I says in the fust place, it’s what I says in the middle,

‘n’ it’s what I says last ‘n’ all the time — the nigger’s crazy

— crazy ‘s Nebokoodneezer, s’I.’

‘An’ look at that-air ladder made out’n rags, Sister Hotchkiss,’ says old Mrs. Damrell; ‘what in the name o’ goodness

COULD he ever want of —‘

‘The very words I was a-sayin’ no longer ago th’n this

minute to Sister Utterback, ‘n’ she’ll tell you so herself. Shshe, look at that-air rag ladder, sh-she; ‘n’ s’I, yes, LOOK at

it, s’I — what COULD he a-wanted of it, s’I. Sh-she, Sister

Hotchkiss, sh-she —‘

‘But how in the nation’d they ever GIT that grind- stone

IN there, ANYWAY? ‘n’ who dug that-air HOLE? ‘n’ who

—‘

‘My very WORDS, Brer Penrod! I was a-sayin’ — pass

that-air sasser o’ m’lasses, won’t ye? — I was a-sayin’ to

Sister Dunlap, jist this minute, how DID they git that grindstone in there, s’I. Without HELP, mind you — ‘thout HELP!

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THAT’S wher ‘tis. Don’t tell ME, s’I; there WUZ help, s’I; ‘n’

ther’ wuz a PLENTY help, too, s’I; ther’s ben a DOZEN ahelpin’ that nigger, ‘n’ I lay I’d skin every last nigger on this

place but I’D find out who done it, s’I; ‘n’ moreover, s’I —‘

‘A DOZEN says you! — FORTY couldn’t a done every

thing that’s been done. Look at them case-knife saws and

things, how tedious they’ve been made; look at that bed-leg

sawed off with ‘m, a week’s work for six men; look at that

nigger made out’n straw on the bed; and look at —‘

‘You may WELL say it, Brer Hightower! It’s jist as I was

a-sayin’ to Brer Phelps, his own self. S’e, what do YOU think

of it, Sister Hotchkiss, s’e? Think o’ what, Brer Phelps, s’I?

Think o’ that bed-leg sawed off that a way, s’e? THINK of it,

s’I? I lay it never sawed ITSELF off, s’I — somebody SAWED

it, s’I; that’s my opinion, take it or leave it, it mayn’t be no

‘count, s’I, but sich as ‘t is, it’s my opinion, s’I, ‘n’ if any body

k’n start a better one, s’I, let him DO it, s’I, that’s all. I says

to Sister Dunlap, s’I —‘

‘Why, dog my cats, they must a ben a house-full o’ niggers in there every night for four weeks to a done all that

work, Sister Phelps. Look at that shirt — every last inch of

it kivered over with secret African writ’n done with blood!

Must a ben a raft uv ‘m at it right along, all the time, amost.

Why, I’d give two dollars to have it read to me; ‘n’ as for the

niggers that wrote it, I ‘low I’d take ‘n’ lash ‘m t’ll —‘

‘People to HELP him, Brother Marples! Well, I reckon

you’d THINK so if you’d a been in this house for a while

back. Why, they’ve stole everything they could lay their

hands on — and we a-watching all the time, mind you. They

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stole that shirt right off o’ the line! and as for that sheet they

made the rag ladder out of, ther’ ain’t no telling how many

times they DIDN’T steal that; and flour, and candles, and

candlesticks, and spoons, and the old warming-pan, and

most a thousand things that I disremember now, and my

new calico dress; and me and Silas and my Sid and Tom on

the constant watch day AND night, as I was a-telling you,

and not a one of us could catch hide nor hair nor sight nor

sound of them; and here at the last minute, lo and behold

you, they slides right in under our noses and fools us, and

not only fools US but the Injun Terri- tory robbers too, and

actuly gets AWAY with that nigger safe and sound, and that

with sixteen men and twenty- two dogs right on their very

heels at that very time! I tell you, it just bangs anything I

ever HEARD of. Why, SPERITS couldn’t a done better and

been no smarter. And I reckon they must a BEEN sperits

— be- cause, YOU know our dogs, and ther’ ain’t no better;

well, them dogs never even got on the TRACK of ‘m once!

You explain THAT to me if you can! — ANY of you!’

‘Well, it does beat —‘

‘Laws alive, I never —‘

‘So help me, I wouldn’t a be —‘

‘HOUSE-thieves as well as —‘

‘Goodnessgracioussakes, I’d a ben afeard to live in sich

a —‘

‘Fraid to LIVE! — why, I was that scared I dasn’t hardly

go to bed, or get up, or lay down, or SET down, Sister Ridgeway. Why, they’d steal the very — why, goodness sakes, you

can guess what kind of a fluster I was in by the time mid-

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night come last night. I hope to gracious if I warn’t afraid

they’d steal some o’ the family! I was just to that pass I

didn’t have no reason- ing faculties no more. It looks foolish

enough NOW, in the daytime; but I says to myself, there’s

my two poor boys asleep, ‘way up stairs in that lonesome

room, and I declare to goodness I was that uneasy ‘t I crep’

up there and locked ‘em in! I DID. And anybody would. Because, you know, when you get scared that way, and it keeps

running on, and getting worse and worse all the time, and

your wits gets to addling, and you get to doing all sorts o’

wild things, and by and by you think to yourself, spos’n I

was a boy, and was away up there, and the door ain’t locked,

and you —‘ She stopped, looking kind of wondering, and

then she turned her head around slow, and when her eye lit

on me — I got up and took a walk.

Says I to myself, I can explain better how we come to

not be in that room this morning if I go out to one side and

study over it a little. So I done it. But I dasn’t go fur, or she’d

a sent for me. And when it was late in the day the people all

went, and then I come in and told her the noise and shooting waked up me and ‘Sid,’ and the door was locked, and

we wanted to see the fun, so we went down the lightningrod, and both of us got hurt a little, and we didn’t never

want to try THAT no more. And then I went on and told

her all what I told Uncle Silas before; and then she said she’d

forgive us, and maybe it was all right enough anyway, and

about what a body might expect of boys, for all boys was

a pretty harum-scarum lot as fur as she could see; and so,

as long as no harm hadn’t come of it, she judged she better

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put in her time being grateful we was alive and well and

she had us still, stead of fretting over what was past and

done. So then she kissed me, and patted me on the head,

and dropped into a kind of a brown study; and pretty soon

jumps up, and says:

‘Why, lawsamercy, it’s most night, and Sid not come yet!

What HAS become of that boy?’

I see my chance; so I skips up and says:

‘I’ll run right up to town and get him,’ I says.

‘No you won’t,’ she says. ‘You’ll stay right wher’ you are;

ONE’S enough to be lost at a time. If he ain’t here to supper,

your uncle ‘ll go.’

Well, he warn’t there to supper; so right after supper uncle went.

He come back about ten a little bit uneasy; hadn’t run

across Tom’s track. Aunt Sally was a good DEAL uneasy;

but Uncle Silas he said there warn’t no occa- sion to be —

boys will be boys, he said, and you’ll see this one turn up in

the morning all sound and right. So she had to be satisfied.

But she said she’d set up for him a while anyway, and keep a

light burning so he could see it.

And then when I went up to bed she come up with me

and fetched her candle, and tucked me in, and mothered

me so good I felt mean, and like I couldn’t look her in the

face; and she set down on the bed and talked with me a

long time, and said what a splendid boy Sid was, and didn’t

seem to want to ever stop talking about him; and kept asking me every now and then if I reckoned he could a got lost,

or hurt, or maybe drownded, and might be laying at this

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minute somewheres suffering or dead, and she not by him

to help him, and so the tears would drip down silent, and

I would tell her that Sid was all right, and would be home

in the morning, sure; and she would squeeze my hand, or

maybe kiss me, and tell me to say it again, and keep on saying it, because it done her good, and she was in so much

trouble. And when she was going away she looked down in

my eyes so steady and gentle, and says:

‘The door ain’t going to be locked, Tom, and there’s the

window and the rod; but you’ll be good, WON’T you? And

you won’t go? For MY sake.’

Laws knows I WANTED to go bad enough to see about

Tom, and was all intending to go; but after that I wouldn’t a

went, not for kingdoms.

But she was on my mind and Tom was on my mind, so

I slept very restless. And twice I went down the rod away

in the night, and slipped around front, and see her setting

there by her candle in the window with her eyes towards the

road and the tears in them; and I wished I could do something for her, but I couldn’t, only to swear that I wouldn’t

never do nothing to grieve her any more. And the third

time I waked up at dawn, and slid down, and she was there

yet, and her candle was most out, and her old gray head was

resting on her hand, and she was asleep.

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Chapter XLII

THE old man was uptown again before breakfast, but

couldn’t get no track of Tom; and both of them set at

the table thinking, and not saying nothing, and looking

mournful, and their coffee getting cold, and not eating anything. And by and by the old man says:

‘Did I give you the letter?’

‘What letter?’

‘The one I got yesterday out of the post-office.’

‘No, you didn’t give me no letter.’

‘Well, I must a forgot it.’

So he rummaged his pockets, and then went off somewheres where he had laid it down, and fetched it, and give

it to her. She says:

‘Why, it’s from St. Petersburg — it’s from Sis.’

I allowed another walk would do me good; but I couldn’t

stir. But before she could break it open she dropped it and

run — for she see something. And so did I. It was Tom Sawyer on a mattress; and that old doctor; and Jim, in HER

calico dress, with his hands tied behind him; and a lot of

people. I hid the letter behind the first thing that come handy, and rushed. She flung herself at Tom, crying, and says:

‘Oh, he’s dead, he’s dead, I know he’s dead!’

And Tom he turned his head a little, and muttered something or other, which showed he warn’t in his right mind;

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then she flung up her hands, and says:

‘He’s alive, thank God! And that’s enough!’ and she

snatched a kiss of him, and flew for the house to get the bed

ready, and scattering orders right and left at the niggers and

everybody else, as fast as her tongue could go, every jump

of the way.

I followed the men to see what they was going to do with

Jim; and the old doctor and Uncle Silas followed after Tom

into the house. The men was very huffy, and some of them

wanted to hang Jim for an example to all the other niggers

around there, so they wouldn’t be trying to run away like

Jim done, and making such a raft of trouble, and keeping a

whole family scared most to death for days and nights. But

the others said, don’t do it, it wouldn’t answer at all; he ain’t

our nigger, and his owner would turn up and make us pay

for him, sure. So that cooled them down a little, be- cause

the people that’s always the most anxious for to hang a nigger that hain’t done just right is always the very ones that

ain’t the most anxious to pay for him when they’ve got their

satisfaction out of him.

They cussed Jim considerble, though, and give him a

cuff or two side the head once in a while, but Jim never said

nothing, and he never let on to know me, and they took

him to the same cabin, and put his own clothes on him, and

chained him again, and not to no bed-leg this time, but to

a big staple drove into the bot- tom log, and chained his

hands, too, and both legs, and said he warn’t to have nothing but bread and water to eat after this till his owner come,

or he was sold at auc- tion because he didn’t come in a cer-

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tain length of time, and filled up our hole, and said a couple

of farmers with guns must stand watch around about the

cabin every night, and a bulldog tied to the door in the daytime; and about this time they was through with the job

and was tapering off with a kind of generl good-bye cussing,

and then the old doctor comes and takes a look, and says:

‘Don’t be no rougher on him than you’re obleeged to, because he ain’t a bad nigger. When I got to where I found the

boy I see I couldn’t cut the bullet out without some help,

and he warn’t in no condition for me to leave to go and get

help; and he got a little worse and a little worse, and after a

long time he went out of his head, and wouldn’t let me come

a-nigh him any more, and said if I chalked his raft he’d kill

me, and no end of wild foolishness like that, and I see I

couldn’t do anything at all with him; so I says, I got to have

HELP somehow; and the minute I says it out crawls this

nigger from somewheres and says he’ll help, and he done it,

too, and done it very well. Of course I judged he must be a

runaway nigger, and there I WAS! and there I had to stick

right straight along all the rest of the day and all night. It

was a fix, I tell you! I had a couple of patients with the chills,

and of course I’d of liked to run up to town and see them,

but I dasn’t, because the nigger might get away, and then

I’d be to blame; and yet never a skiff come close enough for

me to hail. So there I had to stick plumb until daylight this

morning; and I never see a nigger that was a better nuss

or faithfuller, and yet he was risking his freedom to do it,

and was all tired out, too, and I see plain enough he’d been

worked main hard lately. I liked the nigger for that; I tell

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you, gentlemen, a nigger like that is worth a thousand dollars — and kind treatment, too. I had everything I needed,

and the boy was doing as well there as he would a done at

home — better, maybe, because it was so quiet; but there

I WAS, with both of ‘m on my hands, and there I had to

stick till about dawn this morning; then some men in a skiff

come by, and as good luck would have it the nigger was setting by the pallet with his head propped on his knees sound

asleep; so I motioned them in quiet, and they slipped up

on him and grabbed him and tied him before he knowed

what he was about, and we never had no trouble. And the

boy being in a kind of a flighty sleep, too, we muffled the

oars and hitched the raft on, and towed her over very nice

and quiet, and the nigger never made the least row nor said

a word from the start. He ain’t no bad nigger, gentlemen;

that’s what I think about him.’

Somebody says:

‘Well, it sounds very good, doctor, I’m obleeged to say.’

Then the others softened up a little, too, and I was mighty

thankful to that old doctor for doing Jim that good turn;

and I was glad it was according to my judg- ment of him,

too; because I thought he had a good heart in him and was a

good man the first time I see him. Then they all agreed that

Jim had acted very well, and was deserving to have some

notice took of it, and reward. So every one of them promised, right out and hearty, that they wouldn’t cuss him no

more.

Then they come out and locked him up. I hoped they was

going to say he could have one or two of the chains took

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off, because they was rotten heavy, or could have meat and

greens with his bread and water; but they didn’t think of it,

and I reckoned it warn’t best for me to mix in, but I judged

I’d get the doctor’s yarn to Aunt Sally somehow or other as

soon as I’d got through the breakers that was laying just

ahead of me — explanations, I mean, of how I forgot to

mention about Sid being shot when I was telling how him

and me put in that dratted night paddling around hunting

the run- away nigger.

But I had plenty time. Aunt Sally she stuck to the sickroom all day and all night, and every time I see Uncle Silas

mooning around I dodged him.

Next morning I heard Tom was a good deal better, and

they said Aunt Sally was gone to get a nap. So I slips to the

sick-room, and if I found him awake I reckoned we could

put up a yarn for the family that would wash. But he was

sleeping, and sleeping very peaceful, too; and pale, not firefaced the way he was when he come. So I set down and laid

for him to wake. In about half an hour Aunt Sally comes

gliding in, and there I was, up a stump again! She motioned

me to be still, and set down by me, and begun to whisper,

and said we could all be joyful now, because all the symptoms was first-rate, and he’d been sleeping like that for ever

so long, and looking better and peace- fuller all the time,

and ten to one he’d wake up in his right mind.

So we set there watching, and by and by he stirs a bit, and

opened his eyes very natural, and takes a look, and says:

‘Hello! — why, I’m at HOME! How’s that? Where’s the

raft?’

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‘It’s all right,’ I says.

‘And JIM?’

‘The same,’ I says, but couldn’t say it pretty brash. But he

never noticed, but says:

‘Good! Splendid! NOW we’re all right and safe! Did you

tell Aunty?’

I was going to say yes; but she chipped in and says: ‘About

what, Sid?’

‘Why, about the way the whole thing was done.’

‘What whole thing?’

‘Why, THE whole thing. There ain’t but one; how we set

the runaway nigger free — me and Tom.’

‘Good land! Set the run — What IS the child talking

about! Dear, dear, out of his head again!’

‘NO, I ain’t out of my HEAD; I know all what I’m talking

about. We DID set him free — me and Tom. We laid out to

do it, and we DONE it. And we done it elegant, too.’ He’d

got a start, and she never checked him up, just set and stared

and stared, and let him clip along, and I see it warn’t no use

for ME to put in. ‘Why, Aunty, it cost us a power of work —

weeks of it — hours and hours, every night, whilst you was

all asleep. And we had to steal candles, and the sheet, and

the shirt, and your dress, and spoons, and tin plates, and

case-knives, and the warming-pan, and the grindstone, and

flour, and just no end of things, and you can’t think what

work it was to make the saws, and pens, and inscriptions,

and one thing or another, and you can’t think HALF the

fun it was. And we had to make up the pictures of coffins

and things, and non- namous letters from the robbers, and

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get up and down the lightning-rod, and dig the hole into

the cabin, and made the rope ladder and send it in cooked

up in a pie, and send in spoons and things to work with in

your apron pocket —‘

‘Mercy sakes!’

‘— and load up the cabin with rats and snakes and so

on, for company for Jim; and then you kept Tom here so

long with the butter in his hat that you come near spiling

the whole business, because the men come before we was

out of the cabin, and we had to rush, and they heard us and

let drive at us, and I got my share, and we dodged out of

the path and let them go by, and when the dogs come they

warn’t interested in us, but went for the most noise, and we

got our canoe, and made for the raft, and was all safe, and

Jim was a free man, and we done it all by ourselves, and

WASN’T it bully, Aunty!’

‘Well, I never heard the likes of it in all my born days!

So it was YOU, you little rapscallions, that’s been making

all this trouble, and turned everybody’s wits clean inside

out and scared us all most to death. I’ve as good a notion as

ever I had in my life to take it out o’ you this very minute.

To think, here I’ve been, night after night, a — YOU just get

well once, you young scamp, and I lay I’ll tan the Old Harry

out o’ both o’ ye!’

But Tom, he WAS so proud and joyful, he just COULDN’T

hold in, and his tongue just WENT it — she a-chipping in,

and spitting fire all along, and both of them going it at once,

like a cat convention; and she says:

‘WELL, you get all the enjoyment you can out of it NOW,

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for mind I tell you if I catch you meddling with him again

—‘

‘Meddling with WHO?’ Tom says, dropping his smile

and looking surprised.

‘With WHO? Why, the runaway nigger, of course. Who’d

you reckon?’

Tom looks at me very grave, and says:

‘Tom, didn’t you just tell me he was all right? Hasn’t he

got away?’

‘HIM?’ says Aunt Sally; ‘the runaway nigger? ‘Deed he

hasn’t. They’ve got him back, safe and sound, and he’s in

that cabin again, on bread and water, and loaded down with

chains, till he’s claimed or sold!’

Tom rose square up in bed, with his eye hot, and his nostrils opening and shutting like gills, and sings out to me:

‘They hain’t no RIGHT to shut him up! SHOVE! — and

don’t you lose a minute. Turn him loose! he ain’t no slave;

he’s as free as any cretur that walks this earth!’

‘What DOES the child mean?’

‘I mean every word I SAY, Aunt Sally, and if some- body

don’t go, I’LL go. I’ve knowed him all his life, and so has

Tom, there. Old Miss Watson died two months ago, and she

was ashamed she ever was going to sell him down the river,

and SAID so; and she set him free in her will.’

‘Then what on earth did YOU want to set him free for,

seeing he was already free?’

‘Well, that IS a question, I must say; and just like women! Why, I wanted the ADVENTURE of it; and I’d a waded

neck-deep in blood to — goodness alive, AUNT POLLY!’

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If she warn’t standing right there, just inside the door,

looking as sweet and contented as an angel half full of pie, I

wish I may never!

Aunt Sally jumped for her, and most hugged the head

off of her, and cried over her, and I found a good enough

place for me under the bed, for it was getting pretty sultry

for us, seemed to me. And I peeped out, and in a little while

Tom’s Aunt Polly shook herself loose and stood there looking across at Tom over her spectacles — kind of grinding

him into the earth, you know. And then she says:

‘Yes, you BETTER turn y’r head away — I would if I was

you, Tom.’

‘Oh, deary me!’ says Aunt Sally; ‘IS he changed so? Why,

that ain’t TOM, it’s Sid; Tom’s — Tom’s — why, where is

Tom? He was here a minute ago.’

‘You mean where’s Huck FINN — that’s what you mean!

I reckon I hain’t raised such a scamp as my Tom all these

years not to know him when I SEE him. That WOULD be

a pretty howdy-do. Come out from under that bed, Huck

Finn.’

So I done it. But not feeling brash.

Aunt Sally she was one of the mixed-upest-looking persons I ever see — except one, and that was Uncle Silas, when

he come in and they told it all to him. It kind of made him

drunk, as you may say, and he didn’t know nothing at all

the rest of the day, and preached a prayer-meeting sermon

that night that gave him a rattling ruputation, because the

oldest man in the world couldn’t a understood it. So Tom’s

Aunt Polly, she told all about who I was, and what; and I

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had to up and tell how I was in such a tight place that when

Mrs. Phelps took me for Tom Sawyer — she chipped in and

says, ‘Oh, go on and call me Aunt Sally, I’m used to it now,

and ‘tain’t no need to change’ — that when Aunt Sally took

me for Tom Sawyer I had to stand it — there warn’t no other

way, and I knowed he wouldn’t mind, because it would be

nuts for him, being a mystery, and he’d make an ad- venture out of it, and be perfectly satisfied. And so it turned

out, and he let on to be Sid, and made things as soft as he

could for me.

And his Aunt Polly she said Tom was right about old Miss

Watson setting Jim free in her will; and so, sure enough,

Tom Sawyer had gone and took all that trouble and bother

to set a free nigger free! and I couldn’t ever understand before, until that minute and that talk, how he COULD help a

body set a nigger free with his bringing-up.

Well, Aunt Polly she said that when Aunt Sally wrote to

her that Tom and SID had come all right and safe, she says

to herself:

‘Look at that, now! I might have expected it, letting him

go off that way without anybody to watch him. So now I got

to go and trapse all the way down the river, eleven hundred

mile, and find out what that creetur’s up to THIS time, as

long as I couldn’t seem to get any answer out of you about

it.’

‘Why, I never heard nothing from you,’ says Aunt Sally.

‘Well, I wonder! Why, I wrote you twice to ask you what

you could mean by Sid being here.’

‘Well, I never got ‘em, Sis.’

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Aunt Polly she turns around slow and severe, and says:

‘You, Tom!’

‘Well — WHAT?’ he says, kind of pettish.

‘Don t you what ME, you impudent thing — hand out

them letters.’

‘What letters?’

‘THEM letters. I be bound, if I have to take a- holt of you

I’ll —‘

‘They’re in the trunk. There, now. And they’re just the

same as they was when I got them out of the office. I hain’t

looked into them, I hain’t touched them. But I knowed

they’d make trouble, and I thought if you warn’t in no hurry, I’d —‘

‘Well, you DO need skinning, there ain’t no mistake

about it. And I wrote another one to tell you I was coming;

and I s’pose he —‘

‘No, it come yesterday; I hain’t read it yet, but IT’S all

right, I’ve got that one.’

I wanted to offer to bet two dollars she hadn’t, but I reckoned maybe it was just as safe to not to. So I never said

nothing.

CHAPTER THE LAST

THE first time I catched Tom private I asked him what

was his idea, time of the evasion? — what it was he’d

planned to do if the evasion worked all right and he managed to set a nigger free that was already free before? And

he said, what he had planned in his head from the start, if

we got Jim out all safe, was for us to run him down the river

on the raft, and have adventures plumb to the mouth of the

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river, and then tell him about his being free, and take him

back up home on a steamboat, in style, and pay him for his

lost time, and write word ahead and get out all the niggers

around, and have them waltz him into town with a torchlight procession and a brass-band, and then he would be a

hero, and so would we. But I reckoned it was about as well

the way it was.

We had Jim out of the chains in no time, and when Aunt

Polly and Uncle Silas and Aunt Sally found out how good he

helped the doctor nurse Tom, they made a heap of fuss over

him, and fixed him up prime, and give him all he wanted to

eat, and a good time, and nothing to do. And we had him

up to the sick-room, and had a high talk; and Tom give Jim

forty dollars for being prisoner for us so patient, and doing it up so good, and Jim was pleased most to death, and

busted out, and says:

‘DAH, now, Huck, what I tell you? — what I tell you up

dah on Jackson islan’? I TOLE you I got a hairy breas’, en

what’s de sign un it; en I TOLE you I ben rich wunst, en

gwineter to be rich AGIN; en it’s come true; en heah she is!

DAH, now! doan’ talk to ME — signs is SIGNS, mine I tell

you; en I knowed jis’ ‘s well ‘at I ‘uz gwineter be rich agin as

I’s a- stannin’ heah dis minute!’

And then Tom he talked along and talked along, and

says, le’s all three slide out of here one of these nights and

get an outfit, and go for howling adventures amongst the

Injuns, over in the Territory, for a couple of weeks or two;

and I says, all right, that suits me, but I ain’t got no money

for to buy the outfit, and I reckon I couldn’t get none from

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home, because it’s likely pap’s been back before now, and

got it all away from Judge Thatcher and drunk it up.

‘No, he hain’t,’ Tom says; ‘it’s all there yet — six thousand

dollars and more; and your pap hain’t ever been back since.

Hadn’t when I come away, anyhow.’

Jim says, kind of solemn:

‘He ain’t a-comin’ back no mo’, Huck.’

I says:

‘Why, Jim?’

‘Nemmine why, Huck — but he ain’t comin’ back no

mo.’

But I kept at him; so at last he says:

‘Doan’ you ‘member de house dat was float’n down de

river, en dey wuz a man in dah, kivered up, en I went in en

unkivered him and didn’ let you come in? Well, den, you

kin git yo’ money when you wants it, kase dat wuz him.’

Tom’s most well now, and got his bullet around his neck

on a watch-guard for a watch, and is always seeing what

time it is, and so there ain’t nothing more to write about,

and I am rotten glad of it, because if I’d a knowed what a

trouble it was to make a book I wouldn’t a tackled it, and

ain’t a-going to no more. But I reckon I got to light out for

the Territory ahead of the rest, because Aunt Sally she’s going to adopt me and sivilize me, and I can’t stand it. I been

there before.

THE END

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