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

“Stuff! stealing cattle and such things ain't robbery; it's burglary,”

says Tom Sawyer. “We ain't burglars. That ain't no sort of style. We

are highwaymen. 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 most-

ly 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 ransomed if we don't know how to do it

to them?—that's the thing I want to get at. Now, what do you reck-

on it is?”

“Well, I don’t know. But per'aps if we keep them till they're ran-

somed, it means that we keep them till they're dead. “

“Now, that’s something ike. 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 try-

ing 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 ni

and never get any sleep, just so as to watch them. I think that’s fool-

ishness. 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