# CHAPTER I

“TOM!”

No answer.

“TOM!”

No answer.

“What's gone with that boy,  I wonder? You TOM!”

No answer.

The old lady pulled her spectacles down and looked over them about the

room; then she put them up and looked out under them. She seldom or

never looked \_through\_ them for so small a thing as a boy; they were

her state pair, the pride of her heart, and were built for “style,” not

service--she could have seen through a pair of stove-lids just as well.

She looked perplexed for a moment, and then said, not fiercely, but

still loud enough for the furniture to hear:

“Well, I lay if I get hold of you I'll--”

She did not finish, for by this time she was bending down and punching

under the bed with the broom, and so she needed breath to punctuate the

punches with. She resurrected nothing but the cat.

“I never did see the beat of that boy!”

She went to the open door and stood in it and looked out among the

tomato vines and “jimpson” weeds that constituted the garden. No Tom. So

she lifted up her voice at an angle calculated for distance and shouted:

“Y-o-u-u TOM!”

There was a slight noise behind her and she turned just in time to seize

a small boy by the slack of his roundabout and arrest his flight.

“There! I might 'a' thought of that closet. What you been doing in

there?”

“Nothing.”

“Nothing! Look at your hands. And look at your mouth. What \_is\_ that

truck?”

“I don't know, aunt.”