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Mark Twain



The Adventures  
of Tom Sawyer

# CHAPTER I

“Tom!”

No answer.

“Where’s that boy, I wonder! Tom!”

No answer.

The old lady looked over her glasses about the room. She seldom or never looked *through* them for such a small thing as a boy, because she used them for “style” only. A moment later she said loudly, “Well, just let me find you, and I’ll ...”

She looked under the bed, but she found only a cat there.

Then she went to the open door, stood in it, and looked out. No Tom. So she shouted loudly:

“T-o-m!”

There was a quiet noise behind her, and she turned quickly and caught a small boy by his jacket.

“So, you were in the closet.”

“No.”

“No! Look at your hands, and look at your mouth. What is it?”

“I don’t know, Aunt.”

“Well, *I* know. It’s jam. What did I tell you yesterday? ‘Don’t touch that jam!’ Give me that switch.”

Now the boy was in serious danger.



“Oh! Look behind you, Aunt!”

When the old lady turned around to look what was there the boy ran away. He climbed up the high fence, and disappeared over it. His Aunt Polly stood surprised for a moment, and then started to laugh.

“Will I ever learn anything? He played so many tricks on me in the past but I’m never ready for them. And all his tricks are always different, and I never know what’s next. But he knows when to stop and how to make me laugh, so I can’t hit him. I am not doing my duty well by that boy. I cannot teach him with a switch, and this is my sin, *I* know. He’s my dead sister’s son, poor thing, and every time I hit him my old heart almost breaks. He’ll play hookey this evening, and I’ll have to make him work tomorrow to punish him. It’s Saturday tomorrow and all the boys will enjoy their holiday, but he’ll have to work hard. He hates work very much, but I have to do my duty by him, or I’ll spoil the child.”

Tom really played hookey and had a very good time. He returned in time to help Jim, the small Negro boy, to do his work. At least he was there in time to tell his adventures to Jim because Jim was already finishing the work. Tom’s younger brother Sid was through with his part of the work, because unlike Tom he was a quiet boy.

While Tom was eating his supper, Aunt Polly asked him a lot of questions because she wanted to know the truth about his day. She said, “Tom, it was warm in school, wasn’t it?”

“Yes, Aunt Polly.”

“And you wanted to go swimming, didn’t you, Tom?”

Tom became suspicious. He looked at Aunt Polly, but her face told him nothing. So he said:



“No — well, not very much.”

The old lady touched Tom’s shirt with her hand and said:

“But you aren’t too warm now.”

Tom’s shirt was dry and it gave her pleasure to think that nobody knew what was in her mind. But Tom understood her trick and guessed her next move.

“But we pumped on our heads. My hair is still damp. See?”

Then Aunt Polly made a new attempt.

“Tom, you didn’t have to undo your shirt collar where I sewed it to pump on your head, did you? Show it to me.”

The trouble disappeared from the Tom’s face. He opened his jacket and showed his collar.

“So, Tom, you *didn’t* play hookey and go swimming. I forgive you *this* time.”

But at this moment Sidney said:

“Well, it seems to me you sewed his collar with white thread, but it’s black.”

“Oh, Sid is right! Tom!”

But Tom did not wait for the end of the conversation. As he ran out of the door, he said:

“Siddy, I’ll beat you for that.”

Two minutes later he forgot all his problems. Not because his problems were not important for him, but because he had a new interest. He wanted to practise a new way of whistling. Soon he could whistle well enough, and as he went down the street he was whistling cheerfully.

The summer evenings were long. It was not dark yet. Suddenly Tom stopped whistling. He saw a strange boy before him, who was a little larger than himself. This boy’s



clothes were nice and clean, too nice and clean for a week-day. It was unusual. He was all pretty and new and tidy. He had shoes on, but it was only Friday. He even had a tie. The more Tom looked at the strange boy, the higher he turned up his nose at him, and the shabbier his own clothes seemed to him. The boys didn't speak. They looked at each other for some time. At last, Tom said:

"I can beat you."

"No you can't."

"Yes I can."

"No you can't."

There was an uncomfortable pause. Then the strange boy said:

"Well, why don't you *do* it? You say 'I can beat you.' Why don't you *do* it? It's because you're afraid."

"I am *not* afraid."

"You are."

There was another pause. The boys kept looking at each other. Then Tom said:

"Go away from here!"

"Go away yourself!"


"I won't."

"I won't either."

So they looked at each other with hate and then started to push each other. They kept pushing hard but none of them could win. So when they had to stop they both were hot and red. Then Tom said:

"I'll tell my big brother about you, and he can beat you with his little finger."

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“I don’t care about your big brother. I’ve got a brother that’s bigger than yours; and he can throw him over that fence.” (Both brothers were not real.)

“That’s a lie.”

“You’re lying, too.”

Then Tom drew a line in the dust with his big toe, and said:

“Just step over that, and I’ll beat you till you can’t stand up.”

The new boy stepped over quickly, and said:

“Now let’s see you do it.”

The next moment both boys were on the ground. They were tearing at each other’s hair and clothes, scratching each other’s noses, and covering themselves with dust and glory. At last Tom sat on the new boy, and began to beat him with his fists.

“Say enough!” said he.

The boy was crying from rage but struggled to free himself.

“Say enough!” and the beating went on.

At last the new boy said “Enough!” and Tom let him up and said, “That’ll teach you a lesson. Be careful next time.”

The new boy went away sobbing, looking back sometimes, shaking his head, and promising, “I’ll beat you next time I see you!” Tom only laughed back. But as soon as he turned his back the new boy took up a stone, threw it, and hit Tom; then he turned and ran away. Tom followed him home, and found out where he lived. He then stood at the gate for some time, waiting for the enemy to come outside; but the enemy only



made faces at him through the window. At last the enemy's mother came out. She said, "You're a bad, naughty child! Go away, now!" So he went home.

He got home very late that night, and when he climbed quietly in through the window his aunt caught him; and when she saw his dirty and torn clothes, her decision to make him work hard on Saturday became very firm.

## CHAPTER II

It was a Saturday morning, and the whole summer world was bright and fresh, and full of life. There was a song in every heart.


Tom appeared on the street with a bucket of whitewash and a long brush. He looked at the fence, and gladness left his heart. The fence was thirty yards long and nine feet high! Life seemed cheerless to him. He sighed and dipped the brush and passed it along one board. Then he did it again, looked sadly at the unwhitewashed fence, and sat down. He was very unhappy. Jim came out of the gate with an empty bucket. Tom always hated bringing water from the town pump, but now the job didn't seem so unpleasant. He remembered that there were always boys and girls at the pump. And he remembered that although the pump was not far away Jim never returned with a bucket of water in less than an hour. Tom said:

"Listen, Jim. I can bring the water, and you do some whitewashing."

Jim shook his head, and said:

"I can't, Mr. Tom. The old lady told me, 'Go and get the water. Don't stop and talk with anybody. And don't you

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whitewash the fence for Tom.' She's going to come and see how you're doing the whitewashing."

"Oh, never mind what she said, Jim. She always talks like this. Give me the bucket — I'll be back in a minute. *She* won't even know."

"Oh, no, Mr. Tom. I'm afraid the old lady will be angry with me."

"*She!* She may tell you angry words, but words don't hurt. I'll give you a marble — I'll give you my best one! — just give me the bucket."

Jim began to hesitate. Tom went on.

"Come on, Jim, give me the bucket, and I'll show you my sore toe," said Tom.

This was too much for Jim. He put down his bucket, took the marble, and bent over Tom's toe with interest. But a moment later he was running down the street with the bucket, Tom was whitewashing again, and Aunt Polly was leaving the place with triumph in her eyes.

But Tom's energy did not last. He began to think of the fun boys usually had on Saturdays, and he became very unhappy. All the free boys were going to make fun of him because he had to work. He took his treasures out of his pockets and examined them — pieces of toys, marbles, and useless things. Maybe, that was enough to buy an exchange of work, but not enough to buy so much as half an hour of freedom. So he returned these things to his pockets, and gave up the thought of trying to buy the boys. At this moment he had an idea.

He took up his brush and went on working. Ben Rogers appeared in the street — the boy whose jokes he was afraid



of most. Ben was jumping as he moved, and it was clear that his heart was light. He was eating an apple. As he came nearer, he slowed down, and stopped in the middle of the street.

Tom went on doing his work and paid no attention to the boy. Ben looked at him for a moment, and then said:

“Hi! You’re working, aren’t you?”

No answer. Tom watched his last touch with the eye of an artist. Ben came nearer. Tom wanted his apple, but he continued his work. Ben said again:

“Hello, Tom, you have to work, hey?”

Tom turned round suddenly and said:

“Oh, it’s you, Ben! I’m sorry I didn’t notice you.”

“I’m going to swim. You want to swim, too, don’t you? But of course you have to work!”

Tom looked at the boy for a moment, and said:

“What do you call work?”

“Isn’t *that* work?”

Tom continued to whitewash, and answered carelessly:

“Well, maybe it is, and maybe it isn’t. I only know that it is the right job for Tom Sawyer.”

“Oh, do you mean you like it?”

The brush continued to move.

“Like it? Well, I don’t see why I have to dislike it. Does a boy get a chance to whitewash a fence every day?”

That put a thing in a new light. Ben stopped eating his apple. Tom moved the brush back and forth — stepped back to examine the effect — added a touch here and there. Ben



was watching every move with growing interest. Then he said:

“Look, Tom, let me whitewash a little.”

Tom thought for a moment, was about to agree, but then he changed his mind.

“No, I can’t. You see, Aunt Polly cares a lot about this fence — right here on the street, you know. I have to do it very carefully. I think there isn’t one boy in a thousand, maybe two thousands, who can do it the right way.”

“Really? Oh, come on; let me just try, only a little.”

“Ben, I’d like to, but I cannot. Aunt Polly wants me to do it and to do it well. Jim and Sid wanted to do it, but she didn’t let them. So, you see, I’m the only one who can do it well.”

“Oh, I’ll be very careful. Now let me try. I’ll give you a piece of my apple.”

“No, Ben, I cannot. I’m afraid ...”

“I’ll give you all of it.”

Tom gave up the brush rather unwillingly, but happiness filled his heart. And while Ben worked hard in the sun, Tom sat near him in the shade and planned how to make other boys work. There were a lot of them; boys came to laugh at Tom, but remained to whitewash. When Ben grew tired, Tom let Billy Fisher whitewash the fence in exchange for a kite; then it was Johnny Miller’s turn in exchange for a dead rat with a string; and so on, hour after hour. And when the middle of the afternoon came, Tom was a very rich boy. He had the kite and the rat, and twelve marbles, a brass knob, a piece of blue bottle-glass to look through, a broken key, a piece of chalk, the handle of a knife, four pieces of orange-peel and a lot of other useful things.



He was certainly having a good time: the boys were working, and the fence already had three coats of whitewash on it! They had to stop because there was no more paint left.

“My life is not so bad after all,” Tom said to himself. Now he knew a great law of life — in order to make a man or a boy want a thing very much, it is only necessary to make the thing difficult to get.

The boy thought a little about his discovery, and then went to Aunt Polly. He was ready to show her the beautiful fence.

## CHAPTER III

**T**om came to Aunt Polly, who was sitting by an open window in the dining-room. She was nodding over her knitting. The cat was sleeping on the floor near her chair. She didn't expect to see the boy because she was sure that he was playing somewhere instead of whitewashing the fence. Tom said:

“May I go and play now, Aunt?”

“Are you ready?”


“It's all ready, Aunt.”

“Tom, don't lie to me. I cannot hear it.”

“I'm telling the truth, Aunt; it *is* all ready.”

It was difficult for Aunt Polly to believe it, so she went out to see it with her own eyes. When she saw the fence with several coats of whitewash on it, her surprise was great. She said:

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“I can’t believe it! Well, Tom, you *can* work when you want to.” And then she added, “But I have to say it happens very seldom. Well, go along and play.”

She was so happy about his work that she took him into the closet, chose the best apple, and gave it to him. While she wasn’t looking Tom stole a doughnut.

When Tom went out, he saw Sid starting up the outside staircase that led to the rooms on the second floor. Tom took out some stones and started to throw them at Sid. Aunt Polly didn’t expect it, and before she could come to help, Tom disappeared over the fence and ran away. He was happy with his revenge on Sid for attracting Aunt Polly’s attention to his black thread and getting him into trouble.

Now that Tom was safe from punishment he walked to the main square of the village, where two “armies” of boys usually met for a battle. Tom was General of one of the armies; Joe Harper (his best friend) was General of the other one. These two great generals did not fight themselves, but sat together and gave orders to their armies. Tom’s army won a great victory, after a long and hard battle. Then they counted the dead, exchanged prisoners, and agreed on the time of the next battle. After that the two armies and their generals went home.

As Tom was passing by the house where Jeff Thatcher lived, he saw a new girl in the garden — a lovely little girl with blue eyes and yellow hair. She wore a white summer dress. Tom immediately forgot Amy Lawrence whom he thought he loved very much. There was no place for Amy in his heart any more.

He was looking at this new angel in admiration. Then he noticed that she was looking at him, too. Then he pretended



he did not know she was there, and began to “show off” in order to win her admiration. He was right in the middle of some dangerous trick, when he suddenly looked aside, and saw that the little girl was walking towards the house. Tom grew sad and came up to the fence. He wanted her to stay a little longer. She stopped for a moment on the steps and then moved towards the door. Then she stopped and threw a flower over the fence before disappearing inside the house. Tom’s face lit up at once.

The boy ran around and stopped within a foot or two of the flower, and then began to look down street. There was nobody in sight, and he picked up the flower and put it into a pocket inside his jacket, next to his heart — or maybe next to his stomach. He was not very good at anatomy.

Then he returned to the fence. He started to “show off,” as before. He hoped that the girl was near some window looking at him. He stayed there till it was dark, but the girl didn’t appear. Finally, he went home with his poor head full of pleasant thoughts.

All through supper he was cheerful. Aunt Polly was angry with the boy for throwing stones at Sid, but Tom did not seem to mind it in the least, which puzzled his aunt a lot. He tried to steal sugar under his aunt’s very nose, and she beat him on his hands. He said:

“Aunt, you never beat Sid when he takes it.”

“Well, Sid is usually a good boy.”

When Aunt Polly went to the kitchen, Sid reached for the sugar-bowl, but the bowl dropped and broke. Tom was so happy that he could hardly keep silent. He promised himself not to say a word, even when his aunt came in, but to sit still. Of course she will ask “Who did it?” And then he was going