



The Success of Tom's Plan

BUT THERE WAS NO JOY IN THE LITTLE TOWN THAT SAME AFTERNOON. The village was more quiet than usual. The people had little to say to each other. The children had no pleasure in their games.

Becky Thatcher was walking near the school. She thought, "Oh, I wish I had not returned to Tom that bright, shining ball he gave me! I have nothing to help me remember him. He is gone now, and I shall never, ever see him again."

She walked away with tears rolling down her face. Then a large group of boys and girls, friends of Tom and Joe, came to the school and stood looking over the fence into the yard where they had played together. They spoke of things Tom and Joe had said, and of things Tom and Joe had done. They tried to learn who was the last to see the two boys. The children who were the last to talk with Tom and Joe felt very important indeed.

One boy who also wished to feel important said, "I had a fight with Tom Sawyer, and he was stronger than I was."

But most of the boys could say that.

The next morning the church bell did not stop as it usually did

after calling the people to church. It continued to ring.

The people from the village gathered. Outside the church they talked, but in the church all was very quiet.

The little church was filled with people. After a long time Aunt Polly entered, followed by Sid and Mary and by the Harper family. All were wearing black clothes. The other people in the church stood up. They remained standing while the two families walked to the front of the church and sat down.

It was quiet again. All prayed, and then a song followed. Now the church leader began to talk of the boys. He told how good they had been. People were sorry to remember that they had not seen the truth earlier when they had thought that these boys were bad. Tears were falling from all eyes.

The sound of the church door, opening slowly, was heard. One pair of eyes, and then another, turned to look. Then all in the church seemed to turn at the same time, and people rose and watched while the three dead boys walked to the front of the church. Tom was first, Joe next, and last came Huck. They had been listening to every word!

Aunt Polly, Mary, and the Harpers put their arms around Tom and Joe. Huck stood alone, not knowing what to do. He started to move away, but Tom stopped him and said:

“Aunt Polly, this is not right. Some person must be glad to see Huck.”

“And some person shall be. I am glad to see him, dear boy!” She put her arms around him also. And now Huck felt more strange than before.

“Sing! And sing your best!” cried the church leader.

And all the people did sing. There had never been such singing in that church. Tom Sawyer, the Pirate, knew that no moment in his life could be prouder than this.