



Tom Tells the Story of Their Escape

SUNDAY AND TWO MORE DAYS HAD PASSED. FEW OF THE MEN CONTINUED their hunt in the cave. Most of the people believed that the children could never be found.

Mrs. Thatcher was very ill. Aunt Polly's hair had changed from gray to white.

Then, in the middle of the night the village bells began to ring. In a moment the streets were filled with people shouting, "They are found! They are found!" All moved toward the river and met the children as they were carried home.

Aunt Polly's happiness was complete. Mrs. Thatcher's happiness would be complete when the news reached her husband. He was yet in the cave, continuing the hunt.

Tom lay on a bed telling the story of his wonderful adventures. He had gone in one direction as far as the length of the string. Then he had tried another opening. Then he had tried a third. He was ready to try another when he saw a distant light. He thought that it was daylight. He dropped the string and ran toward it, and put his head out through a small hole.

And there was the great river on which the boat had brought them to the picnic!

He told how he then returned for Becky. She did not believe him. She told him to let her die. But after a while she went with him. When she saw the daylight, she almost died of joy. He told how he got himself through the hole and then helped her.

They saw some men in a boat, and shouted. At first the men did not believe their wild story. "Because," the men said, "you are five miles south of the door of the cave."

But they believed the children after a while and took them to a house where they were given food and allowed to rest before being taken home.

It was several days before Tom and Becky were strong again.

Tom learned of Huck's sickness and went to visit him. Mrs. Douglas would not let Tom talk about his adventures because Huck was not strong enough to listen. Also, she would not let the boys talk about what had happened at her house on Cardiff Hill. Tom learned about that at home. He heard, also, that "the other man" who had been with Indian Joe had been found in the river. He had drowned while trying to escape.

About two weeks later, Tom visited Becky at home. Judge Thatcher and some friends were there. They asked Tom if he wished to go into the cave again.

Tom said yes.

"Others might wish to go, also," the Judge said. "But I had that door covered with iron. And it is closed. It can't be opened. No person will get lost in that cave again."

"Oh, Judge," Tom said, "Indian Joe is in the cave!"