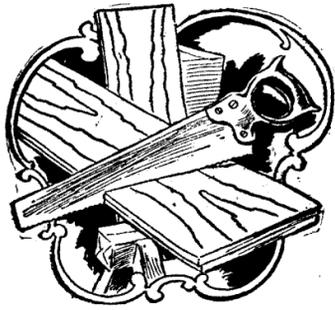


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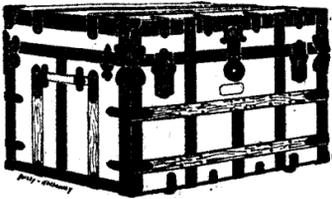
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## HOW TOM SAVED HIS FATHER

"Yes; Toms' been here. Can't you tell he's been here? See the mud on the floor, all the way from one door to the other. Just look at the books, his school books—he has only five and they are in five different places. I never saw such a careless selfish boy."

It was Nellie, the sister, just younger than Tom, who was talking, as she went from place to place, picking up the things Tom had scattered when he came in from school. The little mother had been trying to check her and saying softly: "Wait, Nellie, wait and think of the reasons for Tom's act."

Reasons? There are no reasons, only downright selfishness. What does he care how much work he makes?"

"Tom is thoughtless," said the mother, "and he does not see things as a neat little girl sees them; but he is improving."

There is room for improvement and his change for the better is so slight it needs a magnifying glass to discover it.

"There is a change Nellie. He usually puts his books on the shelf near the window, but to-day he wanted to go to see the football game, and he was late getting home from school. He just threw his books toward the lounge and never waited to see where they landed. But Tom is a brave little fellow and he will do anything for one of us if he only thinks."

"It is just as bad to be thoughtless as downright selfish," said Nellie, as she put the finishing touches to the dainty room.

The next day Nellie and all the family were busy making the house gay with flowers, for father, who had been in California for his health, was expected home. He had been gone nearly a year, but the time had seemed like years instead of months. Everyone was trying to do something to add to the happy welcome home.

"Tom," said Nellie, "there are some beautiful ferns down by the river, just below the railway bridge. I wish we we had some for our dining room. Dad likes ferns as well as flowers."

"I'll get them," said Tom. "I'll bring back all I can carry." Away he ran—whooping like a wild Indian and then calling like a bird, but making as much noise as possible.

"What keeps Tom?" said Nellie, about two hours after Tom had gone for the ferns. "I thought he would be here long ago."

"What keeps father?" said Nellie's mother. "The train is past due I have been listening for the whistle, and although I heard the freight leave the yards I am not sure the passenger train has come in yet."

"I had not noticed the time. I had my eye on the hill over which the hack would come. I intended to meet him at the walls. I had half a mind to slip down to the station, only he does not like to have us meet him there. But it is late mother."

"Is that the hack, Nellie?"

"Yes, it is! It is!" and both mother and Nellie started to meet the loved one. After the greetings were over the father said: "But where is Tom? I've been looking and listening for him."

"Tom went after some ferns to decorate the dining room. He had plenty of time to be back before you came."

"I wonder what detains him?" said the mother. "What was the matter with your train; you were so late?"

"We have great reason to thank God we are all safe. The train was late, true but had it not been for a young boy we would have had a most serious wreck. You remember, there is a down grade just the other side bridge and this bridge has always been called the strongest and safest on the road. It seems you have been having some heavy rains lately and they have injured the foundation on the east side of the river.

"In some way this boy—I do not know who he is, as I did not see him—discovered the damage done by the water. He must have realized that as soon as cars touched the east end, down would go the train, for the weight of the first cars would carry the others over the bridge and down the chasm.

"The car had started on the down grade, and when the boy appeared in middle of the track waving green branches and his coat. He never moved to save himself, only kept jumping up and down like a crazy chap. The engineer told me about it as we drove down by the lower bridge and up this street.

"They had all they could do to stop the train. The engineer said he thought at one time the train would run over the boy. As it was he was so near, the engineer dragged him up into his cab and asked what was the matter. The poor fellow was so excited he could



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only point to the other end and say: 'Water—wash foundation.' The men went ahead and found it was a most dangerous washout. Had it not been for the boy they would not have made any examination here, for this place was considered safe."

"What became of the boy?" asked Nellie, with a queer little look in her eyes.

"When the men started to examine the bridge, he just fainted. A doctor on the train took charge of him. The engineer said the boy gasped out: 'Father—safe, and just fell back in the arms of one of the passengers. We in the last coaches were not permitted to go forward, so we did not see the boy.'"

"There is a carriage just coming here," said Nellie. "And Tom is getting out!

Why"—and away she ran to meet him. Yes, it was Tom, somewhat pale, but trying to appear as if he had done nothing. Tom had saved the train, a large number of passengers—and he had saved father.

The tears were running down Nellie's cheeks as she embraced him and said: "You dear, dear brother—you brave, thoughtful boy!"

Guest (in restaurant)—Bring me a Welsh rarebit, a broiled lobster, bottle of imported ale and a piece of mince pie.

Waiter—Will you please write out that order and sign it, sir?

Guest—What for?

Waiter—As a sort of alibi for the house to show the coroner, sir.—Chicago News.