

How Joe Trusted.

'N. Y. Observer.'

'Who is going to offer himself for a ride to San-ka-do-te's to bring back a sack of potatoes?' asked the missionary mother, turning her face expectantly towards her group of boys.

'O, mother!' exclaimed Tom, 'I can't go! I assure you, I really can't. There's the pasture fence father said I was to fix.'

'Did father say it was to be done to-day, Tom?'

'No, mother,' hesitated Tom; 'but I know he wants it done as soon as I can do it.'

'Well, I think my boy has shown no disposition up to this time to do it speedily. If the fence is to be fixed, then I think the book you have been reading for the last hour or so had better be put up, Tom.'

Tom closed the book with a sheepish look, and went hastily from the room.

'Mr. Morris said he might need me at the store this afternoon,' said Henry, jumping up with sudden alacrity.

His mother smiled as the door closed after him. Then she sighed.

'Why, of course, mother, I'll go!' cried the youngest, Joe, as he ran to her, and threw his arms around her. 'Only, you know, you've always said I was too small for such long errands. But only try me this time, mamma dear, and I'll show you what a smart errand boy I can be.'

'But it is seven miles,' protested his mother.

'I know the way, though, sweetheart mother.'

'But the river, Joe, darling?'

'O, that is shallow now, mother dear. Besides, I'll be ever so careful. Trust me, mother.'

'That mother will, and gladly, too,' my boy. She is, indeed thankful she has one son who doesn't make excuses when errands are to be done.'

With these words she stooped and kissed him, right where the freckles were thickest on his cheek, and after that Joe would have ridden clear across the Kiowa Reservation and back again had she bidden him.

'Heigho! Master Josephus, going after the poor-tatoes, eh?' called Tom quizzingly, as Joe rode out of the stable yard on his pony, Wanda. 'Well, don't try to bring 'em behind you. You aren't yet smart enough for that, let your oldest brother inform you.'

'All right,' said Joe, good-naturedly, 'thank you, Tom.'

Tom stared. Well really, there wasn't so much fun after all teasing Joe. But he made one more effort.

'And look out for the spectre of the Wichita! He's always down upon the Blowing Rock, you know, specially when the shadows grow dark in the swamp.'

This time Joe made no reply and Tom could see that his shaft had hit the mark. He chuckled to himself with satisfaction. Wicked Tom! For poor Joe had one great weakness. This was a fear of ghosts, spirits, hobgoblins and the like.

San-ka-do-te was a Christian Kiowa Indian. He had been converted under the teaching of Joe's father. Since then he had settled down in a permanent home and stopped his roving life on the plains. He showed a strong liking for agriculture, something unusual among the Indians. Consequently he tilled his little farm industriously and had many things to sell when others of the Indians who could have done as well, were going about begging.

San-ka-do-te greeted Joe warmly, for with the old Indian the missionary's little boy was a great favorite.

After the sack had been filled with the

potatoes, he beguiled Joe into the house with the promise of some walnuts and a story.

Now, San-ka-do-te could tell the most marvellous stories, for he had been a great warrior in his day.

When at last Joe came out to mount the pony, the sun was nearly an hour lower than it ought to have been when he started homeward. Some clouds, too, had begun to gather, so that it looked even later than it was.

'I will coax Wanda to walk as fast as she can,' said Joe reassuringly to himself. 'And she can trot a little with the potatoes. I will hold the sack.'

The clouds grew darker and darker. Now the sun was almost hidden. In a little while it was completely blotted out.

'It is going to rain,' said Joe with a little shiver. 'I am sure of it. What shall we do?'

All at once he thought of a wood chopper's cabin not far away.

He had barely time to reach the cabin and coax Wanda through the doorway, when the rain began to fall. Soon it came down in torrents.

It poured for fully a half hour, then the storm ceased as suddenly as it had come. The sun even came out, but did not shine with much strength, it was now low in the west.

'I'm afraid I'll not reach home before night,' said Joe anxiously, as he mounted Wanda again and rode off.

The shadows were lying long and dark within as Joe neared the edge of the swamp. One thing comforted him. He knew it was not very far through it to the bank of the river. But suddenly he thought of what Tom had said about the spectre. He was nearing the rock known as the Blowing Rock, because of the noises like the wind that came from it, the voice of the spectre, many said. Would the spectre be abroad at this hour? Tom had said it came when the shadows gathered. Did he know? O, what should he do if he saw it? Involuntarily he shut his eyes.

All at once he opened his eyes at a sound that came to him. Even the spectre was for the time forgotten. It was the noise made by the river as it rushed onward. It had been very shallow as he came over, not much more than to Wanda's knees. But what was it now? The rain had been long and hard, and Joe knew how easily the streams of the territory filled up after a rain like this.

As Joe came to the bank, he could see in the gray light the foam on the water as it went speeding along.

He stood on the bank a moment, troubled and perplexed, not knowing what to do.

'But I must go home,' he said at length. 'Mother will be so uneasy.'

He urged the pony down the bank and into the stream. She seemed unwilling. Wanda knew better than Joe. She had had experiences with this same Wichita before.

The little brown pony, though she took the water reluctantly, yet, nevertheless, when once she was in, started sturdily for the opposite shore. Joe's heart began to beat faster and faster as he saw the water climbing higher and higher up Wanda's legs until it was almost on a line with the white spot on her breast. Then Wanda began to sway. What could be the matter? There seemed to be something pulling at her feet, trying to pull them from under her. And just then, to Joe's dismay, he felt the sack of potatoes slipping. He made a clutch at it to steady it, lost his balance, and went plunging headlong into the water, and with him the potatoes.

Joe was twelve years old, but he did not know how to swim. He had always been a timid child, and afraid to learn. But sometime and somewhere he had heard Tom say, 'If ever you fall into the water, youngster, and don't know how to swim, don't fight with your hands, and get them above water. You'll drown then sure enough. Keep them under and paddle, yes, paddle like a duck.'

He thought of Tom and of what he had told him, and tried to obey, although he was so frightened. Naughty, teasing Tom! If Joe drowned surely he would be sorry for all he had said that very day. But Joe was not going to drown. Somehow, with all his fright,—this because the water was so cold and running so fast—the fear of drowning did not come to him. It couldn't be that he was going to die. He wouldn't believe it. Surely God didn't mean that he should. No; he would trust him. Only the summer before, at one of his father's meetings, Joe had given his heart to God.

'Father, what is it to be a Christian?' Joe had asked.

'It is to love and trust, my son,' had been the reply. 'You love God you say, now trust him.'

And from that day to this Joe had trusted.

He was trusting now, though he was in the midst of that rushing stream of water, and every moment it seemed he must go down.

'Dear God, dear Father in heaven,' prayed Joe, 'I am in the river. I can't swim and my feet don't touch the bottom. But you won't let me drown, I know. Dear God, I trust in you.'

Even as the words were uttered he felt something strike his face. Forgetting his brother's warning, he threw up his hand to push it away. His fingers closed about the branches of a tree that grew low down over the water. Quickly he caught hold, then with the other hand, too. He let his fingers slip along slowly, carefully, creeping nearer the main part of the tree. All this time the water was seeking to bear him away, but he clung manfully to the limb.

The minutes passed. They seemed like hours to poor Joe. Could he hold on much longer? He would try. Surely God would save him. He had trusted; he was trusting then, even though the water rushed about him, and every moment it seemed he must let go his hold.

'Joe, Joe,' called a voice from the bank almost above him.

'O, father,' cried Joe in response, this time to an earthly parent, who, alarmed by the rain storm and his prolonged absence, had come in search of him. Meeting the pony not far from the bank, he had felt with a sinking heart what might be the fate of his son.

Fortunately, Joe had been washed across the river to the very bank beyond which home lay, and there he had clung bravely to the branches of the tree until his father came.

'I knew you would come, father,' he said as he lay white and exhausted in his father's arms; 'I knew God would send you or some one for I trusted.'

A. M. BARNES.

It is supposed that a man knowing the punishment to be annexed to a particular crime, will avoid it; but I believe nine-tenths of the crimes of violence committed throughout England originate in public-houses, and are committed under circumstances which exclude all reflection.—Justice Keating (1875).