

ROYALTY ON THE MISSISSIPPI:

AS CHRONICLED BY HUCKLEBERRY FINN.

BY MARK TWAIN.

(CONTINUED.)

Then I come back and set down again, and says:

"Don't you holler. Just set still, and take it like a man. I got to tell the truth, and you want to brace up, Miss Mary, because it's a bad kind, and going to be hard to take, but there ain't no help for it. These uncles of yours ain't no uncles at all; they're a couple of frauds—regular dead-beats. There, now we're over the worst of it—you can stand the rest middling easy."

It jolted her up like everything, of course; but I was over the shore water now, so I went right along, her eyes a-blazing higher and higher all the time, and told her every blame thing, from where we first struck that young fool going up the steamboat, clear through to where she flung herself onto the king's breast at the front door and he kissed her sixteen or seventeen times. And then up she jumps, with her face as fire like sunset, and says:

"The brute! Come—don't waste a minute—not a second—we'll have them tarred and feathered, and flung in the river!"

Says I:

"Cert'ly. But do you mean before you go to Mr. Lothrop's, or—"

"Oh," she says, "what am I thinking about!" she says, and set right down again. "Don't mind what I said—please don't—you won't, now, will you?"—laying her silky hand on mine in that kind of a way that I said I would die first. "I never thought, I was so stirred up," she says. "Now go on, and I won't do so any more. You tell me what to do, and whatever you say, I'll do it."

"Well," I says, "it's a rough gang, them frauds, and I'm fixed so I got to travel with them a while longer, whether I want to or not—I druther not tell you why—and if you was to blow on them this town would get me out of their claws, and I'd be all right; but there'd be another person that you don't know about who'd be in big trouble. Well, we got to save him, hain't we? Of course. Well, then, we won't blow on them."

Saying them words put a good idea in my head. I see how may be I could get me and Jim rid of the frauds; get them jailed here, and then leave. But I didn't want to run the raft in daytime, without anybody to answer questions but me; so I didn't want the plan to begin working till pretty late to-night, I says:

"Miss Mary Jane, I'll tell you what we'll do—and you won't have to stay at Mr. Lothrop's so long, nuther. How fur is it?"

"A little short of four miles—right out in the country, back here."

"Well, that'll answer. Now you go along out there, and lay low till nine or half-past to-night, and then get them to fetch you home again—tell them you've thought of something. If you get here before eleven, put a candle in this window, and if I don't turn up, wait till eleven; and then if I don't turn up, it means I'm gone, and out of the way, and safe. Then you come out and spread the news around, and get these beats jailed."

"Good," she says. "I'll do it."

"And if it just happens so that I don't get away, but get took up along with them, you must up and say I told you the whole thing beforehand, and you must stand by me all you can."

"Stand by you! indeed I will. They shan't touch a hair of your head!" she says.

"If I get away, I shan't be here," I says, "to prove these rascals ain't your uncles, and I couldn't do it if I was here. I could swear that they was beats and bums, that's all; though that's worth something. Well, there's others can do that better than what I can—and they're people that ain't going to be doubted as quick as I'd be. I'll tell you how to find them. Gimme a pencil and a piece of paper. There—*Royal, Nonesuch, Brickville*." Put it away, and don't lose it. When the court wants to find out something about these two, let them send up to Brickville and say they've got the men that played the *'Royal Nonesuch'*, and ask for some witnesses. Why, you'll have that entire town down here before you can hardly wink, Miss Mary; and they'll come a-biling, too."

I judged we had got everything fixed about right now; so I says:

"Just let the auction go right along, and don't worry. Nobody don't have to pay for the things they buy till a whole day after the auction, on accounts of the short notice, and they ain't going out of this till they get that money; and the way we've fixed it, the sale ain't going to count, and they ain't going to get no money. It's just like the way it was with the niggers—it war'n't no sale, and the niggers will be back before long. Why, the can't collect the money for the niggers yet—they're in the worst kind of a fix, Miss Mary."

"Well," she says, "I'll run down to breakfast now, and then I'll start straight for Mr. Lothrop's."

"Decid, that ain't the ticket, Miss Mary Jane," I says, "by no manner of means; go before breakfast. Do you reckon you can go and face your uncles, when they come to kiss you good-morning, and never—"

"There, there, don't! Yes, I'll go before breakfast—I'll be glad to. And leave my sisters with them!"

"Yes—never mind about them. They've got to stand it yet awhile. They might suspicion something if all of you was to go. I don't want you to go, them, nor your sisters, nor nobody in town. If a neighbor was to ask how lay you, unless this morning, your face would tell something. No; you go right along, Miss Mary Jane, and I'll fix it with all of them. I'll tell Miss Susan to give your love to your uncles and say you've went away for a few hours for to get a little rest and change, or to see a friend, and you'll be back to-night or early in the morning."

"Gone to see a friend is all right, but I won't have love given to them."

"Well, then, it shan't be." It was well enough to tell her so. Then I says: "There's one more thing—that bag of money."

"Well, they've got that; and it makes me feel pretty silly to think how they got it."

"No, you're out there. They hain't got it."

"Why, who's got it?"

"I wished I knowed, but I don't. I had it, because I stole it from them; and I stole it to give to you; and I know where I hid it, but I'm afraid it ain't there no more. I'm awful sorry, Miss Mary Jane, I'm just as sorry as I can be; but I done the best I could; I did honest. I come nigh getting caught, and I had to shove it into the first place I come to, and run—and it war'n't a good place."

"Oh, stop blaming yourself—it's too bad to do it, and I won't allow it; you couldn't help it—it war'n't your fault. Where did you hide it?"

"I didn't want to set her to thinking about her trouble again, so for a minute I didn't say nothing—then I says:

"I'd rather not tell you where I put it, Miss Mary Jane, if you don't mind setting me off; but I'll write it for you on a piece of paper, and you can read it along the road to Mr. Lothrop's, if you want to. Do you reckon that'll do?"

"Oh, yes."

So I wrote: "I put it in the coffin. It was in there when you was crying there, away in the night. I was behind the door, and I was mighty sorry for you, Miss Mary Jane."

It made my eyes water a little to remember her crying there all by herself in the night, and them devils laying there right under her own roof, shamming her and robbing her; and when I folded it up and give it to her, I see the water come into her eyes, too; and she shook me by the hand, hard, and says:

"Good-by. I'm going to do everything just as you've told me; and if I don't ever see you again, I shan't ever forget you, and I'll think of you many and many a time, and I'll pray for you, too!"—and she was gone.

Pray for me! I reckoned if she knowed me she'd take a job that was more nearer her size. But I bet she done it, just the same—she was just that kind. She had the grit to pray for Judas, if she took the notion—there war'n't no back-down to her, I judge. You may say what you want to, but in my opinion she had more sand in her than any girl I ever see; in my opinion she was just full of sand. It sounds like flattery, but it

ain't no flattery. And when it comes to beauty—and goodness, too—she lays over them all. I hain't ever seen her since that time that I see her go out of that door; no, I hain't ever seen her since, but I reckon I've thought of her a many and a many a million times, and of her saying she would pray for me; and if ever I'd thought it would do any good for me to pray for her, blamed if I wouldn't 'a' done it or bust.

Well, Miss Mary Jane she lit out the back way, I reckon; because nobody see her go. When I struck Susan and the hare lip I says: "What's the name of them people over on t'other side of the river that you all goes to see sometimes?"

They says: "There's several; but it's the Proctors mainly."

"That's the name," I says; "I most forgot it. Well, Miss Mary Jane she told me to tell you she's gone over there in a dreadful hurry—one of them sick."

"Which one?"

"I don't know; leastways I kinder forgot; but I think it's—"

"Sakes alive, I hope it ain't Hanner?"

"I'm sorry to say it," I says, "but Hanner's the very one."

"Aly goodness—and she so well only last week! Is she took bad?"

"It ain't no name for it. They set up with her all night, Miss Mary Jane said, and they don't think she'll last many hours."

"Only think of that, now! What's the matter with her?"

I couldn't think of anything reasonable, right off that way, so I says:

"Mumps."

"Mumps your granny! They don't set up with people that's got the mumps."

"They don't, don't they? You better bet they do with these mumps. These mumps is different. It's a new kind, Miss Mary Jane said."

"How's it a new kind?"

"Because it's mixed up with other things."

"What other things?"

"Well, measles, and whooping-cough and erysipelas, and consumption, and yaller janders, and brain fever, and I don't know what all."

"My land! And they call it the mumps?"

"That's what Miss Mary Jane said."

"Well, what in the nation do they call it the mumps for?"

"Why, because it is the mumps. That's what it starts with."

"Well, ther' ain't no sense in it. A body might stomp his toe, and take pison, and fall down the well, and break his neck, and bust his brains out, and somebody come along and ask what killed him, and some numskull up and say, 'Why, he stumped his toe.' Would ther' be any sense in that? No. And ther' ain't no sense in this, nuther. Is it ketching?"

"Is it ketching? Why, how you talk. Is a narrow ketching?—in the dark?"

"Well, it's awful, I think," says the hare lip: "I'll go to Uncle Harvey and—"

"Oh, yes," I says, "I would. Of course I would. I wouldn't lose no time."

"Well, why wouldn't you?"

"Just look at it a minute, and may be you can see. Hain't your uncles obleeged to get along home to England as fast as they can? And do you reckon they'd be mean enough to go off and leave you to go all that journey by yourselves? You know they'll wait for you. So fur, so good. Your uncle Harvey's a preacher, ain't he? Very well, then; is a preacher going to deceive a steamboat clerk—is he going to deceive a ship clerk—so as to get them to let Miss Mary Jane go aboard? Now you know he ain't."

What will he do, then? Why, he'll say, 'It's a great pity, but my church matters has got to get along the best way they can; for my niece has been exposed to the dreadful pluriusnum mumps, and so it's my bounden duty to set down here and wait the three months it takes to show on her if she's got it.' But never mind, if you think it's best to tell your uncle Harvey—"

"Shucks, and stay fooling around here, when we could all be having good times in England, whilst we was waiting to find out whether Mary Jane's got it or not? Why, you talk like a muggins."

"Well, anyway, may be you better tell some of the neighbors."

"Listen at that, now. You do beat all for nature's stupidity. Can't you see that they'd go and tell? Ther' ain't no way but just to not tell anybody at all."

"Well, may be you're right—yes, I judge you are right."

"But I reckon we out to tell Unc'

Harvey she's gone out awhile, anyway, so he won't be uneasy about her!"

"Yes, Miss Mary Jane she wanted you to do that. She says, 'Tell them to give Uncle Harvey and William my love and a kiss, and say I've run over the river to see Mr. — Mr. — what is the name of that rich family your uncle Peter used to think so much of?—I mean the one that—'"

"Why, you must mean the Apthorpes, ain't it?"

"Of course. Bother them kind of names! a body can't ever seem to remember them, half the time, somehow. Yes, she said, say she has run over for to ask the Apthorpes to be sure and come to the auction and buy this house, because she allowed her uncle Peter would rather they had it than anybody else; and she's going to stick to them till they say they'll come, and then, if she ain't too tired, she's coming home; and if she is, she'll be home in the morning, anyway. She said, don't say nothing about the Proctors, but only about the Apthorpes—which'll be perfectly true, because she is going there to speak about their buying the house; I know it, because she told me so herself."

"All right," they said, and cleared out to lay for their uncles, and give them the love and the kisses, and tell them the message.

Everything was all right now. The girls wouldn't say nothing because they wanted to go to England; and the king and the duke would rather Mary Jane was off working for the auction than around in reach of Dr. Robinson. I felt very good. I judged I had done it pretty neat; I reckoned Tom Sawyer couldn't 'a' done it no neater himself. Of course he would 'a' throwed more style into it; but I can't do that very handy, not being brung up to it.

Well, they held the auction in the public square, along towards the end of the afternoon, and it strung along, and strung along; and the old man he was on hand and looking his level pisonest, up there alongside of the auctioneer, and chipping in a little Scripture now and then, or a little goody-goody saying of some kind; and the duke he was around goo-gooing for sympathy all he knowed how, and just spreading himself generally.

But by and by the thing dragged through, and everything was sold—everything but a little old trifling lot in the graveyard; so they'd got to work that off. I never see such a graft as the king was for wanting to swallow everything. Well, whilst they was at it, a steamboat landed, and in about two minutes up comes a crowd a-whooping and yelling and laughing and carrying on.

They was fetching a very nice looking old gentleman along, and a nice-looking younger one, with his right arm in a sling. And my souls how the people yelled, and laughed, and kept it up!—*February Century*.

The Transient Young Man.

"Girls," says an esteemed contemporary, "beware of the transient young man. He is slick tongued perhaps and well dressed, but one good farmer boy or mechanic whom you know thoroughly and don't know any serious ill about is worth a dozen of him." This is sound advice. The transient young man is full of awful possibilities. Take him in and you may entertain an angel unaware, but there is also a chance that he will turn out to have escaped from somewhere. It is safest, especially if he threatens to stay, to make him feel the necessity of thoroughly accounting for himself. Make him explain why he did not stay at home, and see if he did not leave his last place because he was found out. In the eyes of the community in which he has lived from birth a young frog is more or less of a tad pole. His friends are slow to recognize that he has lost his tail and has two hind legs and a bass voice. But the stranger whose first appearance is made in all the glory of the adult batrachian has no traditions to outgrow. No one ever saw him with a tail, and few people believe that he ever had one. He has that advantage over the native. It is not a fair one, and he should not be allowed to profit by it.

The responsibilities of life are gauged not by what we are but by what we may become. The man who has ventured only to the limits of his conscious force has only reached the threshold of possible attainments.