



E d u c a t i n g H u c k

OU DON'T KNOW ABOUT ME UNLESS YOU HAVE read a book by the name of *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*. That book was written by Mark Twain, and he holds the truths mainly. Not all parts of the story are true, but most of it is. I don't know anyone who tells the truth all the time, except perhaps Aunt Polly or the Widow Douglas or Tom Sawyer's sister, Mary. These people are written about in *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*.

That book ends like this: Tom and I find money that was stolen and we are allowed to keep it. We become rich. We each have 6,000 dollars in gold. Judge Thatcher put the money in a bank for us, and we can have a dollar a day. That is more money than a person can know how to spend.

The Widow Douglas took me into her home to live, but I did not enjoy living in a nice house. I put on my old clothes and ran away and was free and happy, but Tom Sawyer found me and said that if I wanted to join his club and be friends, I would have to return to live with the widow. For this reason, I returned to live with her.

The widow cried over me and gave me new clothes to wear, but I hated those new clothes. I felt too warm in them and I could not move my arms and legs freely. When supper was being served, the widow always rang a bell, and I had to come quickly. I was happier when I could eat whenever I chose to, though this meant I had to make meals of the bits of food other people had thrown away.

When I asked permission to smoke, the widow said, "No." She thought that smoking was a dirty habit and told me that I must not smoke.

Her sister, Miss Watson, a woman who had never married and who had no children of her own, came to live with her. She thought that she could change me and make me a better person by educating me and teaching me to spell. She worked with me for an hour until the widow made her stop. Miss Watson complained about everything I did.

"Don't put your feet up there, Huckleberry. Sit straight in your chair. Why can't you improve the way you act? Don't be so disrespectful to those who are trying to correct you."

Then, when she told me about hell and said that it was where the bad people go when they die, I said that I wished that I was there already. She got angry when I said that, but I didn't intend to make her angry. All I wanted was a change; I wanted to go somewhere, anywhere; I didn't care where that was. Hell had to be better than the life that I was forced to live.

Miss Watson said that it was sinful to talk that way. She lived in a way that would allow her to go to heaven when she died. Well, I could see no advantage in going to heaven if she was going to be there, so I decided that I wouldn't try for it. But I never said so because that would only make more trouble.

Miss Watson told me more and more about heaven and how all

the good people were going there. They would do nothing all day but sing and sing forever. I didn't think much of such a place, but I didn't say so. I asked her if she thought Tom Sawyer would go there, and she said, "No! Never!" I was glad to hear that because I wanted to be where Tom Sawyer was going to be. Miss Watson continued to complain about my behavior, which made me feel unhappy and lonely. In the evening, before we went to sleep, she said prayers for me. I went to my room and sat in a chair and tried to think of something cheerful, but I couldn't. I felt so lonely that I wished I was dead. The stars were shining, and the wind moving the trees sounded as though it was whispering to me. I couldn't understand what the wind was saying.

Far away in the trees I heard the kind of sound that a **ghost** makes when it wants to tell about something but can't make itself understood. I became so sad and frightened that I wished that I had some company. Then a small bug walked on my hand; I shook it off. The bug fell against my **candle** and burned completely. I didn't need anyone to tell me that this was a bad sign which would bring me bad luck.

To try to change my luck, I stood up and turned around three times and made a cross on my chest each time. Then I tied a thread around some of my hair. But I didn't really think that it would change my luck. I didn't know of any way to change the bad luck that comes from killing a small bug.

I sat down again feeling very frightened. The house was very quiet. Everyone was asleep. Far away I heard a clock go *boom—boom—boom—* 12 times—midnight. Then all was quiet again. Soon I heard a quiet "Me-yow! Me-yow!" outside my window. I answered, "Me-yow! Me-yow!" as quietly as I could. Then I climbed out of my window onto the porch roof. From the roof I jumped to the ground and walked slowly among the trees. There was Tom Sawyer waiting for me.