



H u c k S t e a l s t h e M o n e y

WHEN THE PEOPLE HAD LEFT, THE KING ASKED MARY JANE IF THERE was room for us to sleep in her house. She said that she had a spare room for Uncle William, a very small room that I could use, and that she would be happy for Uncle Harvey to sleep in her room. She would move into the room that her sisters shared.

We went upstairs with her and she showed us the rooms. She told the king that she would remove her dresses that were hanging along the wall of the room which he would use; but he told her to leave them.

At supper that evening, I had to wait on the king and the duke and serve them their food. Afterward, Joanna and I ate our own supper in the kitchen and had a nice long talk. I liked her very much and began to feel very guilty and mean when I remembered how I was helping the duke and the king steal her money. I decided that I would take the money away from the king and give it to the three girls.

I went to bed early so that I could have time to think of a plan for getting the money. I wanted to take the money in such a manner that the king would never suspect me. I planned to steal the money and hide it. Later when we were far down the river, I would write Mary Jane a

letter and tell her where the money was hidden.

But where was the money? I knew that I had to search the king's and the duke's rooms. I entered the king's room, but it was too dark to see much. I began feeling around the room, when suddenly I heard the sound of feet in the hall. I quickly hid behind the dresses that were hanging on the wall. The king and the duke came into the room and closed the door. The first thing that the duke did was look under the bed. I was glad that I had not chosen to hide there.

"What did you want to tell me?" asked the king. "Talk quickly. We should be downstairs with the others."

"I don't feel comfortable. I keep worrying about that doctor. I think that we should take the 6,000 dollars and leave tonight—when everyone is asleep."

This talk frightened me. Would I be able to steal the money before they left?

"What! And not sell the rest of the property? We would be fools to leave before we have gotten all the money that we can out of this. The house and the tannery must be worth 9,000 dollars."

The duke complained about this plan and argued that the bag of gold was enough. He didn't want to take *everything* that the three girls had.

"Don't talk that way," said the king. "We won't be taking anything more from them than the 6,000 dollars. The people who buy the property will be the ones to suffer. As soon as it's discovered that we didn't really own the property, the sale will be found to be unlawful and the girls will get their property returned. We'll be far away with the money and the girls will be happy here with their property. They won't suffer at all."

The king continued to talk like this until the duke finally agreed to stay for the funeral and to sell the property. The duke said that he was uncomfortable about the doctor, though.

"Forget the doctor," said the king. "We have all the fools in this town on our side, and that's most of the people."

They started to leave the room, when the duke said, "I don't think

that we've hidden the money in a good place."

"What's wrong with where the money is hidden?"

"Mary Jane may send her black slave into this room to get some dresses for her. Do you think a slave can find a bag of money and not borrow some of it?"

"You're correct this time, duke." And the king began looking among the dresses only a few feet away from where I was hidden. I stood absolutely still—I didn't move a muscle. I wondered what they would have done to me if they had discovered me. But the king found the bag of gold before he found me. He pushed the bag under the blankets of his bed. Then they left the room.

As soon as I heard the sound of their feet on the stairs, I came out of my hiding place, took the bag of gold, and returned to my own small room. I knew that I would have to think of a good place to hide the gold, but where? If I hid it inside the house, they would surely search everywhere and find it, once they realized that it was no longer in the king's bed.

I stayed awake until I heard the king and the duke come upstairs. I waited to see if the king would notice that the gold was gone, but I heard nothing. I waited in my room until the house was completely quiet, then I walked slowly and quietly down the stairs.