



## Going to Sunday School

THE SUN ROSE UPON A QUIET WORLD AND LOOKED WARMLY DOWN UPON the peaceful village. The family began the day by praying together.

Then Tom did his Sunday studying. He was trying to learn some words from the **Bible**. Sid had already finished his studying, but Tom was slow. His mind was busy with other things.

Tom was learning five **verses**. Some verses are long and some are short. Tom had found five short verses. Aunt Polly's daughter, Mary, helped him, and after a time, he could say the verses without looking at the book.

Mary gave him a knife for studying so well. It was not a good knife, but it was a knife. Tom was deeply delighted.

Then Mary helped him to dress in his Sunday clothes. He hoped that she would forget his shoes. But she did not.

When they were ready, the three children went to Sunday school.

With his whole heart, Tom wished not to go. Mary and Sid enjoyed going.

At the church door Tom stopped to speak to a friend. "Billy, do you have a yellow **ticket**?"

“Yes.”

“Will you sell it to me?”

“What will you pay for it?”

Tom offered enough, and received the ticket. Then Tom stopped other boys, and bought more tickets, some red and some blue. He was busy with this buying for about ten minutes. Then he went into the church.

These tickets were given for learning the Bible verses. A blue ticket was given for two verses. A red ticket was equal to ten blue tickets. A yellow ticket was equal to ten red tickets. And for ten yellow tickets, for learning two thousand verses, the Sunday school teacher gave the student a Bible.

It was a wonderful day when a boy or a girl received one of these Bibles. Perhaps Tom did not want the Bible. But he did want the wonderful experience of receiving it.

“Now, children,” the teacher said, “sit up as straight as possible, and listen. That is what good little boys and girls should do.”

While the teacher was talking, three gentlemen and a lady entered the church. The lady was leading a child. When Tom saw this small girl, waves of happiness went over him. He began hitting other boys, pulling their hair, doing everything to force the new girl to look at him and smile. He was quickly forgetting the water the woman threw from her window the night before.

The gentlemen and the lady went to the front of the church and sat down there. Then the teacher told who they were. One gentleman was Mr. Thatcher, who lived in the village. All knew him. But one was his brother, the great Judge Thatcher. He had traveled, he had seen the world, he came from a large town twelve miles away.

The teacher wished that on this day he could give some boy or girl a Bible. He would have been proud to do that. The famous Judge Thatcher would know, then, that this was a fine Sunday school. But no child had enough yellow tickets.

At this moment, when hope was dead, Tom Sawyer came forward. He had nine yellow tickets, nine red tickets, and ten blue tickets. It was

like a storm coming from a clear sky. The teacher had not expected Tom to gather so many tickets in ten years, but here were the tickets.

It was the surprise of the year. The teacher knew that it was strange. He could not understand how it had happened. He did not believe that Tom had learned two thousand verses. He did not believe that Tom had learned twelve verses.

The other boys watched Tom. All wished that they, too, had enough tickets for a Bible. Some boys suffered more deeply, because they had sold Tom their tickets. They were able to understand what had happened. Tom had become rich by letting other boys whitewash the fence. He had been rich enough to buy their tickets. And now anger filled them. They saw clearly what fools they had been.

Tom stood in a place of honor beside the Judge.

The Judge put his hand on Tom's head and called him a fine little man. Tom could not speak. His breath would not come. His heart was shaking. This was partly because the Judge was a great man, but it was chiefly because the Judge was *her* father.

The Judge asked his name.

"Tom."

"Is that all of it?"

"Thomas."

"But you have more, perhaps? Another name?"

"Tell the gentleman your other name, Thomas," said the teacher.

"Thomas Sawyer."

"That is a good boy. You are a fine, manly little fellow. Two thousand verses is a very, very great many. And you never can be sorry that you learned them. Learning makes great men and good men. You will be a great man and a good man some day, Thomas. Then you will remember this day. Then you will be glad that you went to Sunday school. Now, Thomas, tell me and this lady some of what you have learned in your Bible verses. We are proud of little boys who learn. Now, you know the names of the twelve great followers of Jesus Christ. Tell us the names of the first two."

Tom's face became red and he looked down at his feet.

The teacher knew that Tom could not answer. But he felt that he must speak. He said: "Answer the gentleman, Thomas. Do not be afraid."

Tom said nothing.

"Surely you will tell *me*," said the lady. "The names of the first two followers of Jesus Christ were—"

Tom remembered two names from the Bible. He did not remember who the people were, or what they had done. But the two names were always together. He shouted them now:

"DAVID AND GOLIATH!"

But David and Goliath had not been among the twelve great followers of Jesus Christ. Their story was in a different part of the Bible. David was a boy and Goliath was a man of very great size and strength. They were enemies. And David had killed Goliath.

Let us be kind enough to look away from the rest of this scene of Tom Sawyer in Sunday school.