

Chapter 26

Summary:

The king, the duke and Huck are settled comfortably by Peter Wilks's daughter Mary Jane in the house. The following day Huck is questioned by Joanna, the Wilks daughter with hare -lip, regarding the English King, the Church and the manner in which the servants were treated in England. Huck makes silly observations and he is accused of lying. However, he swears that he is telling the truth. Mary Jane and Sarah trust him and are very kind to him. Joanna apologizes to him. Huck feels guilty that he is helping the king and the duke in robbing these girls. Huck is deeply touched by the manner in which Joanna apologizes to him. He says: 'She done it so beautiful it was good to hear; and I wished I could tell her a thousand lies, so she could do it again.'

He further says: ' And when she got through they all jest laid theirselves out to make me feel at home and know I was amongst friends. I felt so ornery and low down and mean that I says to myself, my mind's made up; I'll hive that money for them or bust.' He decides to steal the 6000 dollars in gold coins from the king and the duke in order to return it to the Wilks's daughters. That night he manages to discover where the money has been hidden and steals it. In the process while he was hiding, Huck overhears the king tell the duke that they would sell the Wilks property and take the money. However, once they leave it will be revealed that they were not Peter Wilks's brothers and had no claim to the property. As a result the sale will become null and void and the daughters will get back their property.

Critical points:

1. We have another example of Huck's penchant for telling lies, and the difficult situation in which he lands up when he gets confused and is not able to carry on the pretence. His lying contrasts sharply with the fraud practiced by the king and the duke. Huck's lying is aimed at saving himself, whereas the two rogues lie to fool and cheat others.
2. This chapter marks a development in Huck's moral character. He responds to kindness and trust and feels morally bound to protect the Wilks's daughters from being robbed.

Chapter 27

Summary:

Huck wants to hide the bag of gold coins outside the house. Late in the night he sneaks downstairs and reaches the parlour where Peter Wilks's coffin is kept. Since the door is locked and he hears someone coming, Huck hides the gold coins in the coffin. However, he is unable to retrieve the bag from the coffin since very soon it is daylight and the house is full of people. The funeral proceeds, and Huck is not certain whether the bag is still in the coffin or not. The funeral proceedings are instances of black

humour, especially in the manner in which the undertaker is described, and the interruption caused by a row created by a dog which had caught a rat.

‘When the place was packed full the undertaker he slid around in his black gloves with his softy soothing ways, putting on the last touches, and getting people and things all ship-shape and comfortable, and making no more sound than a cat. He never spoke; he moved people around, he squeezed in late ones, he opened up passageways, and done it with nods and signs with his hands. Then he took his place over against the wall. He was the softest, glidingest, stealthiest man I ever see;.....

.....Then the Reverend Hobson opened up, slow and solemn, and begun to talk; and straight off the most outrageous row busted out in the cellar a body ever heard; it was only a dog, but he made the most powerful racket, and he kept it up right along; the parson he had to stand there over the coffin, and wait - - you couldn’t hear yourself think.....

.....Then in around two seconds we heard a whack, and the dog he finished up with a most amazing howl or two, and then everything was dead still, and the parson began his solemn talk where he had left off. In a minute or two here comes this undertaker’s back and shoulder’s back and shoulders gliding along the wall again; and so he glided and glided around three sides of the room, and then rose up, and shaded his mouth with his hand, and stretched his neck out towards the preacher, over the people’s heads, and says, in a kind of a coarse whisper, “He *had a rat!*” Then he dropped down and glided along the wall again to his place. You could see there was a great satisfaction to the people, because naturally they wanted to know. A little thing like that don’t cost nothing, and it’s just the little things that makes a man to be looked up to and liked. There warn’t no more popular man in town than what that undertaker was.’

After the funeral the king announced that since he had to go back to England very soon, he will settle the estate immediately and return along with the girls. The Wilks daughters accept the sale. However, the con men discover that the bag of gold had disappeared. Huck tells them that the niggers had entered the room. The king jumps to the conclusion that the gold was stolen by them.

Critical points:

1. Twain describes the funeral ceremony in humorous manner, and the description turns into a burlesque when the solemnity of the occasion is undercut by the dog and the rat episode. The undertaker’s description, the curiosity of the people in the midst of the grave occasion, and the satisfaction of this curiosity by mention of the rat – all contribute to the black humour. It also satirizes the manners and morals of the American society of the time.

Chapter 28

Summary

What Mary Jane finds very difficult to accept was breaking up a slave family and selling them to different traders. The following day was the auction. Since the daughters were heartbroken about the slave family, Huck tried to comfort them and in the process reveals to Mary Jane the plan of the fraudsters. Before telling the truth he elicits a promise from her that she would stay with her neighbours for a few days. Mary Jane wants to punish the two men but Huck tells her, "I'd be all right; but there'd be another person that you don't know about who'd be in big trouble". He makes a plan so that he along with Jim would be able to escape and the two fraudsters would be caught. He gives information to her in a note about where he had hid the bag of gold coins. Huck is tearful while writing that note as he remembers her crying near her father's coffin, while the two confidence tricksters were planning to rob her while enjoying her hospitality. Mary Jane has tears in eyes when she reads the note and tells Huck that she will pray for him. Huck is taken aback, and deeply affected, to the extent that he is ready to pray if it was for Mary Jane.

' 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 Judus if she took the notion –there warn't no back-down to her, I judge. You may say what you want to, but in my opinion she was full of sand. It sounds like flattery. And when it comes to beauty – and goodness, too – she lays over them all. 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 a thought it would do any good for me to pray for *her*, blamed if I wouldn't a done it or bust.'

The chapter has another instance of Huck lying to Joanna and getting confused. He tells her that she had gone to visit a neighbor who had a contagious disease. However, he convinces the other two daughters not to inform their uncles (the king and the duke) about why Mary Jane had gone.

The auction is held and practically everything is sold. At the end of the chapter two men arrive claiming to be Peter Wilks's brothers.

Critical points:

1. Through Mary Jane's sorrow for the slave family, this chapter underlines the close familial bonds they share, and this runs parallel to Jim's attachment to his family revealed in his declaration that once he is free he will buy them back. Huck gains awareness of this.
2. This chapter stands in contrast to the black humour of the previous chapter. It records the valuable lessons in humanity learned by Huck. Through Mary Jane's tearful response to separation of the slave family, he realizes the value of compassion and empathy. In earlier instances and at other places, he was not affected by the tricks the

two men played, especially at Bricksville, because those places were shown to be devoid of moral value. Huck experiences transformation and is ready to help the daughters because he is profoundly influenced by their kindness and their sense of integrity and trust. Huck is also drawn towards the act of praying through Mary Jane's example. This can be counterpointed with his earlier rejection of Miss Watson and Widow Douglass's views on praying.

3. This chapter also reiterates his loyalty towards Jim and concern for his safety.

Chapter 29

Summary:

The confusion because of the two sets of brothers is hilarious and exposes the capacity for deceit and deception in the two con men. The newly arrived old man appears to be genuine, and says that by mistake their baggage was left behind, and they will be able to prove their identity once they retrieve it. The crowd considers the king and the duke as the true brothers of Peter Wilks. However, another new arrival claims that he had seen the king in a canoe at Pint where he stays. He also recognizes Huck, who had been seen with the king. In an attempt to settle the dispute the two sets of brothers are confronted with each other and are questioned and investigated. Huck is also closely questioned and it is stated, ironically, that he is lying but does not know how to lie. When the king is asked about the money he confesses that it has been stolen.

The older gentleman says that there was a tattoo on Peter Wilks's chest. The king claims it is a small blue arrow while the older gentleman says it is the letters 'P' and 'B'. In order to arrive at the truth it is decided that the body would be exhumed. When the coffin is opened the bag of gold was found lying on the chest of the dead man.

In the excitement and confusion Huck manages to escape and reach the raft. He is overjoyed that he has managed to get rid of the king and the duke, but is soon almost in tears when he discovers the two men coming towards the raft.

Critical points:

1. The investigation of two sets of men claiming to be Peter Wilks's provides humour and builds up suspense.
2. The way in which the people persist in believing that the king and the duke are the real brothers reveals their ignorance and even their willingness to be duped. The avid interest they show in the dispute also reveals their eagerness to witness a row.
3. When lying, Huck is not able to keep up pretence if he is subjected to close scrutiny; this has been shown earlier in the case of Joanna.
4. The greed of the two frauds is also highlighted in the manner they persist in continuing with their pretence.

5. The crowd also reveals greed when they find the gold with the dead body. Ignorance and the effortless way in which they allow themselves to be duped are other elements that Huck observes to be present in the mentality of a mob.