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"I'LL DO IT."

BY VIRGINIA F. TOWNSEND.

The river went on its way to the sea. It heard the call afar off, and felt the mighty swinging of the great tides, but waited to receive it in their arms.

The day was in the late summer, beautiful in the heavens, rejoicing upon the earth.

All this was in the feeling, if not consciously in the thought of Tom Breck that afternoon, as he wandered along the banks of the river, pausing sometimes a few moments on a green edge of shelving bank, and dropping his fishing-line into the water, and swinging it there, but not waiting long for a nibble, though he was an expert angler.

Nothing remarkable in this boy on a first glance; nor, perhaps, afterwards. A head that promised well, surrounded by a crop of thick, light hair, strongly suggestive of stubble; a gait somewhat slouching and giving a general impression of a rather lumpy, loosely built figure, though time would probably tighten the joints and add tension to the muscles; a skin tanned to a sort of red brick color; eyes of a bright hazel, the best feature of the face; a straw hat surmounting all this, and a brown linen suit, just befitting a school boy of fourteen years.

Just here the life of Tom Breck was hovering. He had the faults and virtues of that stage. With a good deal of roughness, immaturity, and obstinacy, there was a certain down-rightness and sincerity about the boy, which promised a sound, vigorous manhood.

He hated—to use his own strong, if not elegant English—a "sneak." He scorned a mean, treacherous act, and you may be certain, if a boy does not do that, there is every danger, that he will go to wreck in his manhood.

This day formed an era in the boy's life. The next he was to leave home for a boarding school fifty miles away from the quiet island village where he had attended the academy for half a dozen years.

The old life was slipping away from him, and the new one coming to him vague, large, untried, and he panted with a boy's eager longing to enter upon all that was new, strange, attractive in it. He was not given to sentiment of any sort, but amid all the keen, eager swarming thoughts of the future that awaited Tom Breck, something else made itself felt, some haunting memories and regrets for the old life slipping away, gave to the familiar scenes—the river, and far blue hills, and green reaches of field, a new power and sacredness.

All these things had brought the boy down to the river this afternoon. He would have one more good time with his rod and line, before he went away. But the vague restlessness of his thoughts and feelings, imparted themselves to his movements.

He heard the birds singing among the groups of willows and young oaks along the bank, he listened to the low psalm of the waters going down to the sea, he heard the lip of winds in the branches, and something tender stirred in the heart of Tom Breck, and softened the round, immature face, into a thoughtfulness which it had never worn before.

"For the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts." Was it all over for him? he asked himself; the climbing the cherry trees in summer, the nuttings in autumn, the rare castings and skatings in winter, the rides on the loads of new mown hay, from the meadows to the great brown barn, the hunt for squirrels, the glorious times in the play ground, and all the rolling fun and sport that had been his delight ever since he would remember?

And then he felt a strange strain and ache about his heart. What did it all mean? He straightened himself up, the blood glowing under the reddish tan of his cheeks.

At that moment, Tom Breck caught sight of a tall, lank, grizzled headed and bearded man, with a scorched straw hat, and trousers of faded blue, slowly driving an ox team down the river road.

The farmer looked at the boy, then bow-

ed to him pleasantly, and passed out of sight with the slow oxen and the wagon; but that sight had touched the key note of another memory in the soul of Tom Breck.

Six months ago, he, with half a dozen other fellows, had robbed that man's water melon field, and stripped the vines of all its ripened fruit. The plan was concocted on a holiday afternoon and executed that very evening. It happened to be a favorable one for the undertaking, a moon with a lace of gray clouds over it, and the boys were just ripe for a frolic, as they called it, after a half day of rough sport. Nobody thought it was "mean," "stealing," at the time. If such a suspicion had flashed across Tom's mind, he had put it away with some of the maxims of the school boy morality.

Numbers had seemed to justify a deed from which alone his conscience and his sense of honor would have shrunk dismayed, and Tom had gone with the rest.

The vines were rifled, the melons eaten or destroyed, and the boys had their fun.

Of course the farmer was wrathful enough when he discovered the theft next day, and threatened to prosecute the perpetrators; but these had never transpired, so they had all gone "scot free."

Tom had forgotten the whole thing, but now the deed came out of some unlocked door and stood before him for just what it was—mean, dishonest, stealing!

He winced a little under that last word, he tried to varnish the deed over with the current ideas of his class—to bolster it up with such words as "fun," and "good time" and "jolly trick," but through all the varnish the real features showed themselves for just what they were, and the false words could not sustain the bad deed before the boy's better instincts.

Tom Breck wished he had taken no part in the watermelon stealing—wished he had had the moral courage to tell the boys just what he thought of the whole thing, even if they had laughed at him—wished he could go away now to the new school, and the new scenes without that memory rankling in his thoughts; call it what you would, it was just stealing, and nothing better.

But what could he do? dragging his line unconsciously along the river, while something within whispered, with compelling authority—"Just you make a clean breast of it, Tom Breck. Be a man. Go and acknowledge your share in the theft. Tell the farmer you will pay for your part of the stolen melons. Of course you won't betray the other boys, but free your own conscience of this mean deed which clings to and soils it."

But you see Tom didn't like to do this thing. The farmer might not take this confession very kindly, and then the boys would hear of it, and sneer over his "old woman's conscience." And was robbing a water melon patch such a grave, solemn offence, after all?

"It was stealing," said the voice of authority inside. Calling it "fun," "sport," and all those fine words, could not change the fact. There it stood, a mean, cowardly thing, and the numbers that were in it didn't excuse the work. The only brave thing was to go courageously and face the truth, and not run away from it like a coward, when he was already a thief.

The words stung. Tom stood still, slowly winding up his line, the round face full of an unusual gravity.

At last he looked up. The sun of the summer day smiled in the west, the shadows of the trees lay long and thick on the grass.

"I'll do it!" said Tom Breck, at last, a sudden flash of resolve all over his face, and he set off down the river road, where a mile beyond lived the farmer whom he had robbed.

The boy met the old man at his great barn gate which his team had just entered.

Eager and breathless, Tom panted out: "You remember, Mr. Wirt, that your watermelon vines were robbed last fall?"

"Yes, sir," said the farmer cracking his whip. "A precious set of rascals got ahead of me that time. Never scented out a soul yet."

"Here's one of 'em," with another glow under his tan. "It was a mean, sneaking, thing, though I didn't see it in that light at the time. You see we boys got into a frolic and were ready to go any lengths with one helping on the other. But I'm ashamed of the whole thing now, and I've come to say so to you, Mr. Wirt, and pay you for the share I had in it."

Farmer Wirt stood still, surveying the boy from under the deep rim of his straw hat. "Well, I'm beat, now!" he said, at last. "I never thought of layin' it on you, Tom. You've shown you had some good timber in you, though. Give me the names of the others who had a hand in the scrape, and we'll let bygones be bygones betwixt us."

"'Twouldn't be fair to tell on the others, Mr. Wirt. You can see that. Here's a dollar, though, to pay for my part of the mischief," tumbling in his pocket, and bringing out the note at last, and slipping it into the old man's hand, who, to tell the truth, felt a little reluctance at taking it; but he loved money, and he reflected that it was fairly his due.

Of course it costs something to be honest in this world, and the earlier Tom Breck learned and lived that the better.

So they boy went his way with a lighter heart. The blue of the sky seemed fairer—the song of the river gladder than before.

He could go away to-morrow with clean heart and hands. The deed which he had done—the triumph he had achieved—would be a great shaping force in his youth.

Boys and girls, reading this, be of good courage. Hate and scorn whatsoever is mean and sly. Don't think that numbers can ever give dignity to a bad act, or even make it anything but what it is, false and wicked. Be true to yourselves, and looking the right in the face, say bravely, with Tom Breck—"I'll do it."

Appointments of the North Carolina M. E. Conference.

The thirty-first session of the North Carolina Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, held at Wilmington, adjourned sine die on Tuesday night last. The appointments as announced are as follows:

Raleigh District—Rev. L. L. Hendren, P. E.
Raleigh City—H. T. Hudson.
Raleigh Mission—M J Hunt.
Wake Circuit—H H Gibbons.
Smithfield—A R Raven.
Tar River—James P Simpson.
Louisburg—J A Cunningham.
Granville—John Tillets.
Henderson—Ira P Wyche.
Nashville—To be supplied.
Wilson Mission—To be supplied.
Kittrell Springs Female College—John S R Clark, Chaplain and Professor.
James Reid, Agent of Sunday Schools for the State.

Hillsborough District—Rev. W. H. Bobbitt, P. E.

Hillsborough and Company Shops—H N D Wilson.
Chapel Hill and Haw River—O J Brent
Durham's—R S Webb.
Pittsborough—Joseph B Martin.
Franklinville—Hiram P Cole.
South Guilford—Charles H Phillips.
Alamance—Alfred Norman.
Lanesburg—Joseph H Wheeler.
Person—Paul J Caraway.
Orange—Adolphus W Mangum.

Greensborough District—N. F. Reid, D. P. E.

Greensborough—Wm Barringer, W C Wilson, Supernumerary.
Gulford—John W Lewis, W B Richardson.

Trinity College and High Point—B Craven, President Trinity College.
Thomasville—D R Bruton, President Female College.

Davidson—W B Meachum.
Ashborough—R P Bibb and Zebediah Rush.

Forsythe—James W Wheeler.
Stokes—To be supplied.
Madison—Joseph C Thomas.
Wentworth—R C Barrett.

Yanceyville—Lemon Shell.
Trinity College—Peter Doub, professor of biblical literature.

Salisbury District—Rev. Wm. Cross, D. D. P. E.

Salisbury—Calvin Plyver.
Rowan—Jas F Smoot.
East Rowan—Thos I Triplett.
Mocksville—Jas E Mann.
Yadkinville—Jno C Bure.
Jonesville and Elkin—Wm H Call.
Mount Airy—M L Wood.
Surry—To be supplied.
Wilkes—Isaac F Kearns.
Alexander—To be supplied.
Iredell—M C Thomas; W W Albee, supernumerary.

South Iredell—W H Barnes.
Statesville—E A Yates.
South Yadkin—M V Sherrill.
Blue Ridge Mission—R T N Stevenson.

Washington District—Rev. R. S. Moran, P. E.

Washington—John S Long.
Warrenton—J P Moore, T B Reeks, supernumerary.
Roanoke—W C Ganan.
Wilson—Chas C Dodson.

Tarborough—John W Jenkins.
Williamson—W H Weeler.
Martin—Jas J Hines.
Plymouth—W F Clegg.
Mattimuskeet—W H Moore; I Hill, supernumerary.

Portsmouth, Ocracoke and Cape Hatteras, Geo E Wyche.
Bath Mission—To be supplied.
Church of the Strangers, New York City—Chas F Deems.

Newbern District—Rev. Joel W. Tucker, P. E.

Newbern—R A Willis.
Beaufort—J B Bobbitt.
Straits and Cape Lookout—To be supplied.

Morehead City and Trent—W M Jordan, John Jones, supernumerary.
Kinston—Casswell W King.
Snow Hill—T B Ricard.

Newse Mission—Nathan A Hooker.
Goldsborough—John B Williams.
Everettsville—D. Culbreth; one to be supplied.

Wayne Mission—To be supplied.
Nuse—Jas B Bailey.
Wilmington District—Rev. L. S. Burkhead, P. E.

Wilmington, Front Street, J H Dally.
" Fifth Street—S D Peeler.
Topsail—A D Butts.
Kenansville—C M Anderson.
Magnolia—B D Culbreth.

Clinton—J H Robbins.
Cokesbury—T S Gattis.
Bladen—C M Pepper.
Elizabeth—W M Ruby.
South River Mission—To be supplied.
Whiteville—Jas B Alford.
Smithville—One to be supplied; W M D Moore, supernumerary.

Brunswick—To be supplied.
Onslow—D C Johnson.
Mariner's Chapel, Wilmington—J N Andrews.

Fayetteville District—Rev. S. D. Adams, P. E.

Fayetteville—T W Guthrie.
Cumberland—Geo C Bryan.
Robeson—W S Chaffin.
Rockingham—Jas Wheeler.
Montgomery—B C Phillips.
Upham—John K Thompson.
Cape Fear—I W Avent.
Jonesborough—Gaston Farrar.
Troy—Thos C Moses.
Deep River—Frank H Wood.

A letter to the Herald says Secretary Seward is negotiating for the purchase of Cuba, and the Spanish Government looks favorably towards the proposition.

Governor Haight prophesies that the child is now living who will see California populated with twenty millions, and San Francisco a city with two millions of inhabitants.

A Texas paper says sweet potatoes are so plentiful as to be hardly worth harvesting.