



THE BOYS' WORLD

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Vol. VI, No. 23.

PUBLISHED WEEKLY

DAVID C. COOK PUBLISHING CO., ELGIN, ILLINOIS, AND 36 WASHINGTON ST., CHICAGO.

June 8, 1907.

Sam's Salvage from the Sea

By Clifton S. Wady

SAM SANDFORD wrung out his dish-cloth neatly and then put away the few simple dishes required by a hungry boy of sixteen years to serve a hot fish supper to himself. Young as he was, and boy as he was, Sam could turn a flapjack, brown a slice of bread to crisp perfection, and fry fish whose deliciousness would tempt the appetite of an invalid—though there were few enough of those unfortunate near Big Salt River, on whose banks the Sandford family lived.

Sam's parents had been called away on an imperative business to be gone several days, and it had been thought best that, in their absence, his sister Lizzie should stay with relatives living not far distant.

This it happened that Sam was left alone to "hock it," as his uncle expressed such condition, and to look after the lobster traps for his father. This work occupied many hours of the present long day. It is very tiresome work to row along the line of traps set at frequent intervals for several miles, pull up each one in turn, remove the contents when there are any, throw these in the bottom of the dory and rebait the trap. Sam baited with small fish, such as may be caught in large quantities by the use of a hand-net lobster.

Lobsters have become more and more scarce of late years along this Maine coast where Sam lived, but the day had been one of unusual good fortune. Though this meant more full-length salable lobsters (when they are "short" of ten inches, the law requires the fisherman to throw them back into the sea to finish their growth) to go into the big crate, or "pound," floating at anchor handy to the landing, it also meant much backaching labor. Yet Sam was a tough youngster, very sturdy for his years, and now felt rather more lonely than weary.

"I wonder what Robinson Crusoe would do in my place," he remarked to himself, when all things had been put to rights quite "shipshape and snug" for the night. Sam's vivid imagination let him delight in the wonderful adventures of this famous sea character of DeFoe's fancy. "I know he often went to the shore," said aged far-off, along the distant and in his mental search of a passing sail—"I might do that." And the boy laughed a little as he started down the sandy path that led to his favorite lookout rock, a few hundred feet away. He did not much care now to recall that he had lately expected to enjoy the unaccustomed solitude and the independence of actual housekeeping all by himself. The imagine that he had saved to read on this very evening, lay unopened on the sitting-room table. The company of Tige seemed uncommonly comforting, as, wagging his tail joyfully, that brisk little animal pranced along by his young master's side, showing in every position demonstration permitted by the dog language that he greatly appreciated the attention bestowed upon him.

"A hot day," Sam told the dog. "Hear the crickets! They always chirp for all they're worth when the weather is hot." Then boy and dog sat down on a rock overlooking the ocean—for Big Salt River emptied into the Atlantic just here.

Through the soft twilight came a few wood-sounds from behind them—the gentle note of a sleepy bird, tucking itself in for the night; the echo of a distant steamboat

whistle; the call of the deep in that never-ending beat of the waves upon the rocky shores, audible and musical, to the nature-loving ear, either in calm or storm.

"It's going to be a fine night, Tige," remarked Sam, impressed by the beauty, the power and the peace lying on the face of the water. "The moon will come up early, and—hello! What's that?"

As his eyes reached the horizon off to the right, Sam sprang to his feet, for there he saw—could it be—a light!

"What's running higher up into the air now! It can't mean? A ship afloat? Almost at once the light died down, but could still be seen in a tiny spot, some miles distant. That means me, Tige! I must put off and see what I can do to help them. No, old chap, you can't go. You'd take the room of a man—and that room may be much needed," he added seriously.

Meanwhile Sam had not remained upon the rock, but had made all haste to get the best pair of oars he possessed, with which he ran to the dory drawing up on the beach. It was but the work of a moment to unfasten the rope, and pushing off, tumble into the forward way and drop the oars between the wooden thole-pieces. Tige's mournful eyes were kept upon him, but being a well-trained animal he made no effort to follow. A quick pull soon put the boy into the fishing-dory anchored beyond low water.

Making the skiff fast to its place, Sam bent to his oars in a long, strong, steady stroke that sent the sharp craft toward the tiny spark of light still visible to the eye. The young boatman kept his direction by sighting back to the shore, where tall trees made this possible, although as they were against the sky. Such precaution was very essential, and Sam soon had reason to congratulate himself on having "caught the direction," for, after a space spent in hard pulling, a turn in the sea discovered to him no light. The fire had gone out.

"Now, if there isn't any more fire, what's the use of my going any further?" Sam very reasonably asked himself; yet he did not for a moment stop the long, swinging pull on the oars.

In the easy swell of the calm sea—so calm as the sea rarely is, for as far as it is never absolutely still—the dory forged ahead, and nothing was heard but the cut of the water at the bow and the rhythmic chugging of the oars working against their wooden walls. A slow quarter of an hour passed; a half; three-quarters; then, in a pause of the oars' motion, as Sam's glance traveled ahead over the brightened water, he heard a human voice in a hoarse, low tone, and assessed it with his own deep-seated tenor. Though high, the tones carried far, as was shown by his double "Halloo! halloo!" bringing back another double call.

A boat of some kind—or was it a raft?—could now be made out, and before long Sam found himself alongside what looked like the drifting wreck of a fair-sized sailboat. Making fast to it, Sam climbed over the side of his "prize" to answer the eager words of its young skipper, now discernible

at the stern, and who sprang forward to greet his rescuer with a warm clasp of the hand, and to return grateful thanks for having come to his aid.

It seems that no other on all the broad stretch sea had noted the brief flame of fire. At least none had come within hailing distance of it.

"What burned?" asked Sam, glancing aloft at the tall mast swinging against the sky.

"Well, most of the sail did, as you will see by stepping forward here; and the cabin is practically destroyed."

"You can still steer?"

"Oh, yes; and I rigged a sort of jury-mast with a bit of canvas, and made some slight headway—in the wrong direction."

he laughed, "according to your own course, as you approached."

"Yes," smiled Sam, looking toward the distant land. "If you happen to want to make the coast of Maine, you'll have to nose over that way; but it's an ebb-tide, and getting back promptly may mean a good hard pull, towing this boat. I see you have a row boat at the stern."

"I have; and it's double-ended. We could tow your dory and both pull—if you're not too tired—or perhaps take turns."

"Yes, I can pull all right. But I don't see how you caught fire."

"I was trying to get up some hot coffee on the little alcohol lamp, when I tipped up the board it stood on. The first thing I knew it had upset and a sheet of flame shot up the side of the cabin. It caught the woodwork like tinder, for I had recently varnished everything inside."

"I should have been frightened to be all alone in such danger as that."

"I was so excited at first, and afterwards too busy trying to put out the flames. It caught the sail and licked it up pretty quick, I can tell you."

"That part was lucky, I guess, for it

there with me, for I see we shall get back pretty early after all—"

"Early in the morning!" laughed the other. "I'm not much at rowing. I've sailed a little, but this is my first season aboard here. My name is Prince—Harry Prince."

"And I forgot to say that mine is Sam Sandford. Now we are acquainted. You don't live near here then, I take it?"

"No, at Boston. My father—he's really only my stepfather—owns a lot of land at the mouth of Big Salt River, and—"

"Excuse me, but is your father's name Dean?" suddenly exclaimed Sam, turning about in his seat.

"Yes; how did you know that?" asked the other in utter surprise.

"Because our little five-acre lot of land is in the tract he claims, against my father's claim of right of possession, for thirty years. Father is up in Boston now to meet your father's lawyer to try to come to a settlement. Of course he's willing to pay a fair price for the land, if it's right to do that, although he has held peaceable possession of it for more than thirty years."

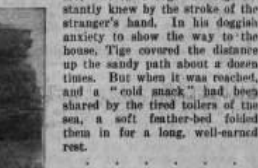
"Excuse me, but I remember that Mr. Dean has been interested in the matter. All that sea-shore property was left him by his father many years ago; but Maine's getting to be quite a summer resort, and my interest in boating started father to thinking of building down here."

"Isn't that queer?" exclaimed Sam wonderingly; and he resumed his oars.

It was not far from midnight when the "towage" came to anchor off the little landing below Sam's house; but Tige was right on hand, as if he had not stirred from his place on the edge of the board floor nearest to the last sight of his master.

He welcomed them back with demonstrative affection, nearly wagging his little tail off in trying to tell the boys how glad he was not only that Sam had come back, but that he had brought a nice big boy friend along

too, who liked dogs—as Tige instinctively knew by the firm stroke of the stranger's hand. In his dogish anxiety to show the way to the house, Tige covered the distance up the sandy path about a dozen times. But when it was reached, and a "cold snack" had been shared by the tired toilers of the sea, a soft father-bed folded them in for a long, well-earned rest.



Harry Prince did not go home to Boston on the next day—or the next week. A letter mailed to his father brought Mr. and Mrs. Sandford home with smiling faces and a deed for their home. Sam didn't understand all the law phrases, but the sentence, "for value received, one dollar," sounded like possession—and a bargain at that.

As to the fine sail boat brought to shore on that memorable night, Harry declared to his friend at the summer's end, that it was Sam's legitimate "salvage," and utterly refused to remove it from what has now grown to be its familiar moorings off the mouth of Big Salt River.

CAME UP SMILING.

Some boys have remarkable fortune in meeting accidents. Slowing Hiram of Danville, Pa., fell off the roof of his father's barn, broke a ladder, in his descent, struck a calf as he reached the ground, was charged by the calf's mother but not touched, tumbled into a tub of water, and came up smiling and unscathed.

sent the blaze so high that I saw it from shore."

"Oh, you were not in your boat when you first saw the fire?"

"No, Tige and I were looking out on the water enjoying the night a little while before going indoors. I'm alone in my home now; and by the way, you must come right

"NOW WE ARE ACQUAINTED," SAID SAM.

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Title: The Lost Knife

Date of first publication: 1907

Author: L. M. (Lucy Maud) Montgomery (1874-1942)

Date first posted: Mar. 15, 2017

Date last updated: Mar. 15, 2017

Faded Page eBook #20170326

This ebook was produced by: Alex White & the online Distributed Proofreaders Canada team at <http://www.pgdpCanada.net>

The Lost Knife

L. M. Montgomery

First published *The Boys' World*, June 8, 1907.



“DID YOU SEE ANYTHING OF MY KNIFE?” ASKED PERCY.

“Did any of you fellows see my knife?” asked Percy Mason, coming up to the group of boys assembled on the Belmont School playground one fine June day at noon hour recess. “I left it lying on my desk when I left the schoolroom half an hour ago, but it is not there now.”

The boys all declared they had not seen or touched the knife. Percy frowned.

“Well, it’s gone anyway. Somebody must have taken it. Where is Wilfred Brett? He was in the schoolroom studying his Latin when I left it.”

“Wilfred went home soon after you went over to the woods,” said Charlie Gardiner.

“I believe he has taken my knife then,” said Percy angrily. “He is the only boy in school who hasn’t got a knife, and I know he envied me mine by the way I’ve seen him looking at it.”

“Better not make such accusations before you are sure, Percy,” said Jack Green. “You haven’t any proof that Wilfred took your knife.”

“Somebody has taken it,” retorted Percy. “You fellows all say you didn’t, so who is left but Wilfred? He was in the school alone with the knife. Of course he took it! I never trusted him! He always looked too quiet and sneaky for my taste.”

None of the other boys spoke up in Wilfred’s defense. They did not believe that he would steal a schoolmate’s knife, but neither could they affirm that they were sure he wouldn’t. None of them knew much about Wilfred Brett. He was a newcomer in Belmont and had been attending the school only a month. His people were poor and Wilfred’s clothes were shabby. He was quiet, reserved, and studious, and did not make friends easily. His classmates did not dislike him, but as yet he was looked upon as a stranger.

“Here he comes now,” said Charlie, looking down the road. “He can answer for himself.”

Wilfred soon reached the group, but he evidently did not intend to join them. He was passing on with a merely friendly greeting when Percy called to him sharply:

“Hello, Wilfred! I was just asking where you were! Did you see anything of my knife? I left it on my desk just beside yours when I went down to the brook, and it’s gone now.”

There was an offensive something in Percy’s tone that brought a flush of anger to Wilfred’s face. Unfortunately there is no way of distinguishing between flushes of anger and flushes of guilt, as far as appearances go. Wilfred also thought the other boys were looking at him curiously. But he answered quietly:

“No, I saw nothing of your knife, Percy, and I do not think you left it in the schoolroom at all.”

“I tell you I did,” said Percy angrily. “I am sure I left it on my desk. Somebody has taken it, and you are the only fellow who has been in the room since I left.”

“Do you mean to insinuate that I took your knife?” said Wilfred, still quietly, but with a dangerous sparkle in his eyes.

"I insinuate nothing," retorted Percy. "I only state plain facts. People can draw their own inferences from them, I suppose."

Percy turned on his heel and marched off. Wilfred clinched his hands, but Jack Green said:

"Never mind, Wilfred. We none of us believe you took the knife, of course. It's just Percy's headlong way of jumping at conclusions. And he is so careless it is just as likely he left the knife somewhere else."

"I assure you I never saw or touched his knife," said Wilfred, looking steadily into their eyes.

"That settles it," said Charlie Gardiner. "Of course we believe you."

It did settle it, as far as the boys were concerned. But Wilfred continued to feel angry and sore. He could not be sure that all suspicion was really banished from the minds of his classmates by his simple asseveration, and he knew that Percy Mason believed that he had stolen his knife. It was a humiliating position. Never before had he been suspected of such a thing, and he felt it keenly.

Three days passed, during which Percy continued to search ostentatiously for his knife, bewailing its loss and throwing out covert hints at Wilfred. As these were not openly directed at him, Wilfred could not resent them, but he chafed under them not a little.

"I hate Percy Mason!" he exclaimed angrily to his sister Isabel. "He is a regular snob, and I've disliked him ever since I came to Belmont. All the boys do. But he has some influence, for all that, and if he keeps on insinuating that I stole his knife—stole it! Just fancy, Isabel—I daresay some of the fellows will come to believe I did. If he would say anything openly to me, I could show him I resented it; but he never has since that first time."

"Don't mind Percy Mason," said Isabel gently. She was a pale, sweet-faced girl and she spent most of her time lying on a sofa with a sadly suggestive crutch close at hand; but she and Wilfred were "great chums" and he told her everything.

"It's easy to say 'don't mind,'" said Wilfred bitterly, "but I can't help minding. It isn't very pleasant to have anyone trying to make you out a thief. My good name is about all the capital I've got, and if it is to be spoiled I'll have a poor show. I'm afraid this will come to Mr. Phillips' ears—Amy Phillips goes to school, you know—and if it does I'll have no chance at all to get that position in the mill. Not that I've much chance anyhow, I suppose. There are nine applicants already and all with more influence than I have."

"Don't get blue, brother mine," said Isabel cheerily. "It will all come out right yet, if you keep your conscience clear. It's only *real* evil that lasts and does harm. And

don't let Percy Mason aggravate you into doing anything you will repent. I think he'd like to do that, and you know that quick temper of yours is very apt to flare up."

"I do know it only too well," said Wilfred, with a rueful smile. "I do my best to keep it under control, and you've helped me more than words can say, Isabel. You're the best sister a boy ever had, and I guess I'll never go very far astray if I always take your advice. Well, I won't vex myself thinking of Percy. But I do wish I could get that position. It would make it so much easier for mother and you if I could."

Two days later Wilfred, taking a short cut to school through the woods, found Percy Mason's knife sticking in a tree down by the brook. He recognized it instantly. With a sparkle in his eyes he pulled it out and hurried up to the playground where the boys were assembled.

"Here is your knife, Percy. I found it stuck in the old poplar tree down by the brook—just where you left it that day you missed it."

Percy took the knife with a disagreeable sneer.

"That story is a little too thin," he said mockingly.

Wilfred's face whitened with anger. The next moment he struck straight out from the shoulder, and Percy went down.

He was on his feet again in a moment, and would have rushed furiously at Wilfred had not the other boys intervened.

"Come now, Percy, no fighting," said Charlie Gardiner authoritatively. "You know Mr. Wilson doesn't stand for it. You'd no business to say what you did to Wilfred. *We* believe his story, so you'd just better take your knife and keep quiet about it."

Percy took this salutary advice and marched contemptuously away; Wilfred also turned and walked into the schoolroom. His anger had spent itself in the blow, and he felt thoroughly ashamed of himself. Nothing could justify the way he had acted, not even Percy's sneer.

"I've made a nice spectacle of myself," he thought miserably. "Will I ever learn to control this wretched temper of mine? I have been flattering myself that I had succeeded in winning the mastery over it, and now I go and break out like this. What will Isabel think!"

Wilfred found out what Isabel thought in their customary twilight talk that night.

"Oh, Wilfred, you didn't knock Percy down!" exclaimed Isabel.

"Yes, I did. I tell you, Isabel, he as good as told me he didn't believe what I said."

"Oh, but two wrongs never make a right, Wilfred. Percy didn't deserve to be

knocked down, badly as he has behaved to you. You've lowered yourself, brother mine, by giving way to your temper so, and there is only one way you can make it right. You must apologize to Percy."

"Oh, I say, Isabel!" protested Wilfred in amazement, "you can't be in earnest. I'm sorry I struck Percy, but I'm not going to stoop to apologize to him."

"I don't think it would be *stooping*," said Isabel steadily. "I think it would be *rising* back to the heights of your self-respect again. I think it's the right thing to do, and I'm not going to say another word about it."

"You've said as much as if you'd preached a sermon," said Wilfred ruefully. "I daresay you're right, Isabel—you're always right. But you don't know what a bitter pill you want me to swallow. I can't apologize to Percy Mason, and I won't."

Isabel sighed, patted his hand, and said no more. She was a very wise little Isabel, and she understood Wilfred thoroughly. The latter went off to his books, but he could not put his mind on his lessons. It was in vain that he decided that it was out of the question to think of apologizing; the question kept coming up again and again. Long after he went to bed that night he wrestled with it. Finally he sat straight up in bed and spoke out his mind to the darkness.

"I'll do it. I've got to do it before I can get back my self-respect. It doesn't make any difference what Percy did or said, it is what I did I have to reckon with. It wasn't right, and I've got to own up to it like a man and a gentleman."

When Wilfred reached the school playground the next morning, he realized that the task would be harder than he had expected. Not only were all the boys present in full force, but the girls were there too. But he did not hesitate. He walked straight up to the group of which Percy Mason, with a black eye, was the center.

"Percy," he said clearly and distinctly, "I am sorry I struck you yesterday, and I ask your pardon for it."

Percy turned red, looked the fool to perfection, and muttered something half inaudible about it being "no matter." Wilfred walked into the schoolroom with his head erect.

"I'm my own man again," he thought. "Isabel was right."

It was a pity he could not have heard the comment Charlie Gardiner was making on the playground that moment.

"Wilfred Brett is the right sort," he said emphatically. "He is one of us from this out. I rather think he has proved his mettle."

A week later Wilfred was considerably surprised to receive a note from Mr. Phillips, the proprietor of the lumber mill, asking him to come to his office. He found Mr. Phillips alone, and that gentleman came straight to the point, as was his custom.

“You applied for the vacancy here, Wilfred?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Well, I have decided to accept you. You can begin your duties next week.”

Wilfred stared at Mr. Phillips as if doubting his ears. It was too good to be true.

“You seem surprised,” said Mr. Phillips, allowing himself to smile. “You didn’t expect to get the place, eh?”

“No, sir, I didn’t,” said Wilfred frankly. “I knew there were several other applicants. But since you have been so kind as to accept me, I’ll do my best to satisfy you, sir.”

“I don’t doubt that you will; and it isn’t any kindness on my part,” said Mr. Phillips grimly. “It is pure self-interest. I want a boy that I can trust, for there are certain responsibilities attached to the position. My daughter Amy told me all about your trouble in school with that Mason boy, and your manly apology under circumstances that might have excused the lack of an apology. I liked it; I thought it showed that there was good stuff in you.”

“I—I mightn’t have done it, though, sir,” stammered Wilfred, desiring to be honest, “if it hadn’t been for my sister Isabel. I didn’t want to apologize, but she said I ought to.”

Mr. Phillips laughed.

“The boy who takes such advice from his sister, is the boy I’m looking for. That’s all. Good day. Report on Monday.”

[The end of *The Lost Knife* by L. M. (Lucy Maud) Montgomery]