

Beneath Robes and Rags: A Study of Social Inequality in Mark Twain's *The Prince and the Pauper*

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Abstract: Mark Twain's *The Prince and the Pauper* begins as a deceptively simple tale but soon reveals itself as a profound social commentary cloaked in the charm of a historical adventure. Set in Tudor England, the novel exposes the superficial judgments society makes based on outward appearances; robes and rags alike, offering a critical lens on class, privilege, and identity. The symbolic exchange of clothing between Edward Tudor and Tom Canty underscores the arbitrary nature of social status and the illusions it sustains. Ironically, both boys live in different forms of confinement: Edward, in the ceremonial cage of royalty; Tom, in the harsh prison of poverty and abuse. As each steps into the other's world, they encounter unexpected challenges and injustices that cultivate empathy, wisdom, and moral growth. The novel's resolution hinges on a small but significant detail, the missing Great Seal; restoring order not by power alone but through Tom's honesty and Edward's enlightened perspective. Beneath the surface of robes and rags, Twain holds up a mirror to society, inviting readers to question what truly defines nobility.

Keywords: historical fiction, intentional, role reversal, dual protagonists, identity

Introduction: Mark Twain's *The Prince and the Pauper*, first published in 1881, remains a beloved classic of American literature. It captivates readers with its timeless tale of mistaken identity, social injustice, and the deeper meaning of true nobility. Set in 16th-century England, the novel masterfully weaves together the lives of two boys: Edward Tudor, the rightful heir to the English throne, and Tom Canty, a destitute boy from the slums of London. Their uncanny resemblance leads to an unintentional exchange of roles, setting the stage for a compelling narrative that examines the stark contrast between privilege and poverty. Through this imaginative premise, Twain explores enduring themes of class disparity, power, and the human condition, all enriched by his trademark wit, empathy, and sharp social insight. Far more than a mere children's story, *The Prince and the Pauper* delivers a powerful critique of societal structures while celebrating the transformative power of compassion. For such enduring contributions, Mark Twain is rightfully hailed as the father of American literature.

Twain's Style of Writing: Every celebrated writer has a unique style, and Mark Twain's is distinguished by subtle humor, compelling narrative strength, vivid descriptions, and a masterful command of dialectal English that reflects the story's setting. Plot, characters, setting, and structure are essential components of any work of fiction, but the emphasis on these elements varies from one work or writer to another. For instance, one literary work may prioritize character exploration, with the other elements taking a secondary role, and vice versa. The renowned English author E.M. Forster, in his *Aspects of the Novel*, identifies seven key aspects for discussion: story, people, plot, fantasy, prophecy, pattern, and rhythm. He uses these aspects to analyze the structure and elements of a novel form. (Forster E.M, 1956). Forster compares the form and texture of a novel to that of a symphony. Regarding subject matter, He expects a work to reveal the hidden life at its core. He concludes that human nature is the novelist's essential focus. From the standpoint of characters, Forster categorizes fictional characters into two groups: round characters and flat characters. Round characters possess diverse traits, shaped by the demands of the plot or thematic considerations. In contrast, flat characters exhibit only the traits essential to the plot and theme.

From this standpoint, the characters in *The Prince and the Pauper*, such as Henry VIII, Humphrey Marlow, Blake Andrews, John Canty, Lady Jane Grey, Lady Elizabeth, and Lady Mary, fall into the category of flat characters. They are crafted to drive the plot forward and to develop the thematic insights that Mark Twain aims to convey to his readers. The main characters, Tom Canty and Edward Tudor, are round characters. Readers remember Tom Canty, Edward Tudor, and Miles Hendon for their distinctive traits and the pivotal roles they play in advancing the storyline with its twists and turns. Twain's distinctive writing style, especially his approach to adventures, is celebrated worldwide. His vivid and dramatic descriptions are a hallmark of his

work, and his masterful use of language immerses readers in the settings he portrays. The central theme of *The Prince and the Pauper* is to avoid judging a book by its cover. The primary conflict in the novel revolves around mistaken identity based on outward appearances. After the prince and the pauper switch roles, no one believes their true identities, forcing them to prove they are not who they appear to be. The novel is not based on a true story, though some incidents are grounded in reality. It is a work of historical fiction. Primarily, it is a work of fiction that tackles class differences with a blend of humor and insight. Tom Canty struggles to adapt to his new environment while trying to reclaim his own identity, but Edward Tudor strives to return to the palace, having come to detest the life outside.

The two boys, Tom Canty and Edward Tudor, are born in London, shockingly with identical features. The Tudors are rich and powerful; inspire England to celebrate the birth of this long-awaited child. There are bonfires, feasting, dancing, and parades that continue throughout the day and into the night. Edward Tudor rests in his comfortable crib, dressed in silks and satins. On the other hand, Tom Canty, the pauper, is born into a poor family in Offal Court, a notorious area known for housing the poorest members of London society. It is also a hotbed of violence, deception, drunkenness, filth, and despair. Tom, an unwanted boy, endures hardship, hunger, and the harsh realities of life as a commoner. Reluctantly, he is forced to beg for his father and grandmother. However, he shares a loving bond with his mother and sisters, Bet and Nan. The plot is carefully structured, with significant character development that propels the story forward. In the words of the author, London is an ancient and developing town with a hundred thousand people. The streets are narrow, crooked, and dirty, and in the part of town where the Cantys live, the streets are even narrower, even more crooked, and are dirtier than most streets. The Canty's house in Offal Court, out of Pudding Lane, is filled with the poorest of London's poor.

There are six members in the Canty family. They live in one room on the third floor of an old, decaying house. Tom Canty's father and grandmother are thieves and beggars and they are also drunk and violent. They make the children beg, because they can't make them steal though begging has been prohibited in those days. The unfailing daily chore of Tom is going out in the morning to beg; if he returns empty-handed, he is thrashed and cursed by his father and grandmother. Thus he begs enough to save his skin, but he spends most of his time listening to Father Andrew's old tales and legends. Father Andrew has been turned out of home by the King with a few pennies as pension. He used to teach Tom, his sisters and other children the right ways of life, secretly. In addition, he teaches Tom how to read and write English and also some Latin. Father Andrew's tales fill Tom's mind and take away some of the pain of the beatings and humiliation at home. The stories make Tom's desire to be clean in body and mind. For example, he sometimes feels like one of the princes in Father Andrew's tales, and he has come to gain a measure of stature among both the children and even the adults who bring him their problems; they are quite amazed by the wisdom with which he solves their problems. Meanwhile, Tom harbours at the core of his heart, a deep and secret desire to see a real prince.

Switching Places: At last, there comes a red-letter day, It is a day in January; Tom Canty wanders through the city, idly and aimlessly ambling farther and farther from Offal Court than ever before. Eventually, he finds himself outside the walls of London and on the Strand, a street in the west of London famous for its theaters and hotels, where there is a scattering of the palaces of the rich. He is aghast to see them and he walks into Charing Village, past the cardinal's palace and goes on toward Westminster. There is a vast and gigantic building with colossal granite lions and other signs and symbols of English royalty. When he comes to the fence surrounding the Westminster, he catches a glimpse of the sturdy, handsome and beautifully-dressed Prince of Wales inside a gate. He is none other than Edward Tudor, the real prince. His desire has come true, but there is another desire which is to have a close look at the prince. Meanwhile, there comes a soldier and pulls Tom out shouting at him. This attracts the attention of the prince who comes there, orders the soldiers to let the poor boy inside the palace. The prince takes Tom into his apartment and treats him kindly. Tom tells the prince about how he spends his time with his friends. The prince is fascinated by them. Impulsively the two boys exchange their dresses and they find that both look alike. Meanwhile, the prince looks at a bruise on Tom's hand and he runs out to punish the guard. The biggest mistake is he has forgotten that he is in Tom's rags.

The guard catches the prince and drives him out. However, before leaving, the prince hides an article of national importance, the Royal Seal, which plays a key role later in the novel. The crowd that surrounds Edward jeers at him, chases him, and eventually leaves him humiliated and exhausted. Dressed in a pauper's clothes, he runs until he reaches a Church, which his father had turned into an orphanage. Seeing a group of boys playing outside, he orders one of them, in his royal tone, to summon their master, claiming to be the

Prince of Wales. Noticing his rags, the boys laugh at him. Enraged, he kicks one of them, prompting the group to call their dogs and throw him into a horse pond. Once untouched by dust, the prince is now a dusty, bloody, and muddy wanderer. He recalls the name Offal Court and begins to walk. Despite the humiliation, he resolves that all boys at Christ Hospital must receive education and culture. Edward Tudor vows to temper power with mercy. As the Duke says in *As You Like It*, 'Sweet are the uses of adversity.' (Wiki, 2025). While walking, a man grabs him by the collar; it is John Canty, who scolds him for not bringing money home. The prince realizes he's Tom Canty's father. Despite claiming to be the Prince of Wales, John thinks he's mad, but mad or not, money is what matters, so he drags him home.

Now the scene shifts to the palace. Tom Canty admires his regal image from every angle in the mirror. He sits in all the chairs, one after another, and wonders what the boys at Offal Court would think if they saw him there. Half an hour passes, and Tom begins to worry as Edward Tudor hasn't returned. Unsure of what to say if someone enters, he slowly opens the door, but retreats upon seeing the servants. Soon, the first visitor arrives, Lady Jane Grey, Edward Tudor's cousin. She notices the confusion on Tom's face, steps back, and asks if he is alright. Tom kneels and confesses that he is not the prince but a pauper. Shocked, Jane runs out. Rumors begin to spread from servant to servant, from lord to lady, that the prince has gone mad. Hearing of this, the king issues a proclamation forbidding anyone from discussing the prince's condition. Silence falls over the palace. Two noblemen escort Tom to the king, whose leg is bandaged. In a gentle voice, the king asks how he is. Tom kneels and pleads, saying he is just a poor boy and begs not to be killed. The king, distressed, questions him in Latin, which Tom surprisingly answers well. But when asked a question in French, he cannot respond, disappointing the king further. Gravely ill and desperate to see his son become king, the monarch is deeply troubled by this sudden and confusing turn of events.

The king declares before all lords and nobles that his son is the rightful Prince and heir to the throne whether sane or insane. Tom senses that everyone in the palace sees him as unworthy of royalty, but they are bound by fear of the king. King Henry insists on installing his son the king the very next day, believing the sooner, the better. Lord Hertford, the king's trusted advisor and Edward's tutor, though disliked by the boy, reminds the king about a man held in the Tower: the Hereditary Great Marshal. This man is Duke Norfolk. Irritated, the king states that this should not delay the coronation and orders Norfolk's execution the next day. Lord Hertford acknowledges that the king's word is law. When Henry asks Tom to kiss him, Tom responds with gratitude but expresses sorrow over Norfolk's fate. The king remarks that his son has always had a kind heart but urges him not to dwell on it. Tom, however, is tormented, feeling responsible for Norfolk's death. The king again tells him to forget it and instructs Lord Hertford to escort Tom out. As Tom leaves, he feels like a prisoner and is deeply disturbed by Norfolk's looming execution. Norfolk is an unfortunate noble whom Henry VIII suspects of aspiring to the throne, hence his imprisonment and impending death.

Lord Hertford brings Tom into a richly decorated chamber filled with elderly nobles. As Tom enters, they all rise. Embarrassed, he feels like asking them to sit, but Lord Hertford explains that it would be inappropriate. Just then, Lord St. John arrives, announcing that he carries a message from the king and requests that Tom dismiss all the nobles. Hertford shows Tom how to gesture to send them away, which he does. Now only three remain in the room. St. John tells Tom to conceal any signs of confusion or mental distress until he is cured. He must never claim he is not the prince and should accept people's reverence without hesitation or protest. The king instructs that Tom should rely on Lord Hertford and St. John for guidance. Tom realizes that what began as play has now become a serious obligation, he is trapped in Edward's role and must now learn the ways of royalty, whether he likes it or not. By entrusting Hertford and St. John with such authority, the king shows great faith in them. It is now their duty not to abuse that power or take advantage of the boy.

Lord Hertford advises Tom that he can enjoy some light reading or some other entertainment in place of his usual lessons until the banquet. St. John observes that Tom's looks are confusing and so he reassures him that he will start remembering things again at the right time. In the meantime, Lady Elizabeth and Lady Jane Grey enter the room. Lord Hertford whispers to them that they should not mind Tom's peculiarities and St. John tells Tom to try to be normal. As the conversation among Tom, Elizabeth and Jane reaches any difficult point at times, Elizabeth and Lord Hertford help the boy through it. Tom decides to take some rest, but can't sleep as he doesn't know how to excuse the people who would like to leave the room. How can he sleep without inner peace? Many people in the palace have found out the subtle difference in mannerisms and speech between Edward and Tom, but there are strict orders that gag their mouths, so they are silent. There is an idiom, 'Caesar's wife must be above suspicion.' It is a well-known idiom and historical reference. It means

that a person closely associated with someone in a position of power or public responsibility must be entirely beyond reproach or suspicion, not just innocent, but appearing unquestionably so.

Once Lord Hertford and St. John are alone, they discuss the events of the day. They are sad because King Henry is on the verge of death and at the same time, the prince has gone mad. St. John has suspected that the prince is not the true prince, but Hertford tells him that it is nothing but treachery to think in that way. When St. John leaves the room, Hertford contemplates on the different behaviour of Tom, but after some time, he thinks that the prince suffers from some mental illness. He feels that it is impossible for anyone to take his place to become the prince. Later that afternoon, Tom undergoes the lengthy process of getting dressed up for the dinner reluctantly. Many nobles and servants do the work solemnly showing no reaction to his madness according to the standing orders. There are many lords and their assistants. All of them stand up when he enters the dining hall. The boy sits at his place and starts eating with his fingers.

Tom notices the expensive flowers, lettuce, and turnips, recent imports from Holland, and innocently wonders if they are meant to be eaten. When his nose begins to itch, he is unsure whether to scratch it himself or ask someone to do it. As tears roll down his cheeks, he finally scratches it himself. Later, a bowl of rose water is brought, it is meant for washing fingers, but Tom, charmed by its sweet scent, mistakes it for a drink and sips it. He then eats some nuts and fills his pocket with them. Though his actions are observed, no one shows any reaction. Before the chaplain can bless him, Tom rises and leaves. Back in his room, he removes some uncomfortable clothing and begins eating the nuts. There, he discovers a book on English court etiquette and reads it while relaxing on a luxurious divan. Through Tom's naïve behavior, the author subtly critiques the nobility, suggesting they are so pampered and reliant on servants that they've lost the ability to manage even the simplest tasks, like bathing or dressing. In this light, palace life appears frivolous and pointless, prompting Edward Tudor to long for the world beyond its walls.

Edward Tudor's father and the reigning monarch, King Henry, is remembered as one of England's most notorious rulers; a figure often seen by readers as an unjust tyrant. Yet, to Edward, he is a loving and gentle father. One day, King Henry awakens from a restless sleep plagued by nightmares. He feels weak, sensing that death is near, and is gripped by the thought that someone must die specifically, the Duke of Norfolk, imprisoned and awaiting execution. Despite being close to death, the king is determined to see Norfolk's head fall. As he reflects on this, the Lord Chancellor arrives and informs him that the British nobility has agreed Norfolk should be executed, and they await the king's final consent. This news excites Henry. He tries to rise, intending to go to Parliament and sign the death warrant himself, but he becomes dizzy and is helped back to his couch by his attendants. Realizing he cannot stand, he orders the Chancellor to bring the Great Seal of England so he can authorize the execution. However, the Chancellor says the king had already taken it from him. The king cannot recall where it is. At that moment, Lord Hertford reminds him that he had given it to the Prince. The king then remembers and orders them to retrieve it from the boy.

After some time, Lord Hertford returns empty-handed, reporting that the prince cannot remember where the Great Seal is. In truth, Tom has no idea what it is, though readers will discover its significance later. Instead of reacting with anger, King Henry responds with sympathy, lamenting his son's supposed illness. Eventually, he resorts to using a smaller seal, and it is decided that the Duke of Norfolk will be executed the following day. King Henry's desire to eliminate Norfolk stems from the duke's growing popularity, which the king irrationally sees as a threat to the throne. His obsession now revolves around two things: Norfolk's public favor and his son's mental state. He is determined to see Norfolk dead, not merely imprisoned. Thomas Howard, the 3rd Duke of Norfolk, was a powerful English nobleman and politician during the Tudor era. He was the uncle of two of Henry's wives, Anne Boleyn and Catherine Howard, both of whom were tragically beheaded. Norfolk played a significant role in the court politics surrounding these marriages. Henry, however, harbors the mistaken belief that the Duke aspires to take the crown. As a result, Norfolk falls out of favor, is stripped of his title, and imprisoned in the Tower of London.

That evening, the Thames in front of the palace is alive with beautifully decorated boats adorned with colorful lanterns and flags. The wide stone terrace and steps leading to the river are lined with guards standing at attention. Dozens of state barges pull up to the landing, and as far as the eye can see, people in the boats rise, shading their eyes from the bright lanterns and torches to gaze at the palace. Among the arriving dignitaries are the Lord High Chancellor of England, the French and Spanish ambassadors, along with English nobles, knights, and gentlemen in splendid attire. As trumpets blast, these figures descend the stairs in grand procession. Lord Hertford steps forward and bows deeply. Another trumpet sounds, followed by a

commanding voice: ‘Make way for Edward Tudor, the Prince of Wales!’ Tom emerges, dressed in magnificent garments studded with pearls and jewels. He offers solemn nods to those who greet him. It is a striking sight, Tom Canty, born in a filthy hovel, now stepping out as a prince. This marks his first public appearance and gives him a glimpse of royal life. He becomes the center of attention, momentarily intoxicated by the power and importance of his role, an overwhelming experience for someone as humble and introspective as Tom Canty.

The scene shifts to John Canty dragging Edward Tudor through the streets near Offal Court, followed by a jeering crowd. Only one person, Father Andrew, pleads with John to show mercy and release the boy. When Edward resists, John raises a thick stick to strike him. Father Andrew steps in, placing his hand on the prince, and the blow lands on his palm. Enraged, John strikes the kind priest on the head, knocking him down, and then continues dragging Edward home, ignoring what he has done. At home, Tom’s frightened sisters and mother sit in a corner while the grandmother glares at the boy. John demands the boy’s name. Angered by the mistreatment, Edward declares that he is the Prince of Wales and that his father is King Henry Tudor. The sisters and mother rush to him with concern, believing he has gone mad. Edward tells the mother that her real son is safe and that she can find him at the palace. John, unmoved, orders everyone to bed and tells Edward he must pay the two pennies due for rent the next day, meaning he must go begging. When Edward resists, John and his mother beat him, along with the others. Eventually, the boy falls asleep, and the mother begins to wonder if he could truly be the prince. She recalls Tom’s peculiar habit, whenever light is shown on his face while sleeping, he raises his palm outward. She has seen it countless times. When she brings a candle near Edward’s face, he opens his eyes but does not raise his palm. After pondering, her maternal instincts lead her to convince herself that this boy must indeed be her son.

Like King Henry, Tom’s mother and sisters believe that the boy’s strange behavior and unfamiliar mannerisms are the result of an illness and hope that rest will restore his sanity. Here, the author draws a parallel between royalty and commoners, showing that despite their vastly different lifestyles, both the king and the Cantys share a genuine concern for a loved one’s mental health. This highlights the shared humanity beneath social divisions. However, Edward, shaped by his royal upbringing, possesses a strong sense of pride. He finds the beatings from John Canty and the grandmother not just painful but deeply humiliating, an emotional wound more than a physical one. Yet, these sufferings serve to strengthen his character and ultimately prepare him to become a more compassionate and just ruler. Sleep soothes Edward’s pain, offering a temporary escape. As Shakespeare writes in *Macbeth*, ‘Sleep that knits up the raveled sleeve of care,’ it is a healing force that eases the burdens and anxieties of the day (goodreads, 2025).

When Edward wakes, he calls for his attendants, but no one responds. Slowly, he is forced to confront the reality of his situation. Just then, several knocks sound at the door, and John Canty asks what the matter is. The visitors inform him that the man he struck, Father Andrew, is dead. Shocked and fearful, Canty quickly instructs his family to flee the house and regroup later at London Bridge, each taking a different route. Grabbing Edward by the hand, he rushes into the street, where crowds are drinking and celebrating. Edward soon realizes that the city is honoring a false Prince of Wales, Tom Canty, in his place. Angry and humiliated, he vows to punish the impostor once he reclaims the throne. At one moment, a man offers John Canty a drink from a loving cup. As he turns away to take it, Edward seizes the chance and slips into the crowd. He resolves to go to Guildhall to publicly declare his identity and expose the false prince.

Meanwhile, the royal barge glides down the Thames in its entire splendor. Music fills the air, bonfires blaze along the riverbanks and across London, lighting up the sky, while artillery booms and loud cheers echo throughout the city. Tom marvels at the spectacle, though for Lady Elizabeth and Lady Jane Grey, such grandeur is nothing new. At last, the barge docks, and Tom, accompanied by his attendants, proceeds to the Guildhall. The arrangements there are equally magnificent. Tom is seated at the highest table, while guests are arranged below according to rank. After the opening prayers, he rises and drinks from the loving-cup, which is then passed to Lady Elizabeth and others, marking the beginning of a lavish banquet. As the celebration reaches its height, dancers appear to entertain the crowd. Tom watches in fascination, momentarily swept up in the privileges of royalty. Outside the true prince, Edward Tudor, stands at the gates of the Guildhall, boldly declaring himself the real Prince of Wales and demanding to be admitted. The crowd mocks and jeers. One voice calls out for the boy to be thrown into a horse-pond. At that moment, a man named Miles Hendon steps forward to defend him. Drawing his sword, he drives off two attackers.

Just as tensions rise, a royal messenger arrives, urgently requesting entry into the Guildhall with an important message for the court. At this critical moment, when Prince Edward is helpless, Miles Hendon steps in to defend and befriend him, saving the boy from the hostile crowd. Meanwhile, news spreads: the king is dead. A sudden silence falls over the people. In the next moment, they stretch out their hands toward Tom and shout, ‘Long live the King!’ Now proclaimed as monarch, Tom turns serious. He tells Lord Hertford that if he truly is king and his word is law, then there shall be no law of blood, and the Duke of Norfolk must not die. Lord Hertford immediately consents. Here, the pauper earnestly attempts to fulfill the role of a king with justice and mercy. The earlier tests by Tom’s mother, and by Lords St. John and Hertford, raise doubts about the identities and characters of the prince and the pauper. Yet, in the end, their judgments rely more on appearances than on behavior. A prince is believed to be a pauper because he wears rags, and a pauper is accepted as prince because he wears royal robes. This underscores the theme that clothes make the man, a reflection of the proverb, ‘The apparel oft proclaims the man,’ from Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*. An even older Greek saying expresses the same idea: ‘The man is his clothing.’ (*medium*, 2022). It emphasizes how significantly a person’s attire influences how they are perceived by society.

Miles Hendon represents the best of British values, high-mindedness, common sense, and true nobility, qualities that shine through despite his modest appearance. He is immediately drawn to the boy not because of his royal status, but because he senses a genuine nobility of character beneath the surface. Throughout the novel, Hendon never fully believes the boy is the real prince, yet he consistently supports him, helping him recover from setbacks and remaining a loyal friend. Hendon takes the boy to his humble lodgings near London Bridge, where, to their surprise, John Canty appears, recognizing Hendon. Canty claims the boy is his son, but Hendon firmly orders him to stay away or face his sword, standing by the boy’s denial of Canty’s claim. Before eating, the boy asks Hendon to help him bathe. Hendon does so quietly pleased, enjoying the boy’s role as the ‘king.’ After their meal, Edward asks Hendon about his own life. Hendon explains that his father, Sir Richard Hendon, is a wealthy baronet in Kent. He lost his mother in childhood and has two brothers: the kind elder brother Arthur and the selfish, deceitful younger brother Hugh who is also their father’s favorite. Hendon has grown up alongside his beautiful, orphaned cousin and heiress, Lady Edith.

Sir Richard Hendon is the guardian of Lady Edith, whom Miles Hendon greatly admires, and Lady Edith herself wishes to marry Miles. However, there is a complication: she has been betrothed to Arthur Hendon since infancy. Yet Arthur loves another woman and urges his brother Miles to marry Lady Edith instead. Meanwhile, Hugh Hendon desires Lady Edith’s wealth rather than her, and when he proposes, she rejects him. Hugh then turns to his father who favors and trusts him as the youngest son and accuses Miles of arrogance and plotting to elope with Lady Edith. Without proper investigation, their father believes Hugh and banishes Miles from home and England for three years, hoping this will teach him wisdom. Miles leaves England, becomes a soldier, and fights in continental wars. Despite facing many dangers, he is eventually captured and imprisoned for seven years. Using his wit and courage, he finally escapes and returns to London, where he encounters and saves Edward. Poor in both wealth and status, Miles now wishes to learn the fate of his family at Hendon Hall. Edward feels that Miles has suffered a great injustice and vows to set it right. Moved by Miles’s story, Edward shares his own misfortunes in detail. Though Miles finds it hard to believe, he senses the boy’s goodness despite his apparent mental illness and resolves to care for him until he recovers.

Edward bestows knighthood on Miles Hendon, granting him the honor to sit beside or before him. That night, Edward sleeps on the cot while Hendon stands guard by the door. Before the prince awakens, Miles rises quietly. Though the boy may not have been born a king, Miles feels he desperately needs better clothing. Lacking the funds to buy new garments, Miles sells his sword and visits a second-hand clothes shop. Returning to the room, he begins mending the clothes with needle and thread. A novice at sewing, Miles pricks his fingers repeatedly but works with a smile, embodying the spirit captured by O. Henry in *The Gift of the Magi*: ‘Life is made up of sobs, sniffles, and smiles, with sniffles predominating’ (Henry, O. 2020). Miles embraces the hardships with quiet resilience. When he finishes, he returns to wake Edward. only to find the boy missing. Rushing outside, Miles questions a servant who says another young boy arrived to take the prince southward. As they step outside, a rough-looking man follows the two boys. Filled with anger and despair, Miles suspects the man is John Canty. Determined to rescue the boy, Miles bursts out of the inn, vowing to find Edward at any cost. He fears John Canty intends to harm the innocent prince. This episode sets the stage for the next part of the story: the prince’s recapture by Canty and Miles Hendon’s unwavering resolve to save him.

Tom Canty is caught between dream and reality. As a pauper, he longs for royal life, but once he experiences it, he finds it restrictive. Though both royalty and poverty have limitations, they differ in nature. The author offers insight into the rigid structure of royal life. Despite having over 384 servants, Tom feels uneasy due to a lack of freedom. Through his experience, readers grasp that absolute freedom is an illusion, one's freedom cannot infringe upon another's. As the saying goes, 'You can't have your cake and eat it too.' The novel also reflects the universal human tendency to be dissatisfied with what one has, a mindset shaped by comparisons and expectations. Gratitude can help counter this. George Bernard Shaw noted in *The Man of Destiny*, 'There's no satisfaction in hanging a man who does not object to it,' suggesting that people often devalue what comes too easily. Though the two boys have not yet reached such wisdom, both dream of royalty, not poverty.

Miles Hendon sets out in search of Edward. Meanwhile, Tom Canty awakens in the royal bed, momentarily confused, and calls for his sisters. When a royal servant arrives for instructions, Tom realizes he is now the King of England. Disturbed, he tries to return to sleep and dreams of a helpful dwarf showing him where to find twelve pennies a week, enough to satisfy his father, help the priest, and support his mother. He is soon awakened again by another servant. His morning ablutions and dressing are done with elaborate ceremony, each item passed through many hands. After the royal hairdresser sets his hair, Tom eats breakfast and is then taken to the throne with pomp, surrounded by officers and functionaries. Assisted by Lord Hertford, Tom must listen to and approve various dull reports. When he hears that the late king's body will be buried only next month, he is puzzled. Learning that royal household expenses total £28,000, Tom suggests dismissing servants and moving to a smaller house to save money, but Lord Hertford discreetly stops him with a firm hand.

Tom Canty, thinking like a common boy, feels the royal household's expenditure is excessive and should be reduced. Through this, the author highlights how public money is often squandered on extravagance. Tom also learns that the late king's will grants Lord Hertford a ducal title and raises his brother, Sir Thomas Seymour, to the baronage, both promptly executed. When Tom is about to suggest that the king's debts be settled first, Lord Hertford's subtle touch silences him. Despite not being his real father, Tom wishes to protect the late king's honour, perhaps out of gratitude for the affection he received. A generous thought crosses his mind: to make his mother the Duchess of Offal Court and grant her an estate. But reality hits, he is king only in name, while powerful nobles rule, and to them, his mother is just a pauper. All the formalities exhaust Tom, and he falls asleep on the throne, halting the empire's business. Later that morning, he enjoys time with Lady Elizabeth and Lady Jane Grey, followed by a brief but unpleasant encounter with his older sister, Mary, later known as Bloody Mary.

At this point, the storyline takes a turn. After Lady Elizabeth and Lady Jane Grey leave, a twelve-year-old boy named Humphrey Marlow arrives, introducing himself as the prince's whipping boy, a child paid to receive punishment for the prince's mistakes in lessons such as Greek, Latin, or French. Tom is shocked and finds it inhuman that someone else is beaten for his errors. The author highlights how common corporal punishment was during that era, especially for the privileged. However, Humphrey becomes a valuable source of information for Tom, helping him understand palace routines and the life of Edward Tudor. While Humphrey believes he is helping the prince regain his memory, Tom is actually learning Edward's past. Humphrey makes two humble requests: to prevent any punishment that day and not to dismiss him from his post, as it is his only means of livelihood for himself and his sisters, 'his back is his bread.' Tom kindly agrees and, going further, appoints Humphrey as the Hereditary Grand Whipping-Boy to the Royal House of England.

As Tom frees Humphrey Marlow from whipping and grants him a palace position, Humphrey begins to feel affection for the prince. Tom keeps him close, encouraging Humphrey to share stories about the real prince. Humphrey recalls many past incidents, and Tom asks him to visit often, believing the more he learns from Humphrey, the better informed he becomes. After Humphrey leaves, Lord Hertford, now Earl of Hertford, Duke of Somerset, and Great Protector, enters. He warns Tom that rumors of the prince's madness are spreading rapidly across the country. To counter these rumors, Tom must dine publicly with the Lords of the Council within a few days. Noting improvement in Tom's memory, Hertford sees the talks with Humphrey have helped. When Hertford mentions the missing Great Seal of England, Tom asks what it looks like. Sensing Tom's memory lapse, Hertford changes the subject but remains pleased with Tom's progress, believing he needs little assistance.

Whether the prince is sane or insane in private, public perception is crucial. That is why the Earl of Somerset advises Tom to dine publicly. As planned, the next day foreign ambassadors arrive with their guards to pay respects to Tom, the new king. The spectacle fascinates Tom at first but soon grows tedious. He follows Lord Hertford's advice, behaving like a king, yet feels the day is largely wasted, except for one private hour spent with his whipping boy, which brings him joy and valuable insight, free from meaningless ceremonies. On his third day at court, Tom grows accustomed to the pageantry and rituals. Though he sometimes longs for the familiar streets, he occasionally enjoys the power his position brings. The fourth day requires him to eat publicly, a distressing experience under many watchful eyes and whispered judgments. Late that afternoon, Tom sits in a large chamber filled with officials and courtiers, including the Earl of Hertford, all awaiting the start of an important ceremony.

'Freedom.....freedom.....freedom!' Tom longs deeply for it. Life without freedom feels restrictive and void of independence. Freedom is the ability to act, speak, and think without external control, and his heart yearns for just that. Now, in a large chamber filled with dignitaries, Tom casually moves to a window and looks out. Beyond the palace gates, he sees a highway bustling with people exercising their liberty to come and go, to talk and see. He feels like a bird trapped in a golden cage, yet this cage is the very dream he once cherished. Suddenly, Tom notices a loud, shouting crowd passing the gates. Curious, he asks his uncle, the Earl of Somerset, who calls a servant to stop the mob and find out what's happening. The servant quickly returns, reporting that the crowd is escorting a man, a woman, and a young girl sentenced to execution for disrupting peace and order. Intrigued, Tom commands that the three be brought before him. He immediately recognizes the man as the one who saved his playmate, Giles Witt, from drowning in the Thames on New Year's Day.

Tom vividly realizes the power of a king's words. Upon inquiry, he learns the man is condemned for poisoning another, who has since died. To Tom, this is a shock; he feels powerless to save him. As the man is about to be led to execution, he raises his head and makes a humble appeal, not to overturn the sentence, but to ask that he be hanged instead, which he calls a great mercy. Tom is astonished and asks why hanging would be a boon. The man explains that the original sentence is to be boiled alive in oil, a horrific punishment Tom finds unimaginable. The Earl confirms the cruel law's existence. Dr. J. Hammond Trumbull, in *Blue Laws, True and False* (Dr.Trumbull JH, 1980), describes this punishment: a coiner was slowly lowered into boiling oil by a pulley, beginning with his feet and legs, until boiled alive. Moved by this cruelty, Tom orders the immediate repeal of the law. Lord Hertford, a merciful man in a harsh age, praises Tom's decree, assuring him that history will honor the royal house for this act of mercy.

As the under-sheriff moves to take the man away, Tom stops him, eager to learn more. Feeling a surge of pride and the rewards of kingship, Tom questions the accused about the crime. He learns the man had entered the house of a sick man in Islington, who died shortly after, with doctors suspecting poisoning. Yet, there is no concrete evidence. A witch reportedly predicted the man's death by poison and named a stranger as the culprit. The man reveals he was at the Thames when the death occurred, coinciding with the day Tom saw him save his playmate's life. Seeing the flimsy evidence, Tom grows angry that such a man should face death on such grounds. He orders the man's release, earning admiration from the crowd who marvel at how a clever boy could be mistaken for mad. They recognize the king's judgment as a refreshing change in England's harsh legal system. Here, Tom applies not just knowledge, but wisdom, the ability to make sound judgments based on experience and understanding.

Indeed, it is a memorable day for Tom, as the audience recognizes his rare combination of knowledge and wisdom though he is a young boy. Shakespeare echoes this sentiment in *The Merchant of Venice*, where the Duke says, 'I beseech you, let his lack of years be no impediment to let him lack a reverend estimation, for I never knew so young a body with so old a head.' (gutenberg, 2023) But this is not the end of Tom's display of humanity and judgment. Another case is presented: a mother and her young daughter accused of selling their souls to the devil to raise a storm that had devastated the surrounding area. Witnesses claim they saw the pair enter a ruined church to perform the ritual, and that the mother removed her stockings to summon the storm. Tom pauses thoughtfully, and then calmly orders the woman to remove her stockings again, to see if the storm will return. The onlookers, gripped by superstition, are terrified. Yet when the woman and her daughter obey, nothing happens. Tom then declares them innocent and orders their release. Through this episode, the author exposes how deeply law was entangled with superstition. Tom's decision reflects the need to liberate justice from irrational fears such as witchcraft, often rooted in ignorance and prejudice, used to justify cruelty in the name of law.

Overall, the remarkable and unexpected events of Tom's fourth day greatly boost his self-confidence, so much so that he no longer dreads the state dinner he must attend that evening. His display of common sense and compassion in judgment earns admiration from everyone present. Through these episodes, the author illustrates how many laws of the time were rooted in cruelty, superstition, and irrationality. Dr. J. Hammond Trumbull, in *Blue Laws, True and False*, notes, 'A woman and her daughter of nine years old were hanged in Huntingdon for selling their souls to the devil, and raising a storm by pulling off their stockings in 1618.' Twain clearly draws from historical records, weaving real legal absurdities into his narrative. Before these events, Tom felt uneasy and unsure of how to behave as a monarch. But now, he gradually begins to assert his royal identity. His growing self-confidence reflects an emerging understanding of his role, he begins to trust his instincts, recognize his strengths, and act with purpose. His words and gestures begin to carry meaning and weight, both within the palace and before the public. The royal dinner that night is grand and majestic, with Tom seated at the center, no longer a fearful impostor, but a boy slowly embracing the burden and dignity of kingship.

As the hour of Tom's first state dinner approaches, he feels a newfound self-assurance, thanks to his success in administering justice and handling prisoners and dignitaries. This practical experience empowers him to approach the event with confidence and composure. The author describes the dinner in rich detail, highlighting the elaborate preparations for the public meal. Tom dines with grace and dignity, showing no sign of discomfort despite knowing that every eye is upon him. He refrains from doing anything for personal gain and allows the servants to attend to him with proper decorum. He takes great care to meet every expectation placed upon him. As a result, Tom feels triumphant and believes he could now face public scrutiny with ease. The narrative then shifts to Miles Hendon, who sets out for Southwark in search of Edward Tudor. Spending the night at an inn, Hendon assumes Edward would try to escape and make his way to Kent, knowing it to be Hendon's home. He decides to head there, traveling through the woods while looking for clues. Meanwhile, Edward, now with a youth who led him from the inn, refuses to go further unless he sees Hendon. The youth lies that Hendon is injured, convincing Edward to continue. They eventually reach an abandoned barn in the woods, where John Canty, now calling himself John Hobbs, reappears in disguise.

When John Canty asks Edward about his mother and sisters, Nan and Bet, Edward replies that his mother is dead and his sisters are in the palace. Canty assumes the boy is still suffering from madness. Edward, meanwhile, reflects on his father's death until he falls asleep. Upon waking, he finds himself surrounded by a rowdy group of ruffians: men, women, and children, drinking, singing, and lamenting the harshness of English laws. Though they appear disabled, most are in perfect health. Edward notices John Canty among them and realizes he is part of this vagabond gang. Their leader, the Ruffler, intervenes when Canty tries to harm Edward, asserting his authority and protecting the boy. The next morning, the gang leaves the barn, passing through farmhouses, stealing from villagers, and frightening locals. Edward is placed under the watch of Hugo, while John Canty is ordered to stay away. As they approach a town, the group splits into smaller bands. With no opportunities to steal, Hugo devises a deceitful plan: he pretends to collapse from illness while Edward is told to beg for help. When a passerby offers three pennies, Edward reveals the truth that it's all a ruse. Hugo flees, and Edward escapes in the opposite direction, finally breaking free from the tramps.

Among the vagabond gang, Edward takes a liking to Yokel, a former farmer forced into their company. In the eyes of society at the time, tramps are despised, viewed as drunkards, beggars, thieves, and threats to social order. Though Edward opposes begging, hunger soon overcomes pride. When he asks for food, people reject him, judging by his ragged clothes. As night descends, the sounds of the forest unsettle him. He stumbles upon a barn, quietly slips inside, and tries to rest. Two farmers enter and then leave with their lamp, unaware of his presence. Edward curls up in a corner, only to discover a calf lying beside him. Grateful for its warmth and silent companionship, he nestles against it, covers them both with some horse blankets, and falls into a deep, dreamless sleep. The scene is a touching moment of humility. The calf does not stir, as if aware that a king is sleeping beside it. This episode mirrors *Oliver Twist's* lonely journey to London. As Dickens writes, 'He was cold and hungry, and more alone than he had ever felt before. Being very tired with his walk, however, he soon fell asleep and forgot his troubles.' (Dickens Charles, 2019) Edward experiences the same solace found in exhaustion and the quiet kindness of nature.

The next day Edward wakes up early in the morning and finds a rat sleeping on his chest. He thinks that it is a good omen and he is about to leave the barn when two young girls come in and see him. He introduces himself as the king of England and narrates his unfortunate story to them. In the entire novel, Edward reveals his past with Miles Hendon due to his kindness and with the young girls due to their age equality. The girls

seem to believe him and they make him remember how the boys at the Christ's hospital have ill-treated him. The girls' mother is a poor widow and she thinks that the boy is a lunatic. When she brings food for him, he talks about some fine dishes so she thought that he is a cook in the palace. When she asks him to take care of cooking for some time, he remembers the ruler of England, 'Alfred the Great' who has been the King of the West Saxons from 871 to 886, Under Alfred's rule, considerable administrative and military reforms are introduced, prompting lasting change in England. Notwithstanding the recent experiences have humbled the boy, his personal pride and a sense of superiority are not rooted out. He therefore is unwilling to do domestic chores. The life in his palace has not taught him the dignity of labour. He takes the mid-day meal and then the lady of the house asks him to take some kittens to give a bath. He is about to deny, but he notices Hugo and John Canty coming towards the house, so he leaves the house with the kittens through the back door. Getting rid of the kittens in the outhouse, he takes to heels to escape the place through a narrow lane.

The young king, Edward flees from the widow's house on noting the approach of John Canty and Hugo at the right time. He runs towards the yonder woods and feels secured as he enters the forest. He keeps his brisk walk until the night falls and starts to worry that he doesn't find any way or a safe place to rest for the night. He remembers that there can be witches in the trees at night. But as a ray of hope, he soon finds a shabby little hut occupied by a hermit who allows the boy and he claims to be an archangel but he should have been Pope except for Edward's father, King Henry. The innocent boy admits that he is the son of Henry. The hermit holds a grudge against the old king and so he wants to take revenge on the boy. And while Edward sleeps, the hermit finds a butcher knife, sharpens it and ties up the little king while he sleeps in such a way that the boy can't cry. It increases the heart beats of the readers thinking it is the silence of the lamb. The crazy hermit sharpens the knife muttering all the while until almost the daybreak. When he kneels beside the king's bed with his knife, Edward wakes up. The lunatic hermit tells the boy that he has to say the death prayer for him. In spite of his continuous struggle, the boy can neither utter a cry nor fee his legs or hands. This part of the novel explores themes of identity, social class, and the disparities between the rich and the poor and even the hermits who bear grudge against King Henry.

'From the historical perspective, the King Henry VIII reformed the official religion in England in 16th century. Thousands of Catholic priests' religious houses were raided and were forced into poverty. Some of them were executed or mutilated for not taking an oath to recognize King Henry VIII as the supreme head of the Church and pledging loyalty to him even before God.' According to David M. Loades, a British Historian writes, 'This period was called the Reformation, during which King Henry VIII reformed the official religion in England. It used to be Catholicism, but Henry broke from the Pope and created the Church of England instead.' The hermit is apparently a Catholic monk or priest once; he wants to show his anger on Edward by killing him. When the hermit is aware Edward is awake he commands the boy to say his final prayers. As the sun rises, the hermit tells Edward to close his eyes and prepare to die. Just at that moment, they hear voices outside and knock on the door. The hermit hurriedly covers Edward with a sheepskin as they hear what sounds like fighting outside. A voice calls for someone to open the door; Edward recognizes that it is Miles Hendon. The hermit opens the door, and Hendon asks him where the boy is. The hermit says that Edward has left on an errand and he will be back shortly, but Hendon expresses disbelief that Edward would not take any orders from anyone. The hermit explains that he's an archangel, not a man. Hendon believes that Edward might run away from there. So taking the hermit to show the way, Miles Hendon has left the hut.

The fate of Edward brings him back to the miserable stage. He has escaped from the gang of thieves and beggars but he is caught by the lunatic hermit who tries to kill him. His saviour, Miles Hendon reaches the hut, but he doesn't look into the inner room. Meanwhile there come Hugo and John Canty who have been searching for the boy frantically and take away him back to their gang. One day Hugo tramples Edward's toe deliberately, when he does the same for the third time, the boy takes a cudgel and knocks Hugo to the ground. Hugo too grabs a cudgel and attacks the boy, but the boy has been trained in the palace in swordsmanship and this comes to his use. All the others form a round and encourage the two to fight in which Edward has easily defeated Hugo. The gang force Huga to indulge the boy in stealing and in begging in vain. Edward's sense of strong moral superiority angers Hugo. It reveals that Edward is not insecure about his own moral character and so he is unwilling to tread the way of the gang. Hugo has become Edward's bitter enemy and he wants to humiliate the boy by creating an artificial sore on the boy's leg for begging. This fails when Yokel comes to the rescue of the boy. At last, the Ruffler decides that Edward can be used as a thief, and one day, he sends the boy along with Hugo who plans to frame him in a theft so that he can be arrested while Edward has his own plan to escape. The two go into a village and they spot a woman with a basket in the street. Hugo tells Edward

to wait in the street. When the woman crosses them, he runs out, grabs a package from her basket and throws it at Edward and runs away. Edward throws the package down and before he escapes, the woman catches hold of his hand and makes a hue and cry that fetches a crowd. Meanwhile, Miles Hendon arrives there.

Before Miles Hendon secures the boy, there appears a constable and he wants to take the three: Edward, Miles Hendon and the woman to the court. But the king wants to show his reluctance, but Hendon says that he should not break his own laws. Miles Hendon is surprised when the king addresses him as Sir Miles Hendon. In Tudor England, only men with knightly titles have been typically called ‘Sir.’ Edward admits Hendon’s words and follows the constable. In the court hall, the woman asserts that it is the boy who has stolen the package because she takes Edward for Hugo. There is no eye-witness and so the judge feels that the boy is guilty. When the package is opened, there is a neatly cut and cleaned small pig, worth three shillings and eight pence. The judge seems to have good insight into human nature. On observing the boy, the judge tells the lady, by sending others from the court, that if anything worth more than 13 pence, the accused must be hanged. The woman is alarmed and says that the price of the pig is just eight pence because she wants to save the boy. In those days 12 pence is a shilling. It can be observed that justice is not delayed in the 16th century England and the same thing is found in the novel, *Oliver Twist*, written by Charles Dickens. The phrase ‘Justice delayed is justice denied’ has been used for centuries. It is first used by the English philosopher and jurist Sir Edward Coke in the early 1600s. Coke has written about the right to a speedy trial, but his words are just as relevant today. In any country where justice is often very slow, people can feel that they are powerless and that the system is against them.

Edward is still at the judge. The constable follows the woman out of the courtroom and Miles Hendon following them secretly. The constable asks the woman to sell the dressed pig for eight pence and the lady refuses saying she has bought it for three shillings and eight pence. The constable says that she has taken an oath in the court that she has bought it at just eight pence, if it is wrong, it comes under crime. The woman bursts into tears and sells the pig at eight pence and leaves the place. The constable goes into the courtroom, the judge gives his judgment that the boy should be in a common jail for some time and be whipped in public. The king is about to react, but Miles Hendon silences him. The constable takes charge of the boy and leaves the courtroom followed by Hendon. The streets outside are deserted as it is evening and when they reach an empty market place, Hendon stops the constable and asks him to let Edward escape. The constable becomes angry and threatens Miles Hendon to get him arrested. Then Hendon repeats the conversation between the constable and the woman and how he has got the pig for eight pence. It is a crime indeed and so the constable frees Edward. He wants to tell the judge that the boy has escaped. Though Miles Hendon knows that it comes under blackmailing, he does it to protect Edward. Shakespeare says in his great play, ‘*The Merchant of Venice*,’ ‘To do a great right do a little wrong.’ The sentence is short, but it is a very thought-provoking and controversial statement that challenges traditional notions of morality and ethics. This quote may seem bewildering, as it suggests that in order to achieve something worthwhile or noble; one can be willing to make use of a small wrongdoing; that is what Miles Hendon does.

It is a happy time for Edward and Miles Hendon. As they are free now and when the constable is out of sight, Hendon asks the boy to be at a certain place and change into the better clothes that Hendon has brought from London. In the mean time, he goes to his inn to bring his own belongings from there. He brings two horses with him. Later Miles Hendon and Edward Tudor head towards Hendon Hall on their horses, stopping at inns and sharing their stories of their adventures. Hendon is horrified to learn that the crazy hermit has tried to kill the boy in his hut. He has felt that he would have killed the hermit. The closer is the Hendon Hall, the greater Hendon’s excitement is. He speaks incessantly about his brothers, his father, Lady Edith, the extension of the Hendon Hall, the number of servants and many more. The area around the Hall is beautiful and he recognizes the various buildings as they are not changed, but he can’t identify the people as he is away from the place for ten years. He says that the members of his family will be immensely happy to see him after a lot of time. Hendon is elated on seeing the appearances of his home, but he doesn’t think what has happened to his people during the ten years. No matter what home means to him, there is surely something nostalgic about the place. It is the place where he is born and bred. He is missing home for years. He can only understand how exciting it is to come back to his own place and people.

No sooner does Miles Hendon reach the Hall, he catches hold of Edward’s hand and rushes into a large room excitedly. They find a young man at a desk and the readers can understand that he is Hugh Hendon. Miles Hendon goes there with an emotional air, asks him to hug him and call their father. However, Hugh has a blank look at Miles and he is surprised and confused and asks him who he is and feels that Miles must be

mad. Being stunned by this cold reception, Miles Hendon says that Hugh is his brother. Hugh takes him to the light to have a better look at his face. He, at last, says that he is like his brother, but the problem he has received a letter from abroad stating his brother is dead in a battle six or seven years ago. Now Miles Hendon and Edward Tudor are sailing in the same boat. Both are treated insane. Hendon, not understanding his brother's deception, asks Hugh to call Sir. Richard Hendon, Arthur Hendon and Lady Edith and the old servants. His hope is one of these will surely recognize him. Hugh says that his father and his brother are dead and only five old servants and Lady Edith who is his wife now, are alive. With those words, he goes inside and after some time, he comes with the servants and Lady Edith. Miles Hendon understands that the old servants are not honest and his only hope is Lady Edith. Edward believes Hendon and asks him if he believes his story, before Miles Hendon answers, there come the servants, Lady Edith with Hugh Hendon.

Miles Hendon walks forward eagerly on seeing Lady Edith, but Hugh stops him. When she looks at Miles, her face becomes pale, but she says that she doesn't know him and runs away into the rooms with sobs. The servants also say the same. This stupefies Miles Hendon, he becomes angry and pins his brother to the wall by his throat and the servants don't come to his rescue as Miles is armed. Somehow, Hugh frees himself and runs out to get help from outside. Edward becomes introvert and wonders why the royal couriers of England are not looking for the king and why proclamations are not made about the missing king of the country. He asks Miles Hendon to do one thing that he will write a letter in Greek, Latin and English and he has to deliver it in person to his uncle Lord Hertford. He writes and gives it to Miles. This letter plays a crucial role at the end of the novel. It is the letter that saves and takes Miles Hendon to the real king of England. Here at the Hendon Hall, suddenly Lady Edith comes there and asks Miles Hendon to leave the place at once as the area is very dangerous for him. The whole territory is under the control of Hugh Hendon and everyone in that place is at Hugh's beck and call. Miles Hendon makes her a request if she believes him as Miles Hendon and Lady Edith refuses to acknowledge him and implores him to run away from there. But when they are about to leave the room, officers of law burst into the room and arrest Miles Hendon and Edward Tudor and take them to prison. Alfred Lord Tennyson, a great English poet, is remembered here who writes in his poem Ulysses, 'One equal temper of heroic hearts made weak by time and fate, but strong in will to strive, to seek, to find and not to yield.' Miles Hendon and Edward Tudor have the heroic hearts.

Edward has to undergo and witness horrible conditions of the prisons and the prisoners in his country being a prisoner himself. The prisoners are overcrowded in the filthy rooms and the food inedible. The king, Edward, is bothered bitterly over the horrible indignity that is meted out to his royalty. But Miles Hendon is silent being utterly disappointed by the force of adverse circumstances. He has felt much as a man who is supposed to be dancing in the rain, but now he is struck by lightning. One week passes in the dungeon prison and people are deliberately sent into the prison to have a look at Miles Hendon who is presented as an imposter. It is an unbearable psychological torture for him. One day, the jailor has brought an old man and asked him to have a deeper look at Miles Hendon and asks him if he is the son of Sir Richard Hendon. The old man is Blake Andrews, a faithful servant for Miles' father, scans him and denies him as Miles Hendon. When the jailor leaves the place, the old man kneels down and prays to God that Sir Miles Hendon is still alive and he is ready to go out and proclaim the truth in the neighbourhood though is killed. Miles Hendon stops the old man from doing it because he can be used to know what is going on outside the prison and to get some proper food for him and Edward. Blake Andrew tells Miles that his brother Arthur dies first and his father forces Lady Edith to marry Hugh, but she is unwilling because Miles will come to marry her. At last, there comes a letter showing the death of Miles Hendon, yet Lady Edith tries to postpone the marriage with Hugh. At last, she has to agree when Sir Richard is on his death bed.

Blake Andrews brings more news that there is a rumour that the king of England is mad, but there is a gag order that it is death to speak about it. On hearing it, Edward Tudor rises and says that the king is not mad. The good old man reports that the dead body of Henry VIII will soon be buried and the new king is crowned after that. Sir Hugh Hendon will attend the coronation function. Edward Tudor also hears that the new king has won the hearts of the people by saving the Duke of Norfolk and he has started repealing the cruellest laws. Now, Edward's captivity has become unbearable for him and this escalates his distress and discomfort. Miles tries his level best to comfort him but he can't do it, meanwhile two women are brought into the prison simply because there are Baptists. The boy becomes close with them and their motherly qualities bring comfort to the boy. One day when the king, Edward wakes up, the two women are not found and he thinks that they are freed. This gives him happy, but after some time, all the prisoners are called out into the jail-yard where the women are tied to two posts. The king is stupefied when dried wood is piled around them and burnt alive

while their two daughters are crying bitterly and trying to jump into the fire. The young king says that one incident does never go out of his memory and he feels that kings should look into their laws and learn how to temper them with mercy. To throw light on the cruel laws of that time, Dr.J. Hammond Trumbull writes in his 'Blue Laws, True and False' that a learned barrister's ears were cut off and was fined for 3,000 pounds and imprisoned to life during the rule of Edward VI for publishing a pamphlet against hierarchy.

The author is well-acquainted with the British Laws of the seventeenth century. In those days some 300 crimes were designated as criminal offenses, and from the fact that housebreaking, or stealing anything of value greater than a shilling, was thus made punishable by death. In the novel, the young king is imprisoned in one of his own prisons. He is a witness to the cruel punishments for crime figured prominently in important social issues. More and more people have perpetrated crimes in an effort to relieve harsh economic poverty. Miles Hendon says many times that a king should be subjected to his own laws. Here the author, through Hendon, speaks to the readers. If laws are good, no person should be exempted. But many laws are made for common people. The young king, Edward is at the lowest ebb and the bitter experiences make him amend all the cruel and unjust laws of his land when he becomes full pledged king. Meanwhile, the surrogate king, Tom Canty is already changing many laws that are unjust. But the horrible thing that he is unaware of the true king is suffering unjustly, but these sufferings can make the king a better king. Though the reforms in the judicial system are in the pipeline, two women are burnt alive just for their religious beliefs. The real king, Edward Tudor is furious over these inhumanities, and he wants Hendon to break the jail and run with him to Westminster, so that he can sit on his throne and hold out his sceptre in mercy over the unfortunate people and save their lives, limbs and dignity.

Miles Hendon grows impatient in the prison and feels that very valuable time is being wasted and at last his time for trial arrives. He thinks that he will welcome any sentence without further imprisonment. The court has called him a sturdy vagabond and the punishment is to sit two hours in the stocks and Edward is sent out with a lecture and a warning not to be associated with such tramps. But when he sees Miles Hendon in such a humiliating position, his royal blood reacts and says that Miles Hendon is his servant and he is..... . He is about to continue, but Hendon stops him and tells the guard that he is a mad boy. Hugh Hendon, who arrives there to witness the punishment, asks the guard to give the boy six lashes, but Miles Hendon requests the guard to give him the lashes, Hugh Hendon makes the six into twelve and leaves the place. The dozen lashes are given on his bare back. This moves Edward Tudor very deeply who sits beside Miles and says that he is awarding him Earldom. Hendon is deeply touched and water wells up in his eyes. He muses that the spectre-knight of the Kingdom of Dreams and Shadows has become a spectre-Earl in an imaginary country, though it is called England. When the time is up, Miles Hendon is released from the stocks and is ordered to leave the territory immediately and he should not come back. The remarkable thing is when Sir Hugh asks the guard to give the king six lashes, they boy is ready to take the lashes than to beg for mercy, it is befitting his royal status. It makes the readers remember a great saying, 'Better to be the head of an ass than the tail of a horse.' He would like to prefer physical punishment to humiliation.

The punishment is over and Miles Hendon is free now. His sword is restored and there are his horse and that of Edward. As they mount the horses, they begin to run, but Miles Hendon doesn't know where he has to go, whose help does he choose and the help should be powerful. Otherwise, he has to live the life of an imposter in spite of his being entitled to riches by his father. He wants a powerful person who can say that he is Miles Hendon and at the same time, there must be a powerful person who can say that Edward Tudor is Edward Tudor. Both of them want mighty voices to call a spade a spade. They want truth, but it is not very easy for them to find. At last, he decides to meet his old friend Sir Humphry Marlowe in London and to meet the king so that his position can be restored. He thinks that doesn't like to cross the bridge before it is reached. Thus he is lost in his thoughts, and then he remembers the king who is following him on his horse. He asked the king where they should go; a very decisive answer comes 'to London.' Edward has also planned to go to London. Miles Hendon is still sure that the boy Edward is not the king. He is confident of it. When they reach London Bridge, the next day is the Coronation Day and the people of London are in a celebration mood. When a commotion starts in the heavy crowd, Miles and Hendon and Edward Tudor are separated. Edward is decisive to prove his identity to dethrone the imposter and to become the king of England. Here the author keeps his readers on tenterhooks because of the heart-pounding suspense.

While the true King is fed up with the life being poorly dressed, poorly fed, cuffed and mocked by tramps, thieves, traitors and murderers in the jail and out of the jail; some have called him a tramp, mad boy, beggar, orphan, servant, idiot and imposter; on the other hand, the mock king, Tom Canty starts enjoying quite an

anomalous experience in the palace. The taste of royalty is heavenly and fantastic. By and large, Edward is not changed, but Tom Canty is changed a lot. He exercises limitless power and authority. He is vested with enormous authority related to legal and formal right to command, make decisions and rule. In the beginning, Tom has detested the pompous and glorious royal life, everything has irked him. Slowly he is fascinated by the bright side which goes on brightening more and more every day. These decimate his fears, fade the misgivings, take away the embarrassments and give place to easy and confident behaviour. There is the whipping-boy to fill the vital vacuums of royal life, before and during. He asserts his position and is able to order Lady Elizabeth and Lady Jane Grey to play or to talk and dismiss them when he is done with them with the air of familiarity. He starts enjoying the gorgeous dinners, processions and the bugles. The other astonishing change in him is he orders for more dresses and trebles his four hundred servants, Tom Canty of late Offal Court. However, he remains kind and gentle, and a strong and determined champion of all that are oppressed, and he has made a determined war upon unjust laws. Lady Mary, Edward Tudor's elder sister finds fault with Tom as he pardons thousands of people. He advises her to go to God and pray for a human heart for her.

In the beginning, Tom Canty has many painful thoughts about the real king, Edward Tudor who is in his rags and his mind wants him to come back and take his royal place. However, slowly the thoughts of the real king have gone into his forgetfulness. If Tom has wanted, he would order a thorough search in the entire country for a boy who resembles him, but he hasn't done it. In due course, the thoughts of the real king are an unwelcome menace for him. He misses his mother and the two sisters who are in utter poverty while he enjoys the royal life of England. But later the very thoughts of them appearing in rags before him make him shudder. He feels that the life at Offal Court is not worth livening. Thus Tom forgets about the real king and his own family as they make him think that he is not the king. And Tom is content, even glad: because, whenever their mournful and accusing faces rise before him now, they make him feel more despicable than the worms that crawl. The next day is the day of his coronation and he feels happy as the day will make him the king of England forever. There is not even a fraction of guilty conscience in him. While Tom is on his luxurious bed, the real king is wandering in London being hungry, thirsty, soiled and dragged, tired out with travel and dressed in rags and shreds. He is caught among people in and out of Westminster Abbey. People are as busy as bees making the last minute preparations for the royal coronation. Edward doesn't know whether he is recognized or not, if anything goes against him, he is a pauper for life-time. It is a bitter sorrow even to conceive, but the day will decide him to be the prince at the top or the pauper at the bottom. The fake king sleeps well; on the contrary the true king is sleepless.

The day of coronation, a red letter day in the history of English that makes Tom Canty a lawful king of the country. When he wakes up, there is thunderous murmuring all over which is like music to Tom. The people of London from low and lofty are in the mood of celebration. As is tradition, Tom leads a heavy procession on a war horse and in spending apparel from the Tower to Westminster Abbey, throwing fistful of coins at the people now and then. Lord Hertford is just behind him on his horse. Everything is in perfect protocol. Tom's heart swells with pride as he looks out over the crowds who have come there to see him. Tom sees some of his playmates in the crowd, but he doesn't call them and his memories with them are behind an iron curtain in his mind. There are calls for largess that prompts him to throw coins into the crowd and feels elated as he is the centre of attraction. At the Gracechurch Street, there are images of Elizabeth of York, Henry VII, Henry VIII, Jane Seymour and Edward Tudor as well. There are eulogies in poetic form, but the loyal uproar is sweeter music to Tom than any poetry, no matter what its quality might be. He witnesses that throughout the city, there are fine paintings that exemplify the king's virtues and talents. Tom wonders at these all, thinking they have been set up for him and his eyes are flashing with excitement. His senses swim in a delirium of pleasure. He has very conveniently forgot that he is a duplicate king. The author here gives the story a very powerful dimension which has brought Tom Canty from heaven to the grass-root level.

All of a sudden, Tom notices a very familiar face looking up at him in utter surprise. It is his own mother who is in the crowd and on seeing her son, she rushes forward and grabs his leg and cries addressing him as her child and her darling. Her face is full of joy and love. She has seen her son after a long time, especially in that royal position. Meanwhile, there comes an officer and snatches her away with a curse and sends her reeling back to her place. She is bitterly hurt not by the treatment of the officer, but by the words come out from Tom's mouth. They are, 'I do not know you, woman.' The readers feel that all the traditional pomp and glory shut the feelings for his mother. But there comes a second thought that afflicts him to the core of his heart to see her treated such cruelly. She turns for a last glimpse, but the crowd takes her away. She is wounded,

brokenhearted and a shame falls on him and decimates his pride. His grandeurs are stricken valueless and they fall down like dried leaves. He becomes introvert and feels ashamed of himself and how the guards have treated his mother. The smile, the pride and the royalty disappear from him. Lord Hertford finds this out, comes near him on his horse and asks him to smile at the crowds and people are observing his gloomy dull face. Tom tries to be happy, but he miserably fails. The Protector (Lord Hertford) comes to Tom again and asks him to be dignified, but he tells the Protector that the woman is his mother. The Protector is utterly disappointed and says that the king has gone mad again.

The procession for Coronation reaches the Westminster Abbey with the gloomy and dull Tom. The Protector, Lord Hertford is disappointed as he thinks that Tom has gone back mad. All the people are in their own allotted places and Tom is on the throne in his coronation robe. The women of elite are with their jewels and the light is being reflected on the diamonds. At last, the ceremony begins. For the rich people, the ceremony of coronation is all about appearances. For them it is the place to exhibit their best and show off in the presence of others. As the procedure begins, Tom becomes more and more uncomfortable and experiences dread. The process continues not minding his thoughts. Meanwhile, the Archbishop of Canterbury takes the crown and holds it over Tom's head and the aristocrats stand up and hold their coronets over their heads, suddenly a boy, with bareheaded, decadent shoes, and dressed in coarse common clothes that were falling to rags, shouts that the crown should not be on the wrong head as he is the real king. Just then, the guards rush to Edward and they are about to lay their hands on him, but Tom gets up and orders them not to touch him as he is the king. Utter astonishment sweeps through the hall. But the Lord of Hertford tells everyone to ignore the words of Tom as there is a reoccurrence of his mental illness and he orders the guards to pull Edward away from that place. But Tom stamps his foot and orders them not to do it. Edward steps up on the platform and Tom kneels down and swears fealty to Edward and requests him to put on the crown and become the king of England.

Here Tom comes out of his moral and painful dilemma and shows his uprightness. Though he is on the throne, he is caught between 'to be or not to be.' His mother brings this change in him. Once the coronation is done, he is the king permanently though Edward shows up. But the presence of Edward at the right time has turned the tables. The Lord Protector or the Lord Hertford looks at Edward, but his anger is transformed into wonder and others are also amazed at the extraordinary resemblance between the prince and the pauper. Lord Hertford asks Edward many questions about the court, the late King, the Prince and his sisters; the boy answers them correctly and without any hesitation. Edward also describes the rooms of state in the palace, the late King's apartments, and those of the Prince of Wales. The Lord Protector doesn't think that it is not strong enough proof because it is the matter of declaring a king. Meanwhile his eyes light up and he says that he knows a question only the real prince can answer it. 'Where is the Great Seal of England?' The question is approved by all. Edward with neither fear nor hesitation calls St. John and narrates him how to find out the place in his room and how to open it where the Seal is hidden. Tom orders St. John to hurry to the place to find it out so that the mystery can be solved. In the mean time, the people on the platform are gradually attracted toward Edward leaving Tom. The Lord Protector feels that it is a very tough time for England. St. John comes there running and people hold their breath to listen to him. He says that the Great Seal is not in that place. It pours cold water on Edward and Tom is speechless. The favoritism of the onlookers swings to Tom.

There is uncomfortable silence and the problem of finding out the real king becomes more problematic. The Lord Protector asks the guards to take out Edward into the streets and whip him throughout the town. But Tom moves ahead and warns them not to touch him as he is the real king of England. Lord Protector is caught between the devil and the deep sea. He asks St. John if he has searched properly and wonders how such a big thing as the Great Seal is missing. He says that it is not a small thing like a pin; it is a large golden disk. This description startles Tom Canty; with his beaming eyes springs forward and says that he knows where something that matches the description is, but that he is not the one who has hidden it. He says that it is hidden by Edward the real king of England. The pauper turns to the prince and asks him to think about what he has done before running out of the room in the palace that day when they have met. Edward thinks deeply and says that he can't remember any place where he has hidden the Great Seal. Then Tom prompts him to remember the incidents one after another in detail like, they have changed the clothes, both looked at their images in the mirror, Edward has noticed that the soldier has hurt Tom's hand and sprang to go and punish the soldier and he ran towards the door, but while he is passing a table, he sees a thing which they call a Great Seal on it. He takes it and looks at it as is for a place to hide it..... At this moment, Edward exclaims and asks St. John to go and find it in the Milanese armour that hangs on the wall in his room.

Tom's face beams up and he praises the king for remembering it. He asks St. John to rush to bring the Great Seal and he says that the scepter of England is Edward's. St. John leaves the place with wings to his feet. By this, the readers can understand that Tom Canty knows where the Great Seal of England is, but he doesn't know what it is. He understands by the description of the Lord Protector. But he doesn't tell where it is, he prompts Edward to remember the place. This is another example of his integrity. The whole assemblage is on its feet now with a bated breath, uneasiness, apprehension and consuming excitement. Edward has failed once to prove himself as the king and the second test is in progress. On the platform and on the floor, from low to lofty, there is a deafening sound of frantic conversation. For some time nobody knows anything or hears anything what his fellow bystander is telling him or he is telling his bystander. They feel the time has come to a standstill or it may be passing unheeded and unnoticed. At last, a sudden silence falls on the house as St. John appears upon the platform and holds the Great Seal aloft in his hand. A loud shout is delivered, 'Long live the true King.' Tom requests Edward to take the royal dress and give him his rags again. The Lord Protector calls for the arrest of Tom, but Edward stops it and reminds him that it is Tom who has given him the title of Duke and if Tom requests him, he will take the title back. With this The Lord Protector steps back. Edward asks Tom how he knows where the seal is. Tom with shy says that he used to crack nuts with it. Edward wears the coronation robe and the ceremony continues and England has its true king.

Now the author takes his readers to Miles Hendon who is caught in the crowd on the London Bridge and he misses Edward, but he decided to leave no stone unturned to get his young friend. But someone pickpockets him and makes him penniless. What now he has is his dress and sword. Miles walks along with the coronation procession, but he doesn't get an opportunity to have a look at Tom. He reaches some countryside and sleeps on the bank of the river Thames being hungry and tired. His pride forbids him from begging or pawning his dress or his sword. The next morning he goes to go to the palace to meet Sir Humphrey Marlow. At the palace the whipping boy happens to meet him and the boy thinks that he has seen Miles somewhere as Sir Humphrey is his father who is dead. The boy considers that the man should be taken to the presence of the King with the latter's permission. So he asks Miles to wait there till he comes and leaves the place. Meanwhile there come some soldiers and the in charge of the group, checks Miles and finds a letter written in three languages by Edward, at Hendon Hall, for Lord Hertford. He asks him to sit there and takes the letter to the King. The in-charge officer comes back and asks Miles respectfully to follow him. He is directly taken to the presence of the King, Edward Tudor. Miles Hendon is stupefied to see his young friend on the throne. To test the truth, he grabs a chair and sits in front of the King. Soldiers try to arrest him, but the king says that Miles has that privilege.

The King Edward Tudor appoints Miles Hendon as the Earl of Kent. Sir Hugh Hendon and Edith arrive at the palace someday and the King takes away his property and the title and asks him to leave the place. Hugh Hendon leaves the country. Tom Canty reaches the King with good news that he has found his mother and sisters. The King names Tom as the King's Ward. King Edward has remembered all the people who have helped him while is living the life of a pauper. The good people are rewarded and the bad people are punished, but the punishments are not cruel. Meanwhile, there is news that Hugh Hendon is dead abroad and Miles Hendon marries the widow, Lady Edith. John Canty is never heard of again. Being great friends of the King, Tom Canty and Miles Hendon have enjoyed privileges. Miles descendants remain the honour of sitting in the King's presence as long as the lineage continues. Tom Canty lives a long life, but Edward Tudor lives a short life. The King is known for his magnanimity and he amends any law which is harsh and oppressive because he has practical experience of suffering.

The last chapter includes the specific components of the author's style with ingenious reflections and commentary on human condition of the 16th century England. Political, historical and linguistic contexts mentioned in the novel are quite apt; certain of some horrible occurrences have really taken place in the history of England, especially the most barbarous punishments. The author had a thorough study of it and he smartly used it to make broader statements about the social structure and ruling class. In the end, readers are provided an opportunity to reflect on the events that have been occurred, the lessons that learned and the overall message that conveyed in the novel. If Tom's mother is forgotten in the review, it is doubtlessly missing a vital dimension though her role is short and brief. Her appearance strips Tom of his high-spirited delight in his power and glory and makes him a humble son of his mother. Her genuine motherly feelings are expressed through a single sentence and her looks. But he doesn't reject the coronation out and out and it may be his being in a state of confusion. However he becomes decisive, honest and open when the real king appears in the West Minster Abbey.

The incidents in the storyline showcase the growth and development of the main characters, predominantly the Prince and the Pauper. Especially the Prince learns a lot of lessons about the real-time situations of his people, the prevailing justice and injustice and by and large he understands how he ought to rule his kingdom in a better way. He can never have learnt them by just being in his palace. His administration moves from palace centred to people centred. Because of their unique experiences, Tom and Edward have learnt many a lesson related to the top and bottom of the then society. The novel comes to a conclusion with the central theme of switched identities has been properly replaced. In the story as a whole, the author addresses the readers directly to offer insights into the inspiration behind the novel. Though most of the novel is in third person narration, at times it comes to first person narration too to interact with the readers and this fills certain gaps. There are reunions: Edward Tudor and his royal line; Tom Canty and Edward Tudor; Miles Hendon and Edward Tudor; Lady Edith and Miles Hendon; Tom Canty and his mother and sisters. All the loose ends are tied to the main storyline including the whipping boy and Sir Humphrey Marlowe.

Conclusion: In *The Prince and the Pauper*, Mark Twain offers more than a whimsical tale of mistaken identity wrapped in robes and rags; he delivers a sharp critique of the rigid social hierarchies and surface-level judgments that defined sixteenth-century England, and, by extension, his own time. Beneath the novel's sentimental veneer lies a powerful exploration of the legal, moral, and class-based injustices that continue to echo across generations. Through the mirrored journeys of Edward Tudor and Tom Canty, Twain reveals how quickly society assigns value based on appearance and how fragile identity becomes when roles are reversed. The symbolic exchange of clothing dismantles the illusion of status, exposing both boys to the unfamiliar, and often brutal, realities of the other's world. As Edward endures the trials of poverty and Tom faces the weight of royal responsibility, both emerge with a deeper, hard-earned understanding of justice, empathy, and leadership. Edward's transformation into a more humane ruler is not a product of lineage but of lived experience, suggesting that true nobility arises not from birthright but from character. Twain's vivid use of dialect, historical detail, and irony enriches the narrative, turning what appears to be a children's story into a profound reflection on human dignity and social perception. Ultimately, when order is restored and the prince and the pauper return to their rightful places, Twain leaves us with a timeless truth: what lies beneath the robes and rags defines a person far more than what is worn. Though subtitled 'A Tale for Young People of All Ages,' this enduring narrative remains a compelling mirror held up to society, inviting each generation to examine its values, prejudices, and ideals. Indeed, men may come and men may go, but *The Prince and the Pauper* endures as a parable of conscience and compassion.

'When I am the king, the children shall have not only bread and shelter, but also teachings out of books, for a full belly is little worth when the mind is starved.' --Mark Twain, (*The Prince and the Pauper*)

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