

AN EXPERIMENT IN COMPOSITION WRITING.

I was tired of listening to so-called compositions on the trite subjects of Friendship, Winter, Education, Hope, Pleasures of Memory, Punctuality, *et id genus omne*. Every Friday afternoon I had suffered untold torments while the lads and lasses of my class stumbled up to the platform by my side and mumbled off their wise nothings on these subjects. The affair was getting to be as much dreaded by me as I knew it was irksome to my scholars. Could anything be done to awaken an interest in this really most valuable exercise? I had often striven to answer this query, and had occasionally broken the bonds of habit and had given out subjects which I wished to be discussed or written about. Sometimes it would be biographical, and the lives of great men in history would be the subject, but the encyclopedias were the sole source of information, and the results, in a literary point of view and value, were practically *nil*, and this line was abandoned after a few weeks. After many trials with varying degrees of success, I finally hit on the following plan: I announced a week previous to the afternoon for literary exercises, that the only subjects for composition were descriptions of something each scholar had seen being done; they were to be accounts of the actual working of some business or occupation, and such writer was to be familiar with his subject. The composition was to be written in the school-room, and was to occupy the hour usually given to the reading of the regular weekly essays.

As the hour approached I observed that there was considerable eagerness on the part of the children to begin their writing, and when the paper was distributed there was not a moment spent in preliminary excursions and wool-gathering. All went industriously and eagerly to writing. Fifty-four papers were handed in at the end of the allotted time and fifty-four satisfied boys and girls sat back in their seats with calm expectancy and contented mien. It may not be worth while to recount all that this exercise meant to us all, and how it was followed up with ever-increasing interest and profit. Let me state some of the subjects on which the first compositions were written.

Twelve girls and one boy described the process of making bread, and their directions were for the most part lucid and safe