

Children's Department.

Writing a Composition.

Tom Sherwood sat at a table in the room which he called his own, writing a composition. That is, he thought he was writing. At least, he had answered the call of his sister Jennie, who wished him to help her in some little task, "I can't. I'm writing my composition."

But there was not much written upon the paper which lay upon Tom's desk. In one corner was the picture of a horse, or of something a good deal like a horse. Then there was a dog that seemed to have made a mistake and had attacked the wrong cat, and was assuming an inoffensive and retiring attitude. Then under the drawings was the word "Ambition," with a very big A, and, if the truth be told, what appeared to be a boy or a goblin sitting upon the peak of it. But Tom had drawn two or three lines all through the word, and had written under it "Napoleon Bonaparte." Then he had also drawn a line through "Napoleon Bonaparte," and had commenced again, "The value of—," but there he stopped, and what was to be valued I am sure I cannot tell.

So Tom was hardly writing now; the fact is, he had dropped fast asleep. The composition was too much for him. It was no use trying. So he said, "I can't write. There is nothing to write about," and then he went to sleep. But sleeping boys dream sometimes, and I must tell you Tom's dream.

Tom dreamed that he had given up writing in despair, and had gone out under the apple trees in the dooryard. He saw, as usual, the rooster with his flock; but somehow "Old Joe" seemed to look at him in a wonderfully knowing way, and presently winked and



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beckoned as if he purposed to speak. Indeed, he did speak. "So you can't write a composition!"

"No," answered Tom, who was not as surprised as you might have supposed, "I have nothing to write about."
"Well, I declare," said Old Joe, "come here."

Tom followed the rooster, who brought him near the flock which he was escorting. "Sit down," said the rooster, and Tom sat upon a large, flat stone. All at once Tom noticed that the air was full of little threads, spiders' webs, he thought, and began to brush them away. Strangely enough, they remained just as before.

"Don't do so," said the rooster. "Just hold them to your ear."

Tom carefully reached for some of the threads, and bent his head towards them, when, at once, he heard a multitude of voices. If he took his ear away he heard nothing but clucks and a medley of fowl sounds, but as he listened with the threads at his ear he heard the funniest conversation.

"Such an escape as I had," said Speckle, and Spotted almost lost a cricket in her effort to hear what Speckle was saying. Speckle told a long story; and Tom fairly shivered from sympathy as Speckle described the night visit of a weasel to the hen-roost, and how he sucked the blood of poor unfortunate Topknot.

Tom thought to himself, "That would be a nice subject for a composition. I believe I will write about weasels. I wonder where they live and what they eat."

But the rooster interrupted his thoughts by saying to Speckle, "See here; here is a boy who has nothing to write about!"

Speckle looked at Tom in a sort of inquisitive way, and then said, "I have some things which I think you would like to write about. Did you ever see my grist-mill?"

"Your grist-mill?" said Tom, quite astonished.

"Yes," said Speckle, "I carry my mill with me."

In some strange sort of way, Tom seemed to see what was going on in the mill. The grindstones were all sorts of things—pieces of crockery, bits of glass, little pebbles, and actually a pin was doing service. The "hopper" interested Tom very much. All

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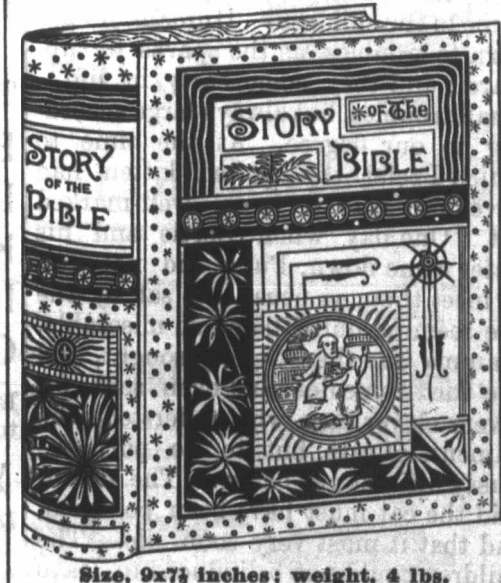
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