

SHORT STORIES.

**IN THE CHICKEN COOP.** He was the oldest boy in the country school and stayed to help the teacher sweep at night.

They grew confidential and the boy finally told of a boy's club he had belonged to the year before called the "Boy Robbers of the Slough."

"We had a cave," he explained, "up the slough where we would go of evenings and have gay times. We stole green corn from our fathers' fields and spring chickens from our mothers' hen-houses. Then some of the boys would bring biscuits and we would have a spread. We got caught though."

The teacher smiled. "How?" she asked.

"I guess it was my fault; the gang was out one night and sent me into Old Haskin's chicken house. They told me to go in and feel along on the roosts till I felt a pair of feet and then grab for the neck so that the chicken wouldn't squall. I felt along on the lower roost where the young chickens usually stayed but there wasn't any there. Then I felt slowly along on the next pole. Suddenly I touched some spurs. I knew this was an old rooster, but I was afraid he would make a racket anyhow now that I had touched him, so I grabbed for his neck."

The teacher turned the key in the school house door.

"Well?" she asked.

The boy answered succinctly, "I hadn't noticed which way his toes went. I grabbed his tail."

**THE NEWSPAPER HABIT.** Some men are afflicted with what one might call the newspaper habit.

At the breakfast table he swallows coffee while he reads the columns of crime, and then the column of "smiles." A little later at the office he reads the same things over again to an enthusiastic circle of clerks who themselves had the paper for breakfast. Off and on during the morning he finishes up the rest of the paper. At night he rides home on the car and reads, everybody on the car reads, the evening paper which, French fashion, gives them warmed up for supper just what they had for breakfast with a new sauce of jokes, and some patent insides telling about Pharaoh's mummy, the manufacture of pins and the fan of Marie Antoinette. At the supper table he tells his wife he forgot to bring up the morning paper for her to look over, there was nothing in it. Perhaps he gives her a brief sketch of a lynching in Alabama, a murder in New York, an execution in Chicago.

Later in the evening the minister calls, and while his wife entertains the company, the man of the house sits by the stand and fingers a pile of newspapers making desultory remarks for politeness sake, while he keeps his finger at the point when stopped reading.

Somebody could gain the gratitude of the race by inventing a gold cure for the newspaper habit.

**SEWING.** A girl likes to do sewing. It has the same element of pleasure that threshing time has for the hired man.

When she begins she lays out about twenty bundles of different shapes. There is a dress. She could never think of all the things at once, the linings and the thread and the looks and eyes and all the rest. She bought things piecemeal just as the inspirations came to her. Now she opens the bundles. She does not need anything at first except the linings but she doesn't know just which bundle has the lining in it.

She strings them all out and when she gets through every chair in the room has a pile of things on it, from binding braid to crinoline. Strings and wrap ping paper are scattered promiscuously around the parlor—the truly aesthetic girl never thinks of sewing anywhere except in the parlor. And in the fracas her workbox has been tipped over on the parlor table and some dozen spools of white basting thread are rolling treacherously on the floor. Now she feels ready to take up the dress in true bohemian fashion, whichever part comes first to hand. This is all very enjoyable. And then the training to her patience is so delightfully thorough. If a man had to baste up a dress and rip it out about five times, stitch it up and then rip it in various places, and after all wear an ill-fitting dress, he would swear or else stuff the dress in the stove and order another from his tailor. A woman can do neither. She calms the recklessness that siezes her heart at times and goes on to the bitter end. As a result, when she grows old she finds her character is absolutely petrified. She thinks then that is a the apathy of a disappointed life that ails her but it is not; it is just the atrophy induced by uncongenial work.

**CHILD STUDY**

He is a newspaper man now. He attributes all of his success to the early days of his school life. He learned his alphabet

from letters on the rim of a little lava plate. He was then sent to school and read in the first reader. Here he got his first idea of what a gloriously clean, simple style should be. He read thrilling stories like the following:

Does the boy go up. Yes; the boy does go up. See the boy go up. It is a game of see saw."

When the child read this fluently he was sent on up to the second reader, where he read the same kind of stories embellished with a few adjectives and beautiful "by gems of thought," something after the style of:

"Come when you're called,  
Do as you're bid,  
Shut the door after you  
And you'll never be chid."

Now it was considered the proper thing for the little boy's relatives to send him picture books for Christmas. Among them were some that proved to be his salvation. Without them he might have come to think that the single "see the cat catch the rat" style was the only one used by literary people.

In these picture books he came, for the first time in his literary career, upon the heavy involved style so suitable in after years for impressive editorials. Then, too, he learned about many things that came in handy when he ran out of copy. The habits and names of all the animals from Greenland to Borneo in the form as the introductions said, of "easily comprehended explanations of the most important illustrations."

From this point on his style developed naturally under the influence of Mother Goose and fairy stories, Sunday school books and at last the newspapers. It is no wonder that his pen as he himself puts it is "fluent and trenchant."

**RETORT COURTEOUS**

When he was a cadet he went to the encampment. She sent him a box of cake, with a dainty note.

Dear Tom:

One of the cakes I baked myself and I think you had better give it to some other boy. I have marked it. It is called angel food, so it might not agree with you. Give it to Clements.

Sincerely,

ETHEL."

He answered her letter with evident haste.

My dear Ethel:

How can I ever thank you enough for warning me against the angel food that you made. I gave it to Clements and it made him horribly ill. The curious part of it is that I am sure even yet he is a perfect angel. There must have been something else the matter with the cake.

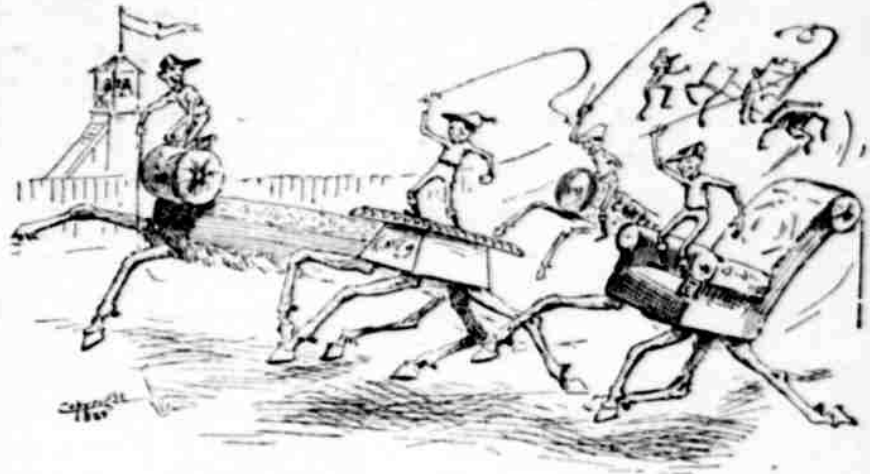
Gratefully,

TOM."

ANNIE PREY.

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