Tom Sowar lives with his Aunt Polly and his half-brotehr Sid. He skips school to swim and is made to whitewash the the fence the next day a s punishment. He cleverly persuades his friends to trade him small treasures for the privilege of doing his work. He then trades the treasures for Sunday school tickets which one normally receives fro memorizing verses consistently, redeeming them for a Bible, mush to the surprise and bewilderment of the superintendent who thought “it was simply preposterous that this boy had warehoused two thousand sheaves os Scriptual wisdom on his premises---a dozen would strain his capacity, without a doubt.”

Tom falls in love with Becky Thatcher, a new girl in town, and persuades her to get “engaged” by kissing him. But their romance collapses when she learsn Tom has been “engaged” previously to Amy Lawrence. Short