

Daddy Takes Us to the Garden eBook

Daddy Takes Us to the Garden by Howard Roger Garis

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Page 1

A NEW GAME

"Mother, what can we do now?"

"Tell us something to play, please! We want to have some fun!"

As Harry and Mabel Blake said this they walked slowly up the path toward the front porch, on which their mother was sitting one early Spring day. The two children did not look very happy.

"What can we do?" asked Hal, as he was called more often than Harry.

"There isn't any more fun," complained Mab, to which her name was often shortened.

"Oh, my!" laughed Mother Blake. "Such a sadness! What doleful faces you both have. I hope they don't freeze so and stay that way. It would be dreadful!"

"It can't freeze," said Hal. "It's too warm. Daddy told us how cold it had to be to freeze. The ther—ther—Oh, well the thing you tell how cold it is—has to get down to where it says number 32 before there's ice."

"You mean the thermometer," said Mab.

"That's it," agreed Hal. "And look, the shiny thing—mercury, that's the name of it—the mercury is at 60 now. It can't freeze, Mother."

"Well, I'm glad it can't, for I wouldn't want your face to turn into ice the way it looked a little while ago."

"But there's no fun, Mother," and Mab, whose face, as had her brother's, had lost its fretful look while they were talking about the thermometer, again seemed cross and unhappy. "We can't have any fun!"

"Why don't you play some games?" asked Mrs. Blake, smiling at the two children.

"We did," answered Hal. "We tried to play tag, but it's too muddy to run off the paths, and it's no fun, staying in one place. We can't play ball, 'cause Mab can't throw like a boy, and I'm not going to play doll with her."

"I didn't ask you to!" said Mab quickly. "I was going to play doll by myself."

"Yes, but you'd want me to be a doctor, or something, when your doll got sick—you always do."

"I should think that would be fun," said Mother Blake. "Why don't you play doll and doctor?"

"I'm not going to play doll!" declared Hal, and his face looked crosser than ever.

"Oh, it isn't nice to talk that way," said his mother. "You ought to be glad if Mab wanted you to be a doctor for her sick doll. But perhaps you can think of something else—some new game. Just sit down a moment and we'll talk. Then perhaps you'll think of something. I wonder why it is so warm to-day, and why there is no danger of anything freezing—not your faces of course, for I know you wouldn't let that happen. But why is it so warm; do you know?"

"'Cause it's Spring," answered Hal. "Everybody knows that."

"Oh, no, not everybody," replied his mother. "Your dog Roly-Poly doesn't know it."

"Oh, yes, Mother! I think he does!" cried Mab. "He was rolling over and over in the grass to-day, even if it was all wet like a sponge. He never did that in the Winter."

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"Well, perhaps dogs and cats do know when it is Spring. The birds do, I'm sure, for then they come up from the South, where they have spent the Winter, and begin to build their nests. So you think it is warm to-day because it is Spring; do you, Hal?"

"Yes, Mother," he replied. "It's time Winter was gone, anyhow. And the trees know it is going to be Summer soon, for they are swelling out their buds."

"And after a while there'll be flowers," added Mab. "Didn't we have fun, Hal, when Daddy took us hunting flowers?"

"Yes, and when he took us to the woods, and to see the different kinds of birds," added the little boy. "We had lots of fun then."

"I wish we could have some of that kind of fun now," went on Mab. "When's Daddy coming home, Mother?"

"Oh, not for quite a while. He has to work and earn money you know. He has to earn more than ever, now that everything costs so much on account of the war. Daddies don't have a very easy time these days."

"Do Mothers?" asked Mab, thinking of how she played mother to her dolls. Maybe, she thought, she could make up a new game, pretending how hard it was for dolls' mothers these days.

"Well, mothers have to do many things they did not have to do when things to eat and wear did not cost so much," spoke Mother Blake. "We have to make one loaf of bread go almost as far as two loaves used to go, and as for clothes—well, I am mending some of yours, Hal, that, last year, I thought were hardly useful any more. But we must save all we can. So that's why Daddy has to work harder and longer, and why he can't come home Saturday afternoons as early as he used to."

It was a Saturday afternoon when Hal and Mab found so much fault about not having any fun. Almost any other day they would have been in school, and have been busy over their lessons. But just now they wanted to play and they were not having a very jolly time, for they could not think of anything to do. Or, at least, they thought they could not.

"What makes it Spring?" asked Hal, after a bit, as he watched his mother putting a patch on his little trousers. Hal remembered how he tore a hole in them one day sliding down a cellar door.

"Tell us what makes Spring, Mother," went on Mab. "That will be as much fun as playing, I guess."

"The sun makes the Spring," said Mrs. Blake "Spring is one of the four seasons. I wonder if you can tell me the others?"

"Which one starts?" asked Hal.

"Spring, of course," exclaimed Mab. "You have to start with something growing, and things grow in the Spring."

"That is right," said Mrs. Blake. "Spring is the beginning of life in the world, when the flowers and birds begin to grow; the flowers from little buds and the birds from little eggs. What comes next?"

"Summer!" cried Hal. "Then's when we can have fun. The ground is dry, so we can play marbles and fly kites. And we can go in swimming and have a long vacation. Summer's the jolly time!"

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"It is a time when things grow that start in the Spring," said Mother Blake. "What comes after Summer?"

"Autumn," answered Mab. "Some folks call it Fall. Why do they, Mother?"

"Because the leaves fall from the trees, perhaps. It is a time when the trees and bushes go to sleep, and when most birds fly down to the warm South. And what comes after Autumn or Fall?"

"Christmas!" cried Hal.

"Yes, so it does!" laughed Mrs. Blake. "And I guess most children would say the same thing. But I meant what season."

"It's Winter," Hal said. "Let's see if I know 'em. Spring, Summer, Autumn, Winter," he recited. "Four seasons, and this is Spring. I wish it would hurry up and be Summer."

"So do I," agreed Mab. "You can't have any fun now. It's too wet to go without your rubbers, too cold to go without a coat and almost too hot to wear one. I like Summer best."

"And I like Fall and Winter," said Hal. "But let's do something Mab. Let's have some fun. What can we do, Mother?" and back the children were, just where they started.

"Why don't you get Roly-Poly and play with him?" asked Mrs. Blake.

"He's gone away. I guess he ran down to Daddy's office like he does sometimes," said Mab.

"Let's go down after him," exclaimed Hal. "That'll be some fun."

"I don't want to," spoke Mab. "I'd rather play with my doll."

"You never want to do anything I want to play?" complained Hal. "Can't she come with me after Roly-Poly, Mother?"

"Well, I don't know. Can't you both play something here until Daddy comes home? Why don't you play bean-bag?"

"We did, but Hal always throws 'em over my head and I can't reach," Mab said.

"She throws crooked," complained Hal.

“Oh, my dears! I think you each must have the Spring Fever!” laughed Mother Blake. “Try and be nicer toward one another. Let me see now. How would you like to help me bake a cake, Mab?”

“Oh, that will be fun!” and Mab jumped up from the porch, where she had been sitting near her mother’s rocking chair, and began to clap her hands. “May I stir it myself, and put the dough in the pans?”

“Yes, I think so.”

“Pooh! That’s no fun for me!” remarked Hal. “I want to have some fun, too.”

“You may clean out the chocolate or frosting dish—whichever kind of a cake we make,” offered Mab. “You always like to scrape out the chocolate dish, Hal.”

“Yes, I like that,” he said, smiling a little.

“Well, you may have it all alone this time, if I make the cake,” went on Mab. Nearly always she and Hal shared this pleasure—that of scraping out, with a knife or spoon, the chocolate or sugar icing dish from which Mother Blake took the sweet stuff for the top and inside the layers of the cake. “Come on, Hal!”

Hal was willing enough now, and soon he and his sister were in the kitchen, helping Mother Blake with her cake-making. Though, to tell the truth, Mab and Mrs. Blake did most of the work.

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While the three were in the midst of their cake-making, into the kitchen rushed a little poodle dog, whirling around, barking and trying to catch his tail.

"Oh, Roly-Poly, where have you been?" cried Hal. "Did Daddy come home with you?"

"Bow-wow!" barked Roly-Poly, which might mean "no" or "yes," just as you happened to listen to his bark.

"Oh, don't get in my way, Roly!" called Mab as the little dog danced about in front of her, while she was carrying a pan filled with cake dough toward the oven. "Look out! Oh, there it goes."

Just what Mab had feared came to pass. She tripped over the poodle dog, and, to save herself from falling, she had to drop the pan of cake dough. Down it fell, right on Roly-Poly's back.

"Bow-wow-wow!" he barked and growled at the same time.

"Oh, look at him!" laughed Hal "He's a regular cake himself."

"Don't let him run through the house that way!" called Mother Blake. "He'll get the carpets and furniture all dough. Get him, Hal!"

Hal made a grab for the little pet dog, and caught him by his tail. This made Roly-Poly howl louder than ever, until Hal, not wishing to hurt his pet, managed to get him in his arms. But of course this made Hal's waist all covered with cake dough.

"Never mind," said Mother Blake, as she saw Hal looking at himself in dismay. "It will all wash off. Better to have it on your waist than on the carpets. Why, Mab! What's the matter?" for Mab was crying softly.

"Oh—Oh, my—my nice ca-cake is all spoiled," she sobbed.

"Oh, no it isn't!" comforted Mother Blake. "Only one pan of dough is spilled, and there is plenty more. The kitchen floor can easily be washed, and so can Roly Poly.

"Hal," went on his mother, "you take the dog up to the bath tub and give him a good scrubbing. He'll like that. Take off your own waist and let the water run on that. I'll wipe up the floor and you can fill another pan and put it in the oven, Mab. Don't cry! We'll have the cake in time for supper yet."

So Mab dried her tears and once more began on the cake, while Mrs. Blake cleaned up the dough from the floor. In a little while the cake was baking in the oven, and Hal came down stairs, rather wet and splattered, but clean. With him was Roly-Poly, looking half drowned, but also clean.

“Well, we did a lot of things!” said Hal, when he had on dry clothes, and he and Mab were waiting for the cake to be baked, after which the chocolate would be spread over it. “It was fun, wasn’t it?”

“I—I guess so,” answered Mab, not quite sure. “Did I hurt Roly when I stepped on him?”

“I guess not. He splashed water all over me when I put him in the bath tub, though. I pretended he was a submarine ship and he swam all around.”

“I wish I had seen him.”

“I’ll make him do it again,” and Hal started toward the stairs with Roly in his arms.

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"No, please don't!" laughed Mother Blake. "One bath a day is enough. Besides, I think it's time to take the cake out, Mab."

When the chocolate had been spread on, and Hal had scraped out the dish, giving Mab a share even though she had said she did not want any, the front door was heart to shut.

"Here comes Daddy!" cried Mab.

"Oh, I wonder if he brought anything?" said Hal, racing after his sister.

Daddy Blake did have a package in his arms, and he was smiling. He put the bundle down on the table and caught up first Mab and then Hal for a hearty kiss.

"Well, how are you all to-day?" he asked.

"I just baked a cake," answered Mab.

"And the dough went all over Roly-Poly, and I made believe he was a submarine ship in the bath tub," added Hal. "We had lots of fun."

"Before that we didn't thought," spoke Mab. "We wanted to play something new but we didn't know what. Did you bring us anything, Daddy?"

"Yes, I brought you and Hal a new game."

"A new game? Oh, goody! May we play it now?"

"Well, you can start to look at it now, but it takes quite a while to play it. It takes all Spring, all Summer and part of the Fall."

"Oh, what a long game!" cried Hal. "What is it?"

"It is called the Garden Game," said Daddy Blake, smiling. "And after supper I'll tell you all about it."

"The Garden Game," murmured Mab.

"It must be fun," said Hal, "else Daddy wouldn't laugh around his eyes the way he does."

"Yes, I think you'll like this new game," went on Mr. Blake. "And whoever learns to play it best will get a fine prize!"

"Oh! Oh! Oh!" cried Hal and Mab in delight. They could hardly wait to find out all about it.



CHAPTER II

MAKING A GARDEN

"Now children," began Daddy Blake, as the table was cleared of the dishes, when supper had been finished, "I'll start to tell you about the garden game we are going to play."

"Oh, are *you* going to play it, too?" asked Hal in delight "Won't that be fun, Mab?"

"Lots of fun!"

Anything Daddy Blake did was fun for Hal and Mab, whether it was playing a game, or taking them somewhere.

Eagerly the two children watched while their father opened the package he had brought up from down town when he came home to supper.

"Is it some kind of a puzzle?" Hal wanted to know.

"Does it go around with wheels?" asked Mab, as she heard something rattle inside the paper.

"How many can play it?" asked Hal.

"Oh, as many as care to" answered Daddy Blake. "I'm going to play it, and so is your mother, I think; and Uncle Pennywait, and Aunt Lollypop, and—no, I guess we can't let Roly-Poly play the garden game, but you two children can."

"Oh, it must be a fine game if so many can play," laughed Hal. "Hurry, Daddy, and show us what it is."

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“Do you play sides?” Mab inquired.

“Yes, you can play sides,” her father answered with a smile. “As I told you I’m going to give a prize to whoever plays the game best. I’ll tell you about it. Now here’s the first part of the garden,” and, as Mr. Blake opened the paper fully, out rolled a small parcel. The string came off it, and Hal and Mab saw a lot of beans.

For a moment they looked very much disappointed.

“Oh, Daddy Blake!” cried Hal. “This isn’t a new game at all! We’ve got a bean-bag one!”

“And we got tired of playing it to-day,” went on Mab, in disappointed tones.

“This isn’t exactly a bean-bag game,” said Mr. Blake with a smile, “though you can make it one if you like. It’s ever so much more fun than just bean-bags, for there are many other different parts to the garden game. Now if you’ll sit down I’ll tell you about it.”

Hal and Mab saw some brightly colored pictures, among other things, in the big bag that had held the beans, and they thought perhaps they might have fun with the garden game after all.

Some of you have met Hal and Mab Blake before, on one or more of their many trips with Daddy, so I do not need to tell all of you about the children. But to those of you who read this book as the beginning of the Daddy Series I may say that the first volume is called “Daddy Takes Us Camping.” In that I told you how Daddy and the two children went to live in a tent, and how they heard a queer noise in the night and—

Well, I’ll leave the rest for you to find out by reading the book. Hal and Mab lived with Daddy and Mother Blake in a nice house in a small city, and with them lived Uncle Pennywait and Aunt Lollypop.

These were not their real names. Uncle Pennywait was called that because he so often said to Hal and Mab:

“Wait a minute and I’ll give you a penny!”

Aunt Lollypop was more often called Aunt Lolly, and the reason she had such a queer name was because she was always telling the children to buy lollypops with the money Uncle Pennywait gave them. Lollypops, the children’s aunt thought, were the best kind of candy for them, and perhaps she was right.

Then there was Roly-Poly, the funny little poodle dog, and once when Daddy Blake took Hal and Mab skating, as you may read in *that* book, Roly slid under the ice and was lost for a long, long time.

Hal and Mab just loved to go places with Daddy, to learn about the birds, trees and flowers. They had gone to the circus with him, had gone coasting, and had hunted birds with a camera to take pictures of them. There is a book about each one of the different trips Hal and Mab took with their father. They had many adventures each time they went out, and they learned many things.

Just before the story I am going to tell you now, Daddy Blake had taken the children to the woods, telling them about the different kinds of trees.

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Sometimes Roly-Poly went along with Hal and Mab when Daddy started off with the children. Once Mab had a little cat that got lost up in a tree, and once her Dickey bird flew away and it was a long time before she found one she loved as much as her first singing pet.

"But I don't see how you are going to take us anywhere, so we can have fun, just with *beans*," said Hal, as he waited for his father to tell something about the new game.

"Oh, it isn't just beans," said Daddy Blake. "See here are some radishes, lettuce, carrots, turnips, potatoes, beets and—"

"Why it sounds just like a *garden*!" cried Aunt Lollypop, coming in from the hall at that moment.

"It's a garden game, but we don't know how to play it yet," said Mab.

"That's what I'm going to teach you," spoke her father. "We are going to make a garden."

"Where?" Hal wanted to know.

"In our back yard and in the lot next door. I have hired that to use in planting our garden."

"How do you start to make a garden?" asked Hal.

"That's part of the game you and Mab must learn," said Mr. Blake. "Now I'll begin at the beginning and tell you. I think you will like this game as well as any you have ever played, for not only will it be fun, but it will give you work to do, and the best fun in the world is learning to make fun of your work. And don't forget the prize!"

"What's the prize for?" asked Hal.

"For the one who has the best little garden, whether it is Hal, Mab, Uncle Pennywait, Aunt Lolly, Mother or myself. We're all going to play the garden game!"

"What is the prize going to be?" asked Mab.

Daddy Blake thought for a moment. Then he said:

"Well, I suppose if *you* won the prize you would like it to be a nice doll."

"Oh, I'd just love it!" cried Mab with sparkling eyes.

“And Hal would want a pair of skates or maybe a sled, for I think his old one is broken,” went on Daddy Blake.

“It is,” answered Hal.

“So, as only one of us can win the prize, and as we would all want something different,” spoke the children’s father, “I think I’ll make the prize a ten dollar gold piece, and whoever wins it can buy what they like with it.”

“Oh, that’s great!” exclaimed Hal.

“Ten dollars!” added Mab. “Why I could buy a lot of dolls for that!”

“I hope you wouldn’t spend *all* that money for dolls,” said Aunt Lolly.

“No, save some for candy!” laughed Uncle Pennywait. “I’ll give you a penny extra as my prize.”

“We’ll talk about spending the money when the prize is won,” said Daddy Blake. “Here it is,” and he took from his pocket a bright, shining ten dollar gold piece. Hal and Mab looked at it.

“But everyone must work hard in the garden to win it,” said Mr. Blake. “And, mind you! I may get my own prize, for I am going to work in the garden, too. We will each choose some one vegetable, and whoever raises the finest and best crop will get the prize.”

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“What made you think of this game for us?” asked Hal.

“Well, everyone is making gardens this year,” said Daddy Blake. “You know we are at war, and in war time it is harder to get plenty of food than when we are at peace.”

“Why?” asked Hal.

“Because so many men have to go to be soldiers,” his father answered. “The farmers and gardeners—thousands of them—have been called away to fight the enemy, so that we, who never before helped to grow things from the earth, must begin now if we are to have enough to eat and to feed our soldiers.

“That is why I am going to have a garden—larger than we ever had before. That is why many others who never had gardens before are going to have one this year. All over vacant lots and play-fields, and even some beautiful green, grassy lawns, are being turned into gardens. They will take the places of many gardens that have been turned into battle fields. We must raise more vegetables and fruits and we must save what we raise.”

“Why do we want to save it?” asked Hal, “Can’t we eat it?”

“We will eat all we need,” his father, “But you know that gardens and farms can only be planted, and fruits vegetables can only grow when the weather is warm. Nothing grows in the cold Winter. So we raise all we can in Summer and save what we need to eat when snow is on the ground.”

“How are we going to make our garden?” asked Mab.

“And what am I going to plant?” asked Hal.

“Well, we’ll begin at the very beginning,” answered Daddy Blake. “The first part of any garden is getting the soil ready. That is the dirt, in which we plant the seeds, must be dug up and made soft and mellow so the seeds will grow.”

“What makes seeds grow?” asked Mab.

“And why can’t we plant ’em anywhere?” Hal wanted to know.

Daddy Blake laughed.

“You’re going to have a lot of questions to answer about this garden game,” said Uncle Pennywait. “You’ll be kept busy.”

“Yes, I guess so,” agreed Daddy Blake. “Well I’ll answer all the questions I can, for I want Hal and Mab to know how hard it is to make even one bean or radish grow from a

seed. Then, when they find out that it is not easy to have good vegetables, when the bugs, worms and weeds are fighting against them, they will not waste. For waste is wicked not only in war time but always."

"Oh, Daddy!" cried Mab. "Do the worms and bugs and weeds fight the things in the garden?"

"Indeed they do," answered her father. "It is just like war all the while between the things we want to grow and the things we don't want."

"Oh, if the garden game is like war I'm going to have fun playing it!" exclaimed Hal, while Roly-Poly chased his tail around the table. I don't mean that the little poodle dog's tail came off and that he raced around trying to get hold of it again. No indeed! His tail just stayed on him, but he whirled around and around trying to get hold of it in his mouth, and he was having a good time doing it.

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"There is one of the enemies you'll have to fight if you make a garden," said Daddy Blake with a smile.

"Who?" asked Hal.

"Your dog, Roly-Poly. Dogs, when they get in a newly planted garden, often dig up the seeds, just as chickens do. So from the start you'll have to keep Roly-Poly away."

"And chickens, too," said Mab. "They've got chickens next door."

"Yes, but they are kept shut up in their yard, with a wire fence around it," said Daddy Blake. "However you must keep watch. Now suppose we start and pick out what crops we want to raise for the prize of the ten dollar gold piece. I have different kinds of seeds here—corn, beans, tomatoes, radishes and others."

"I want to raise beans!" cried Mab. "Then I can have as many bean-bags as I want."

"We mustn't waste too many beans just for playing games, since beans make a good meal, especially for soldiers," said Daddy Blake. "And much of the food raised on farms and gardens will have to go to feed our soldiers. So we'll give Mab the first choice and let her raise beans. What will you choose, Hal?"

"Corn, I guess," Hal said. "I like pop corn."

"Well, we won't raise much pop corn," laughed his father. "While that is good to eat it is not good for making corn bread, and that is the kind we may have to eat if we can't raise enough wheat to make all the white bread we want."

"Why can't we raise wheat?" asked Hal.

"Well, we could grow a little, for it would grow in our garden as well as in any other soil or dirt," explained Daddy Blake. "But to raise a lot of wheat, or other grains, a big field is needed—a regular farm—and we haven't that."

"Will you take us to a farm some day?" asked Mab.

"Yes, after you learn how to make a garden," his father told him. "So you think you want to try corn; eh?" and he laid a package of that seed in front of the little boy.

"If Mab raises beans and Hal grows corn we'll have succotash at any rate," said Mother Blake. "And succotash is good to can and keep all Winter."

"Well, we may have enough to eat, after all, from our garden," said Aunt Lolly. "I think I'll raise pumpkins for my share of the new game."

"Then we can have Jack-o-lanterns!" laughed Hal. "That will be fun!"

"Now look here!" exclaimed; Daddy Blake. "I want you children to have some fun in your gardens, but is isn't *all* fun. There is going to be hard work, too, if anyone wins this prize," and he held up the ten dollar gold piece. "You may have one pumpkin for a Hallowe'en lantern, maybe, but pumpkin pies are what Aunt Lolly is thinking of, I guess."

"Indeed I am," she said. "When I was a girl we used to raise many pumpkins in the cornfield at home. So I'll raise my pumpkins between your rows of corn, Hal."

"That's the way to do it," said Uncle Pennywait.

"I think I'll raise potatoes. They're easy to grow if I can keep the bugs off them, and they'll keep all winter."

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"I'll raise tomatoes," said Daddy Blake, taking out a package of tomato seeds for his part of the garden. "We can eat them sliced in Summer and have them canned, ready to stew, in Winter, I'll have to plant some seeds in the house first to raise plants that I may set them out when it is warm enough. Now, Mother, what will you grow in the garden?"

"Carrots," answered Mrs. Blake.

"Oh, then we can keep a bunny rabbit!" cried Mab. "I've always wanted a bunny."

"Well, a rabbit may be nice," said Daddy Blake. "But, as I said, this garden is not all for fun. We are going to raise as many vegetables as we can, so we will have them in the Winter to save buying them at the store. We can't afford to raise carrots for rabbits this year. There are your seeds, Mother," and he gave his wife a packet with a picture of yellow carrots on the outside.

"But there are a lot of seeds left," said Mab, as she looked at the large opened bundle on the table.

"Yes, well have to take turns planting these," her father said. "I just wanted you to pick out your prize crops first. Now we have made a start on our garden. The next thing is to get the ground ready as soon as it is warm enough. But first I think I'll start my tomato plants. I'll plant the seeds in the morning."

"Where?" asked Mab.

"In a box in the house. You may bring me in a little dirt and I'll let it dry out near the fire, for it is rather damp and cold yet in the garden."

The next day Hal and Mab brought in some dirt from the yard. It was wet and sticky but when it had been spread out on a paper under the stove it soon dried. That night Daddy Blake filled a big wooden box with the dirt, which he worked with a trowel until it was made fine and smooth.

"The first thing to learn in making a garden," the children's father said, "is to have your dirt made very fine, and to be sure that it is the right kind for what you are going to raise. Beans will grow in almost any kind of soil, but tomatoes and other vegetables must have soil which is called richer—that is it has more fertilizer in it—something which is food to the seeds and plants as bread, butter, meat and potatoes are food for us."

"Do plants eat?" asked Hal.

"Of course they do, just as I told you the trees did. Plants eat through their roots in the earth. They drink water that way, too, and through their leaves. And they breathe in the air and sunlight the same way. Plants, as well as boys and girls, need warm sun, enough water and good soil to make them grow."

“But why don’t you plant the tomato seeds right in the garden?” asked Hal.

“Because it is a little too early. The weather is not warm enough and the ground is too damp. So I plant the seeds in the house and soon there will be many little tomato plants in this box, which, you children must see to it, must be kept in the sunny window, and not out in the cool air. When the plants are large enough we will take them from the box and put them in the garden in nice long rows. This is called transplanting, which means planting a second time, and is done with many garden things such as lettuce, cabbage and celery.”

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"But you didn't tell us what makes the seeds grow," said Mab, as she watched her father carefully smooth the soil in the box and then scatter in the tomato seeds, afterward covering them up with a piece of window glass.

"I'll tell you as best I can, though no one really knows what is in the seed to make it grow. Only Mother Nature knows that. But at least we have a start with our garden," said Daddy Blake, "and to-morrow I'll tell you, as well as I can, why a seed grows. It is time to go to bed now."

As Hal and Mab started up stairs, thinking what a wonderful thing it was to have a garden, there came a ring at the front door.

"My! Who can be calling this time of night?" asked Mother Blake, in surprise.

Hal and Mab wondered too.

CHAPTER III

UPSIDE DOWN BEANS

"Let's wait and see who it is, Hal," whispered Mab to her brother as they stood on the stairs.

"Maybe it's somebody come to find out about a garden," added the little boy. "Daddy knows lots about how to make things grow, and maybe, on account of the war, everybody's got to plant corn and beans and things."

"I don't like war and soldiers," spoke Mab, while Daddy Blake went to the front door. "I don't care when you play soldier, and make believe shoot your pop gun, but I don't like *real* guns. Maybe this is somebody come to tell Daddy to go to war."

"I hope not!" exclaimed Hal.

When Daddy Blake opened the door the children heard some one saying:

"I guess this little fellow belongs to you, Mr. Blake. I found him over in my garden, digging away. Maybe he was planting a bone, thinking he could grow some roast beef," and a man's laugh was heard. Then came a sharp little bark.

"Oh, it's Roly-Poly!" cried Hal.

[Illustration]

"He must have run away and we didn't miss him 'cause we talked so much about the garden," added Mab. "I wonder where he was?"

"Yes, that's my children's dog," said Mr. Blake to the man who had brought home Roly-Poly. "So he was in your garden; eh?"

"Well, yes, in the place where I'm going to make a garden. My name is Porter, I live next door. Only moved in last week and we haven't gotten acquainted yet."

"That's right," said Mr. Blake. "Well, I'm glad to know you, Mr. Porter. Hal and Mab will be pleased to have Roly-Poly back, I'm also glad to know you're going to have a garden. I'm going to start my two youngsters with one, and if Roly-Poly comes over, and digs out your seeds, let me know and I'll keep him shut up."

"I will, and you do the same with my chickens. They're bad for scratching in a garden, though I plan to keep them in their own yard. So your boy and girl are going to have gardens; are they?"

"Yes. I want them to learn all they can about such things."

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"I've got a boy, but he's too young to start yet. Sammie is only five," said Mr. Porter. "Well, doggie, I guess you're glad to get back home," and he gave Roly-Poly to Mr. Blake who thanked his neighbor, asking him to call again.

"Here, Hal and Mab!" called their father. "After this you must keep watch of your pet. I guess there will be many gardens on our street this Summer, and no dogs will be allowed in them until after the things are well grown. So watch Roly-Poly."

Hal and Mab promised they would, and Mab said:

"Oh, that's a cute little boy next door. He has red hair."

"His name is Sammie," said Mr. Blake. "Now off to bed with you, toodlekens!" and he made believe Roly-Poly threw kisses from his paws to Hal and Mab.

Daddy Blake had to go away early the next morning, to be gone three days, so he did not have time to tell Hal and Mab why it was that seeds grew when planted in the ground. But before going to school on Monday the brother and sister saw to it that the glass covered box in which the tomato plants were soon to grow, was put in a sunny window.

On the way to school they looked in the big yard of Mr. Porter who lived next door. He was raking up some dried leaves and grass and a small, red-haired boy was watching him.

"Hello, little ones!" called Mr. Porter. "Have you got your garden started yet?"

"Not yet," answered Hal.

"But we got tomato seeds planted in the house," said Mab.

"Yes, and I must do that too. We'll see who'll have the finest garden," went on Mr. Porter. "How's your poodle dog?"

"Oh, we got him shut up so he can't hurt your garden," Hal said.

"Don't worry about that yet," went on the neighbor. "I haven't planted any seeds yet, and shall not until it gets warmer. So you may let your dog run loose."

"All right. I guess I will," cried Hal, running back to the house.

"You'll be late for school!" warned Mab.

"I'll run fast!" promised her brother. "Roly-Poly cried when I shut him up. I want to let him out."

Soon the little dog came running out of the barn where Hal had locked him. Over into Mr. Porter's yard ran Roly and Sammie laughed when he saw Hal's pet rolling around in the pile of dried leaves Mr. Porter had raked together.

"Roly, you be a good dog!" warned Mab, shaking her finger at him.

"I get him a cookie!" said Sammie with a laugh as he toddled toward the house.

"Sammie likes dogs," said his father as Hal and Mab hurried on to school.

Mr. Blake was away longer than he thought he would be, and it was over a week before he came back home. Each day Hal and Mab had placed the box of tomato seeds in the warm sun before going to school, moving it when they came home at noon and in the afternoon they also changed it so that the soil would always be where the warm sun could shine on it. They sprinkled water in the box, as their father had told them to do.

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Then, the day when Daddy Blake came back from his business trip, Hal, looking at the tomato box, cried:

“Oh, Mab! Look! There are a lot of little green leaves here.”

“Yes, the tomatoes are beginning to grow,” said Daddy Blake, when he had taken a look.

“What makes the seeds grow and green leaves come out?” asked Hal.

“Well, as I said, Mother Nature does it and no one can tell how,” said Daddy Blake. “But somewhere inside this tiny little thing,” and he held out in his hand a tomato seed, “somewhere there is hidden a spark of life. What it looks like we can not say. It is deep in the heart of the seed.”

“Do seeds have hearts?” asked Mab.

“Well, no, not exactly,” her father answered. “But we speak of the middle of a tree as it’s heart and I suppose the middle of a seed, where its life is, is its heart. So this seed is really alive, though it doesn’t seem so.”

“It looks like a little yellow stone—the kind that comes in sand,” spoke Hal.

“And yet it is alive,” said his father. “It can not move about now, though when it is planted it begins to grow and it can move. It can push its leaves up from under the earth. Just now it is asleep, and has no life that we can see.”

“What will bring it to life and make it wake up?” asked Hal.

“The warm dirt in which it is planted, the sunlight, the air and the water you sprinkle on it,” said Mr. Blake. “If you kept this seed cold and dry it might sleep for many many years, but as soon as you put it under the warm, wet soil, and set the box of dirt where the sun can shine on it, then the seed begins to awaken. Something inside it—a germ some call it—begins to swell. It gets larger—the seed is germinating. The hard outside shell, or husk, gets soft and breaks open. The heart inside swells larger and larger. A tiny root appears and begins to dig its way down deeper in the ground to find things to eat. At the same time another part of the seed turns into leaves and these grow up. It is the green leaves you see first, peeping up above the ground, that tell you the seed has germinated and is growing.”

“Isn’t it funny!” said Hal. “One part of the seed grows down and the other part grows up.”

“Yes,” said Daddy Blake. “That’s the way seeds grow. Each day you will see these little tomato plants growing more and more, and, as soon as they are large enough, we will set them out in the garden.”

Hal and Mab thought it was wonderful that a single, tiny seed of the tomato—a seed that looked scarcely larger than the head of a pin—should have locked up in its heart such things as roots and leaves, and that, after a while, great, big red tomatoes would hang down from the green tomato vine—all from one little seed.

“It’s wonderful—just like when the man in the show took a rabbit, a guinea pig and a lot of silk ribbon out of Daddy’s hat,” spoke Hal.

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"It is more wonderful," said Mr. Blake. "For the man in the show put the things in my hat by a trick, when you were not looking, and only took them out again to make you think they were there all the while. But roots, seeds and tomatoes are not exactly inside the seed all the while. The germ—the life—is there, and after it starts to grow the leaves, roots and tomatoes are made from the soil, the air, the water and the sunshine."

"Are there tomatoes in the air?" asked Mab.

"Well, if it were not for the things in the air, the oxygen, the nitrogen and other gases, about which you are too young to understand now, we could not live grow, and neither could plants. Plants also have to have water to drink, as we do, and food to eat, only they eat the things found in the dirt, and we can not do that. At least not until they are changed into fruits, grain or vegetables."

Hal and Mab never tired looking at the tomato plants growing in the box in the house. Each day the tiny green leaves became larger and raised themselves higher and higher from the earth.

"Soon they will be large enough to transplant, or set out in the garden," said Daddy Blake.

Two or three days after their father had told Hal and Mab why seeds grow, the children, coming home from school, saw something strange in their garden.

There was a man, with a team of horses and the brown earth was being torn up by a big shiny thing which the horses were pulling as the man drove them.

"Oh, what's that in our garden?" cried Hal to Uncle Pennywait.

"It's a man plowing," said Hal's Uncle.

"But won't he spoil the garden?" Mab wanted to know.

"He's just starting to make it," Uncle Pennywait answered. "Didn't Daddy Blake tell you that the ground must be plowed or chopped up, and then finely pulverized or smoothed, so the seeds would grow better?"

"Oh, yet, so he did," Hal said.

"Well, this is the first start of making a garden," went on Uncle Pennywait. "The ground must be plowed or spaded. Spading is all right for a small garden, but when you have a large one, or a farm, you must use a plow."

Mr. Blake owned a large yard back of his house, and next door, on the other side from where the new Porter family lived, was a large vacant lot. The children's father had hired this lot to use as part of his garden.

Hal and Mab watched the man plowing. He held the two curved handles of the plow, and it was the sharp steel "share" of this that they had seen shining in the sun as it cut through the brown soil. A plow cuts through the soil as the horses pull it after them, and it is so shaped that the upper part of the earth is turned over, bringing up to the top, where the sun can shine on it, the underneath part. The undersoil is richer and better for seeds to start growing in than the upper part, where the rain may wash away the plant-food things that are needed to make a good garden.

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"But Daddy said the ground had to be *smooth* to make a garden," said Mab. "The plowing man is making it all *rough*."

"Yes, it does look rough now," said Daddy Blake, as he came along just then, in time to watch the man plowing. "Those long lines of overturned soil which you children see are called furrows."

"Could you plant anything in them?" asked Hal.

"Well, you could, yes. But it would not grow very well, and when the corn, beans or whatever you planted came up, you could not work around them well to cut down the weeds. It would be too rough. So after the man has plowed the ground he will harrow it."

"What's that?" asked Hal

"Well a harrow is something like a big rake," explained Daddy Blake. "There are three kinds of harrows, but they don't often use more than one kind for a garden. The man will use a tooth harrow. It is called that because it is made of iron spikes, or teeth, driven through some long beams of wood. The teeth stick through and when they are dragged over the plowed ground they make it quite smooth. When I take you to the farm I can tell you about and show you other kinds of harrows or big rakes."

It took the man with the plow the rest of the day to turn over the soil in the Blake garden, and Hal and Mab looked on every minute they had out of school. Mr. Porter's garden, next door, was plowed too.

When Hal and Mab went to the fence to see how Mr. Porter's ground looked they saw little Sammie standing near. The red-haired boy was looking at something on the ground.

"What is it?" asked Hal.

"Big snake," was the answer. "I don't like a snake. I'm goin' home," and he started to run.

"Oh, a snake!" cried Mab. "I don't like snakes either;" and she turned to go away.

"Where's the snake, Sammie? Show me!" said Hal.

"See him crawlin'?" and red-haired Sammie pointed. "I guess he goin' to bite! I run!" and away he started, but he fell down on the rough ground. He did not cry, however, but picked himself up and kept on.

"That isn't a snake!" called Hal with a laugh, "It's only a big angle worm. That won't hurt you, Sammie! Don't be afraid."

"Dat no snake?" the little boy wanted to know.

"No. Only a fish worm. Don't you remember how we went fishing with Daddy, Mab?" asked her brother.

"Yes, I do. But I thought it was a snake."

Hal had jumped over the fence and picked up the worm. It was a large one and had been crawling about the newly-plowed field.

"Oh, I don't like 'em," said Mab with a little shiver.

"Worms are good," said Mr. Porter coming out into his garden.

"You mean good for fishing?" asked Hal

"Yes, and good for gardens, too. They wiggle through the ground and sort of chew it up so it does not get so hard. The earth around the roots of trees and plants ought to be kept loose and dug up so the air and water can get through easier. So worms in a garden help to make the plants grow."

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"I didn't know that," said Hal, as he put down the big worm, which at once began to crawl slowly along, stretching itself out until it was almost twice as big as at first.

In a few days the weather was much warmer, and the soil in the two gardens began to dry out. The man came with the spiked, or tooth, harrow, and his horses dragged this over the ground several times. Soon the soil was quite smooth, the big lumps or clods of earth being broken up into little fine chunks.

"But it must be finer yet for some things, like lettuce and tomatoes," said Mr. Blake. "So I'll use a hand rake."

"Can't we help too?" Hal wanted to know.

"Yes, I want you and Mab to do as much garden work as you can. In that way you'll understand how to make things grow. And remember the more you work around in the garden, digging up the earth above the roots of your plants, keeping the weeds cut down, the better your things will grow. Making a garden is not easy work, but, after all think what a wonderful lot the seeds and plants do for themselves. Still we must help them."

"When can I plant my beans?" asked Mab.

"Well, pretty soon now. Make your part of the garden, where you are going to plant your beans, as smooth as you can. Then mark it off into rows. You should plant your beans in rows with the rows about two feet apart, and put the beans in each row so they are about four inches, one from the other. That will give the plants room enough to spread."

"How do I plant my corn?" asked Hal.

"Well, corn must be planted a little differently from beans," answered Daddy Blake. "You should have your rows from two to three feet apart and each hill of corn should be from a foot to a foot and a half from the next hill."

"Does corn only grow on a hill?" asked Hal.

"Oh, no," laughed his father, "though on some farms and gardens the corn may be planted on the side of a hill. What I mean was that after your corn begins to grow, the ground is hoed around the corn stalks in a sort of little hill. That is done to keep it from blowing over, for corn grows very tall, in the West sometimes ten and twelve feet high.

"However that is yellow or field corn, from which corn meal is made. The kind you are going to plant, Hal, is called sweet corn, such as we eat green from the cob after it is boiled. That may not grow so high. But in a day or so it will be time for your corn and beans to be planted, for Spring is now fully here and the weather is warm enough."



Hal and Mab worked hard in their gardens. They raked the ground until it was quite smooth. Daddy Blake, his wife, Aunt Lollypop and Uncle Pennywait also raked and smoothed the parts of the garden where they were going to plant their seeds. Sometimes the older folks helped the children.

Next door Mr. Porter was planting his garden, and red-haired Sammie thought he was helping. At least he picked up the stones and threw them at the fence. If Roly-Poly had been there maybe Sammie would have thrown the stones for the little poodle dog to run after. But Roly had been sent away for a few weeks, until the gardens had begun to grow. For Roly never could see a nicely smoothed patch of ground without wanting to dig in it, and spoil it.

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"We'll bring him back when the garden things are larger and well-enough grown so he can not hurt them," said Daddy Blake.

Hal and Mab planted their corn and beans. Daddy Blake showed his little girl how to punch holes in the brown earth along a straight row which her father made with the rake handle, and into the holes she dropped the beans, covering them with earth so that they were about two inches down from the top. Hal's corn did not have to be planted quite so deep, and he dropped five kernels in a circle about as large around as a tea-saucer. This circle would, a little later, be hoed into one big hill of corn.

"How long before my beans will grow?" asked Mab.

"And my corn?" Hal wanted to know.

"Well, beans begin to grow almost as soon as they are in the ground," answered her father, "but you can't see them until about a week. Then the little leaves appear. Hal's corn will take longer, maybe ten days, before any green shows. You must be patient."

Hal and Mab tried to be, but each day they went out in the garden and looked at where they had planted their beans and corn in the garden rows.

"I don't believe they're ever going to grow," said Mab at last. "Maybe some worms came and took my seeds. I'm going to dig some up and look."

"Don't," begged Hal.

But Mab did. With a stick she poked in the earth until she saw something that made her call:

"Oh, Hal! Look. My beans are all swelled up like a sponge."

Hal looked, Mab had dug up one bean. It had swelled and split apart, and inside the two halves of the bean something green showed.

"Oh, Mab! Cover it up, quick!" he cried. "The beans are growing—they're sprouting! Cover it up, quick!"

And Mab did. Now she was sure her beans were growing.

Two mornings afterward she went out into her part of the garden before starting for school. She saw something very queer.

"Oh, Daddy! Hal!" cried the little girl "My beans were planted wrong! They're growing upside down! The beans are all pushed upside down out of the ground. Oh, my garden is spoiled!"

CHAPTER IV

THE FIRST RADISH

Daddy Blake came hurrying out of the house as Mab called. Hal, who was anxiously looking to see if any of his corn had come up, ran over to his sister.

“What is the matter?” asked Mr. Blake. “Did Roly-Poly come home and scratch in your garden?”

“No. But look at my beans!” wailed Mab. “They’re all upside down.”

It did seem so. Along the rows she had so carefully planted in her garden could be seen some light green stems, some of them curved like the letter U upside down. And sticking out of the brown earth were the beans, split open in two halves.

“Who did it?” asked Mab, tears in her eyes.

Daddy Blake looked and laughed.

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“Did you do it?” his little girl wanted to know. “Did you upside down my beans, Daddy Blake?”

“No, Mother Nature did that for you, Mab.”

“Then I don’t like Mother Nature!”

“But she had to,” explained Daddy Blake. “All the beans I know anything about grow that way. After the bean is planted the heart or germ inside starts to sprout, and sends the root downward. At the same time the leaves begin to grow upward and they take with them the outside husk of the bean which is of no more use. The plant wants to get rid of it, you see, and as there is no room under ground for it, where it might be in the way of the roots, the leaves bring it up with them. For a time after the bean has been pushed out of the ground it keeps the tender leaves from being hurt. Then the bean dries and drops off—that is all that is left of it, for the germ, or heart, has started growing another plant, you see.

“So don’t worry, Mab. Your beans are all right, even if they do seem to be growing upside down. That is the only way they know. From on your beans will grow very fast.”

And so they did. Daddy Blake told the children that beans are ready to eat sometimes within six weeks after the seeds are planted. The beans are not ripe, of course, and some are green, while others are yellow, or wax beans. Inside the pods, which are almost like peas, are small green beans. If they were allowed to stay on the vines the green beans inside the pods would get hard and ripe, some turning white like the beans which boys and girls stuff into cloth bags to play games with, and other beans turning a sort of brownish red, with a white spot on.

“Some bean vines like to climb poles,” said Daddy Blake, “and others are what are called bush-beans, growing as peas grow. That is the kind we planted, as I did not have time to get the poles. Then besides string beans, which is the sort in your garden, Mab, there are the larger or lima beans, which are very good to eat. I have planted some of them, and we will have them for dinner with your corn, Hal, when it grows.”

“Will my corn grow upside down like Mab’s beans?” Hal wanted to know.

“Oh, no,” answered Mr. Blake. “Corn sprouts and grows from the bottom. In another week you ought to see some tiny green spears, like blades of grass, coming up through the brown soil. It is then that crows like to come along, pull up the green stalks and eat the soft kernel of corn which is still there, fast to the root.”

“How are we going to keep the crows away?” asked Hal.

“Well, I think none will come here, as our garden is in the city and so near the house,” said Mr. Blake. “Crows are more plentiful in the country and—”

“I know how to keep them away!” cried Mab.

“How?” asked her brother.

“You take an old coat and a pair of pants and stuff ’em with straw, and fasten ’em on a stick in the field.”

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"Oh, you mean a scare-crow!" cried Hal.

"Yes," said Mab. "Could I make a scare-crow for my beans, Daddy?"

"I hardly think you'll need it, Mab," her father said with a laugh. "Beans are not eaten by crows. But you will have to begin to hoe away the weeds soon, and work around your rows of bean plants. Nothing makes garden things grow better than keeping the weeds away from them, and keeping the soil nicely pulverized and damp."

"What do the weeds do to the beans?" asked Mab.

"Well, the weeds grow faster than the beans, and if the weeds are too near they would keep off the sunlight. Weeds also eat out of the soil the food that the beans need, so if you let weeds grow in your garden your bean plants would starve. It is just the same as if some big giant sat beside you at the table and took from your plate nearly everything Mother put on for you to eat.

"So, in order that you might grow well and strong, we would have to take the giant away. It's the same with weeds. They are the bad giants that eat the good things in the soil which our plants need. I'll get you and Hal each a little hoe to use in your garden."

Mab's beans grew very fast and soon the two green leaves on each plant were quite large. Then other leaves appeared. By this time Hal's corn had begun to show green above the earth, and he was anxious to hoe the dirt around it up into hills, as he had been told he must do.

"It is too soon now, though," his father said. "If you work around plants when they are too young you would kill them. They must be allowed to get their roots well down into the ground, to begin eating and drinking. A little baby, at first, does hardly anything but eat and sleep, so that it may grow fast. Plants need to do the same thing. I'll tell you when it is time to hoe."

Aunt Lolly and Uncle Pennywait, as well as Daddy Blake, had planted their parts of the garden, and the land around the Blake house looked smooth and brown, with, here and there, a little green showing.

"I know what I'm going to do with that ten dollar gold piece prize when I win it," said Uncle Pennywait.

"What are you going to do?" asked his wife.

"I'm going to buy ice cream," said Uncle Pennywait. "I never yet had all the ice cream I wanted. But I will when I get that ten dollars."

"Ten dollars is an awful lot of ice cream!" said Mab, sighing.

“He’s only joking,” laughed Aunt Lolly. “You children mustn’t let him win the prize. Keep busy in your gardens, and get it yourselves.”

Hal and Mab did, hoeing away each afternoon when school was out. Daddy Blake showed them how to cut off the weeds that grew in between the rows of corn and beans. The earth was chopped up fine, for the children were told that earth which is made fine holds water, or moisture, longer than when it is in big chunks.

“And plants need to drink water from the soil, as well as through their leaves when it rains,” said Daddy Blake. “A plant can no more get along without water to drink than you children can.”

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"Oh Daddy!" cried Mab, running in the house from her garden one day. "A lot of my bean leaves have holes in them. Has Hal been shooting his pop gun at them?"

"No," said Hal. "I didn't! I wouldn't shoot your beans, Mab."

"Well, something did!" cried Mab. "Will my beans be spoiled, Daddy?"

"I don't know. I hope not. We'll take a look."

As Mab had said many of the leaves did have holes in them. Daddy Blake looked carefully and found some little bugs on the undersides of the bean plants.

"Ha!" he cried. "Here is the enemy!"

"It sounds like war to hear you say enemy," spoke Hal.

"Well, if you have a garden you have to make war on the weeds, bugs and beetles," said Mr. Blake. "A bean-leaf beetle is eating your plants, Mab."

"Can't we make him stop, Daddy?"

"Yes, we'll spray some poison on the leaves, so that when the beetles eat them the poison will kill them," said Mr. Blake.

"But if you poison the beans won't they poison us when we eat them?" Hal wanted to know.

"The rain will wash off all the poison the beetles do not eat," answered his father.

"Besides there are no beans on Mab's plants yet. By the time the bean pods come I hope we shall have driven the beetles away."

Mr. Blake mixed some poison called arsenic in a can of water and sprinkled it on Mab's bean plants. In a few days the beetles had died, or they went away, not liking the taste of the poisoned leaves, and Mab's beans were allowed to grow in peace. That war was over. But other bugs and worms came in the Blake garden, and Daddy Blake, Uncle Pennywait and Aunt Lolly, as well as the children and their mother, were kept busy. The cut worms got in among the cabbages, and many a nice plant was gnawed off close to the ground, dropping over and wilting away until it died. The cut worms came up out of the ground and ate the tiny cabbage stalks close to the earth.

"We shall have to put collars on the cabbage plants," said Daddy Blake, as he looked at some which were killed.

"Put collars on cabbages—how?" asked Mab.

"I'll show you," said her father.

He took some tough paper and made a sort of hollow tube around the stalk of each cabbage plant, tying the paper with string. One end was shoved down in the ground, the other being close up around the lowest cabbage leaves, until it did look as though the plant had on a high, stiff collar.

"The worms can't bite through the paper—or at least they hardly ever do," said Daddy Blake, "and after a while the cabbage stalk will get so strong that the worms can not do it any damage."

By this time many things were growing in the Blake garden. The tomato plants had been set out, and for the first day or so had been kept covered with pieces of paper so the strong sun would not wilt them. They had been used to living in the house, where they started to grow, and transplanting made them tender. But soon they took root in their new soil and began to grow very fast.

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Hal and Mab hoed and raked their gardens. When it did not rain they watered their corn and beans, and they were anxious for the time to come when they could really eat some of the things they had grown. Daddy Blake said Mab's beans might be ready to pick green, so they could be boiled, in about six weeks, but Hal's corn would not be ready for ten weeks. Then the ears would be filled out enough so they could be boiled and eaten with salt and butter. Corn grows more slowly than beans.

"When will we have anything to eat from our garden?" asked Mother Blake one day, when the Summer sun had been beaming down on the green things for a week.

"Well, we'll see," said her husband. "Come with me, Hal and Mab. I'll take you to the garden and we'll see what we can find."

"My beans aren't ready yet," said Mab.

"And there are only little, teeny ears of corn on the stalks in my garden," Hal said.

"We'll see," said Daddy Blake.

He led the children to a plot of earth he himself had planted. Hal and Mab saw some dark green leaves in long rows.

"Pull up some of them," directed Daddy Blake.

Hal did so. On the end of the leaves, growing down in the ground, was something round and red.

"It's a little beet!" cried Mab, clapping her hands in delight.

"No, they're radishes!" exclaimed Hal. "Aren't they, Daddy?"

"Yes, those are red early radishes. Here are some white ones over here for you to pull, Mab. They are called icicles."

Mab gave a cry of delight as she pulled up some long, white radishes. They did look a little like icicles.

"Radishes grow very quickly," said Daddy Blake. "They are ready to eat in about five weeks after the seeds are planted—sooner even than the quickest beans. But of course radishes do not keep over winter. They must be eaten soon after they are pulled, and they make a good relish with bread and butter. We'll have some for dinner."

And the Blakes did. It was the first thing they had from their new garden, and Hal and Mab, who were allowed to eat a few, thought the radishes very good.



Just as the children were getting up from the table one morning, to go out and hoe a little among the corn and beans before going to school, they heard a barking, whining, growling noise out in the yard, and the voice of Sammie Porter could be heard crying:

“Oh, stop! Stop! Go on away! You’re bad! Oh, come take him away! Oh! Oh!”

“Something has happened!” cried Daddy Blake, jumping up from his chair. “I hope Sammie isn’t hurt!”

CHAPTER V

THE POTATOES’ EYES

Hal and Mab ran after their father as he hurried out into the yard. They could hear Sammie crying more loudly now, and above his voice sounded a growling and barking noise.

One part of the fence, between the Blake yard and that where Mr. Porter had made his garden, was low, so that the two children could look over. They saw Sammie standing near the fence, greatly frightened, and looking at a tangle of morning glory vines in which something was wiggling around and making a great fuss.

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"Oh, what is it?" asked Hal.

"It's a—it's a lion!" cried the frightened Sammie. "A great—great big lion, all fuzzy like!"

"Oh, it couldn't be a lion, Sammie," said Mr. Blake. "Tell me what it is that scared you."

"'Tis a lion," said Sammie again. "He ran after me an' I ran an' he ran in the bushes an' he's there now. He barked at me!"

"Ho! If he barked it's a *dog*," cried Hal. "Where is he, Sammie?"

"In there," and Sammie pointed to the tangle of morning glory vines. Just then Mab saw something that made her call out:

"Why it is a dog. It's *our* dog—Roly-Poly!"

"Are you sure?" asked her father. "Roly is over at Mr. Thompson's house you know," for the little poodle had been sent away while the garden was being made. Mr. Thompson had planted nothing, having too small a yard.

"I don't care!" exclaimed Mab. "I *did* see Roly. He's in the bushes there—under the morning glories."

"Well, if it's your dog Roly I would not be so frightened of *him*," said Sammie. "Only I think he was a *lion*."

"Here, Roly! Roly-Poly, come on out!" cried Hal, and out came a very queer-looking dog indeed. It was Roly, but how he had changed. He was all stuck over with leaves, grass and bits of bark from the trees. He certainly did "fuzzy," as Sammie had said, and not at all like the nice, clean poodle he had been.

"Oh, whatever is the matter with him?" cried Mab.

"He's got a lot of leaves stuck on him," added Hal. "Come here, Roly, and I'll pull 'em off for you."

Roly came running over to Hal, but when the little boy tried to get the leaves, grass and bits of bark off his pet he found out what was the matter.

"Roly's all stuck up in fly paper!" cried Hal. "Look!"

"In fly paper?" asked Mr. Blake. "Are you sure?"

"Yes, he must have sat down in some fly paper, and it stuck to him all over, and then he rolled in the leaves and grass," answered Hal.

“And then the leaves and grass stuck to the fly paper,” added Mab. “Oh, you poor Roly-Poly!”

The little poodle dog must have known how he looked, and he must have felt quite badly, for he just stretched out at the feet of Hal, who had jumped over the fence, and he howled and howled and howled, Roly-Poly did.

“I wonder how it happened?” asked Mr. Blake. “But we must take Roly-Poly in the house and wash him. Then he’ll feel better and look better. Did he scare you very much, Sammie?”

“A—a little bit. When I saw him in our yard, all fuzzy like, I thought sure he was a lion.”

Mrs. Porter came out, having heard her little boy crying, and when she saw Roly-Poly she laughed.

Then she said:

“You poor dog. Come over and I’ll squirt the hose on you. That will take off some of the fly paper.”

“Oh, let me squirt it!” cried Hal. “Roly loves to be squirted on! Let me do it!”

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"I'm going to help," added Mab.

"An' me, too!" called Sammie.

"They'll drown the poor dog," spoke Mr. Blake, laughing. "I guess I'd better take a hand in this myself."

"What's the matter?" asked Aunt Lolly from the back steps. "Is the house on fire?" She was always afraid that would happen.

"No, it's just Roly-Poly and some sticky fly paper," answered Mr. Blake. "He must have run home to get a bath after he got all tangled up in the sticky stuff at the Thompson house."

By using the hose, and by greasing the fly paper, which really loosened it more than water did, and then by using soap suds and a brush, Roly-Poly was finally cleaned. Then on their way to school Hal and Mab stopped at the Thompson home to find out what had happened.

"Roly-Poly was very good, all the while he was here," said Mrs. Thompson, "though at first he was lonesome for you. He would have run back to your house if I had let him out, but I knew he might make trouble in your garden so I kept him here."

"This morning I put some of the sticky fly paper around the house and left a window open in the room where Roly was sleeping. The wind must have blown the sticky paper on his curly coat of hair and this so frightened him that he jumped out of the window and ran back home to you."

"Only he went in the yard next door, instead of in ours," said Mab, "and he hid under the morning glory vines."

"And on his way," added Hal, "he rolled in dried leaves and grass until he was all covered, and he looked twice as big as he is now."

"And Sammie thought he was a lion," went on Mab.

"Are you going to bring Roly-Poly back to me to keep?" asked Mrs. Thompson.

"Thank you, no," answered Hal. "Daddy says our garden is growing so well now that Roly can't do much harm. Besides we're going to teach him he mustn't dig holes, to hide his bones, in places where we have things planted. So we'll keep Roly now."

"And we're much obliged to you for being so nice to him," added Mab, "and we're sorry he spoiled your fly paper."



“Oh, I have plenty more fly paper,” laughed Mrs. Thompson. “I’m only sorry poor Roly was so stuck up. Good-bye!”

Hal and Mab hurried on to school, laughing over what had happened to their pet poodle. When their lessons were done they went back to their garden, anxious to see if Roly had been good, and had not dug up any corn or beans.

“Everything is all right,” said Mab, as she looked at her bush beans, which were now in blossom. Soon the blossoms would drop off and in their places would come tiny bean pods.

“Oh, see Uncle Pennyweight!” cried Mab, when she had found that Roly was peacefully sleeping on the shady porch. “What’s he doing?”

“Planting something, I guess,” replied Hal after he had looked at his growing corn, and hoed around a few hills.

“And Aunt Lolly is working in her part of the garden,” went on Mab. “I wonder if they’ll win that ten dollar gold piece prize, Hal?”

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"I hope one of us wins it, Mab. If I win I'll give you half."

"And I'll give you half if I win, 'cause you helped me hoe my beans one day when there was so many weeds in 'em."

Daddy Blake had put the ten dollar gold piece in a little box on the dining room mantle, and every day Hal or Mab looked to make sure the prize was there.

"What you doin' Uncle Pennywait?" asked Mab as she and her brother went over to the vacant lot next door, where part of the Blake garden had been planted.

"I'm taking the eyes out of the potatoes," answered Uncle Pennywait.

"Eyes out of potatoes!" cried Hal. "I didn't know they had any."

"Of course they have!" laughed his uncle. "Else how could they see to get out of their brown skin-jackets when they want to go swimming in the kettle of hot water?"

"Oh, he's only fooling us; isn't he Aunt Lolly?" asked Hal. His aunt was hoeing some weeds away from between the hills of cucumbers she had planted, for she was going to raise some of them, as well as pumpkins, which last had been planted in between the rows of Hal's corn.

"Well, Uncle Pennywait may be fooling you a little," said Aunt Lolly, "but I did see him cutting some eyes from the potatoes."

Hal and Mab looked at one another. They did not know what to think now. It was seldom that both Aunt Lolly and Uncle Pennywait joked at the same time.

"Come over here and I'll show you," called Uncle Pennywait when he had laughed at the funny looks on the faces of the two children. "See," he went on, "these are the 'eyes' of the potato, though the right name, of course, is seeds."

He pointed to the little spots you may see on any potato you pick up, unless it is one too small to have them. The spots are near the ends and in the middle, and they look like little dimples. Some of them may look very much like eyes, and that is what most gardeners and farmers call them, but they are really the potato's seeds.

Mab and Hal watched what Uncle Pennywait was doing. He had a basket in which were some large potatoes and these he was cutting into chunks, letting them fall into another basket. In each chunk their uncle cut the children noticed several "eyes."

"What are you doing?" asked Hal.



"I am getting ready to plant a second crop of potatoes," said Uncle Pennywait. "The first ones I planted in my garden were early ones. Soon we will be eating them on the table. They are not the kind that will keep well all winter, and I am planting that kind now. I am going to win the ten dollar prize by raising a bigger crop of potatoes than you can raise of corn or beans, little ones," and he smiled at Hal and Mab.

Then he went on cutting the eyes out of the potatoes, while the children watched him. They saw that each potato chunk had in it two or three of the queer dimple-spots.

"A potato is not like other things that grow in the garden," said Uncle Pennywait. "It does not have its seeds separate from it, as beans have theirs in a pod, or as corn has its kernels or seeds on a cob, or a pumpkin or apple has seeds inside it. A potato's seeds are part of itself, buried in the white part that we cook for the table, and each potato has in it many seeds or eyes.

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"Of course I could plant whole potatoes, one in each hill, but that would be wasting seed, so I cut the potatoes up into chunks and plant the little chunks, each one with two or more seeds in it."

"And do you only plant one chunk?" asked Mab.

"No, I drop in two or three, according to the size and the number of eyes. This is done so that if one set of seeds doesn't grow the other will. Now you watch me."

Uncle Pennywait had smoothed off a nice bit of his garden where, as yet, he had planted nothing, and into the long earth-rows of this he now began to plant his potato seed. He walked along the rows with a bag of the cut-up pieces hung around his neck, and as he dropped in the white chunks he covered them with dirt by using a hoe.

"When my potatoes grow up into nice green vines, and the striped bugs come to have a feast on them, you may help me drive the bad creatures away," said Uncle Pennywait to the children. "In fact some of my early potatoes need looking after now."

"Are there bugs on them?" asked Mab, when her uncle had finished his planting.

"Indeed there are! Come and I'll show you."

Over they went to the early-potato part of Uncle Pennywait's garden. There, on many of the green vines, were a lot of blackish and yellowish bugs, crawling and eating the leaves.

"We'll just give them a dinner of Paris Green," said Uncle Pennywait, "and they won't eat any more of my vines."

"What's Paris Green?" asked Mab.

"It is a deadly poison, for grown folks or children as well as bugs, and you must never touch it, or handle it, unless I am with you, or your father is near," said Uncle Pennywait. "Here is some of it."

He showed the children a bright, green powder, some of which he stirred into a sprinkling pot full of water. This water he sprayed over the potato vines.

"The poison in the water goes on the potato leaves," explained Uncle Pennywait, "and when the bugs eat the leaves they also eat the poison, and die. We have to kill them or they would eat away the leaves of the vines until they all died, and we would have no potatoes. The potato bugs are very harmful, and we must get rid of them."

Then he let Hal and Mab sprinkle the potato vines with the Paris Green, afterward making the children carefully wash their hands so there would be no danger.

“Is that the only way to drive away the potato bugs?” asked Hal.

“Sometimes farmers go through their potato field and knock the bugs from the vines into a can full of kerosene oil,” said Uncle Pennywait, “or they may use another poison instead of Paris Green. But the bugs must be killed if we are to have potatoes.”

Just then Mab saw Aunt Lolly going into her garden with a bottle in her hand.

“Are you going to poison bugs too?” asked the little girl.

“No, I am going to make a cucumber grow inside this,” was the answer.

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"Make a cucumber grow in a bottle?" exclaimed Hal. "Why, how funny!"

"Let's go see!" cried Mab, and together they ran over to Aunt Lolly's garden.

CHAPTER VI

THE CORN SILK

"Maybe this is another joke, like the eyes of the potatoes," said Hal to his sister, as they ran along.

"That wasn't a joke—the eyes were *real*, though they couldn't see nor blink at you," Mab answered.

"The potato eyes must see a little, else how could they find their way to grow up out of the dark ground?" Hal wanted to know.

"Well, my beans didn't have any eyes, and they grew up," Mab answered. "Even if they did grow upside down, or I thought they did," and she laughed. "But let's see what Aunt Lolly is doing."

Uncle Pennywait's wife was out among the cucumber vines now. She had planted them about the same time Hal had put in the five kernels of corn in each hill.

Aunt Lolly's cucumber seeds had also been planted in hills, so there would be a raised mound of earth for the roots to keep moist in, and in order that the vines, at the start, would be raised up from the other ground around them. Now the cucumber plants were quite lengthy, running along over their part of the garden, and in some places there were growing tiny little pickles—or they would be pickles, when put in salt, vinegar and spices.

"Are you really going to make a cucumber grow in a bottle?" asked Mab as she saw her aunt, with a bottle in her hand, stooping over one of the vines.

"I really am," was the answer. "It is only a little trick, though, and really does no good. But I thought you children would like to see it."

"How are you going to do it?" asked Hal.

"You see this little cucumber, or pickle," spoke Aunt Lolly, and she showed one to Hal and Mab. "Well now I'm going to slip it inside this bottle, but not pull the pickle from the vine. If I did that the cucumber would stop growing and die."

She had a bottle with a neck large enough so the pickle would go in it. The bottle was an odd shape.

“The pickle will grow large and completely fill the bottle,” went on Aunt Lolly. “It will grow because it is not broken off the stem, and the bottle, being glass, will let in the sunshine. The neck is also large enough so air can get in, for without air, sunlight and the food it gets through the stem the pickle would not live.

“But as it grows it will swell and fill every part of the bottle and it also will grow just to the shape of the bottle, so that in the Fall, when it can’t grow any more, because of the strong glass, I can break the bottle and I will have a pickle shaped just like it, curves, queer twists and everything else.”

“Oh, how funny!” cried Hal “I wonder if I could grow an ear of corn in a bottle?”

“No,” answered his aunt. “An ear of corn has to grow inside the husk, and you could not, very well, put a bottle over that.”

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"Could I over one of my beans?" asked Mab.

"Well, you might, but it would have to be a very long and thin bottle, for a bean is that shape when it has grown as large as it will ever get. So I don't believe I'd try it, if I were you. Ill let you each have one of my pickles to grow inside a bottle."

Hal and Mab thought this would be fun so they found other bottles with which to do the funny trick of making cucumbers grow inside the glass.

"I wish Daddy would give a prize for the funniest shaped cucumber," said Mab, when she had fixed her bottle with a pickle inside it.

"Maybe he will," spoke her brother. "We'll ask him."

But when Daddy Blake came home that evening he had a package in his arms, and the children were so interested about what might be in it that they forgot to ask for the cucumber prize.

"What are you going to do now?" asked Mab.

"I'm going to take you and Hal down to the garden and show you how to set out cabbage plants," said Daddy Blake.

"But we've got some cabbage plants!" cried Hal.

"Yes, I know. But these are a kind that will get a head, or be riper, later in the Fall. This is Winter cabbage that we will keep down cellar, and have to eat when there is snow on the ground, for cabbage is very good and healthful. We can eat it raw, or made into sauer-kraut or have it boiled with potatoes. We must save some cabbage for Winter and that is the kind I am going to plant now."

"And may we help?" asked Mab.

"Yes, come on to the garden."

Daddy Blake had asked Uncle Pennywait, that day, to smooth off a plowed and harrowed place ready for the cabbage plants to be put in that evening, and the long rows, dug in the brown soil, were now waiting.

"Where did you get the cabbage plants?" Mab wanted to know. "Did you grow them in a little box down at your office, Daddy, as we did the tomatoes here?"

"No, Mab, not quite that way, though I might have done that if I had had room. I bought these cabbage plants in the market on my way home. Some farmers, with lots of ground, plant the cabbage seed early in the spring in what are called 'hot-frames.' That

is they are like our tomato boxes only larger, and they are kept out of doors. But over the top are glass windows, so the cold air can not get in. But the warm sun shines through the glass as it did through our tomato box, and soon the cabbage seeds begin to sprout.

“Then the plants grow larger and larger, until they are strong enough to be set out, as the tomatoes were. In this way you can grow the vegetables better than if you waited until it was warm enough to put the seed right out in the garden, and let the plants grow up there from the beginning. Putting the seeds in the hot frame gives them a good start. Now we’ll set out the cabbage plants, and you may both help.”

Daddy Blake gave Hal and Mab each a small handful of the little cabbage plants, some of which had two and others three light green leaves on. There were also small roofs, with a little wet dirt clinging to them, from where they had been pulled out of their early home in which they first grew.

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"Oh, Hal! That isn't the way to do it!" cried Daddy Blake, when he had watched his little boy walking along the cabbage row for a while, dropping the plants, the roots of which were afterward to be covered with the brown earth.

"Why not?" Hal asked.

"Because you must only drop *one* plant in a place. You are letting two and three fall at once. You mustn't make a bouquet of them," and his father laughed. "Only one cabbage plant in a spot."

"Am I doing it right?" asked Mab, who was on the other side of the cabbage plot.

"Well, not exactly. Hal dropped his too close together and yours are too far apart. The cabbage plants ought to be about two and a half feet apart, in rows and the rows should be separate one from the other by about twenty inches. Here, I'll cut you each a little stick for a measure. You don't need to worry about the rows, as Uncle Pennywait marked them just the right distance apart as he made them."

So after that Hal and Mab measured, with sticks Daddy Blake gave them to get one cabbage plant just as far from the one next to it in the row as Daddy Blake wanted. Then, with a hoe, the children's father covered the roots with dirt and the cabbages were planted, or "set out," as the gardener calls it.

"Now let me take a look at your corn and beans," said Mr. Blake to the two children, when the cabbages had been left to grow. "I want to see who has the best chance of winning that ten dollar gold prize."

"Hal's corn is very nice," said Mab.

"And so are her beans," added Mab's brother kindly. "I guess maybe she'll get the prize."

"Well, it will be quite a little while before we can tell," spoke Daddy Blake. "Corn and beans will not be gathered until Fall, though we may eat some of Hal's corn earlier, for he has some rows of the sweet variety which can be boiled and gnawed off the ears."

Daddy Blake found a few places in Mab's bean patch where the useless weeds needed hoeing away, so they would not steal from the brown earth the food which the good plants needed.

"And one or two of your corn hills could be made a little higher, Hal," said his father. "If you look at the corn stalks you will see, down near where they are in the ground, some little extra roots coming out above the earth. In order that these roots may reach the soil, and take hold, the dirt must be hoed up to them."

Mr. Blake showed the children what he meant, and Mab cried:

“Those roots are just like the ropes we had on our tent when we went camping.”

“That’s it,” said Daddy Blake. “These roots keep the tall corn stalks from blowing over just as the ropes keep the tent from falling down.”

“Oh, look!” cried Mab, as she passed one stalk of corn that was larger than any of the others. “There’s something growing on this that’s just like my doll’s hair. I’m going to pull it off.”

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"No, you mustn't do that," her father said. "That is corn silk."

"Oh, I know what it is," said Hal. "It's brown stuff and sometimes when you're eating corn it gets in your mouth and tickles you."

"Corn silk isn't brown until it gets old and dried," said his father. "At first it is a light green, like this. And the silk is really part of the corn blossom."

"I didn't know corn had a blossom," said Mab.

"Yes," said her father, "it has. Part of the blossom is up top here, on these things that look like long fingers sticking out," and he pointed to the upper part of the stalk. "On these fingers grows a sort of fine dust, called pollen, and unless this falls down from the top of the corn stalk, and rests on the silk which grows out from the ear, there would be no more corn seed. Or, if corn seed, or kernels, did form on the ear, they would be lifeless, and when planted next year no corn would grow from them. The pollen dust and the silk must mingle together to make perfect ears of corn, so don't pull off the silk, even if you do want to make it into hair for your doll."

Mab promised she would not, though she loved the feel of the soft corn silk. Then she and Hal noticed where some of the light yellow pollen had already been blown by the wind down on the silk to help make the perfect ear of corn.

As the children walked along through the garden with Daddy Blake they heard voices over the fence where Mr. Porter lived. Then they heard Sammie calling:

"Oh, Daddy! Look what I got! It's a big green bug, an' Roly-Poly is barkin' at him! Come quick!"

"I hope Roly-Poly isn't making any more trouble as he did with the fly paper," said Mr. Blake as he walked toward the fence.

CHAPTER VII

EARLY TOMATOES

"What's the matter, Mr. Porter?" asked Mr. Blake, looking over the fence where Sammie's father was working in his garden. "Has our little poodle dog been scratching up your plants?"

"Oh, no. Roly is very good. He seems to know we want the thing's in our gardens to grow, and he only walks carefully between the rows, and doesn't scratch a bit," answered the neighbor.

“What is he barking at now?” asked Mab, for the little poodle dog had crawled under the fence and had gone next door, as he often did. He was standing near red-haired Sammie now.

“He’s barkin’ at a big, green bug,” said the little boy.

“A green bug; eh?” spoke Mr. Porter. “Maybe we’d better see what it is,” he added, speaking to Daddy Blake.

“I rather think we had. There are so many bugs, worms and other things trying to spoil our gardens, that we must not let any of them get away.”

“He’s a awful big bug, almost as long as Roly’s tail,” called Sammie from where he stood near a tomato plant.

“Well, Roly’s tail isn’t very big,” laughed Daddy Blake. “But a bug or worm of that size could eat a lot of plant leaves.”

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"Don't touch it—Daddy will kill it!" called Mr. Porter to his little boy. But Sammie had no idea of touching the queer bug he had seen, and at which the poodle dog was barking.

"Oh, it's one of the big green tomato worms!" exclaimed Mr. Blake when he saw it. "They can do a lot of damage. I hope they don't get in my garden. We must kill as many as we can," and he knocked the worm to the ground and stepped on it. Roly-Poly barked harder than ever at this, thinking, perhaps, that he had helped get rid of the unpleasant, crawling thing.

"We'll look over your tomato patch and see if there are any more worms," suggested Mr. Blake to his neighbor.

"Yes, and then I'll come and help you clear your plants of the pests," said Mr. Porter. "We want to have our gardens good this year, so we won't have to spend so many of our pennies for food next Winter."

A few more of the green worms were found on the tomato vines, and there were more on Daddy Blake's. So many were found that he could not be sure he had knocked them all off.

"I think I will have to spray the plants with Paris Green as I did the potatoes," he said. "The tomatoes will not be ready to pick—even the earliest—for some weeks and by that time the poison will have been washed off by the rain."

"Making a garden is lots of work" said Hal, next day, when he and Mab had helped their father spray the tomato plants.

"Yes, indeed," agreed Mr. Blake. "But, like everything else in this world, you can't have anything without working for it."

"I thought all you had to do in a garden," said Mab, "was to plant the seed and it would grow into cabbage, radishes, corn, beans or whatever you wanted."

"You are beginning to learn otherwise," spoke her father, "and it is a good thing. Mother Nature is wise and good, but she does not make it too easy for us. She will grow beautiful flowers, and useful fruits and vegetables from tiny seeds, but she also grows bad weeds and sends eating-bugs that we must fight against, if we want things to grow on our farms and gardens. So we still have much work before us to make our gardens a success."

"We haven't had much to eat from them yet," said Mother Blake, who had been hoeing among her carrots. "I hope we can pick something soon."

"We had radishes," said Hal.

“And well soon have tomatoes,” added his father. “Now that I have driven away the eating worms the vines will grow better and the tomatoes will ripen faster.”

A week later on some of the vines there were quite large green tomatoes. Hal and Mab watched them eagerly, noting how they grew and swelled larger, until, one day, Mab came running in, crying:

“Oh, one tomato has a red cheek!”

“That’s where it got sunburned,” said her father with a smile. “That shows they are getting ripe. Soon we will have some for the table.”

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In a few days more tomatoes on the vines had red, rosy cheeks, some being red all over. These Daddy Blake let Hal and Mab pick, and they brought them in the house.

“Oh, we shall have some of our own tomatoes for lunch!” cried Mother Blake when she saw them. “How fine! Our garden is beginning to give us back something to pay us for all the work we put on it.”

“But these are Daddy’s tomatoes,” said Hal. “He had the first thing, after the radishes, for the table from his garden, and Mab and I haven’t anything. Daddy’ll get his own prize.”

“No, I promise you I will not take the prize for these tomatoes, even if I did raise them in my part of the garden,” said Daddy Blake with a smile. “And I won’t count the radishes we had before the tomatoes were ripe, either. Those belonged to all of us.

“The prize isn’t going to be given away until all the crops are harvested, or brought in, and then we’ll see who has the most and the best of things that will keep over Winter.”

“Can you keep tomatoes all Winter?” asked Mab of her father.

“Well, no, not exactly. But Mother can put them into cans, after they have been cooked, and she can make ketchup and spices of them—chili sauce and the like—as well as pickles, so, after all, you might say my tomatoes will last all Winter.

“Sometimes you can keep tomatoes fresh for quite a while down in a cool, dry cellar, if you pull the vines up by the roots, with the tomatoes still on them, and cover the roots with dirt. But they will not keep quite all Winter, I believe. At any rate I’m not going to keep ours that way. We’ll can them.”

Mother Blake sliced the garden tomatoes for supper. She also made a dressing for them, with oil, vinegar and spices, though Hal and Mab liked their tomatoes best with just salt on.

“Tomatoes are not only good to eat—I mean they taste good—but they are healthful for one,” said Daddy Blake. “It is not so many years ago that no one ate tomatoes. They feared they were poison, and in some parts of the country they were called Ladies’ or Love Apples. But now many, many thousands of cans of tomatoes are put up every year, so that we may have them in Winter as well as in Summer, though of course the canned ones are not as nice tasting as the ones fresh from the garden, such as we have now.”

It was not long before there was lettuce from the Blake garden, and Mother Blake said it was the best she had ever eaten. Lettuce, too, Daddy Blake explained, would not keep over Winter, though it is sold in many stores when there is snow on the ground. But it comes from down South, where there is no Winter, being sent up on fast express trains.

“Lettuce is also as good to eat as are tomatoes,” remarked Daddy Blake. “It is said to be good for persons who have too many nerves, or, rather, for those whose nerves are not in good condition.”

One day, when Hal and Mab came home from school, they hurried out, after leaving their books in the house, for they wanted to play some games.”

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"Aren't you going to work in your gardens a little while?" asked their mother. "Daddy is out there."

"Is he?" cried Hal. "Did he come home early?"

"Yes, on purpose to hoe among his tomatoes, I think he is cutting down the weeds which grew very fast since the last rain we had."

"Our parts of the garden are all right," said Hal. "My corn doesn't need hoeing."

"Nor my beans," said Mab. "But let's go out and see Daddy, Hal. Maybe he'll tell us something new about the garden."

"Well, where are your hoes, toodlekings?" called Daddy Blake, when he saw the two children coming toward him.

"There aren't any weeds in my corn," said Hal.

"Nor in my beans," added Mab.

"Not very many, it is true," said Daddy Blake. "But still there are some, and if you cut down the weeds when they are small, and when there are not many of them, you will find it easier to keep your garden looking neat, and, at the same time, make sure your crops will grow better, than if you wait and only hoe when the weeds are big."

"Gardens should be made to look nice, as well as be made free from weeds just because it is a good thing for the plants," went on Daddy Blake. "A good gardener takes pride in his garden. He wants to see every weed cut down. Besides, hoeing around your corn and beans makes the dirt nice and finely pulverized—like the pulverized sugar with which Mother makes icing for the cakes. And the finer the dirt is around the roots of a plant the more moisture it will hold and the better it will be for whatever is growing, as I have told you before."

"Well, we'll hoe a little bit," said Hal.

He and his sister got their hoes and soon they were so interested in cutting down the weeds in between the rows that they forgot about going off to play. Hal noticed that the ears of corn on his stalks were getting larger inside the green husk that kept the soft and tender kernels from being broken, as might have happened if they were out in the air, as tomatoes grow.

And so the gardens grew, just as did that of "Mistress Mary, quite contrary," about whom you may read in Mother Goose, or some book like that. Sometimes it rained and again it was quite dry, with a hot sun beating down out of the blue sky.



"If we don't get rain pretty soon we shall have to water the gardens," said Daddy Blake one night after about a week of very dry weather. Around the roots of the many plants the earth was caked and hard, so that very little air could get down to nourish the growing things.

"What do people do who have gardens where it doesn't rain as often as it does here, Daddy?" asked Mab.

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“Well in very dry countries, such as some parts of ours near the places called deserts,” said Mr. Blake, “men build large dams, and hold the water back in big ponds or lakes so it will last from one rainy season to another. The water is let run from the lake through little ditches, or pipes, so that the thirsty plants may drink. This is called the irrigation method, for to irrigate means to wet, soak or moisten with water. Each farmer or gardener is allowed to buy as much water as he needs, opening little gates at the ends of the main ditches or sluices, and letting the water run over his dry ground, in which he has dug furrows to lead the water where he most needs it.

“And sometimes, when there is too little water to use much of it this way, the gardeners do what they call intensive cultivation. Those are big words, but they mean that the man just hoes his ground every day around his plants, instead of perhaps once a week.

“You know there is moisture in the air, and at night dew falls. This wets the ground a little, and by digging and turning over the earth around the roots of his plants, the gardener makes it very fine so it holds the moisture longer. In this way a little bit of rain, or dew, lasts a long time. Come out now, and I’ll show you something you perhaps have not noticed.”

Daddy took Hal and Mab to the garden, and with a hoe he pointed to a place around Hal’s corn stalks where the dry ground was hard, and baked by the sun.

A few strokes of the hoe and Daddy Blake had turned up some of the underlying earth. Hal and Mab saw that it was darker in color than that on top, and when they put their hands down in it the earth felt moist.

“What makes it?” asked Mab.

“Because the underneath part of the ground held the moisture in it. The top part was baked dry and the moisture had all gone away—evaporated in the sun, if you want to use big words, just as water dries in your hands after you wash them, even if you do not soak it up with a towel.”

“Does a towel soak up water?” asked Mab. “I thought it just wiped it off our hands.”

“No, the towel is like a sponge,” said Daddy Blake. “The fuzzier the towel the more like a sponge it is. Each little bit of linen or cotton, is really a tiny hollow tube—a capillary tube it is called—and these tubes suck up the water on your hands as the same fuzzy capillary tubes in a piece of blotting paper suck up the ink. A towel is a sponge or a blotter. And the earth is a sort of sponge when it comes to sucking up the rain and dew. It also holds the water near the plant, when the ground is finely pulverized, so the tomato vine, the corn stalk or the bean bush can drink when it gets thirsty.”

“My! There’s a lot to know about a garden; isn’t there?” said Mab with a sigh.

“Yes, there is,” agreed Hal. “I don’t s’pose we’ll ever know it all.”

“No,” said his father, “you will not. There will always be something better to learn, not only for you but for everyone. But learn all you can, and learn, first of all, that plants must have sunshine, air and water to make them grow. Now we’ll water the garden.”

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There were no signs of rain, and though the ground was a little moist in some parts of the garden Daddy Blake thought all the growing things would be better for a wetting from the hose. So he attached it to the faucet and let Hal and Mab take turns sprinkling. As the drops fell on the thirsty ground there floated up a most delicious smell, like the early spring rain, which helps Mother Nature to awaken the sleeping grass and flowers.

"I guess my corn is wet enough," said Hal, after a bit. He had only been sprinkling a little while when he heard one of his boy friends calling him from the street in front.

"Oh, your corn isn't half wet enough," laughed Daddy Blake. "It is almost better not to water the garden at all than not to give it enough, for it only hardens the dirt on top. Give the corn a good soaking, just as if it had rained hard. A good watering for the garden means about two quarts of water to every square foot in your plots. Don't be afraid of the water. Your plants will do so much better for it. But don't spray them too heavily, so the dirt is washed away. Let the hose point up in the air, and then the drops will fall like rain."

Hal kept the hose longer, giving his corn a good wetting, and he could almost see the green stalks stand up straighter when he had finished. They were refreshed, just as a tired horse is made to feel, better, after a hot day in the streets, when he has a cool drink and is sprinkled with the hose.

"Roly, get out the way or you'll be all wet!" cried Mab, as the little poodle dog ran around her beans when she was watering them.

"Bow-wow!" barked Roly, just as if he said he didn't care.

"Well, if you want to get wet—all right!" laughed Mab. "Here it comes!"

She pointed the hose straight at Roly and in a second he was wet through.

"Ki-yi! Ki-yi! Ki-yi!" he yelped as he ran out of the garden. "Bow-wow! Ki-yi!"

"Well, it will cool him off, and I guess he wanted it after all," said Daddy Blake. "But Roly is a good little dog. He only dug once in the garden since he came back, but I tapped him on the end of his nose with my finger, and scolded him, and he hasn't done it since."

The next day Daddy Blake took Hal and Mab to the garden again, and showed them how he was building little wooden frames under his tomatoes to keep the red vegetables off the ground where they might lie in the mud and sand and get dirty.

"The frames help to hold up the vines so they will not break when the tomatoes get too heavy for them," said Mr. Blake.



“Plants have lots of trouble,” said Hal. “You have to put their seeds in the ground, keep the weeds away from them, hoe them, water them, and keep the bugs and worms away. Is there anything else that can happen to things in a garden, Daddy?”

“Yes, sometimes heavy hail storms come and beat down the plants, or tear the leaves to ribbons so the plants die, and bear nothing. This often happens to corn, which has broad leaves easily torn by hail.”

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"What is hail?" asked Hal.

"Well, it's a sort of frozen rain," said Daddy Blake. "Often in a thunder shower the wind plays strange tricks. It whirls the rain drops about, first in some cool air, far above the earth and then whips them into some warm air. The cool air freezes the rain, and when it falls it is not in the shape of beautiful crystals, as is the snow, but is in hard, round balls, sometimes as large as marbles. Often the hail will break windows."

"I hope it doesn't hail in our nice garden," said Hal.

"It will hurt your corn worse than it would my beans," said Mab. "I hope it doesn't hail, too, Hal."

But two or three days after that, one evening when the Blakes were sitting on the steps after having worked in the garden, there came from the West low mutterings of thunder. Then the lightning began to flash and Daddy Blake said:

"We are going to have a shower, I think. Well, it will be good for the garden."

And soon the big drops began splashing down, followed by another sound.

"Oh, it's hailing!" cried Aunt Lolly. "Hear the hail stones!"

"I love to see it!" exclaimed Mab. "But I hope it doesn't hail very big stones."

However the stones from the sky—stones of ice that did not melt for some time after they rattled down—were rather large. They bounced up from the sidewalk and on the path around the Blake house.

"Where's Hal?" suddenly asked his father. "I want to show him and Mab how the inside of hail stones look. I'll run out and get some as soon as the shower slackens a little."

It was raining and hailing hard now, and the lightning was flashing brightly, while the thunder was rumbling like big cannon.

"Hal was here a minute ago," said his mother. "I wonder if he could have run out in the storm?"

Just then, from his porch, Mr. Porter called something to Daddy Blake. All Mab and her mother could hear was:

"Hal—hail—umbrella!"

"Oh, I hope nothing has happened to him!" said Mrs. Blake. "You had better go look for him, Daddy!"



CHAPTER VIII

THE CHILDREN'S MARKET

Daddy Blake caught up an umbrella from the hallway and ran out into the storm, going around the side path toward the back yard and lot where the children had made their gardens.

"Where is he going?" asked Mab.

"To look for Hal," answered her mother.

"Where is Hal?"

"He must have gone out in the storm to see what made it hail, I suppose."

"Oh, if one of the big hail stones hits him on the end of his nose he'll cry!" exclaimed Aunt Lolly.

"Well, he'll know better than to do it again," said Uncle Pennywait "Listen to Roly-Poly howling!"

The little poodle dog was afraid of thunder and lightning, and every time there was a storm he used to get in the darkest corner of the house and howl. He was doing this now as Daddy Blake ran to the garden to find where Hal was.

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"He's back there—out where his corn is planted!" called Mr. Porter to Hal's father as Daddy Blake ran around the house. "I saw him from our kitchen window, and I thought I'd tell you."

"I'm glad you did!" shouted Mr. Blake. Both he and Mr. Porter had to shout to be heard above the noise of the storm; for the thunder was very loud, and the patter of the rain drops, and the rattle of the hail made a very great racket indeed.

[Illustration]

When Daddy Blake turned around the corner of the house and started down the main path that led through the vegetable garden, he saw a strange sight. There stood Hal, in the midst of his little corn field, out in the pelting rain and hail, holding the biggest umbrella over as many of the stalks of corn as he could shelter. And Hal himself was dripping wet for the rain blew under the umbrella.

"What are you doing?" cried Mr. Blake.

"Keeping the hail off my corn," answered Hal. "You said the hail stones would tear the green leaves all to pieces and I don't want it to. Can't Mab come out and hold an umbrella, too? You've got one, Daddy, so you can help."

Mr. Blake wanted to laugh but he did not like to hurt Hal's feelings. Besides he was a little worried lest Hal take cold in the pelting storm. So he said:

"You must come in, Hal. Holding an umbrella over your corn would only save one hill from the hail and saving that one hill would not make up for you getting ill. We shall have to let the storm do its worst, and trust that not all the corn will be spoiled."

"Is that what the farmers do?" asked Hal, making his way between the rows of corn toward his father.

"Yes. They can't stop the hail and they can't cover the corn. Sometimes it doesn't do a great deal of damage, even though it tears many of the green leaves. This storm is beginning to stop now, so you had better come in."

"I didn't want my corn to be spoiled, so I couldn't win the prize," spoke Hal, as he went back to the house with his father, walking under the umbrella. "That's why I came out to keep off the frozen rain. It came down awful hard."

"Yes, it was a heavy storm for a few minutes," said Mr. Blake. "But it will soon be over, and the rain will do the gardens good, though the hail may hurt them some."

By the time Hal and his father reached the porch the hail had stopped and it was only raining. Mrs. Blake, Aunt Lolly and the others were anxiously waiting.

"I thought maybe he had been struck by lightning," said Mab.

"Pooh! I wasn't afraid!" boasted Hal.

"I guess you were thinking too much about your corn," said his father with a laugh. "It was very good of you, but you mustn't do such a thing again. Now you'll have to get dry clothes on. But wait until I show you how a hail stone looks inside."

Daddy Blake ran out into the storm and came back with a handful of the queer, frozen stones. He let Hal and Mab look at them, and then, taking a large one, he held it on top of the warm stove for a second, until the chunk of ice had melted in half.

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“See the queer rings inside it,” Daddy Blake said to the children and, looking, they noticed that the hail stone was made up of different layers of ice, just as some kinds of candy are made in sections.

“What makes it that way—like an onion,” asked Hal, for the hail stone did look a bit like an onion that has been sliced through the centre.

“It is because the hail is made up of different layers of ice,” answered Daddy Blake. “It is supposed that a hail stone is a frozen rain drop. In the tipper air it gets whirled about, first going into a cold part that freezes it. Then the frozen rain drop is tossed down into some warm air, or a cloud where there is water. This water clings to the frozen centre and then is whirled upward again. There is another freeze, and so it goes on, first getting wet and then freezing until, after having been built up of many layers of ice and frozen rain, the hail stone falls to the ground.”

“My!” exclaimed Mab. “I didn’t know hail stones were so wonderful.”

“Neither did I,” added Hal.

When Hal had changed his clothes he told how it was he happened to run out into the garden during the heavy hail storm. He had seen the big frozen chunks of rain coming down, and he remembered what his father had said about it spoiling garden and farm crops. So Hal, when no one was looking, got a big umbrella from the rack and went out to hold it over his corn. Mr. Porter happened to see him and told Mr. Blake.

The shower did not last very long, and when it was over Daddy Blake took Hal and Mab into the garden to see what damage had been done. The ground was so muddy they had to wear rubbers.

“Oh, a lot of my beans are beaten down!” cried Mab, as she looked at her bushes.

“They’ll straighten up again when the sun comes out,” said her father. “If they don’t you can hold them up with your hand and hoe more dirt around their roots. That’s what I shall have to do with my tomatoes, too. The fruit is getting too heavy for the vines. However no great harm will be done.”

“A lot of my corn is torn,” said Hal. “It’s too bad!”

“Not enough is torn to spoil the ears,” said Daddy Blake. “A gardener must expect to have a little damage done to his crops by the storms. Of course it isn’t nice, but it is part of the garden game. Sometimes whole orchards, big green houses and large fields of grain are ruined by hail storms. We were lucky.”

“What does a farmer do when his whole crop is spoiled by a big storm?” asked Hal.



“Well, generally a farmer raises many crops, so that if one fails he can make money on the others. That is what makes it hard to be a farmer, or, rather, one of the things that make it hard. He never can tell whether or not he is going to have a good crop of anything. Sometimes it may be storms that spoil his wheat or hay, and again it may be dry weather, with not enough rain, or bugs and worms may eat up many of his growing things. So you see a farmer, or a man who has a larger garden, must grow many crops so that if he loses one he may have others to keep him through the Winter, either by selling the things he raises, or by eating them himself.”

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The next day there was no school, and Hal and Mab spent much time in their garden. The sun came out bright and warm, and the children said they could almost see the things growing. Mab declared that her bean vines grew almost an inch that one day, and it may be that they did. Beans grow very fast. If you have ever watched them going up a pole you would know this to be true.

With their hoes the children piled more dirt around the roots of the garden plants where the rain had washed the soil away, and thus the bushes and stalks were helped to stand up straighter. Some straightened up of themselves when they had dried in the sun.

"Well, I think we are going to have some good crops," said Daddy Blake when he went to the garden with Hal and Mab a few days after the storm. "In fact we are going to have more of some things than we can use."

"Will we have to throw them away?" asked Hal.

"No indeed!" laughed his father. "That would be wrong at a time when we must save all the food we can. But we will do as the farmer does who raises a large crop of anything. We will start a little store and sell what we do not need."

"A *real* store?" cried Mab, with shining eyes.

"And sell things for *real* money?" asked Hal.

"Of course!" laughed their father, "though you may give your friends anything from your garden that you wish to."

"Where will we keep the store?" asked Hal. "And who will we sell the things to?"

"And what will we sell?" asked Mab. "What have we too much of, Daddy?"

"My! You children certainly can ask questions!" exclaimed Mr. Blake.

"Now let me see! In the first place I think if you keep the store out on the front lawn, near the street, it will be the best place, I'll put an old door across two boxes and that will be your store counter. And you can sell things to persons that pass along the street. Some in automobiles may stop and buy, and others, on their way to the big stores, may stop to get your vegetables because they will be so fresh. The fresher a vegetable is the better. That is it should be eaten as soon as possible after it is taken from the garden, else it loses much of its flavor."

"But will people give us real money for our garden truck?" asked Hal. He had heard his father and Uncle Pennywait speak of garden "truck" so he knew it must be the right word.



“Indeed they’ll be glad to pay you real money,” said Mr. Blake with a smile. “Persons who have no garden of their own are very glad to buy fresh vegetables. You’ll soon see.”

“But what are we going to sell?” asked Mab.

“Oh, yes, I forgot your question,” said her father. “Well, there are more tomatoes than your mother has time to can, or make into ketchup just now. She will have plenty more later on. And I think there will be more of your beans, Mab, than you will care to keep over Winter, or use green. So you can sell some of my tomatoes and some of your beans.”

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"My corn isn't ripe yet," said Hal. "The ears are awful little."

"No, you must wait a while about your corn. But Mother's carrots are ready to pull, and she has more than we will need over Winter. You may sell some of those, Hal."

"Oh, won't it be fun—having a real store!" cried the little boy. "Come on, Mab, we'll get ready! I'm going to pull the carrots."

"And I'll pull the beans!" cried Mab. "Will you get the tomatoes, Daddy?"

"Yes, but you had better let me show you a little bit about getting the things ready for your market store. The nicer your vegetables look, and the more tastefully you set them out, the more quickly will people stop to look at them and buy them. Wise gardeners and store-keepers know this and it is a good thing to learn."

So Daddy Blake first showed Mab how to pick her string beans, taking off only those of full size, leaving the small to grow larger, when there would be more to eat in each pod. The beans were kept up off the ground with strings running to sticks at the of each row.

"If the beans touch the ground they not only get dirty," Mr. Blake, "but they often are covered with brown, rusty spots and they soon rot. Persons like to buy nice, clean beans, free from dirt. So have yours that way, Mab."

Mab put the beans she picked into clean strawberry boxes, and set them in the shade out of the sun until it was time to open the store on the lawn near the street.

Hal's father showed how to pull from the brown earth the yellow carrots from Mother Blake's part of the garden. Only carrots of good size were pulled, the small ones being left to grow larger. The carrots were tied in bunches of six each, and the bright yellow, pointed bottoms, with the green tops, made a pretty picture as they were laid in a pile in the shade.

"Now I'll pick some tomatoes and your garden store will be ready for customers," said Daddy Blake.

His vines were laden with ripe, red tomatoes and these were carefully picked and placed in strawberry boxes also, a few being set aside for lunch, as was done with Mab's beans and Mother Blake's carrots.

A little later Hal and Mab took their places behind a broad wooden counter, placed on two boxes out in front of their house. On the board were set the boxes of red tomatoes, those of the green and yellow string beans and the pile of yellow carrots.

"Now you are all ready for your customers," said Daddy Blake, as he helped the children put the last touches to their vegetable store.

“Oh, I wonder if we’ll sell anything?” spoke Mab, eagerly.

“I hope so,” answered Hal. “Oh, Look! Here comes a big automobile with two ladies in it, and they’re steering right toward us!”

“I hope they don’t upset our counter,” said Mab slowly, as she watched the big auto approach.

CHAPTER IX

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SAMMIE PLANTS TOMATOES

"Look at the lovely vegetables!" exclaimed one of the ladies in the automobile, as she glanced at what Hal and Mab had spread out on their store counter—the old barn door set on the two boxes.

"Are they nice and fresh, children?" asked the second lady, as she put a funny pair of spectacles, on a stick, up to her nose, and looked at the string beans through the shiny glass.

"Oh, yes'm, they're very fresh!" answered Hal. "Daddy and us just picked 'em from our garden."

"We have more than we can eat, and mother hasn't time to can the tomatoes," explained Mab, for their father had left them alone, to say and do as they thought best.

"They certainly look nice," went on the first lady, "And how well the children have arranged them."

"Like a picture," added the other. "See how pretty the red, green and yellow colors show. I must have some tomatoes and beans."

"And I want some of those carrots. They say carrots make your eyes bright."

Hal and Mab thought the ladies eyes were bright enough, especially when the sun shone and glittered on the funny stick-spectacles. The automobile had stopped and the chauffeur got down off the front seat behind the steering wheel and walked toward the children's new vegetable store.

"How much are your tomatoes?" asked the lady who had first spoken.

"Eight cents a quart," answered Hal, his father telling him to ask that price, which was what they were selling for at the store. "And they're just picked," added the little boy.

"I can see they are," spoke the lady. "I'll take three quarts, and you may keep the extra penny for yourselves," she added as she handed Hal a bright twenty-five-cent piece.

Hal and his sister were so excited by this, their first sale, and at getting real money, that they could hardly put the three quarts of red tomatoes in the paper bags Daddy Blake had brought for them from the store. They did spill some, but as the tomatoes fell on the soft grass they were not broken.

"I want some beans and carrots," said the other lady, and the chauffeur helped Hal and Mab put them in bags, and brought the money back to the children. The beans and

carrots were sold for thirty cents, so that Hal and Mab now have fifty-five cents for their garden stuff.

“Isn’t it a lot of money!” cried Hal, when the auto had rolled away down the street, and he and his sister looked at the shining coins.

“Well get rich,” exclaimed Mab, gleefully.

A little later a lady in a carriage stopped to buy some beans, and after that a man, walking along the street, bought a quart of tomatoes. Later on a little girl and her mother stopped and looked at the carrots, buying one bunch.

“I want my little girl to eat them as they are good for her,” said the lady, “but she says she doesn’t like them, though I boil them in milk for her.”

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"But they don't taste like anything," complained the little girl.

"Our carrots are nice and sweet," said Mab. "You'll like these. My brother and I eat them."

"They look nice and yellow," said the little girl. "Maybe I will like these."

Hal and Mab had sold several boxes of beans and tomatoes and about half a dozen bunches of carrots, in an hour, and now they began putting their store counter in order again, for it was rather untidy. Daddy Blake had told them to do this.

Once or twice the children could not make the right change when customers stopped to buy things, but Aunt Lolly was near at hand, on the porch, and she came to their aid, so there was no trouble.

It was rather early in the morning when Hal and Mab started their store, and by noon they had sold everything, and had taken in over two dollars in "real" money.

"Isn't it a lot!" cried Hal, as he saw the pile of copper, nickle and silver coins in the little box they used for a cash drawer.

"A big pile," answered Mab. "We'll sell more things to-morrow."

"No, I think not," spoke Daddy Blake, coming along just then. "We must not take too much from our garden to sell. But you have done better than I thought you would. Over two dollars!"

"What shall we do with it?" asked Hal.

"Well, you may have some to spend, but we'll save most of it," his father answered. "This is the first money you ever earned from your garden, and I want you to think about it. Just think what Mother Nature did for you, with your help, of course.

"In the ground you planted some tiny seeds and now they have turned into money. No magician's trick could be more wonderful than that. This money will pay for almost all the seed I bought for the garden. Of course our work counts for something, but then we have to work anyhow."

Hal and Mab began to understand what a wonderful earth this of ours is, and how much comes out of the brown soil which, with the help of the air, the rain and sunlight, can take a tiny seed, no larger than the head of a pin, and make from it a great, big green tomato vine, that blossoms and then has on it red tomatoes, which may be eaten or sold for money. And the beans and carrots did the same, each one coming from a small seed.

Sammie Porter came out two or three times and watched Hal and Mab selling things at their vegetable store. The little boy seemed to be wondering what was going on, and Hal and Mab told him as well as they could.

“Sammie goin’ to have a ’mato store,” he said when the two Blake children had sold all their things, and were moving their empty boxes and door into the barn. “Me goin’ to sell ’matoes.”

“I wonder what he will do?” said Mab.

“Maybe he’ll take a lot of things from his father’s garden,” suggested Hal. “We better tell him not to.”

“Well, Mr. Porter is working among his potatoes so I guess Sammie can’t do much harm,” Mab said.

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A little later she and Hal happened to look out in front and they saw a queer sight. Sammie was drawing along the sidewalk his little express wagon, in which he had piled some tomatoes. They were large, ripe ones, and he must have picked them from his father's vines, since he could not get through the fence into the Blake gardens.

"Oh, Sammie!" cried Mab, running out to him, "What are you doing with those tomatoes?"

"Sammie goin' have a 'mato store an' sell 'em like you an' Hal. You want come my 'mato store?" he asked, looking up and smiling.

"No, I guess we have all the tomatoes we want," laughed Hal.

Sammie did not seem to worry about this. Maybe he thought some one else would buy his vegetables. He wheeled his cart up near his own front fence, on the grass and sat down beside it.

"'Mato store all ready," he said. "People come an' buy now."

But though several persons passed they did not ask Sammie how much his tomatoes were. They may have thought he was only playing, and that his tomatoes were not good ones, though they really were nice and fresh.

"We'd better go tell his father or mother," suggested Mab to her brother. "I don't believe they know he's here."

"Guess they don't," Hal agreed. "Come on; he might get hurt out there all alone."

Brother and sister started into the Porter yard. They did not see Sammie's mother, but his father was down in the back end of his lot, weeding an onion bed.

"Hello, children!" called Mr. Porter. "Did you come over to see how my garden is growing?"

"We came to tell you about Sammie," said Mab. "He's out—"

"Hello! Where *is* that little tyke?" cried Mr. Porter suddenly. "He was here a little while ago, making believe hoe the weeds out of the potatoes. I don't see him," he added, straightening up and looking among the rows of vegetables.

"He's out in front trying to sell tomatoes," said Hal.

"Oh my!" cried Sammie's father. "I told him not to pick anything, but you simply can't watch him all the while."

He ran out toward the front of the house, Hal and Mab following. They saw Sammie seated on the ground near his express wagon, and he was squeezing a big red tomato, the juice and seeds running all over him.

“Sammie boy! What in the world are doing?” cried his father.

“Sammie plantin’ ’mato,” was the answer. “Nobody come to my store like Hal’s an’ Mab’s, so plant my ’matos.”

Then they saw where he had dug a hole in the ground with a stick, into this he was letting some of the tomato juice and seeds run, as he squeezed them between his chubby fingers.

“Oh, but you are a sight!” said Mr. Porter with a shake of his head. “What your mother will say I don’t dare guess! Here! Drop that tomato, Sammie! You’ve got more all over you than you have in the hole. What are you trying to do?”

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"Make a 'mato garden," was Sammie's answer as his father picked him up. "I put seeds in ground and make more 'matoes grow."

"But you musn't do it out here," said Mr. Porter, trying not to laugh, though Sammie was a queer sight. "Besides, I told you not to pick my tomatoes. You have wasted nearly a quart. Now come in and your mother will wash you."

Into the house he carried the tomato-besmirched little boy, while Hal and Mab pulled in the express wagon with what were left of the vegetables. Sammie had squeezed three of the big, ripe tomatoes into a soft pulp letting the juice and seeds run all over.

"And a tomato has lots of juice and seeds," said Mab as she and Hal told Daddy and Mother Blake, afterward, what had happened.

"Yes, nearly all vegetables have plenty of seeds," said their father. "Mother Nature provides them so there may never be any lack. If each tomato, squash or pumpkin or if each bean or pea pod only had one seed in, that one might not be a good one. That is it might not have inside it that strange germ of life, which starts it growing after it is planted.

"So, instead of one seed there are hundreds, as in a watermelon or muskmelon. And nearly all of them are fertile, or good, so that other melons may be raised from them.

"You see I only bought a small package of tomato seeds, and yet from them we will have hundreds of tomatoes, and each tomato may have a hundred seeds or more, and each of those seeds may be grown into a vine that will have hundreds of tomatoes on, each with a hundred seeds in it and each of these seeds—"

"Oh, Daddy! Please stop!" begged Mab with a laugh. "It's like the story of the rats and the grains of corn!"

"Yes, there is no end to the increase that Mother Nature gives to us," said Daddy Blake. "The earth is a wonderful place. It is like a big arithmetic table—it multiplies one seed into many."

The long Summer vacation was now at hand. Hal and Mab did not have to go to school, and they could spend more time in the garden with their mother, with Uncle Pennywait or Aunt Lolly, while Daddy Blake, every chance he had, used the hoe often to keep down the weeds.

"There is nothing like hoeing to make your garden, a success," he told the children.

"Do they hoe on big farms?" asked Hal.



“Well, on some, yes. I’ll take you children to a farm, perhaps before the Summer is over, and you can see how they do it. Instead of hoeing, though, where there is a big field of corn or potatoes, the farmer runs a cultivator through the rows. The cultivator is like a lot of hoes joined together, and it loosens the dirt, cuts down the weeds and piles the soft, brown soil around the roots of the plants just where it is most needed. But our garden is too small for a horse cultivator—that is one drawn by a horse. The one I shove along by hand is enough for me.”

Of course Hal and Mab did not spend all their time in the garden. They sometimes wanted to play with their boy and girl chums. For though it was fun to watch the things growing, to help them by hoeing, by keeping away the weeds and the bugs and worms, yet there was work in all this. And Daddy Blake believed, as do many fathers, that “all work and no play makes Jack a dull boy.” So Hal and Mab had their play times.

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One day Mrs. Blake asked Hal and Mab to pick as many of the ripe tomatoes they could find on the vines.

“Are we going to have another store and sell them?” asked Hal.

“No, I am going to can some, and make chili sauce of the others,” answered his mother. “In that way we will have tomatoes to eat next Winter.”

It was more fun for Hal and Mab to pick the ripe tomatoes than it was to hoe in the garden, and soon, with the help of Uncle Pennywait, they had gathered several baskets full of the red vegetables. Then Aunt Lolly and Mother Blake made themselves busy in the kitchen. They boiled and stewed and cooked on the stove and there floated out of the door and windows a sweet, spicy smell.

“Oh, isn’t that good!” cried Mab.

“It will taste good next Winter!” laughed their uncle.

“And to think it comes out of our garden—the tomato part, I mean,” spoke Mab.

“Come on!” called Hal, after a while, when they had picked all the tomatoes Mother Blake needed.

“Where you going?” asked Mab.

“Over to Charlie Simpson’s and have some fun. He’s got a new dog.”

“Wait a minute and I’ll give you each a penny!” called their uncle, and Hal and Mab were very glad to wait, for they were hungry after having picked the tomatoes.

Very early the next morning the Blake family was awakened by the loud ringing of their door bell.

“Oh, my goodness! I hope the house isn’t on fire!” cried Aunt Lolly, quickly getting out of bed.

“It’s Mr. Porter. He’s at our front door,” reported Hal, who had looked from the window of his room, from which the front steps could be seen.

“What’s the matter? What is it; a message—a telegram?” asked Mr. Blake, as he, too, looked from Hal’s window. “What has happened?”

Mrs. Blake and the children waited anxiously to hear what the answer would be.



CHAPTER X

WHITE CELERY

"In our garden you say!" cried Daddy Blake, with his head out of the window. What it was Mr. Porter had told their father, to make him exclaim like that, neither Hal nor Mab could guess. For they could not tell what Mr. Porter, who now was calling from down on the sidewalk in front, was saying.

"That's too bad!" Daddy Blake went on, as he drew his head in from the window. "I'll come down right away."

"Oh, what is it?" anxiously asked his wife as he hurried to his room to change from his bath robe into outdoor clothes. "Has anything happened?"

"I'm afraid there has," answered Daddy Blake.

"Is anyone ill that Mr. Porter wants you to come out in such a hurry. Is little Sammie hurt in our garden?"

"No, but it's something in our garden," replied her husband.

"What? Oh, don't tell me the garden is on fire?" cried Aunt Lolly.

"How could a green garden burn?" asked Uncle Pennywait, laughing.

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"It's somebody cows in our garden—in Hal's corn, too, I expect," said Daddy Blake. "Mr. Porter saw them and told me. We ought to have Little Boy Blue here to drive them out with his horn. But I'll have to use a stick, I guess."

"Oh!" cried Hal "Cows in my corn! They'll eat it all up!"

"That's what they will, and Mab's beans and Aunt Lolly's green peas and other things if I don't get them out," said Daddy Blake from his room where he was quickly dressing.

"Where you going, Hal?" asked Mab as she saw her little brother come from his room half dressed.

"I'm going with Daddy, to the garden, to drive out the cows!"

"No, you'd better stay here," his father said. "The cows might run wild when I drive them out, and step on you. It isn't any fun to be stepped on by a cow."

Hal thought this might be true, so he stayed in while Mr. Blake hurried out to the yard in the early morning. Hal and Mab looked from the windows at the back of the house but they could not see much of the garden on account of the thick, leafy trees. They could hear their father and Mr. Porter talking, though.

Then while they waited, they heard the mooing of cows, a little later there was a rushing sound at one side of the house, and next several of the big creatures ran out of the side gate into the street.

Daddy Blake made sure the gate was fastened, so the cows could not get in again, and then he came into the house.

"Is my corn all eaten up?" asked Hal, anxiously as he thought of the prize ten dollar gold piece. "Is it all gone, Daddy?"

"No, not very much, though some is trampled down."

"Is the whole garden spoiled?" asked Mab.

"Well, a little corner of it is. The cows got in among the green peas and they liked them so well they stayed there eating, not going far from where they were planted. So, though we may lose some corn and peas, nothing much else is harmed."

"Whose cows were they?" asked Aunt Lolly.

"Mr. Porter says they belong to a milkman who lives on the other side of the town. They must have gotten out of their pasture during the night and then then came here to our garden. They broke down part of the fence to get in."

“That milkman ought to be made to pay for what his cows ate,” said Uncle Pennywait.

“Perhaps he will,” said Mr. Blake. “Mr. Porter says the man is very good and honest. We won’t make a fuss until we see what he will do.”

Hal and Mab were anxious to see what had happened to their garden, and so, as soon as they were dressed, they went out along the paths that were made among the different plots where the potatoes, beans, peas, lettuce and various vegetables were growing.

“Oh, look at my corn!” cried Hal “It’s all spoiled!”

“No, not all, though you will lose several hills,” said his father.

“And my beans are all trampled down,” wailed Mab.

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"Never mind," consoled Uncle Pennywait. "They'll still grow, even if the vines are not as nice as before. A wind storm would have made them look the same way."

"And as long as both your crops are damaged, and each about the same amount," said Daddy Blake to Hal and Mab, "you will still be even for winning the prize of ten dollars in gold. That is if Uncle Pennywait doesn't get ahead of you," he added with a sly wink at Aunt Lolly's husband.

Hal and Mab hurried to look mere closely at their garden plots. Hal found, just as he had after the hail storm, that, fey hoeing dirt higher around his hills of corn he could make some of the stalks that had been trampled down, stand up straight. And Mab's beans could also be improved.

"But the cows certainly ate a lot of green peas," said Daddy Blake with a sigh as he looked at the place where they had been growing. "Still I'd rather have them spoiled than the potatoes, as peas are easier to get in Winter than are potatoes—at least for us."

The cows wandered up and down the village street until their owner and some of his men came for them. Then, when the milkman heard how his animals had damaged Mr. Blake's garden, an offer of payment was made.

Some of Daddy Blake's neighbors told what they thought the milkman should pay, and he did. He said he was very sorry his cows had made so much trouble, and hereafter, he said, he would see that they did not break out of their pasture.

"I saw them in your garden, Mr. Blake, as soon as I got up," said Mr. Porter. "I arose earlier than I usually do as I wanted to hoe my lima beans before I went to work. I thought I'd call you before the cows ate everything."

"I'm glad you did," spoke Hal's father. "We saved most of the garden, anyhow."

It took two or three days of hard work in the Blake garden until it looked as nicely as it had done before the cows broke in. Even then the pea vines were only about half as many in number as at first, and they had been delicious, sweet peas, that Mother Blake had counted on serving at many meals.

"But I guess the cows enjoyed them as much as we did," she said. "Anyhow there is no use in worrying over what can't be helped."

"Did the cows hurt the egg plants?" asked Aunt Lolly.

"No, they didn't get in that part of the garden," answered Mrs. Blake. "I think well have some for dinner."

“What—Cows or *egg* plant?” asked Uncle Pennywait, winking his left eye at Mab as he made this joke.

“Egg plant, of course!” laughed Mrs. Blake. “Suppose you go bring one in for me, Uncle Pennywait.”

“We’ll come, too!” cried Hal and Mab, while the little girl, as she took hold of her uncle’s hand, asked:

“Is there really an egg plant? I thought hens laid eggs, and we haven’t any hens in our garden.”

“There is a plant named egg,” Uncle Pennywait said. “I’ll show you some. It’s down in the far end of the garden.”

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Hal and Mab had been so busy with their own part of the garden, hoeing and weeding their corn and beans, that they really did not know all the things Daddy Blake had planted. But when Uncle Pennywait showed them where, growing in a long row, were some big purple-colored things, that looked like small footballs amid the green leaves, Hal cried:

"Are those egg plants?"

"They are," said his uncle.

"And do we eat them?" asked Mab.

"Surely; and very good they are, too!"

"What makes them call 'em egg plants?" Hal wanted to know. "Do they taste like eggs just like oyster plant tastes like stewed oysters?"

"And how do they cook 'em?" asked Mab.

"Well, you children certainly haven't forgotten to ask questions since your Daddy began telling you things about the woods, fields, flowers and birds," laughed Uncle Pennywait.

"Let me see, now. Well, to begin with, these are called egg plants because they are shaped like an egg you see, only much larger, of course," and Uncle Pennywait held up one he had cut off the stem where it had been growing. "They taste a little like eggs because, when they are fried, some persons dip them in egg batter. But first they cut them in slices, after they are peeled, and soak them in salt water."

"What for?" asked Hal.

"Oh, maybe to make them nice and crisp, or maybe to draw out a strong flavor they have; I really don't know about that part of it. At any rate we're going to have some fried egg plant for lunch, and I like it."

So did Hal and Mab, when they had tasted it. They were beginning to find out that many things good to eat grew in their garden.

About a week after this some of Hal's corn ears were large enough to pick and very delicious they were boiled, and eaten from the cob with salt and butter on. Mother Blake also cooked some of the lima beans Mab had planted when she made her garden, and the corn and beans, cooked together, made a dish called "succotash," which name the Indians gave it many years ago.

"What does the name mean?" asked Hal.

"I can't answer that, for I don't know," replied Daddy Blake.

"I know what it means," said Uncle Pennywait.

"What?" asked Mab.

"It means fine, good, very good," replied her uncle. "Or, if it doesn't, it ought to. Those Indians knew what was good, all right! I'll have some more, Mother Blake," and he passed his dish the second time.

One day, when Hal and Mab had finished cutting down some weeds in their garden plots they saw their father carrying some long boards down to the lower end of the lot next door.

"Are you going to build a bridge, Daddy?" asked Hal, for there was a little brook not far away.

"No, I am going to make my celery grow white?" he answered.

"Make celery grow white?" exclaimed Mab. "I thought it grew white, or light green, all of itself."

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"No," replied her father, "it doesn't. If celery were left to grow as it comes up from seed the stalks would be green, or at least only the hearts, or the most inside part, would be white.

"To make celery white all over we have to keep the sun from shining on it. For it is the rays of the sun, together with the juices, or sap, inside leaves and plants, that makes them green. Celery has to be bleached, and one way of doing it is to set long boards on each side of the row of celery plants, fastening them close up, and covering them with straw and dirt to keep out all the light.

"Some farmers bank up the dirt on both sides of their plants, not using any boards, but I like the boards because they are clean, and keep the soil from getting inside the celery stalks. Another way is to put a small wooden tube, or barrel around each plant so that no sunlight can get to the sides of the stalk to make them green."

"Isn't it queer," said Mab. "I thought celery always grew white, like we get it at the table. And so it has to be bleached. If you keep the light from anything green will it turn white, Daddy?"

"Well, almost anything, like plants. Children turn pale if they do not get enough sunlight and so does celery. Only we like pale celery but it is not healthful for children to be too white. Just try a little experiment yourself. Take a flat stone and put it over some grass. In a week or so lift up the stone and see what has happened."

Hal and Mab did this, after they had helped their father put the boards on the celery. Then, a week later, they lifted up the stone which they had laid over a spot on the lawn.

"Why, the green grass has all turned white!" cried Hal. And so it had.

"That's how my celery will turn," said his father. "The grass grew pale from being in the dark so long. It did not like it, and if you left the stone there too long the grass would die. Now take it away and in a day or so the grass will be green again."

And that's exactly what happened. The sun had tanned the grass green as it tans children brown at the seashore.

One day, when Mab and Hal had started out with their father who was going to show them how to dig potatoes, which is not as easy as it sounds, the children suddenly heard a yelping and barking sound in Mr. Porter's garden.

"There's Roly-Poly in trouble again!" called Mr. Blake.

"Yes, and he's hurt, too!" added Hal, for the little poodle was yelping as if in pain.

"Oh, what has happened to him?" cried Mab. "Hurry, Daddy, please, and see!"

CHAPTER XI

GATHERING CROPS

Hal, Mab and their father ran to the gate in the fence that was between their yard and the garden of Mr. Porter. Down where their neighbor's lima beans were planted, and where they were climbing up the poles, they heard the barking and yelping of Roly-Poly sounding loudly.

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"He's there!" cried Mab.

"Here, Roly! Come here! Come on, little doggie!" called Hal, thinking, for a moment, that perhaps his pet was barking at a cat, as sometimes Roly did, though he really would not have hurt pussy.

"Why doesn't he come?" asked Mab, coming to a stop, while her father looked around, trying to see the poodle among the growing things in the garden.

"Maybe he's caught and can't come," suggested Hal.

"Caught how?" asked Mab.

"Well, maybe he's all tangled up in the bean vines like he was in the morning glories the day he sat down in the fly paper," Hal answered.

"Oh, Roly! Are you hurt?" cried Mab.

"Bow-wow! Ki-yi!" was all the answer the little poodle dog gave, and, though it might have meant a great deal in dog language Mab and Hal could not understand it. But Roly-Poly was trying to make his friends know that something had happened to him.

"I'll find him," said Mr. Blake. "You children had better stay back there," and he motioned to them not to come any farther. Hal and Mab stood still.

"What is it? What's the matter?" Mr. Porter, coming from another part of the garden where he had been pulling up some turnips. "Has anything happened?"

"Something has happened to Roly-Poly," replied Hal.

"Hear him howl?" inquired Mab.

"I should say I did!" cried Mr. Porter. "And I guess I know what's the matter to. He's in the trap."

"In the trap?" cried Hal in surprise. "What trap?"

Mr. Porter did not answer. He ran down to where Daddy Blake was poking among the green vines and bushes, trying to find Roly.

"Come on!" exclaimed Hal. "Let's go see what it is."

"Daddy told us to stay here," said Mab. "We can't go."

Hal knew that, and, much as he wanted to see what was going on, he would not disobey his father. Mab, too, would have liked to run down where Daddy Blake and Mr. Porter were.

“Bow-wow! Ki-yi!” barked and howled Roly again, and then the children heard their father and his friend, the man next door, laughing.

“I guess Roly can’t be hurt very much or Daddy wouldn’t laugh,” said Mab.

“I guess not,” agreed Hal. “I wish we could go see what it is.”

Just then their father came out from among the tall lima beans. He had Roly in his arms, and the little poodle dog was cuddled up as though he did not want to leave them.

“Is he hurt?” asked Mab.

“A little,” her father answered.

“Where?” Hal wanted to know.

“On his tail. It was pinched a little in the mole trap, where he was caught fast. But we got you out; didn’t we Roly-Poly?”

“Bow-wow; Ki-yi!” yelped the poodle.

“Was he in the mole trap?” asked Hal.

“And what is a mole trap?” asked Mab.

“Well, I see I’ll have to tell you more about the garden,” answered Daddy Blake with a laugh, as he gave Roly over to his little girl and boy, who eagerly petted him. “For the mole is one of the garden pests, and the trap, Mr. Porter set to catch some who were spoiling his things, caught Roly-Poly instead.”

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"Is a mole a worm?" Hal wanted to know. "Or is it like a potato bug?"

"It's a little animal like a mouse," said his father, "only it is blind. It lives underground, in the dark all the while, so really it has no use for eyes, any more than have the blind fish in the big Kentucky cave.

"But, though a mole is blind, it does not stop him from turning up the ground and uprooting many plants. He really doesn't mean to do it, but we have to catch him just the same."

"Oh, I'd like to see a blind mole," said Mab.

"I can't show you one just now," spoke Mr. Porter, "but I can show you how they dig underground, and the damage they do to lawns and gardens. Maybe, if your dog Roly will keep out of my mole trap, I can catch one of the creatures and show you how it looks. Come down here."

Mr. Porter led the way to that part of the garden where Roly had been caught by his little tail. On the ground, among the rows of beans, sometimes going right under them and spoiling the roots, was a long ridge of dirt, in a sort of wavy line. With his fingers Daddy Blake tore up some of the earth, and opened a regular little tunnel under ground.

"The mole," said Daddy Blake, "tunnels, or digs, his way in the dark, underground, to find grubs and worms which he eats. He had two front claws, very strong, just purposely made for digging, and you would be surprised to see how soon a mole can dig himself underground, even if you put him on top of a hard, dirt road.

"It is when the blind mole tunnels along, smelling here and there for grubs and worms, that he uproots the plants and for that reason we have to catch him. There are some traps that have sharp points which go down through the ground with a strong spring to push them, whenever a digging mole gets too near. But the trap Mr. Porter set was a spring trap without any sharp points to it, which he thought might catch a mole alive. Instead it caught Roly, who was digging away to find a buried bone, maybe."

"Is he all right now?" asked Mab.

"Yes, his tail was only pinched a little but Roly's tail is very tender I guess, for he howled very loudly."

"I wish I could see a mole," said Hal.

"So do I," echoed his sister.

But all they could see was the place where the mole had dug. And perhaps you may see, in your garden or on your lawn, a little raised ridge, or long, low hill of dirt, some

morning. If you poke your finger, or a stick, down in it you will find that underneath it is hollow.

This is a place where a mole has dug his tunnel in the night to get things to eat. Moles dig deep down, too, under the surface where no one can see them, and when they do not uproot the grass or the garden plants, they do little harm. It is only when they come near the top that you can see the ridge they make.

Sometimes cats catch moles when they come out on top of the ground, thinking them a sort of mouse. The mole's fur is very fine and soft, and would make a fine cloak, only it would take many skins to make one large enough to wear.

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"Well, I'm glad Roly-Poly is all right," said Mab, as she took the little dog from Hal, who was holding him, and petted him on his head.

"Yes, you may put him down now," spoke her father. "And we'll go dig the potatoes. Mother wants some for dinner, and I want to show you children how to get them out of the ground. For we will soon be digging them to put away for winter."

When Hal and Mab reached the potato part of the garden, which was the largest of all the plots, the children saw that many of the green vines were getting brown and withered.

"Why, the vines are dying!" exclaimed Mab. "Did a mole spoil them, Daddy?"

"No, but the potatoes have grown as large as they ever will be, and, there being no more need of the vine, it is drying up. It has gone to seed, just as a dandelion goes to seed, in a way, though we call the potatoes 'tubers' instead of seed. There may be potato seeds, that come when the potato blossom dries up, for all I know, but I have always planted the eyes of the tubers and so does everyone else. Now to show you how to dig."

[Illustration]

Mr. Blake had planted two kinds of potatoes, early and late, and it was the vines of the early ones that had dried up. Later on the others would dry, and then it would be time to dig their tubers to put down cellar for the long Winter.

"First you pull up the vine," said Daddy Blake, and he tore one from the earth, many of the potatoes clinging to it. These he picked off and put in the basket. Then, with a potato hook, which is something like a spading fork, only with the prongs curved downward like a rake, Daddy Blake began scraping away the dirt from the side of the hill of potatoes.

"When a farmer has a big field of potatoes," said the children's father, "he may use a machine potato-digger. This is drawn by horses, who walk between the rows, drawing the machine right over where the potato vines are growing. The machine has iron prongs which dig under the dirt like giant fingers, turning out the potatoes which are tossed between the rows of dirt so men, who follow, may pick them up. But we'll dig ours by hand. And in digging potatoes you must be careful not to stick your fork, spade or whatever you use, into the potato tubers, and so cutting them."

"Why can't we do that?" asked Hal.

"Because a potato that is cut, pierced or bruised badly will not keep as well as one that is sound and good. It rots more quickly, and one rotten potato in a bin of good ones will

cause many others to spoil, just as one rotten apple in a barrel of sound ones will spoil a great many. So be careful when you dig your potatoes.”

Hal and Mab watched Daddy Blake, and then he let them pull a vine and dig in the hill after the brown tubers. Out they came tumbling and rolling, as if glad to get into the light and sunshine. For they had been down under the dark earth ever since the eyes were planted in the Spring, growing from tiny potatoes Into large ones.

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When Mab dug up her hill of potatoes, after she had picked up all there were in it, her father saw her carefully looking among the clods of brown soil.

"What have you lost, Mab?" he asked.

"I was looking for the eye pieces you planted when you made your potato garden," she answered.

"Oh, they have turned into these many potatoes," laughed Mr. Blake. "That is the magical trick Mother Nature does for us. We plant a piece of potato, with 'eyes' in it, or we plant a seed, and up springs a plant on the roots of which are more potatoes, or, if it is a bean, it turns into a vine with many more beans on it. And the seed—that is the eye potato or the bean—disappears completely, just as a magician on the stage pretends to make your handkerchief disappear and change into a lemon. Mother Nature is very wonderful."

Hal and Mab thought so too.

The Summer was passing away. The days that had been long and full of sunshine until late in the evening were getting shorter. No longer was it light at five o'clock in the morning, and the golden ball did not stay up until after seven at night.

"The days are getting shorter and the nights longer," said Daddy Blake. "That means Winter is not far off, though we still have Autumn or Fall before us. And that will bring us the harvest days. We will soon begin to harvest, or bring in our crops."

"And then will we know who gets the prize?" asked Hal.

"Yes," his father answered. "I'll have to award the ten dollar gold prize then, but it will be some little time yet. Things are not all done growing, though they have done their best. From now on we will not have to worry so much about weeds, bugs and worms."

"Do they die, too, like the potato vines?" asked Mab.

"Yes, though many weeds will not be killed until a hard frost nips them. But the garden plants have gotten their full growth, and are not babies any more, so the weeds can not do them so much harm. Most of the bugs and worms, too, have died or been eaten by the birds. The birds are the gardener's best friend, for they eat many worms and bugs that could not be killed in any other way. So the more insect-eating birds you have around your garden the better. Even though the robins may take a few cherries they don't get paid half enough that way for the good work they do."

"How am I going to harvest my beans?" asked Mab. "There aren't many more green ones left to boil, for Mother canned a lot of them."

“What are left of your beans we will save dried, to make into baked beans this Winter,” said her father.

“And what about my corn?” Hal wanted to know.

“Well, your mother canned some of that,” answered his father, “that is the sweet kind. The yellow ears I will show you how to save for the chickens this winter, and there is another kind—well, I’ll tell you about that a little later,” and he smiled at the children.

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"Oh, have I got three kinds of corn?" asked Hal, clapping his hands in delight.

"We'll see when we come to harvest it," said Daddy Blake.

"Maybe I'll win the prize with that!" exclaimed the little boy. "Come on, Mab! Let's go in and look at the ten dollar gold piece. I hope I win it!"

"I hope you do, too, Hal," said his sister. "But I'd like it myself, and I've got a awful lot of beans. My vines are covered with them—I mean dried ones, in pods like peas."

"I wish we could both have the prize," said Hal. "But if I win I'll give you half, Mab."

"So will I to you!" exclaimed the little girl.

As they ran toward the house they saw a farmer, from whom their mother often bought things, standing on the porch. In his hand he held what looked to be a big whip. There was a long wooden handle and fast to it was a shorter stick of wood.

"There's the flail I told Mr. Blake I'd bring him," said the farmer to Aunt Lolly, who had come to the door when he rang the bell.

"A flail," she repeated. "What is it for?"

"Well, I think Mr. Blake wants to whip some beans with it," and the farmer laughed, while Hal and Mab looked at him curiously.

CHAPTER XII

PUMPKIN PIE

"Oh, Hal!" murmured Mab, as she looked at the queer sticks the farmer had brought. "It does seem like a whip! I wonder if Daddy is going to whip Roly-Poly for getting in the mole trap?"

"Of course not!" laughed Hal. "Daddy never whips Roly anyhow, except sometimes to tap him on the nose with his finger when our poodle does something a little bad. Daddy would never use this big wooden whip, anyhow."

"The farmer-man said he was bringing it to Daddy to whip my beans," went on Mab. "I wonder what he means?"

Just then Daddy Blake himself came on the front stoop.

"Ah, so you have brought the flail?" he asked the farmer.

“Yes, and your little boy and girl here were afraid it was to use on their pet dog!” laughed the farmer, “I guess they never saw a flail before.”

“I hardly think they did,” said Mr. Blake. “But next year I intend to take them to a farm where they will learn many more things than I could teach them from just a garden.”

“Daddy, but what is a flail?” asked Mab.

“A flail,” said Mr. Blake, “is what the farmers used to use before threshing machines were invented. And I had Mr. Henderson bring this one from his farm to thresh out your beans, Mab, as we haven’t enough to need a machine, even if we could get one.”

“What does thresh mean?” asked Hal.

“It means to beat, or pound out,” his father explained. “You see wheat, oats, barley, rye and other grains, when they grow on the stalks in the field, are shut up in a sort of envelope, or husk, just as a letter is sealed in an envelope. To get out the letter we have to tear or break the envelope. To get at the good part of grain—the part that is good to eat—we have to break the outer husk. It is the same way with peas or beans.

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"When they are green we break the pods by hand and get out the peas or beans, but when they are dried it is easier to put a pile of pods on a wooden floor and beat them with a stick. This breaks the envelopes, or pods and the dried peas or beans rattle out. They fall to the bottom, and when the husks and vines are lifted off, and the dirt sifted out, there are our beans or peas, ready to eat after being cooked.

"The stick with which the beating is done is called a flail. One part is the handle, and the other part, which is fastened to the handle by a leather string, is called a swingle, or swiple, because it swings through the air, and beats down on the bean or pea pods.

"In the olden days wheat, rye and oats were threshed this way on a barn floor, and in the Bible you may read how sometimes oxen were driven around on the piles of grain on the threshing floor, so that they might tread out the good kernels from the husks, or envelopes that are not good to eat. But I'll tell you more about that when we get on the farm."

"When are we going to beat out my beans?" asked Mab.

"In a week or so, as soon as they get dried well, and are ripe enough so that they are hard, we will flail, or thresh them," answered Daddy Blake. "I am going to thresh some peas, too, to have them dried for this Winter."

Farmer Henderson left the flail which he had made for Daddy Blake, and Hal and Mab looked at it. They could whirl it around their heads, but their father told them to be careful not to hurt one another.

"I'm going to thresh some peas!" cried Hal.

"And I'll use it on my beans so I can get the ten dollar gold prize!" cried Mab.

There were busy times in the Blake home for the next few weeks, for there was much canning to be done, so that the vegetables raised in the garden during the Summer would keep to be eaten in the Winter.

"For that," said Daddy Blake, "is why Uncle Sam, which is another name for our government, wants us to grow things out of the earth. It is so that there may be plenty of food for all."

So tomatoes were canned, or made into ketchup and chili sauce, while some were used green in pickles. Aunt Lolly brought into the house the cucumber which had grown inside the glass bottle. It was the exact shape of the glass flask, and when this had been broken the cucumber even had on its side, in white letters, the name of the drug firm that made the bottle. For the name had been painted black by Aunt Lolly and as the rays of the sun could not go through the black paint the cucumber was white in

those places and green all over elsewhere. The children's cucumbers also grew to funny shapes in their bottles.

Mother Blake, with Mab and Hal to help, pulled up her carrots, of which she had a good crop. The long yellow vegetables, like big ice cream cones, Uncle Pennywait said, were stored in a dark place in the cellar.

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"You have a fine crop of carrots," said Daddy Blake.

"Do you think I'll win the prize?" asked his wife.

"Well, I wouldn't be surprised," he answered.

"Oh, if she should!" exclaimed Hal to his sister.

"Well," spoke Mab, with a long sigh, "of course I'd like to have that ten dollar gold piece *myself*, but we ought to want *mother* to have it, too."

"Of course," said Hal, and then he went out to look at his corn. It had grown very tall, and there were ears on every stalk. Much had been eaten during the Summer, boiled green, and sweet and good it was. Mother Blake had canned some plain corn, and had also put away more, mixed with lima beans, making succotash as the Indians used to do.

Daddy Blake soon began to dig the late potatoes, which would be kept down cellar in the dark to be eaten as they were needed during the long Winter.

"And I think we'll have enough to last us until Spring," he said, "and perhaps have some for seed. Our garden has been a great success, even if the hail did spoil some things and bugs and worms part of other crops."

The potatoes were really Uncle Pennywait's crop—at least he had planted most of them and called them his, for the tomatoes were Daddy Blake's. And Uncle Pennywait kept careful count of every quart and bushel of the potatoes that were eaten, or put away for Winter.

"Because I want that ten dollar prize," he said.

Hal and Mab looked at one another anxiously.

"Who would win it?" they wondered.

Finally there were some cold, sharp frosts, so that the tomato and other vines were all shriveled up when Hal and Mab went out to the garden to look at them.

"Oh, Daddy! Will they straighten up again?" they asked.

"No. Their work is done. We shall have to plant new seeds to make new vines, but we shall have to wait until Spring comes again. The earth is soon going to sleep for the Winter, when nothing will grow in it. But it is time to get in your corn and beans, children. You must cut your yellow corn, Hal, and the other kind, too, and let the ears get dry, ready for husking."

“What other kind of corn, Daddy?” Hal asked.

“Come and I’ll show you,” his father said.

Mr. Blake led the way down to the corn patch of the garden. At the end he plucked an ear of corn, stripped away the half dried husk, and showed Hal and Mab some sharp-pointed kernels.

“That’s the kind of corn that pops,” said the children’s father. “I sowed a few hills for you without saying anything. I wanted it as a surprise.”

“And will it really pop?” asked Hal, his eyes shining.

“Try some and see,” advised Daddy Blake. And later, when the ears of popcorn had dried, and the kernels were shelled into the popper and shaken over the fire, they burst out into big, white bunches like snow flakes.

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"What makes pop-corn?" asked Hal.

"Well the heat of the fire turns into steam the water that is inside the kernel of corn," said Mr. Blake. "Though you can not see it, there is water in corn, beans and all vegetables, even when they are dry."

"And, as I have told you before, when water gets too hot it turns into steam, and the gas or vapor, for that is what steam is, grows very big, as if you blew up a balloon, so that the steam bursts whatever it is inside of, unless the thing that holds it is very strong. Steam can even burst cannon balls, so you see it can easily burst, or pop the corn.

"Then, as the kernel bursts it puffs out and quickly dries into queer shapes by the heat of the fire. It is white because the inside of corn is really white, though the outside husk looks rather yellow sometimes."

So part of Hal's pop corn crop made something nice to eat during the long Winter evenings. But before those evenings came Hal and Mab had harvested all the things in the garden, with the help of their father and mother, Uncle Pennywait and Aunt Lolly.

"We must get in the pea and bean vines," said Daddy Blake when he saw what a hard frost there had been. "Then we'll thresh them on the barn floor and it will be time soon, Hal, to husk your corn and bring in Aunt Lolly's pumpkins."

For about a dozen big yellow pumpkins were growing amid the stalks of corn, and very pretty they looked in the cool, crisp mornings, when the corn had turned brown from the frost.

Hal's father showed him how the farmers cut off a hill of the corn stalks, close to the ground, stacking them up in a little pile called a "shock." They were allowed to stand there until the wind and sun had dried the husks on the corn.

"Now we'll husk the corn," said Daddy Blake, after the peas and beans had been stored in the barn to dry until they were ready to be threshed or flailed.

He showed Hal and Mab how to strip back the dried husk, and break it off, together with the part of the stalk to which the ear of corn is fastened when it is growing. It was hard work, and the two children did not do much of this, leaving it for the older folk.

But they took turns using the flail, and thought this great fun. On a big cloth, on the floor of the barn, were spread the dried bean vines that had been pulled from Mab's part of the garden. Then the swinging end of the flail was whacked down on the dried vines and pods. Out popped the white beans as the pods were broken, and when the flail had been used long enough Daddy Blake lifted up the vines and crushed, dried pods, and there was left a pile of white beans.

“Oh, what a lot of them!” cried Mab, when they had been sifted, cleaned and put away. There were about two bushels of the dried, white beans, enough to last all Winter, baked or made into soup.

Some dried peas were threshed out also, but not so many of them, and they could be cooked soft again, after they were soaked in water. Then Hal’s yellow corn was piled into two bushel baskets, and there were some of the ears left over.

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As for Uncle Pennywait's potatoes, there were nearly ten bushels of them stored away down cellar, and Aunt Lolly had more than a dozen yellow pumpkins, one very big. Mother Blake's carrots measured over a barrel and there were many, many cans filled with Daddy Blake's tomatoes.

"Now who won the prize?" asked Mab, as she looked at her bushels of beans and then at Hal's corn. "Did Hal or did I?"

"Well," slowly said her father, "I think you both did so well, and you raised, each one, such fine crops, nearly the same in amount, that I'll have to give two prizes!"

"Two prizes!" cried Hal.

"Yes," went on his father. "Instead of dividing this one I'll make another. I brought another ten dollar gold piece from the bank to-day, and here is the first one," and he held up the two, shining, yellow pieces of money.

"Here is one for you, Hal," went on Daddy Blake, "and one for you, Mab," and he handed the children their prizes. "And how did you like being taken to the garden, instead of after flowers or to the woods?"

"It was fine!" cried Hal, looking eagerly at his golden prize.

"And we learned so much," added Mab. "I never knew, before, how many things can grow in the ground."

"Oh, you are just beginning to learn them," said her father. "Wait until you go to the farm."

"What about my prize?" asked Aunt Lolly with a laugh. "I'm sure my pumpkins will more than fill two bushel baskets."

"Perhaps they will," said Daddy Blake. "Well, I'll give you a prize for the first pumpkin pie you bake, Aunt Lolly. And Uncle Pennywait shall have a prize for his potatoes, while as for Mother—well we'll each give her a prize for the many good meals she got for us while we were working in the garden, and she'll get a special prize for her carrots, which will give you children red cheeks this Winter."

"Hurray!" cried Mab.

"Hurray!" echoed Hal. "It's better than Fourth of July."

A few days after this, when all the vegetables had been gathered in from the garden, which was now sear and brown because of heavy frosts, Mab and Hal heard their aunt calling them.

“Maybe she has some lollypops,” said Hal.

“Let’s go see,” cried Mab.

“Here is something you may have for Hallowe’en which comes to-morrow night,” said Aunt Lolly, and she pointed to a large pumpkin. “There’ll be enough without this,” she went on, “and I promised you one for a Jack-O’Lantern.”

“Oh, won’t it be fun to make one!” cried Hal.

Aunt Lolly showed them how to cut the top off the big pumpkin, leaving part of the vine for a handle, so that it could be lifted off and put on like a lid. Then the pumpkin was scooped out from the inside, so that eyes, a nose and mouth could be cut through the shell.

“To-morrow night you can put a lighted candle inside, and set it on the front porch for Hallowe’en,” said Aunt Lolly, when the pumpkin lantern was finished.

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The afternoon of Hallowe'en Hal and Mab, who were helping Daddy Blake rake up some of the dead vines in the garden, heard Sammie Porter crying on their front stoop.

"What's the matter?" asked Hal, running around the corner of the house.

"Oh-o-o-o-o!" cried Sammie. "Look at the pumpkin face!" and he pointed to the Jack-O'lantern into which the candle had not yet been put. "It's alive!" cried Sammie. "Look, it's rollin'!"

And so the scooped-out pumpkin was moving! It was rolling to and fro on the porch and, for a moment, Hal and Mab did not know what to think. Then, all of a sudden, they heard a noise like:

"Bow-wow! Ki-yi!"

"Oh, it's Roly-Poly!" exclaimed Mab.

"He's in the pumpkin," shouted Hal.

And so the little poodle dog was. He had crawled inside the big, hollowed lantern, while the lid was off, and had gone to sleep inside. Then Aunt Lolly, as she said afterward, came out, and, seeing the top off the pumpkin-face, had put it on, for fear it might get lost. Thus, not knowing it, she had shut Roly-Poly up inside the Jack-O'lantern and he had slept there until he felt hungry and awakened. Then he wiggled about, making the pumpkin move and roll over the stoop as if it were alive.

"Oh, what a funny little dog!" cried Mab, as she cuddled him up in her arms, when she took him from the pumpkin.

"He's a regular Hallowe'en dog!" laughed Hal.

That night Mr. Jack-of-the-lantern looked very funny as he grinned at Hal, Mab and the other Hallowe'en frolic-makers who passed the Blake stoop. The candle inside him blazed brightly, shining through his eyes, nose and through his mouth with the pumpkin-teeth.

"A garden makes fun, and it makes good things to eat," said Hal.

"I wonder what we'll see when Daddy takes us to the farm?" spoke Mab.

"It will be fun, anyhow," went on Hal. "We always have fun when we go anywhere with Daddy!"

And now, as the children's garden is finished, and all the vegetables are safely put away for the Winter, this book comes to an end. But there will be another soon, which I hope you will like. And, for a time, I'll say "good-bye!"

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