

"Well," said Sim, "we shall have chance enough to try it; but we must try a little farming first. 'Tis jolly, having, you see."

So they went down stairs, where Aunt Martha had a fine breakfast waiting for them, and who told them that uncle Tracy and Bill had eaten theirs, and had gone down to the mowing-field long before. They felt ashamed of being so late, and said they would get up as early as Bill did while they were there. They were going to be real farmers, they said, and make hay, and hoe corn, and do everything that the others did. But people are very apt to promise more than they are likely to perform; and the resolution of two small boys at the breakfast-table, in broad sunlight, was different from that of the same boys next day, when called by Bill at the dawning, and told to get up and milk the turkeys, and drive the hens to pasture. It was pretty hard to get up before it was light enough to see the beauty of a farmer's life, and so they failed to "see it;" but they dressed themselves, and were proud to hear Uncle Tracy say they were "smart boys." Ike shivered in the morning air; and when Bill laughed at him, he sung,—

To plough and to sow, and to reap and to mow,
And to be a farmer's boy, ay, ay,
And to be a farmer's boy.

"Bully for you!" cried Bill; and Uncle Tracy quietly laughed as Ike took up a stone, and threw it at a little chipmunk that sat on the wall.

And very good farmers the boys made for a day or two. They drove the horses in the horse-rakes, raked after the load, pitched on the hay, and deemed that it was really fine fun; but the thought would come up that there were thousands of fish waiting out there in the river to be caught, and that all this time was fruitlessly spent: therefore it grew irksome, and they were not so chipper as they had been.

On the third day, right in the midst of making a load of hay, they saw a woodchuck make for his hole; and both of the boys dropped their forks, and ran for him. Of course he disappeared, before they reached him, but they knew he was there. Rover, an old dog belonging to one of the haymakers, who took an interest in the animal, and began to paw away the dirt at the mouth of the hole; but the boys drove him aside, and began a noisy debate as to how they should get the woodchuck out. Sim was for digging down to him, but Ike's suggestion to drown him out, yelled in a louder key, was adopted.

But what should they bring water in from the spring down in the valley? Lucky thought! There was a large tin pail over in the shadow of the wall, in which the men had brought some "switchel,"—a drink made of water, molasses, ginger, and a little old cider-vinegar; and they would get this for the purpose. There was some left when Ike went for it; and, in the haste and excitement of the moment, he drank what he could, and spilled the rest on the ground, making off with the pail. The spring was several rods away; and hurrying to it, they filled the first pail, leaving Rover to watch the animal. Up they came with the water, and dashed it into the hole, expecting him to come out; but he didn't come worth a cent. Then they went for more water, which they dashed in the hole as before; but still he didn't budge. Rover had grown very unconcerned, and lay there with his head on his paws, and his eyes half shut, except as a little of the water fell on him, when he moved to a greater distance. Bucket after bucket of water did they bring to drown out the woodchuck, but he made no sign.

"Guess he's got a life-preserver on," said Ike.

"All Rapid River couldn't drown him," echoed Sim.

They were vexed enough when they found that they had all their "labour for their pains;" and probably at that very moment the woodchuck was away, by the back-door of his house, high and dry, and laughing, as perhaps a woodchuck can, at their effort to drown him out. Rover could have told them better how to manage it.

"They replaced the pail, leaving the men to wonder at the sudden evaporation of the "switchel;" and then, taking their forks, they commenced to hole again over the hay. The two boys kept together, and, nearing a little clump of trees, they saw a hornet's nest, as big as a hat, near the ground in a small bush.

"Hallo!" cried Ike, "see there!"

"I see it; real yellow-jackets," said Sim.

"What's to be done?"

"Stick a fork into it, and push for the bushes."

Sim led the way on the retreat; and Ike, after seeing the course clear to run, stuck his fork into the nest, leaving it there; and out the hornets poured by hundreds. He plunged with Sim into the thick bush, and they saw the enraged insects flying over them, and round about them as if they suspected the boys were hidden there; but none came in to find out, and after a while