



### AMONG THE POTATOES.

Who would have thought, to look at the two jolly boys trotting behind Uncle Tom on the way to the lot, that they would ever follow the example of dogs, who, we are told, "delight to bark and bite?"

I never have believed it that this was true of dogs, even of very common dogs, real ash-barrel dogs, for I have noticed that it takes a good deal of teasing and tormenting to make them bark and snarl; and I am sure that I have often wondered that they did not bite when I've seen them pulled along the street by boys who looked as if they ought to know better. I make this apology to the dogs for using the line quoted. Certainly boys ought to do very much better than dogs, but sometimes they do not behave nearly as well.

As I began to tell you, these two boys, Bert and Tremper, were visiting their Uncle Tom, who had no boys of his own, and was very glad to have his two sisters, the mothers of Tremper and Bert, send them to him to spend their vacation. They lived in two cities far apart, and rarely saw each other except when they met at Uncle Tom's. They had arrived a week before and had behaved so well that Uncle Tom told pretty Aunt Kittie "they had both improved, for he had not heard them say one unpleasant word since they came."

This morning they each had a hoe, and were going to hoe in the potatoe field. They felt very large and important, each carrying a hoe over his shoulder. They did not say much as they walked along, but each had determined that he would hoe the fastest. As neither of them knew anything about hoeing, their ideas were not very clear.

They began, one carefully hoeing the dirt from one side of the plant to the other, and the other hoeing so fast and so hard as to bury the plants entirely. Uncle Tom had set them to work near a stone fence, where the potatoes had so little sun that they had but little chance to amount to much. Uncle Tom gave them some lessons when he saw how they worked, and then left them.

Tremper was so intent—he was working on the second row from the fence—that he did not notice how close he was to Bert's row.

"Hello! Look out!" cried Bert. "You are stepping on my hills."

"Oh!" was Tremper's answer, as he changed and stood with his feet on the other side of his row.

After a time he stood up straight to rest his back, and then he laughed at Bert's row; they looked as though a heavy wind had blown them over. Bert had worked all on one side, and so hard as to really make the plants lean over. Bert looked up and saw what Tremper was laughing at, and he grew very angry.

"They will be all right when I do the other side."

"Yes; but Uncle Tom said we were to work all round each hill," said Tremper.

"Well, mine are hoed," retorted Bert. "They don't look as if the earth had been scratched by a cat," and Bert pointed to Tremper's row.

Tremper flushed, and said something about "Know as much as you do," and "I don't dig potatoes when I hoe them."

There—you know how such things begin. A word here, a motion there, and two boys are fighting, squirming, wriggling among the potatoes.

Uncle Tom looked up from way across the field, and saw the dust and commotion. He was over there in a jiffy, but there were torn clothes and scratched, bruised faces before he got there.

Two shamefaced boys went into Aunt Kittie's sitting-room. They did not have to tell what had happened—she saw at a glance.

She took them by the hand upstairs. Each boy went into his own room. That afternoon Aunt Kittie told them that for one week one boy could play out-of-doors in the morning and the other in the afternoon; but when one was out-of-doors the other must stay in. Both could not be out at the same time.

"What can one boy do alone?" whimpered Tremper.

"There is one thing he cannot do; he cannot fight," said Aunt Kittie.

Both boys hung their heads; fight, you know, is such an ugly word. You can imagine what a week that was. Uncle Tom would not let either of the boys go with him, so each wandered about drearily, and did not know what to do.

A week afterward their mothers came and found them playing in the garret, as you see they ought to do. After kissing and hugging them, each mother held her own boy off, one exclaiming:

"Why, Bert, how did you get that bruise on your cheek?"

The other mother:

"Why, Tremper, you look as if you had a long scratch on your forehead! How did it happen?"

Both boys were scarlet, and then there was a silence such as always comes when mothers are sorry. Bert and Tremper had learned a lesson, and there were no more fisticuffs that summer.

"It is very curious," said an old gentleman to his friend, "that a watch should be perfectly dry when it has a running spring inside."

Fair Maiden (a summer boarder)—"How savagely that cow looks at me."

Farmer—"It's your red parasol, mum."

Fair Maiden—"Dear me! I knew it was a little out of the fashion, but I didn't suppose a country cow would notice it."