

WHAT WAS SAID IN THE CELLAR.

It was only the middle of the afternoon, but it was dark in the minister's cellar, and its occupants might have felt like settling down for the night had it not been for the unusual commotion above ground. All the afternoon it had been going on—children's laughter and talking and running hither and thither. Now and then there had been an interval of comparative quiet, only to be succeeded by merrier outbursts. It was very disturbing to the cellar people, and not a little annoying.

"As if," said the Celery crossly, "it were not enough to be shut up here! They might at least let us be quiet."

"Or if we only knew what it is all about," said an Onion, almost tearfully. "I think the Cat might come down and tell us."

At the mere mention of such a thing a bright-eyed Mouse in the corner retired to her hole in a panic, although she knew very well the door was shut and the cat could not possibly get in. Presently, however, the door opened, and not the cat but the minister came down the steps with a half-bushel basket of potatoes in each hand. He set them down on the floor, and some one from above handed him two more baskets, which he placed beside the others, and then hurried upstairs and shut the door.

"Well," said one of a large pile of Snowflakes, "one would have thought there were enough potatoes in this cellar already without bringing in more!

"Oh, but we are Missionary Potatoes," said one of the newcomers, cheerfully.

"Missionary Potatoes, indeed!" said the Snowflake, scornfully. "You look uncommonly like Early Ohios, I should say! But perhaps you can tell us what all this disturbance upstairs is about."

"With all my heart," was the reply. "The minister's wife has been having a potato party and all the children of the Mission Band are here—twenty of them, I believe they said."

"And what is a potato party?" said the Celery, crisply. "Pray explain yourself. It is extremely trying to be always kept in the dark, as no one knows better than myself."

"Well," said the Missionary Potato, rolling over a little way so as to get into a more comfortable position, "last spring the minister's wife gave each member of her band a fine, large seed potato, and set them to raising potatoes for missions. They've had great times all summer, fighting weeds and potato bugs. The minister said he would put fifty cents in the mite box of the one that raised the most potatoes, and a silver quarter in the box of the child that raised the biggest one. They had great fun this afternoon measuring and weighing us, to see who had won the prizes."

"Before that, though, they had some readings and recitations; the pieces were all about potatoes or missions, and some of them were about both. The programs were written on colored cardboard cut out in the shape of potatoes, and then they had refreshments."

Here the Potato paused, and the Mouse, who had been listening just within her hole, crept out again and said eagerly, "Oh, do tell us about them!"

"That is the saddest part of the story," said the Potato, its voice quivering, "the very saddest part of the story. The refreshments were mostly potatoes. There were thin slices of bread and butter—I heard the minister's wife say that the bread was made with potato yeast—and potato salad and Saratoga chips."

"And what is to be done next?" asked the Snowflake. "What will become of you now?"

"Oh, we are to be sold as soon as possible, and the money is to go for missions! It wasn't a very good year for potatoes, but there are two bushels of us, you see."

"Well," said the Celery, decidedly, "it seems to me that was taking lots of trouble just for two bushels of potatoes!"

"That's just what some one said to the minister's wife this afternoon," said the Missionary Potato, meekly, "but she said she hoped she was raising missionaries as well as potatoes."

"I'm sure I don't know what she meant by that," said the Celery, and so said the Onion, and so said all the Potatoes. The little Mouse said nothing, but she looked very wise, so perhaps she understood.—Children's Missionary.