

Our Boys and Girls

TWO GARDENS.

Gardens, gardens, everywhere! Hal and Ted Holcomb had caught the spirit and were enthusiastic as Dad himself about turning farmers. Accordingly, when the back yard was spaded up, a plot was assigned to each of the boys for his very own.

"Of course," advised Hal, "Ted being only ten, he wouldn't know as much about gardening as I, so he'd better not have so much ground to look after." And Hal was for appropriating part of Ted's allotment besides his own.

"No, sir!" interposed Father, "equal advantages for both and we'll see if it's equal results. Hal might be expected to do a bigger bit for his additional year and a half, but we'll see," he repeated, giving earnest Ted an encouraging pat. Then he disappeared for a moment and came back with two wonderful, brand new sets of garden tools, just alike.

"Glad you're pleased with them," said Dad in response to the boys' whoops of delight. "Remember, though, it takes more than fine tools to make fine gardens. And enthusiasm is all right, but mind you, it's only the enthusiasm that lasts that amounts to anything.

Given their choice of seeds, Hal decided on string beans, carrots and radishes; while Ted chose early peas, lettuce and beets. About the middle of May both gardens had been planted, and the peas, first to be sown, were already up.

For a while, both boys worked valiantly, early before breakfast, and after school in the afternoon, loosening the soil, weeding and watering. Pretty soon, however, the novelty began to wear off, and Hal announced one day, he was going to leave his garden to grow by itself for a spell. He was tired of getting up so early mornings, and after school he wanted to play ball and go roller skating. Of course, he'd make up for it, he hadn't any idea of flunking or his garden, and he'd catch up with Ted without any trouble, once he got at it. He just wanted a little vacation.

"Hal," warned Dad, "don't expect to sow a good time and reap string beans and radishes; and don't count too much on 'catching up' with Ted. You can't succeed at farming without patience and perseverance any more than you can at learning to fly."

"Of course not, Dad, but just wait till you taste my beans!" Hal balanced himself on one foot, then away he skated, up the walk and out to the street.

Next morning Ted was up earlier than ever, leaving his sleepy brother in bed. His own stunt finished, Ted was about to turn to Hal's plot, but Father protested.

"No, Ted, you're not to touch Hal's garden, understand? He must see for himself what neglect will do."

Days flew by. Hal became more and more taken up with sports after school and less and less inclined to early rising. Over a week had passed and a second Saturday had come before he "found time" to work his garden again.

"Look here," he cried, in disgust, at the crop of weeds that greeted him, "where did you all come from? I'll bet somebody went and planted you, just to give me an extra job! Oh, hello, Billy. Up to the cliff to signal? Sure, I'll go. I can do this hoeing later in the day, well's not. Better come along, too,

Ted, you're getting to be a reg'lar grind."

But Ted shook his head and Hal was off.

"Gee!" gasped Hal, as he was crawling into bed that night, "I forgot all about that old garden—something doing all day. But next week'll be all right. Once I get down to business, I'll make things move." Next week, however, was like last week and so on. There was always something Hal wanted to do today; he was always going to tend his garden tomorrow. He never managed to get down to business—only an occasional hour or two grudgingly given, with results so discouraging that his flickering enthusiasm was all but extinguished.

At last it was late June. One day, Father unexpectedly brought home to dinner a guest whom he introduced as his old college chum, Mr. Sheldon Brooks, who had bought an immense farm in the Berkshires which he was running on most up-to-date methods.

"We're delighted to meet you, Mr. Brooks," welcomed Mother, "and you're just in time for Father's surprise."

The "surprise" turned out to be a dish of luscious sweet peas from Ted's garden.

"Never tasted better in my life," declared the guest, as he took a second serving. "I must see that garden the minute we're through dinner. And what is this other lad raising on his farm?" turning to Hal.

"Er—string beans—and—er—carrots—and—and—radishes," stammered Hal faintly looking very hard at his plate.

"Come, boys," cried Dad, presently, "now we're ready to show off our farms." Hal mumbled something about having a date, but Dad didn't seem to hear him and ushered him right along.

Father's and Ted's gardens were duly admired. "Now for Hal's." Mr. Sheldon Brooks smiled expectantly down on a very disconcerted boy. Oh, how Hal longed to escape! but Dad was ruthlessly pointing out a most luxuriant bed of weeds.

"Oh—um—I see." Mr. Sheldon Brooks' face remained perfectly grave. "A most abundant crop! A most extraordinary crop!" he commented.

Hal's cheeks burned like mustard and red pepper and he couldn't find anything to say or any place at all to look. Then Father took the guest off to see the new peach trees.

"How would you like to visit my farm, Ted?" asked Mr. Sheldon Brooks, that evening. "Your Father's going up with me tomorrow, for the week-end. Sorry there's only room for one of you in my machine, but I take it you're more in for gardens than Hal. Baseball is his specialty, I believe. And I understand you don't mind getting up with the birds. We shall start before the whistles begin to blow."

"Oh, do you really mean it?" Ted's voice told how much he'd love to go. "But poor Hal!" Ted's eyes grew troubled.

"Now just cut out your worrying about me," cried Hal in a mighty effort to keep a good face. "It's a perfectly square deal," he acknowledged. "You've been pegging away for fair, now it's time you had some fun. I took mine as I went along," he added grimly.

Next morning Hal was up to see Ted off.

"I'll water your garden for you," he volunteered sheepishly as the auto started. "And

there's going to be something doing on the Hal Holcomb farm today—you'll find something missing, anyway, when you get back, and don't you forget it!"

And Hal was true to his word.—Selected.

THE MAGIC WORD.

Bennie was cross. In the first place, it rained when he wanted the sun to shine. Then he had cut his finger, and now he was hungry and Jane wouldn't give him anything to eat. "You've got to give me some bread and butter," he said.

"You go along and stop your noise," replied Jane.

So Bennie wandered out in the garden and found George playing with his ball.

"Give me my ball," he said crossly. "You've had it all the morning."

"Don't bother me," replied George, "I have not finished with it."

Bennie turned away, half crying. Annie was sweeping the parlor. "I want you to put some salve on my finger and tie it up," he said. "It hurts."

"Wait a little," replied Annie. "I'm so busy now."

The tears in Bennie's eyes got bigger, and soon began to fall fast. He lay down on the sitting-room couch and sobbed, and there mamma found him a little later.

"Why, what's the matter, Bennie, boy?" she asked.

"Any one won't do a thing for me," he cried. "They just send me off instead of doing what I ask them to do."

"Perhaps you haven't used the magic word."

Bennie brushed away the tears and looked up. "Magic word?" he said.

"Why, yes. Didn't you know there was a magic word that would make people do just what you wanted?"

"What is it, mamma?" cried Bennie.

Mamma whispered in his ear. Bennie wiped his eyes, grinned, and then jumped down and ran to the kitchen. "Oh, Jane," he cried, smiling, "please give me some bread and butter."

"Of course I will," said Jane, and she put jam on it, too.

Bennie sat on the doorstep to eat it, while he watched the clouds break away and let the sunlight through. Then he went out in the garden.

"Please, George, may I have the ball now?" he asked, smiling.

"Catch it," said George, tossing it to him. "I'd have let you have it long ago if you hadn't been so cross."

When he had grown tired of playing, he went and stood beside his mother where she sat sewing. "Well, Bennie boy, how does the magic word work?" she asked.

But before he could answer, little May came in with a frown on her face. "You promised you'd make me a dollie, and you didn't do it," she complained.

Bennie laughed. "I think I'd better teach May the magic word, too," he said to mamma.—Exchange.

Children's Letters

ENJOYS THE LETTERS.

Dear Presbyterian: I am a little girl nine years old. I like to go to Sunday-school. I go to Sunday-school every Sunday I can. I am in the fourth grade at school. This is my first time I have written to you. I hope