

# BOYS AND GIRLS

## Our Neighbors.

A gentleman soliciting for foreign missions asked a farmer for a gift. 'I don't believe in foreign missions,' said the farmer. 'I won't give anything except to home missions. I want what I give to benefit my neighbor.'

'Whom do you regard as your neighbor?' asked the gentleman.

'Why, those around me.'

'Those whose land adjoins yours?'

'Yes.'

'How much land do you own?'

'About five hundred acres.'

'How far down do you own?'

'I suppose it goes half way through the earth.'

'Exactly,' said the gentleman. 'Well! I want this money for the neighbor whose land joins yours at the bottom.'

'Not to those you need, but to those who need you the most.' Surely those at the bottom need us the most.—Christian Age.

## Nevers for Boys.

Never make fun of old age, no matter how decrepit or unfortunate or evil it may be. God's hand rests lovingly on the aged head.

Never use intoxicating liquors as a beverage. You might never become a drunkard; but beer, wine and whisky will do you no good, and may wreck your life. Better be on the safe side. Make your influence count for sobriety.

Never tell or listen to the telling of filthy stories. Cleanliness in word and act is the sign manual of a true gentleman. You cannot handle filth without being fouled.

Never cheat nor be unfair in your play. Cheating is contemptible anywhere at any age. Your play should strengthen, not weaken, your character.—Selected.

## Better Pay.

Several years ago two partners in a moderately large business agreed to separate. The one who remained was reluctant to have his partner withdraw, as the business represented their joint effort for a period of years, and their relations had been altogether pleasant. But the withdrawing partner believed himself to be in danger of breaking down in health, and thought it better for him to stop while he was still reasonably strong and the business prosperous. He and his wife moved to a little farm which he bought among the hills, and there they lived modestly and happily, and raised fruit and poultry.

The neighborhood into which they went was a decadent one. People had removed to the towns. Those who remained lacked thrift and enterprise. There was a dearth of youth and energy. Down the long and winding road stood house after house vacant or inhabited by old people, where once there had been young life and laughter. Streams that formerly whirled merrily over the wheels of little factories ran unfettered to the sea, for the factories had moved to town, and the people with them.

The district school had only twelve children, and the Sunday School was feeble and dying. The little church had gone down, and had only infrequent services, with an itinerant minister at long intervals preaching to a meager and disheartening congregation.

Such was the community into which this man of education and resource had gone. Modest as were his means, he was well-to-do compared with most of his neighbors, and he soon rose to a position of leadership. He superintended the Sunday School, and gave a new impetus to the services and social life of the little church. He led in a movement to repair the schoolhouse and improve the school. He took up these duties without any special theory of his mission to the community, and merely because they seemed to him to be things that some one ought to do.

One day a boy fell from the seat of a mowing-machine, and was fatally cut. From his home among the hills a horse, panting and flecked with foam, and a rider, breathless and white-faced, carried a message to the retired business man—the message that the dying boy

wanted the Sunday School superintendent. It was a new experience for the man, and one that he dreaded. What could he say to a dying boy? What could he do in such an emergency?

God gave him the message which he needed, and the boy died holding his hand. From that hour the Sunday School teacher was more than a mere layman. He conducted the burial service. No one else ever thought of sending for a minister, nor did he. To that service he had been called, and he performed it. Unordained by hands of men, unknown in official records of the church, he continued to perform the duties of lay preacher, and his life was fruitful and happy.

After a period of years he and his wife returned to the city for a visit to the home of his old partner. The business had grown. His friend lived in a new house, and was prosperous and content.

'I have been figuring,' said he, 'how much you lost by pulling out of the business when you did. Deducting what I paid you for your half from one-half of the net earnings of the business since then, I figure that you made me a present of eighty-five thousand dollars. The business is still good, and growing. I should like to have you back with me again. You are strong and well—much stronger than I am now. Come back, and let us renew the old first name.'

Then the man from the hills told the simple story of the work he was doing, and how the hand of the dying boy had drawn him into it, and how he could never withdraw.

'I thank you for the offer, old friend,' he said. 'If I could get away I should like to do it, and I'm sure we should make the business go and grow. But really, I can't afford it. This work is paying me better.'—Youth's Companion.

## Queer Japanese Birds and Plants.

The Oriental idea of art and beauty is sometimes very different from that which American boys and girls are accustomed to, and birds and plants that come from the Mikado's island empire are frequently so odd that we wonder at the people who produced them. For they are the result of training and culture rather than the natural products of field and forest.

The long-tailed Japanese chickens, for instance, are the result of a thousand years of careful breeding. A few years ago a number of these queer fowls were exhibited in this country, and they took many prizes at the poultry show; but to see the long-tailed chickens in all their glory, one must go to Japan. There we find the birds with gorgeous tails from twelve to twenty feet in length. The birds are no longer than our ordinary barnyard chickens, but the tails are so long that it is almost impossible for the chickens to stand on the ground. They are kept in lofts with high perches, so that the birds can walk with comparative ease. It is almost impossible for them to walk on the ground, so tremendous is the train they have to carry behind them.

The length of the tail of these fancy breeds of chickens is a mark of culture and caste, as the long finger nails of the Chinamen indicate that they are gentlemen who do not resort to manual labor for a living. The Japanese have studied the art of raising long-tailed chickens on the island of Shikoku, for centuries past. The fowls were originally jungle birds, and by systematic culture of them the tails have increased to their present extreme length. Great honors and rewards were conferred upon the owners of the handsomest long-tailed chickens five hundred years ago, and the ancient Daimyo, the ruler of the Province of Tosa, used the longest tail feathers for decorations. In time, a heraldry system sprang up, with the handsome feathers of the fowls as the symbols.

The birds, when young, are selected from the best flocks, and kept in cages by themselves, the perch being raised each year as the tail feathers increase in length. The plumage is very gorgeous in color, shimmering in bronze, crimson and gold. In order to pro-

tect them from defilement, the owners wrap them up carefully in rice paper, and expose them to the public gaze only on exhibition days. The feathers are washed and cleaned carefully, and when tied up in the rice paper, they seldom have an accident happen to them. The effect of the rich tails on the birds is apparent. Like the peacock, they become inordinately vain and proud. They strut around in their cage, and try to spread their feathers to increase their beauty. But they have no such control over them as the peacocks do with their gorgeous plumes. Naturally, the birds are denied many of the ordinary pleasures of the common chickens, who can run around and scratch in the dirt all day. Their tails are really impediments which make their lives somewhat monotonous.

In Korea, also, the breeding of long-tailed fowls has been carried on systematically for something like a thousand years, and in the early centuries the royal family offered titles and money rewards to those who bred the handsomest long-tailed birds. There are some records in Korea indicating that this industry was in existence as early as the year one thousand.

The Japanese are also great flower growers; their gardens are considered the most remarkable in the world. Everybody who can afford a few square feet of soil in front or back of the home, has a garden. They are gardens in miniature as a rule, and as beautifully laid out as if they occupied acres. Every detail is attended to. There we find dwarf trees and plants growing, and the most perfect specimens of flowers.

The art of dwarfing trees and plants without injuring any of the branches and products has been developed to a marvellous degree by these people. Their dwarf maples and oaks have been exhibited in this country in the past few years. They show wonderful results of what careful study and culture will do. The miniature oaks and maples, scarcely two feet high, exhibit perfect developments of mature trees. Some of them are half a century old, with gnarled branches, bark rings to indicate their age, and leaves as perfect in minute detail as any found on the larger trees. At first glance, these dwarf trees appear artificial plants, carefully made of wax, and painted to resemble the originals. But they are genuine trees growing in pots. One can in this way, have for the table centerpiece a full-grown oak or golden maple. As the seasons come and go, the tiny trees shed their leaves, remain bare for a few months, and then push out new delicate green leaves, which mature and turn to autumn hues, until their little cycle is once more run.

The trees that produce brightly hued leaves in the autumn are classed among the flowering plants by the Japanese. They raise them in pots in their miniature gardens, along with the geraniums and roses. They select their dwarf trees for their beautiful foliage or rich blossoms. Their cherry and plum trees are the marvels of oriental gardens. They produce clouds of pink, white, and red blossoms. The fruit is of secondary importance, although the Japanese plums are the largest and finest in the world. The fruits of these trees, instead of being eaten when they are purple and black, are pulled off when green and tinged with a little red. When they turn purple they are dead and not fit to eat, according to the Japs.

Of course, everyone knows that the home of the chrysanthemum is in Japan, and that the richest and finest varieties originally came from the Mikado's land. There are over eight hundred varieties there, and they have been cultivated for centuries. Chrysanthemums run riot in the gardens and adorn the landscape on all sides. The children understand the art of producing fine flowering plants before they have learned their first school lessons. They are brought up to associate with flowers all the wisdom and literature of their country. This constant association with flowers and plants cultivates in the children a love for the beautiful in nature.

The peonies and tulips rank next to the chrysanthemums. They have been cultivated to produce enormous flowers, while the true lotus flower clogs every pond and lake until