

OUR YOUNG FOLKS.

LIVING LIGHTS.

"O GRANDMA, Grandma! What do you think? The grass is just full of fireworks. Do come and see them. Quick! before they go out," cried little Bessie, excitedly, as she ran into the farm-house kitchen, where Grandmother Harvey stood folding the clothes for to-morrow's ironing.

"I'll be there in a minute, dear," answered the old lady in a pleasant voice, snapping the wrinkles out of the sheet she was folding. Then she laughed a quiet little laugh at Bessie's funny mistake, for I must tell you that the little girl had lived the eight years of her life in the city and had never seen nor even heard of a fire-fly before.

"You may run and catch one of the sparks, Bessie, and bring it to me. It will not burn your hand," called out Mrs. Harvey, as she seated herself in the big red easy-chair on the porch.

Bessie dashed off into the grass, where thousands of tiny lights were flashing to and fro in all directions, as if the whole tribe of fairies were out with torches searching for some one of their number who had strayed away from their encampment.

Before many minutes she succeeded in capturing one of these tiny lights and hurried back with it to her grandmother. I leave you to imagine her look of surprise and tone of astonishment as she carefully opened her hand and found that it contained only a bug, with bright lights along its body and under its wings.

"There, see him flash! Why, Grandma Harvey, it's just like lightning!" cried the excited little child, as her little captive straightened out his wings preparatory to flying away.

"Yes, dear, we call them lightning-bugs," said Mrs. Harvey, pleased that her granddaughter was so interested. "The light, as you see, is caused by two bright spots on the sides of the body; and the flashing is produced by the removing of the little screens from over the torches, which the little fellow can do at pleasure. If you could catch a number of them you would have light enough to read by."

"I'll catch them some night before I go home," said Bessie. "But now I want to hear more about them, please." And the little creature, who dearly loves a story, settled herself on the steps and leaned her head up against her grandmother's knees.

"What would you think if I should tell you that there are some kind of jewels which have to be washed, fed, and put to bed, Bessie?" asked Mrs. Harvey.

"Now, Grandma, you're making fun of me; I know you are!" exclaimed Bessie.

"No, dear, it is true. In South America, where these bugs are a great deal larger and brighter than they are here, the ladies put them into little cages and hang them in their ears for ornaments. How they would sparkle and flash! Diamonds would not be half so bright.

"Sometimes the Spanish ladies sew them into bags of gauze, which they twist in and out with strings of pearls and diamonds, and wear as bracelets, girdles, and necklaces."

"That would be beautiful! But, Grandma,

you said they had to be washed, fed, and put to bed. What did you mean?"

"Why, when the fire-flies get home from a ball, after having been worn in the way I have spoken about, they are tired and dim; so the ladies make their servants take the poor little things, give them a bath of clear water, feed them on tiny pieces of sugar-cane, and put them back into their cages where they shed a soft light until morning."

"Did anybody but me ever take them for real fire?" inquired Bessie.

"Yes; plenty of people. Years ago, a very learned woman, a Mrs. Merian, went to South America to study and make pictures of insects. One day the Indians brought her in a whole basketful of fire-flies. She did not know that the little creatures could give light, and, as she was very tired with tramping in the woods all day, she put the basket in her bedroom and went to sleep. In the middle of the night, a strange humming sound awoke her. It came from the basket. She pulled off the cover, and thousands of flames seemed to leap out and dart in every direction.

"She was so frightened that she just dropped the basket and screamed as loud as she could; but after a little her senses came back to her and she had a hearty laugh over her funny mistake.

"In the great war known as the Spanish Conquest, a whole army of men were kept from fighting the entire night, because they mistook the fire-flies for the lights of the enemy."

"Are they ever used for real lights, Grandma?"

"Yes; in hot countries it is the custom to avoid the heat by travelling by night; but this is dangerous because the woods are full of serpents and furious wild beasts; so the traveller fastens fire-flies to his boots and they light up his pathway. In the morning, however, he carefully puts his living lantern upon a bush and tells it to fly back to the place whence he took it, for the native fears bad luck if he kills his useful little travelling companion.

"Dear me, child, it's time you were in bed. Catch some fire-flies and turn them loose in your chamber so that you may dream that the fairies are watching over you with their torches. Good-night!" And the old lady went off to her own pleasant dreams.—*Christian Weekly*

GIRLS IN CHINA.

ONLY in the northern part of China do we find young girls selling fruit and vegetables. The life is much easier than the one generally led by Chinese women, for they are used to labor from childhood.

During the time for picking tea, women and children earn from three to six cents a day, finding food for themselves. Fortunately they like rice, which is very cheap. They eat it with two ivory or bone sticks, which look like knitting needles. With the left hand they hold a bowl of rice near the mouth, and with the right hand use the chopsticks instead of a spoon.

A common occupation among them is pasting silver and gold foil on sheets of pasteboard; out of these bright cards are cut mock money, or "cash," as they usually call it. This is used in large quantities at funerals: they

scatter it along the way to pay the spirit of the road, that he may let the coffin pass to the grave. They think the loved one needs it to pay all his bills on the journey from earth to the unknown country, and must have plenty of it in his coffin.

The Chinese are very industrious, and some of the gardens yield six or eight crops a year. They have all our vegetables, excepting beets, tomatoes, and musk-melons. They raise two crops of Irish potatoes. Excepting at lunch, they consider it a great hardship to eat potatoes, and only do it when very poor. Though they have many vegetables, we read seldom of flowers or their cultivation; and they seem to have little idea of beauty or comfort in their home life.

As a race, the Chinese are very superstitious, having many forms and customs which seem to us absurd. One of these is the bandaging of women's feet. Of course it is impossible with girls who carry heavy loads and work in the rice-fields—their feet must grow naturally; but among the wealthy families tiny feet are thought a great beauty. To have them perfect, they begin when the child is five years old, to bind tightly with strips of cloth the foot from the ankle to the large toe, pressing in the heel. On the toes is then placed a small pointed shoe with a block for the heel. Chinese ladies really walk, when they attempt it, on their tiptoes, and very awkward work they make of it. But to wear a shoe three inches long is so stylish that they forget all pain and trouble.

Girls in China are often looked upon, not as blessings, but as burdens. Sometimes they are killed or left by the roadside to die when little babies. In Christian countries such deeds are looked upon with horror. One of the great influences that Christ's life and example casts over his disciples is the tender love which it inspires for all in the house. In the Christian family the little girl is treasured even more tenderly than the boys. Our missionary ladies in China, by their lives and characters, show the people what women can be when a nation accepts the Bible and obeys it. Thus the Chinese are led to believe God's word and to follow it.

DOING GOOD.

EMMA GRAY, on her way to school, passed a little boy whose hand was through the railings of a gentleman's front garden, trying to pick a flower.

"O, little boy," said Emma, kindly, "are you not taking that without leave?"

"Nobody sees me," answered the little boy. "Somebody sees you from the blue sky," answered Emma. "God says we must not take what does not belong to us without leave; and you will grieve Him if you do so."

"Shall I?" said he: "then I won't."

He drew back his hand and went away. One way of doing good is to prevent others from doing wrong.

A LITTLE boy, hearing some one remark that nothing was quicker than thought, said—"I know something that is quicker than thought." "What is it, Johnny?" asked his pa. "Whistling," said Johnny. "When I was in school yesterday I whistled before I thought; and got licked for it too."