

BOYS AND GIRLS

The City Clerk.

(Light in the Home.)

When Arthur Walterson was a lad of sixteen he was in a merchant's office, where he had, to his misfortune, a fellow-clerk, who was a fast youth. It was not only that he did many things which he ought not to have done; he had in addition a certain affectation of wildness. He usually carried a sporting paper in his pocket, and bragged of being on intimate terms with a certain jockey from whom he 'had picked up a thing or two.' He had many stories about racing horses; he would recount with immense gusto certain trips he had made to the Derby—in point of fact, he had only been there once, and then in a very humble conveyance indeed—but when he described the visit to Arthur, who implicitly believed every word the other told him, he had been

He hadn't courage to tell his father. Besides, his people were always short of cash. After some days of torture he did what others in a similar predicament have done before. He had a letter to take down in shorthand to a certain Arthur Scrivener. He had then to write it out in longhand, to enclose a cheque for seven pounds, and post it. Every detail he transacted except the last. The money was a gift, and perhaps, Arthur argued, a receipt would not be expected. Accordingly he wrote the name of Arthur Scrivener across the cheque and cashed it.

It was not long before his crime was discovered. One day his employer called him into an inner office and shut the door. 'Walterson,' he said sternly, 'I shall have to give you into custody for forgery.'

The culprit turned deadly pale.

'You are ruined for life; you will be con-

woman, what terrible sufferings it'll cause her to have a son in prison! She will shrink from all society; when she sees two of her acquaintances conversing, she will be sure to think they are speaking of the terrible disgrace that has befallen her family.'

At these words Arthur hung his head and sobbed, for he loved his mother. The merchant went to the door and turned the key. 'Your sisters will feel this terrible disgrace, and will be ashamed before their school-fellows.'

The words struck home. Arthur had a favorite sister, and little Maggie returned his affection; and now he was cut off from the sweet and holy joy of the home life. Crime had stepped in between him and his mother; he was no longer a fit associate for his innocent little sister. For a few moments he was allowed to give vent to his agony in sobs uninterrupted. Then his employer spoke—

'Walterson, for the sake of your parents, with whom, as you know, I am not acquainted; but I know it would be something most terrible to them to see you stand in the dock—to know their son to be a convicted thief;—for their sakes then I forgive you.'

'Oh—h!' cried Arthur, with the feeling of having passed from hell to heaven. 'Oh, sir, how can I ever thank you enough? It would have broken my mother's heart!'

'Your crime must be concealed from her, and in order to do that you must remain here. If I discharged you, it would be without a character. But I only keep you on condition that you give me your solemn promise never to bet again.'

'I'll do that most willingly. I hate the whole thing now.'

'Will you give up your companion?'

'I won't be chummy with him any more,' he averred, with a look of disgust. The dashing, rackety ways of the tempter were now to him like the apples of the Dead Sea.

'Oh, sir, you are so kind. I don't deserve this mercy; but I will pay you back,' he now said in eager, earnest tones.

'I've no doubt you'll try to do so; but remember a good motive doesn't justify doubtful means. You mustn't try to become suddenly rich. Don't think too much about paying me back, lest it should make you break your resolution not to bet. Now you had better take a walk to calm yourself. The clerks mustn't see these traces of emotion.'

For nine months Arthur remained with his kind employer. Then, owing to a general commercial depression, he became bankrupt, in consequence of which the unhappy lad lost his berth. And now he had to seek employment elsewhere without a character. In deepest dejection he scanned the 'Telegraph' for suitable advertisements, and answered some, though he felt it was of no avail. He had all the acquirements a clerk was expected to have. He was an excellent penman, he was quick at accounts, he knew shorthand, was a typist, and had office experience. Yes, he had all that was demanded but the one thing—unblemished character. His parents, of course, took a lively interest in his getting a new berth, and were even a little ambitious for him. His father had a high opinion of his abilities, and, observing that his son seemed dull and apathetic, tried to rouse him by speaking of the high positions that might be attained if one were energetic and went about things the right way. 'You're not to imagine,' he said, 'that because I am a civil service clerk with a small salary that



borne by a carriage and pair, and had revelled in champagne. Though only nineteen he was in the habit of speaking of himself as 'a man of the world,' and Arthur felt quite proud of being the friend of this dashing fellow.

By-and-by Arthur was induced to follow in his friend's footsteps. He was persuaded to bet upon a horse that was 'dead certain to win'; there could be no doubt at all about it; he was assured. Full of confidence in his chum's knowledge of such matters, Arthur did that which he knew his parents would entirely disapprove, with the result that he lost. Then came a sudden and awful awakening from his pleasant dream. This youth, with an income of twelve shillings a week, now found himself seven pounds in debt. What was he to do?

victed and sentenced, perhaps, to penal servitude for three years. How could you be guilty of such mad folly? What led you to it? Have you been betting?'

'Yes,' whispered Arthur.

'Who led you astray—for I suspect you have had some bad companion?' asked the employer, who possibly suspected who the tempter was.

'Don't ask me, sir. I've sunk low enough without being mean enough to shelter myself behind any one else's back.' As he spoke there was both earnestness and humility in his tone.

'Had you not one thought for your father and mother, boy, when you did this thing? How is it you can be true to your comrade in evil, and so forgetful of them? I have seen your mother: she is a lady. Poor