

is club-shaped and bristly, the rays ranging from four to six only. The petals are narrower and paler in colour.

In some places the "Opium Poppy (*Papaver somniferum*)" has become naturalized. It may be identified by its much taller growth, the large, broad, grey-green leaves, whose bases clasp the stem, the large white, lavender or purple flowers, and the large, stalked, round seed-urn.

"Upholden."

THE STORY OF THREE LIVES.

BY THE

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CHAPTER III.

A DAY TO BE REMEMBERED.



THE Hopley boys remained together at the Blue Coat School for over three years; and during all that time good Mr. Withers never ceased to take a lively interest in their welfare. In his keen, quiet way he watched the lads; he noted how they differed in disposition and

tastes, and while he could not be blind to certain defects, he loved to dwell rather on the good qualities of each.

Mr. Withers, who had been many years a widower, resided with his two daughters in what was then the rural district of Edge Lane. The house stood about midway between Liverpool and Old Swan village, and thus formed a convenient meeting-place for the boys and their sister, Maggie, on certain rare and festive occasions when, a holiday having been obtained, the children were free to spend an afternoon together. Those were indeed grand, momentous days, eagerly anticipated and prepared for, lingeringly dwelt upon and lovingly cherished in memory. Grown-up people

do not always realise how much such a memory as that may be to a child; how character may be shaped and moulded by it; how the deepest impressions and purest sentiments of after life may cling around it. By Arthur, at least, those afternoons were never forgotten; they became a hallowed, wholesome memory, an influence to persuade and to restrain throughout the years that followed.

No doubt Ida and Esther Withers had a good deal to say to the glamour with which the recollection of those days came to be surrounded. There were six years between the sisters, and Ida regarded herself as standing in quite a motherly relation both to the Hopley children and to her own little sister, who was a year or two older than Maggie. But boys who are entering on their teens are seldom inclined to regard young ladies who have not yet emerged from *theirs* in a sober and commonplace light. To Arthur, Ida Withers was a creature from some higher sphere; she dwelt in fairyland, and when she touched the earth—when she came into his lowly life—everything was transformed and glorified. To say her word was law to him would be merely to say that he was a good boy and did what he was bid; but he tried to read her wishes in her every look. Her smile was rapture to him, and the ripple of her laughter beat like a pulse in his young blood. He lived in her presence, and whatsoever was associated with her became doubly dear to him—her father and Esther, his own sister Maggie, and even his brother Ernest. These were all within the circle of which Ida was the centre; they moved within the soft, sweet light that surrounded her, and to think of them was to think also of her. This was Arthur Hopley's secret—his silly secret, if the unsympathetic reader likes to call it such; but silly or otherwise, he had the sense to keep it to himself.

As we have already seen, no two brothers could have been less like than these whose story we are telling. Arthur was certainly the favourite. His handsome face and wide-open blue eyes, his clear, frank utterance and ready smile attracted attention and generally inspired confidence. A vague rumour, too, had got abroad as to the off-hand way in which he had faced the governors, and this made him a hero amongst the boys, and an object of some interest to those in authority. He was strong and athletic, and though too generous and good-tempered to be a bully, he was able, when the occasion seemed to demand, to give a sufficiently good account of himself, with his fists or otherwise. The boy was vain, and at the same time capable; he liked to find himself the centre of a group and he was seldom at a loss when ready speech or readier action was required.

Ernest was the contrary to all this. A quiet, unassuming, thoughtful boy, his great ambition was to be let go on his way unnoticed and alone. From the first he was languid and disinclined for play; then, when he had got thoroughly into the ways of the