

really was no longer hers, but the rightful property of one of the world's toilers.—*Martha C. Rankin, in the Congregationalist.*

A BOY'S INFLUENCE.

I want first of all to tell you about a boy who lived long, long ago. He was the son of a prince, and his name was Daniel. One day, when far away from home, Daniel was asked to do something that he thought was wrong, and, noble young fellow that he was, he politely, but firmly, said he could not do it. Though he was only a boy he had resolved that he would live on principle. "Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself," Dan. i. 8.

What I want you specially to notice is this: That action of Daniel's was the cause of three other boys resolving that they would not defile themselves. In the eighth verse we are told that Daniel resolved that he would not, but when we come to the eleventh verse we find that there were three others who had stepped into the ranks of the heroes, mainly, it seems, through the influence of one brave boy.

Now that suggests a thought about the power of influence. Influence is the effect of our action upon others. It is the mysterious and immeasurable effect produced upon others by our words, acts, movements, manners, lives. It is the great silent power. It is character in operation. From each one of us, boy and man, young and old, there is forever going forth a continual impression, moulding and moving and turning others. We cannot explain it. We cannot measure it. We cannot study it. It is like the perfume from the flower sweetening the whole room, though itself unseen. It is like the miasma spreading itself silently through the whole atmosphere, poisoning and to poison.

Everybody is an influence for good or evil.

You, my lad, are going along the path of life. Perhaps you never thought of this, but look, there right behind you, following you closely, is a boy, your younger brother, the lad who lives next door, doing what you do just because you

are doing it. You thought you would go into the saloon and have a drink. You didn't think it would do any harm. And there, watching you, waiting to see what you would do, was a boy just quivering in the hesitation of the first great crisis of his life, standing at the forked road of indecision, just waiting for some influential factor to turn him to the right or to the left, and though you didn't know it, and perhaps never will know it, the influence of your example turned the balance in the scale, and, induced by you, he entered on a career that in his case, alas, was only too rapidly downward.

Or you were standing one bright Sunday at the corner, halting between two opinions. You had a struggle—you know you had. That tempting walk through leafy avenues lay stretched before your eye, and oh, it was inviting. But you overcame—you entered the house of God, and took your stand with the children of God. You never knew it—you never could have thought of it—but do you know that that day a young life took a new direction! You didn't see him, but as you stood halting there a boy was watching you, and, do you know, he was just going through the same struggle as you, and when he saw you turn and go into the church, that decided him. He resolved that he would go too.

Every element of character is an operative influence, and the intent of influence is seemingly out of all proportion to the cause of influence; it is as an acorn to the oak, or as an idea to a career.

Often a single word has influenced a life for good or for evil.

There was a brave Christian officer in the British navy called Captain Hope. Before he died he told how that when he was a young midshipman an older officer said to him one day: "I never go to bed without prayer; do you?" It was a simple question, a mere sentence; but yet that simple question was the means of controlling a long and a noble life. "It is between seventy and eighty years ago," he said, "but from that day to this I have never gone to bed without prayer to God." And then he added: "See the influence of a good word."

On the other hand Count Tolstoi tells that when he was a boy a friend of his, who was out on a hunting party in Russia, slept in the same room with his brother. Before he lay down to rest, he knelt down to pray. When he had finished his prayer, and was preparing to lie down his brother said to him carelessly: "Ah! you still keep that up?"

It was a word, a mere word; nothing more passed between them, but from that day that boy ceased to pray—nay, more, that prayerless boy became a prayerless man, and for thirty years he never entered a church. See the influence of a bad word. Ah! boys, you can never measure the awful harm which you may do by an evil word, by the muttered oath, by the taunting laugh against religion, by repeating the filthy story, by the cowardly sneer at one who is trying to live a Christian life. You never can tell how far it will go, how many it will affect, how many lives it will touch, for influence is like the ever-widening circles that radiate from the stone you drop into the lake, going on and on till they break on the opposite shore.

Influence is for to day and to-morrow and forever. One of the saddest verses in the Bible is that verse in the Old Testament about Jeroboam. "He made Israel to sin," 1 Kings xv. 26. Again and again, long after he was dead, the name of that king is mentioned, but always as the man who made Israel to sin. 1 Kings xv. 26-30; 34; 1 Kings xvii. 19-31; 1 Kings xxii. 52. "The evil that men do lives after them."

I do not wonder that a poor fellow once said on his death bed: "Oh, that my influence could be gathered up and buried with me!" But it could not. Boys, that man's influence is still going on, and it will go on, working through the evil lives he has created for years to come. It is an awful thing to start a life sliding down hill.

But, thank God, you can never tell how much good will be done by a noble act, a noble word. When little twelve-year old Arthur Stanley knelt down alone in one great big dormitory at Rugby school and prayed like a little hero; he little knew that one by one