

"I asked you if you had told *all* the truth," persisted Ida quietly.

"Well, no, I didn't tell that our Maggie was there talking to me for a few minutes on the Monday morning—because it was no business of theirs."

"And was there nothing else?"

Poor Arthur glanced nervously round the room; then, looking straight into his questioner's face, he answered:

"Yes, there was one thing. Mrs. Hayhurst gave me something to take to the woman in the laundry; but I didn't like to do it, and I told her there must be no more of such games. It was drink, or something that way."

"Mrs. Hayhurst asked you to do such a thing! Well, I am surprised. What would my father say to that?" exclaimed Ida.

The boy laughed. "The fact is, the old lady has gammoned the gov'nor and you young ladies; but she has been good enough to me, in her way, and I didn't want to kick up a bother."

"But it is a dreadful thing for her to let you be blamed; and now I don't like the idea of Maggie being with such a person."

"It is no matter about me—so long, that is, as *you* know the truth," replied Arthur philosophically. "If I wasn't blamed for that, it would have been for something else, and it was about time I cleared out of the old place. But you are right about our Maggie; the Old Swan is no place for her, and Mrs. Hayhurst won't be any good to her either."

"But she seemed a very respectable woman, and you boys always said you were happy with her in the holidays."

"Oh yes, we were happy enough! I've nothing to say against the Swan, nor yet against the old lady. She treated us real decent, and mostly kept herself straight when we were there. Only I'm saying it is not the place for our Maggie, and I wish she was well out of it."

"But she was so fond of Maggie, and would never take any money for keeping her," suggested Ida, really distressed to find her old faith in the motherliness of Mrs. Hayhurst thus rudely shaken.

Arthur's reply showed that he had not been brought up in a "great commercial centre" to no purpose. "That's right enough, miss; but if she didn't get money regular, she got many another thing that was as good. Not that I mean to say she isn't kind in

herself and willing to do a good turn for any one that needed it."

"Well, of course my father has helped her at times, and done things for her in the way of getting situations for her boys and that."

"Aye, that is just about the way of it," assented Arthur, well pleased evidently at his own shrewdness.

There was a pause. Ida Withers was an innocent girl without the faintest trace of personal vanity; but she could not be altogether unconscious of the power she held over the impulsive lad that stood before her. Knowing that power, and feeling responsible for its use, she felt compelled to speak again before letting him depart.

"I am glad you have told me all this about yourself, Arthur; but why should you not tell the same to others—to my father and to the schoolmaster?"

The boy was at his best as he replied: "I'd do it if there was any need; but what is the use of talking now that *you* know all about it? It is all settled for me to go to sea to-morrow, and what I have got to do now is just to make the best of it. Isn't that it, miss?"



"HE HID HIS FACE AND SOBBED ALOUD."

Specially drawn for THE CHURCH MONTHLY by PAUL HARDY