

himself very well in the general estimation; Mr. Withers, however, who followed the recitation with a large official Bible open on the desk before him, noticed several minor slips, indicating a failure either of memory or of attention.

The children file out at the conclusion of the service; and the visitors when they descend to the lower room, find the long tables lined with standing, expectant figures. Then grace is said, and in an instant, the signal being given, all are seated and busily at work. Visitors and—in those days—the relatives and friends are allowed to walk round and converse with the children.

"Well, my young man, you got through your part very creditably; I may, upon the whole, congratulate you." Looking quickly round Arthur encountered the kindly glance of Mr. Withers.

There was something in the tone more than in the actual words that wounded the lad's vanity.

"Thank you, sir," he replied with regulation politeness.

"I think you did it splendidly; we could hear every word, and you never stopped once," exclaimed Esther, who evidently thought that her father had not spoken with sufficient enthusiasm.

The boy flushed with pleasure, gave her one thankful glance and then looked shyly towards Ida.

"Yes, you did nicely; and it must have been pleasant for you to have had your sister Maggie there."

"I didn't know she was coming—I didn't think about seeing her," growled Arthur.

Miss Withers looked mildly surprised. "Oh yes, she was there in the gallery with Mrs. Hayhurst—and I daresay she will be round to speak to you. Now, Esther, we must go on; father is waiting for us."

As the sisters moved away, Arthur, looking after them, saw Mr. Withers bending over his brother Ernest, who sat at the next table, and resting his hand on his shoulder.

CHAPTER IV.

INFLUENCE.



OW true it is that "Pride goeth before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall"!

Arthur Hopley had reached the summit of his schoolboy ambition, and the result was disastrous. The distinction of being made "gate-boy" for a week was

but a small thing in itself; yet it sufficed to turn the head of a vain and self-willed lad. Not, indeed, that this was really the beginning of the mischief. Arthur had already been a source of anxiety to the school authorities, and he had already been reprimanded and even punished for breaches of discipline. He was a big lad now, and the restraint of school life was galling to him. He had an adventurous spirit and he longed to be up and doing for himself. In that there was certainly no harm; but the harm came in when he persisted in turning a deaf ear to reasonable counsels of patience, and deliberately set himself to feed his imagination on all sorts of wild schemes for immediate emancipation and ultimate self-glorification.

But now there was something more serious. During a brief conversation on the Sunday, the boy had boasted to Mrs. Hayhurst and Maggie about his being in charge of the gate for the ensuing week. Then Mrs. Hayhurst, in the fulness of her heart, had thought what a nice thing it would be to bring the girl to see her brother in the exercise of his authority. At the same time she remembered that a friend of hers was employed at the school, in connection with the laundry. So, on the Monday, she made a pilgrimage to Liverpool, taking Maggie with her and also secreting a little offering for her friend.

For a few minutes the brother and sister chatted together at the gate; then Mrs. Hayhurst produced her parcel. Arthur, to do him justice, was very unwilling to take charge of it—and it was only after considerable coaxing that he was induced to do so. Later on in the week there was a great disturbance. Irregularities had been suspected for some time and at last the guilt had been brought home to the laundry-woman, she being convicted alike of dishonesty and of drunkenness. A number of articles had been somehow smuggled through the gate, and, naturally enough, the boy who had charge of the key was subjected to a severe examination. Poor Arthur! he was angry with himself because these irregularities must have been going on under his very nose without his observing them, and he was angry with the master for suspecting him of complicity in the crime. Thus, in a moment of temptation he was too frightened to confess the one fault that he had actually committed. He denied that he had ever allowed anything to be passed through the gate in a secret way, or even that he had lingered there in conversation. As, however, he had been seen talking with his sister, this one falsehood brought discredit on all his statements.

The boy now felt himself disgraced, and the spirit of rebellion that had long been smouldering flared wildly up. One night he escaped from the dormitory, only to be ignominiously brought back by the police after hours of aimless wandering about the docks and shipping. Punishment was inflicted—but that only led to further insubordination. At last it was decided