

CHAPTER V.

CORRESPONDENCE.

AFTER William had been at Wilton a few weeks, he sat down and wrote to his parents and brothers and sisters at home:—

“Wilton Institute, January 8, 18—.

“MY DEAR PARENTS,—I have been anxiously expecting a letter every day; but with the exception of the one I received soon after my arrival here, I have not heard a word from you.

“It seems six months since I bid you all good bye at the gate; how often I have thought of it! I can imagine how every thing is going on at home, just as if I was there. There is father in the study, writing; mother with the baby—dear little fellow, I wish I could kiss him, but as I cannot, please to do it for me; there is Johnny poring over his geography, or perhaps mending his skates; Mary is sewing in the corner, and little Helen is learning her spelling lesson. By the way, I miss Mary’s sewing on

my shirt buttons and stockings, for I make but a sorry hand of it myself. Nor do I forget old Towser stretching himself out on the back piazza, in the sun. Where are Henry King and all the boys? At school, I suppose. Please give them my love.

“But perhaps you would like to hear something of the Institute. Well, it is a fine building. We have a nice room in the fourth story, which looks out upon a beautiful meadow with a little brook at the end, and a hill covered with forest trees, beyond. We have about a hundred students, from different parts of the country, some very pleasant companions and some not so pleasant. The teachers seem to be good men, and are loved and respected by all. We have a prayer-meeting once a week, and a Bible-class in the chapel every Saturday, which all are required to attend, and I think it is very interesting.

“Wilton is a very pretty town, and I have become acquainted with several families, where I occasionally make some pleasant visits; but, after all, ‘there is no place like home.’

“I was asked on Sunday to teach a little class in Sunday-school, and I was very much pleased with it. I had six scholars, and they appeared to be as well satisfied as their teacher. I need not say that I find your kind instructions and the reading of the Bible very useful in this exercise, as they sometimes asked me hard questions.

“Mr. Reynolds, the pastor of the church, is a very pleasant man. He often speaks to me of father, and said he was in the same class in college with him, and bade me present his regards to you both.

“Please give my love to grandmother, and tell her I miss her ginger cakes and apples, and her pleasant stories about ‘old times.’

“I have not forgotten, nor, I trust, neglected, your kind advice to me on parting, and I hope I love the duties you so much enjoined.

“I have several agreeable companions, and friends among so large a number of boys and young men; and if it would be pleasant to you, my dear parents, I should be glad to bring one of them (his

name is Charles Seymour) home to spend a few days in vacation. He is a fine fellow, of about my own age, and lives in Cheltenham, so our house will be directly on his way. I have not invited him, as I thought it proper to ask you first.

“But I have filled up all my paper, and have only room to send you all my love, and beg you to write soon to your affectionate son,
WILLIAM.

Rev. J. S. HERBERT, Marlboro.

My young reader, have you ever been from home, and do you know what it is to look anxiously for a letter from that dear place, and what pleasure you feel on receiving it? With what throbbing heart and trembling hands you read it? If not, you cannot understand William Herbert's emotions, on being informed one evening, that there was a letter for him in the post-office.

He put on his hat and ran down to the office, as if his life depended on being there in five minutes. It seemed an age while he watched the deliberate movements of the postmaster's clerk in looking

over the "H's." He wondered the clerk was not as much excited as he was himself. In his haste he had almost forgotten to pay the postage, and only waited to get outside the door, before he broke the seal, and read—

"DEAR WILLIAM,—Our little family, and especially your father and myself, were made very happy in receiving your welcome and interesting letter, which came to hand on Monday, and we feel grateful to hear that you are well and enjoying, and we trust improving, yourself. Your father thought it best to let you get a little weaned from home before he wrote. That is the reason why we delayed answering your former letter, and not because we had forgotten you, as you seem to have imagined.

"Your friend, Henry King, was here yesterday to inquire after you. He has taken the bed of tulips into his care, and says he intends to cultivate them for you in the spring. I gave your kiss to little Henry, but he has not sent any return. I presume he would prefer to give one in person. I have no message from

the children, as they intend to add a postscript. Your uncle Horace will pass through Wilton the early part of next week, and I shall avail myself of his kind offer to send you the handkerchiefs, gloves, and books, which you left behind, and also a new book, which we have been reading to the children, entitled 'Frank Harper,' which I have no doubt will greatly interest you. I hope, my dear William, you are particular as to what books you read. Many of the books of the present day are not only hurtful in their influence, but are not really worth the time it takes to read them. They dissipate the mind, and unfit one for sound and sterling works. Especially place the reading of the Bible first, highest and foremost. Seek the aid of God's Spirit, in its daily prayerful perusal. It will make you wiser, happier and better.

"I trust I need not enjoin upon you the duty of prayer—secret prayer. You are, I am confident, too well aware of its value and happy influences to neglect it. I am happy to know that you are particular in the choice of your companions—and that you find some Christian and

congenial spirits there. Cultivate their acquaintance, and strive to be mutual helpers of each other's good. Grandmother has just called, and says she is glad to hear you have not forgotten the ginger cakes and apples, and you must not be surprised at receiving some by uncle Horace next week. There was a heavy snow-storm last night, and the children enjoyed the 'sliding' greatly. But I must not encroach upon their limits, as they have made me promise not to tell any of their news, nor use up all the paper. Your father is quite busy now, but says he will write you next week, and joins with me in permission to invite your friend to spend the vacation with us. He also desires to be kindly remembered to Mr. Reynolds and Mr. Sanford. Grandmother, father and children all well, and send love.

Your affectionate mother,

H. HERBERT.

"To Master W. HERBERT, Wilton.

Marlboro, Jan. 15, 18—."

"P. S.—DEAR WILLY,—Mother has consented to let us write you a postscript in name of myself, John, Helen,

and the baby. It stopped snowing last night, and we have had a nice time sliding down hill. John has learnt to guide almost as well as you, but we had rather have Willy here for all that. Cousin Susan spent last evening at our house, and we played blindman's buff till eight o'clock. John sits up now till nine, and Helen till eight, and I do not go to bed till father and mother go. When are you coming home? It seems so long since you went. I wish you were here to make molasses candy. It sticks all over our hands, or else we burn it so that it is not fit to eat. We take good care of your minerals and the rabbits. Old Tower is well. We are all going over to grandmother's to-morrow afternoon, in the sleigh. We go to Sunday-school every Sunday, and shall, we hope, remember what we have been often told about loving the Saviour, and being good children.

"From your affectionate brother and sisters,

JOHN, HELEN, MARY and BABY."

William's joy was so great at getting

this letter, that whilst walking back to his room, he read and re-read it, folded it up, and put it in his pocket, then took it out and read it again, until he was quite as much overcome as Robinson Crusoe's man Friday was when he discovered his father.

