

CHAPTER IX.

ARNOLD soon after left the Institution, and William had now established his character at Wilton, not only for true courage and generosity, but for kindness and good scholarship, and above all for genuine piety, which he endeavoured to recommend to others by his consistent conduct and bearing towards all. There was a student, of about his own age, to whom William was very much attached; but he had early discovered, on conversing with him, that, though he had been brought up and educated by Christian parents, he was still destitute of true religion, and that, in his youthful ardour and love of play, he seemed to care little or nothing for the great interests of his soul.

This naturally caused William some anxiety in his behalf, and often did he pray in secret for the conversion of his friend Charles Seymour.

Charles was of a modest, sprightly,

and amiable disposition, a good scholar, and a pleasant companion, and very much of a favourite among his fellow-students. He was particularly fond of the society of William, and often, as the spring advanced, they would walk together in the fields, following the winding brook, or wandering through a neighbouring forest.

William frequently embraced such opportunities to direct the attention of his friend to religion, but on this subject he too often found him an unwilling hearer. He enjoyed his society and delighted to hear him talk of old associates, to speak of the beauties and wonders of nature which they met in their walks; but as he gently lead the mind of his friend from the creature up to the great Creator, Charles's voice was silent, and his downcast eyes and uneasy manner showed too plainly that even this amiable and generous youth's heart was enmity to the law of God; not subject to it; nor indeed could it be until renewed by the Spirit of God.

As they were thus walking along the bank of the little brook that flowed be-

neath the hill upon which the Institute stood, one afternoon early in the spring, when the flowers were just blooming, and the trees fresh with their new foliage, William took the arm of his friend, and, continuing their walk a little, they entered a beautiful clump of forest trees. Passing this, and ascending the hill just beyond, they beheld the sun setting behind the rugged mountain, and the gorgeous clouds of gold and crimson reaching far up the heavens. Twilight came on, inspiring them with holy feelings and delightful emotions.

"This makes me think of home more than any scene I know of," said Charles. "How I used to stand on the hill behind my father's house, and watch the sun in his going down, and see the beautiful clouds gather around."

"It is a beautiful, a glorious sight," replied William. "It makes me think of home, too, and of a brighter home, a more beautiful world than this, Charles, I hope you and I shall be prepared to see and enjoy it together when we leave this."

"I thank you, Willy, for your wish;

and I am quite sure you will enjoy it, though I have no reason to hope so for myself."

William went on to speak of the glories of that world, comparing them with every thing beautiful before them—of its golden streets, its pearly gates, its walls of precious stones, its crystal river, its tree of life, and all its glorious inhabitants; and then of the power, wisdom, and holiness of God, the capacities of the soul, and the danger of its being eternally lost.

"It is amazing to look at those glorious heavens over us, and to think that they are mighty worlds, larger even than our own, and probably as full of inhabitants, and all sustained and directed by the hand of God! How does it make us feel our own nothingness! What a mighty God to create and uphold all this and much more! Truly the heavens declare his glory, and the firmament showeth his handiwork. Ought we not to fear Him for his power and justice and majesty; and to love Him for his goodness, especially, dear Charlie, that he has given his only

begotten Son to die for such sinners as you and I?"

Charles made no reply, but as they were walking arm in arm, whilst thus speaking upon the love of God, William felt a tear drop upon his hand, an almost unexpected token that his friend was seriously affected by his conversation.

"Charlie," said he, after a short pause, "do you not wish to be a Christian?"

"Oh yes, Willy, I do, but—"

"Do you ever pray, Charlie?"

"Sometimes. I used to pray every night. My mother taught me to do so—but—but I have neglected it since I came from home, except occasionally."

"You have been taught, then, I suppose," said William, "that you must be born of the Spirit before you can be a true Christian?"

"Yes."

"And that the Spirit is given to those that ask sincerely?"

"Yes," said Charles.

"And that our heavenly Father is more willing to give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him, than earthly parents are to give good gifts to their children?"

You are dependent on God, then. You must believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and faith is the gift of God.

"Then you ought to ask Him," continued William, with affectionate earnestness, "ask him by prayer for this great blessing. Trust his gracious promise that he will hear, and by repentance and faith seek him, until he grant you pardon and acceptance."

"Oh," said Charles, "I cannot pray. I am such a great sinner; my heart is hard; I am afraid to speak to God; and I don't know what to do."

"Shall I pray for you, Charles?" said William.

"Yes, Willie—if you will—but I do not know—"

"Come," said William, taking his arm, and walking into the thick dark woods close at hand.

It was a lovely sight to see those boys entering the forest as the beautiful evening drew on, and the stars looked down and seemed to smile through the huge oaks, beneath which they kneeled together upon the moss.

Throwing off their caps, and putting

their arms about each other's necks, William raised his voice in supplication to God for his Holy Spirit to enlighten the mind, subdue the will, and renew the heart of his friend. As he ceased, he turned to Charles, whose face was wet with tears.

When William had prayed again, they rose from their knees, put on their caps, and turned their steps towards the Institute.

"Good night, my dear Charlie. Don't forget to pray for yourself now," said William, as he parted from him.

"Oh, no. Good night, dear Willy."

Charles entered his room, and finding himself alone, took his Bible from the trunk and sat down by his table to read.

"This my mother gave me," said he to himself, "and asked me to read it every day, and I have scarcely read it at all." Then turning over the leaves to the 5th chapter of Matthew, he read, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." "This is the first of the beatitudes, as if all the others depended upon it, and if it is a preparation for the rest, I wonder what

it is to be poor in spirit. I am referred in the margin to Isaiah xlvii. 15th verse, 'For thus saith the high and lofty One, that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy, I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.' And again, to Isaiah lxvi. 2, 'But to this man will I look, even to him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.' "

"Humility—repentance—obedience," said Charles, aloud, and laying his head upon his hand, he thought and wept,—and then kneeling down he prayed. While thus engaged, he was interrupted by footsteps along the hall, and as his room-mate entered, he hastily laid his Bible aside, and retired.

