

CHAPTER VI.

THE ICE-BOAT.

ONE pleasant day, William, in company with several of his companions, had repaired to a large pond about a mile from the Institute, which, in summer, was used by the students for bathing, and in winter for skating, sliding, and other amusements of that season.

Here they had made an ice-boat of a triangular form, with a skate firmly fastened at each angle, upon which the whole structure rested. Pieces of plank were secured across the top; a mast with a sail attached was erected near the centre, while a skate, firmly nailed to a kind of tiller, served for the rudder to guide the whole.

It would hold some dozen boys at a time, and was easily managed by one who stood at the helm, holding the sheet of the sail in one hand, and steering with the other. With a good wind it would

sail with great velocity, and when the ice is strong, and no holes in it, and the pond itself surrounded by a flat shore, (with no dam, such as are found in most mill ponds,) it is quite safe.

When all was ready, the largest one in the company took the helm, and gave the signal for hoisting the sail. The boat creaked, then it started, and then glided gently along until the breeze freshened, and the speed increased more and more till they almost seemed to fly. As they approached the opposite shore, the captain as they styled the one who steered, brought the boat gracefully around, shifted the sail, and away it scudded again. The fences and trees, and even the shore itself seemed to be swiftly flying past, and the young navigators, almost out of breath, were obliged to cling fast to the planks to keep on. The pond, as we have said, was quite large, and there were several little islands in it, which it required considerable skill on the part of the pilot to avoid.

They had named the boat the "Washington," and it was shortly proposed to go upon a voyage of discovery among the

islands, in imitation of the voyage to the Arctic seas, by the "Hecla," &c.

For this purpose, the pilot pressed the rudder "hard down," to reduce the speed, and when they came to any island, they anchored, furled the sails, and all went ashore, and after a sufficient survey, named it Long Island, Heart Island, or the Isle of Randolph, either from its form or in honour of some of the party. Near one of these numerous islands it seems some persons had been cutting out ice for their ice houses, and had thus made a large hole in the pond, which the night previous had been slightly closed up by the frost. While the others were making discoveries in another part of the island, two of the youngest, thinking it sufficiently strong, had rashly ventured on. When they reached the middle of the hole, the ice cracked, and they were plunged into water ten feet deep! A cry of "Oh, save me. Save me!" startled William and his companions, who quickly hastened to the spot. There were the two boys grasping eagerly at the slippery and brittle ice, but all in vain. What was to be done?

They were drowning, and it was impossible to reach them upon the ice. Some said one thing and some another. But none knew what to do.

William looked around for a moment, and then snatching the mast of the boat which was close at hand, and laying it across the hole, threw himself upon it to rescue his companions. Happily for them, though they could not swim he could, and bravely did he use every exertion in his power to save them. Catching one by his coat collar, with great difficulty he succeeded in getting him safe upon the ice, and immediately returned to the assistance of the other, who, benumbed with cold, and frightened at the prospect of his danger, was wildly catching at every thing in his reach. Twice had he already sunk, when William, extending his arm its whole length, as he clung to the mast, was jerked by the drowning boy from his slippery hold, and both sank out of sight. After a severe struggle, however, William extricated himself, and seizing the boy by the arm, placed him also in safety upon the ice.

Forgetful of the cold, and by the assist-

ance of the others, he removed the two almost frozen boys to the ice-boat, fixed the mast in its place, and the whole party were soon scudding across the pond to a farm-house, which stood on the opposite shore.

The good old woman kindly received them, and brought some dry blankets in which the wet boys were wrapped, until their clothes could be procured from home.

"I always said Willy Herbert was a brave fellow," said Charles Seymour, as the party were returning for clothes, "although Arnold did say he was a coward for stopping the fight at the snow fort."

"Yes," said Rogers, "I believe Wallace and Olcott would have drowned, if it had not been for him. I should never have thought of putting that mast across so as he did."

"No, nor of going out upon it either," rejoined Harris.

"Well, sure enough, they owe their lives to him. I thought they were gone when Willy fell from the mast. There are not many fellows who would have

stuck to them as he did, when Olcott was pulling him under."

"Well," said Rogers, "they may thank him that they are not at the bottom of the pond, instead of before Mrs. Williams's fire."

The news spread rapidly when they reached the Institution, and the principal took occasion, at evening prayers, to commend the good conduct of William, before the whole school, while he rendered thanks to God for the rescue of the two boys from a watery grave.

The occurrence made a strong impression upon Charles Seymour. "I wonder if being a Christian," said he to himself, "makes one so different." Of two things he might be sure; one is, that religion does not make its possessor a coward; and another, that it is very important to know how to act wisely in an emergency. William had been told how to proceed in such cases, and his presence of mind enabled him to use the means of saving two lives.