

CHAPTER III.

THE DEPARTURE.

TUESDAY morning dawned brightly on the village of Marlboro, and at an early hour the driver of the sleigh-stage was at the parsonage, putting William's well-packed trunk on behind.

"Good bye, my dear son," said his mother, giving him a parting kiss.

"Good bye," said little John and his sisters, still clinging to his neck.

"Good bye, my boy," said Mr. Herbert, pressing his hand warmly, as he stepped into the stage.

Long and affectionately did William gaze towards the group, standing at the gate, and thought how long a time would elapse before he should see them again; nor could he repress the tears which came stealing down his cheeks.

Think it not unmanly that, forgetful for the time of those about him, as the fond, dear friends faded from his sight, he buried his face in his handkerchief and

sobbed, for William had never been from home for any length of time before.

We shall not detail the circumstances of his journey to Wilton. After riding all that day, and till the evening of the next, the stage drove into a beautiful village, and, passing through a long street, shaded in summer by rows of stately elms, it stopped before a fine large edifice, which William easily recognised as "the institution." About thirty boys and young men were standing in front, amusing themselves in various ways, and all awaiting the ringing of the tea bell.

As the stage stopped at the gateway, a tall, dignified, and benevolent looking man walked out. William inquired if he was Mr. Sanford, the principal of the Wilton Institution? He replied that he was, and William then gave him the letter from his father, and Mr. Sanford invited him to his room. After some inquiries about William's family, &c. &c., he gave him a ticket with the number of his room on it, and directions how to find it, and bade him good evening.

William knocked at No. 20, North Hall, and was greeted with a blunt "Come in."

He entered, and found his new room-mate by the side of a small box-stove, busily engaged in mending a pair of skates. In each corner of one end of the room stood a narrow bed. On the side opposite the door was a long table or desk. Over the little toilet table hung a looking-glass. These, and a few wooden chairs, "rather the worse for wear," composed the entire furniture of the room, if we except the closet for clothes and for washing, which was visible through an open door between the beds.

"Good evening," said William. "Mr. Sanford directed me here as my room."

"Oh, yes,—very well," said the other; "then that is your trunk there, in the corner, I suppose."

"Yes," said William; and as he stood quickly striking his hands against the stove-pipe, the bell rang for tea.

"There it goes," said the other, throwing down his skates. "Come, let's go to tea."

William pulled off his overcoat, and followed his room-mate down three flights of stairs, along a narrow walk, and entered the dining hall, where he was shown a

seat among some eighty students at the same table.

Mr. Sanford was sitting at the head, and another of the teachers at the foot. When all was still, Mr. Sanford asked a blessing, and then they commenced operations, with their appetites heightened by an hour's exercise in the open air, and six hours' fasting.

William was anxious to see who were to be his companions, and cast an occasional glance along the table, to observe the different faces of the students.

They had come from various parts of the country, and were as peculiar in their characters as in their appearance, or their places of nativity. William remembered what he had read of some, who, professing to be well bred, may pass very well elsewhere, but seldom escape detection in the manner of their eating, if they really have any rude ways. Some were engaged stuffing themselves with food, as though they had not eaten for six days, instead of six hours. Others grasped their knives and forks as if to make sure of what might otherwise be lost; scarcely raising their eyes from

their plates; while many observed that grace and ease which at once stamped them as well-bred boys.

At a given signal they all rose, and walked out to enjoy themselves an hour or two before they should be summoned to their rooms for evening study.

The sun had already gone down, and its rays, reflected on the clouds which stretched away in the west, presented a gorgeous and glorious appearance, and the stars coming out one by one, like diamonds in the blue vault, added new beauty to the scene.

William, seeing his room-mate going with several boys to the post-office, thought it would be a good opportunity to withdraw to his room for meditation and prayer, as was his custom,—like Isaac of old, as he walked in the fields at eventide.

“How often,” thought he to himself, as he closed the door and looked out of the window of his little room,—“how often have I gone thus to pray by myself at home.” The thought of “home,” at this silent evening hour, when the sensibilities seem most acute, touched his heart, and

again the tears started to his eyes; but when he had thought a moment, the eye of faith was directed to that home in the heavens, beyond the visible sky, where he should meet his former friends who loved the Saviour, and meet them to part no more for ever. His heart was comforted and gladdened with the glorious prospect, for he "looked not at the things which are seen and temporal, but at the things which are not seen, and eternal."

Before the evening had worn away, William became somewhat acquainted with his room-mate, whose name he learned was John Thompson. He was rather older than himself, but seemed like a good-hearted fellow, though he was more engaged about his "fun" than his books, and as for religion, or its forms, it was soon apparent that he neither knew nor cared much about them.

As the bell rang for nine o'clock, they both began to think of retiring, and John, pointing to the bed farthest from the door, told William that was his, and commenced throwing off his coat. William hesitated for a moment, for he felt somewhat embarrassed. At last he summoned

courage to ask his companion if he never said his prayers before going to bed.

"I, say my prayers! not I," replied Thompson. "I am too old for that, I guess."

"But I suppose you have no objections to my reading in the Bible, and praying, have you?" said William.

"No, you may read and pray as much as you like," replied the other, as he sat upon the foot of the bed, and pulling off his boots.

Before William had found the place he desired, his companion was in bed. He, however, read a few verses, and then, kneeling down, commended himself and his new friend to God, and then went to bed.

