

CHAPTER IV.

My young reader! have you ever been from home, and do you know what it is to be surrounded by a crowd, and yet feel a sense of loneliness? Such were William Herbert's feelings for the first few days after his arrival at Wilton. But he was of a sociable disposition. It was not long, therefore, before he found all the company he wished among his fellow students. Still he was careful who he selected as his friends, and also not to keep company with boys of bad character. He could not, indeed, but be associated with them in some degree, but he endeavoured, as far as possible, to refrain from all intimacy, and to turn what intercourse he was obliged to have with them to the best account; but in all, he remembered that, "Evil communications corrupt good manners," and preferred the society of those whose conduct and conversation afforded him most pleasure, because it tended to his improvement.

One Saturday morning, after a snow-storm, and when the exercises of the week were all over, the younger portion of the school started the project of building a snow-fort.

For this purpose they rolled a ball of snow over and over, increasing its size at every turn by the adherence of new snow, until it became so large as to require the united strength of three or four boys to move it. Not unlike a village story, especially if it be against the character of any one, it grows as it goes, each adding a little as he passes it to the next, and so on. Thus the story will increase faster than the snow-balls, and soon be as large, though not so difficult to move, for the larger the story the faster it goes. Well, after they had rolled a great many of the balls together in the form of a circle, and piled others on the top, they stationed a party of boys inside of the fort to defend it, while the others drew up at a short distance, and fired upon them, just as men throw cannon balls against stone forts, in order to make the besieged surrender. William was one of the besieging party. This was

a very healthy and agreeable sport, and if they had only acted honorably, and kept their temper, all would have been well.

But some of the boys were not contented with throwing snow, and so they put pieces of ice into their balls to make them more effectual.

"Stop that, Bill Parsons. You had better not throw ice here, I can tell you," cried a voice from the fort.

An explanation followed, and all agreed not to throw any ice; but it was not long before the agreement was broken, and another cake of ice was shot over, into the fort.

"Now, Bill Parsons, you agreed not to throw any ice, and you just threw a piece and hit me on the arm. I suppose you would like to have hit me on the head, wouldn't you?" said George Hackstaff, indignantly. "I'll fix you for that," he continued, and climbing over the fort seized him by the collar.

Angry words followed, and the shouts of some dozen boys announced "A fight! a fight! Clear a ring; let's see fair play."

"Well," said Parsons, "suppose I did

hit you, what do you intend to do about it?"

"I intend to make you suffer for it," said Hackstaff, still holding him by the collar, "by giving you a thrashing."

"Would it not be better to forgive him?" asked William, mildly.

Astonishment appeared on the countenances of all, and every eye was turned to see who was the author of this new sentiment; and William, for the moment, felt almost ashamed and sorry that he had said any thing.

The astonishment however was soon dispelled, and cries of, "No, let's have the fight out," followed.

William still interposed, and told them of the wickedness of fighting, and of its folly; and how much better it would be to pardon the offender.

"Any one is a coward who is afraid to fight," said Samuel Carroll; "father says he is."

"It requires more courage to refuse than it does to fight," said William. Here the party began to turn from the two combatants to listen to William, and although, at first, most of them were op-

posed, they gradually came round, and it was agreed on all hands that there should be no fighting, and the play went on as before. I need not say that no more ice was thrown into the fort, nor that they all felt better, and enjoyed their sport more without the fight, than they could have done with it—especially Hackstaff and Parsons; and William felt something of the force of that beautiful passage: “Blessed are the peace-makers, for they shall be called the children of God.”

