

CHAPTER VIII.

WILLIAM, as I told you, was a very diligent scholar, and often had applications from those of a different character to assist them in their lessons; and as he was of a kind and amiable disposition, he was always ready to render them assistance, telling them, at the same time, it would be far better for them to study more attentively. For his generous conduct he was greatly esteemed, though some, through envy, hated every thing and every one better than themselves.

Not long after the affair with Jones, William happened one evening to be in the room of one of the older students, to borrow a book. Presently, several others came in, and proposed a game of cards, and invited William to join them.

"No, I thank you. I don't play cards."

"Well, you can learn."

"I don't wish to learn," replied William.

“Why not?” inquired the occupant of the room.

“Because it would do me no good to learn, for I do not think it right to play.”

“Well, so you might say about playing ball. What good does that do?”

“Why, that is very different. Playing ball is good exercise.”

“I suppose,” said Arnold, “he is one of your—I forget the name—he never does any thing that is not seen to be of some use. Utilitarians, I think they call them. But I believe in having a little sport once in a while.”

“So do I,” returned William, “if it is of the proper kind; but I don’t think playing cards is any such sport.”

“Why, what harm does it do?” said Arnold, angrily.

“Why, cards are generally used for gambling purposes; and I have heard from those who played, that they tend to that; that persons soon become tired of playing for nothing but sport, and they therefore stake something to make it more exciting, and so go on till they get to be regular gamblers; and even if it did not, you must acknowledge that peo-

ple often get angry, and even fight over cards, and that certainly is wrong."

"I don't believe it," exclaimed Arnold. "I don't see any harm in playing a game of cards."

"Nor I either," said the large boy who occupied the room.

"Well," said William, "I don't know that I can explain it, but you will see it all clearly proved in the history of many a one who only began to play for fun."

"Come, boys, don't let us hear him preach any longer," said Arnold. "I go for a game. I like to see a fellow with some life and spirit in him. I hate your sour-faced croakers."

William well knew for whom this insinuation was intended, but he could stand such fire like a veteran, and he kept his temper.

"Come," said another of the party, "take a hand, Herbert."

"No, I thank you," replied William, "Mr. Sanford has expressly forbidden it; and even if it were not wrong, I should not play after that."

"Well, what if he has? Who will know it?"

"I shall," said William, bidding them good night, and leaving the room.

"Yes, and I suppose you would tell him," said the occupant of the room.

"If he does," said Arnold, "I'll make him sorry."

William went up stairs to his own room, and soon after was in bed.

The others sat down to the game. While thus engaged, they heard footsteps along the hall, and presently a knock, which they recognised as Mr. Sanford's.

"Hush!"

A knock again.

"Busy," cried Arnold.

"Open this door," said Mr. Sanford in a commanding voice.

"Busy," returned Arnold, again.

"Open this door immediately," said Mr. Sanford.

"Busy," again replied the same voice.

Mr. Sanford stepped back a short distance, and planting his foot against the door near the lock, with one push thrust it open, and entered.

"Shut down that window. Light the candle, and hand me those cards," were

the successive orders of the principal. The first two were immediately obeyed, but in reply to the last, they persisted that they had no cards.

But it was to little purpose to endeavour to deceive Mr. Sanford, who soon discovered them under the bed, whither they had been cast in their haste and confusion.

“Arnold,” said Mr. Sanford, “have you not been playing cards?”

“I have played cards—in my lifetime.”

“Answer me, directly and properly, sir. Have you not been playing cards this evening?”

Arnold saw that it would be useless to deny it.

“And so have the others, I suppose,” said Mr. Sanford.

They confessed that they all had been playing.

“Did you not know that it was my express desire that there should be no card-playing in the institution?”

“Yes, sir.”

“I very much regret that you should have suffered yourselves thus to transgress a known regulation. The offence is

greatly aggravated by your attempt to conceal it from me, and to deceive me, and is sufficiently flagrant to justify an immediate expulsion of every one of you who have been engaged in it; but as it is the first instance of the kind that has come to my knowledge, I shall simply require a confession of it before the whole school. Now, Arnold and King, you will retire to your own rooms, and to-morrow morning you will call at my study one half hour before prayer time."

The next morning, when the bell had done ringing, and all were assembled in the chapel, Mr. Sanford arose very deliberately to address them. All eyes were upon him.

"Young gentlemen," said he, "I regret that any of you should incur my displeasure. Four of your number were last night discovered by me, at a late hour, at card-playing, which, for good reasons that I stated fully at the commencement of the term, is strictly forbidden. For this offence I should feel myself justified in immediately dismissing them, but I have determined on a dif-

ferent course in this case, and shall only ask from them a confession of their fault."

"Arnold," he continued, "you will read your confession."

The young man arose, unfolded a paper, and with evident embarrassment read as follows:

"Respected teachers, and fellow-students—It is with regret and sorrow, that I confess being engaged in playing at cards, when I knew it was contrary to the rules of the institution. I ask your forgiveness, and promise never to do so again while I remain with you."

Something similar to this was read by the others, and after a few appropriate lessons of warning and reproof, the usual devotional services were attended, and the students dismissed to their rooms to prepare for the duties of the day.

On the way up stairs, half-suppressed murmurs and threats—such as "I hate a tell-tale," "I knew he would inform," "I'll make him smart for it," "He wont come off so easy," and the like—were heard from the guilty and chagrined culprits, who were unable to conceal their mortification and humbled pride; and were

evidently designing to wreak their vengeance on William, who they supposed had been the cause of their exposure.

Towards evening, as William was walking in the orchard quietly and alone, Arnold and one of the other delinquents accosted him.

"See here! I should like to know what business you had to tell Mr. Sanford that we were playing cards last night?"

"How do you know that I did tell him?"

"Because, he could never have found it out unless you had."

"That remains to be proved," replied William, quietly.

"Well, we'll prove it to your satisfaction," said Arnold.

"Proceed!" said William, coolly.

"That we will," said the others, taking off their coats.

"I don't see the need of stripping to prove it," said William.

"Perhaps we shall show you," replied Arnold, turning up his sleeves and loosening his neck-cloth.

"If it cannot be proved to my satisfaction with your coats on, it certainly

cannot with them off; and if you expect me to fight, I can assure you that you will find yourselves much mistaken."

William's coolness seemed to have the desired effect; and they were in some doubt what course to take. He soon relieved their anxiety, by suggesting that as they could not prove that he did, perhaps he could prove that he did not tell Mr. Sanford, or any one else, that they had been playing cards.

"Well, how was it," said the others.

"In the first place, I did not see Mr. Sanford until this morning at breakfast; and if I had, I could not have told him, for I did not know, till just as you were called upon for the confession, that you had been playing at all; for I went up stairs to my room after I left yours, last night, and went directly in bed, and my room-mate was already asleep; and so, of course, whatever you may have suspected, nothing could have come from either of us about it. Besides, I heard Thompson say, this noon, that Mr. Sanford had just arrived from Somerset, and was on his way to his room, when he stopped, of his own accord, (for he could

not have seen any one to tell him,) and found you playing. Now, I suppose you are satisfied that I did not inform of you?"

They seemed to be very well satisfied; and when one of them expressed regret for having treated him so harshly, he readily accepted the apology, and advised them to be less hasty in their judgment for the future.

