

WILLIAM PARKER:

or

Don't be afraid to be laughed at.



N O R T H A M P T O N .

John Metcalf....1836.

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WILLIAM PARKER.

SCHOOL was just out. A number of boys were to be seen scattered in groups near the door. "Come, boys, let's have a game at marbles," said Charles Edwards to those who were standing idle near him. "Agreed! that's the best game we can have;—we must each put down two," was their ready answer.

"Come, William, come play with us," called out one of them to William Parker, who was standing at a little distance. "You'll put down, won't you?" William's mother had told him that very morning, that she hoped he would

never play marbles again. Perhaps she would not have thought about it, had not William the afternoon before, brought home a bag full that he had won. When he showed them to her, he told her how angry the boys became, from whom he had won them, and how they insisted that he did not *play fair*. His mother asked him if he never felt angry himself when he was playing. After thinking a few minutes, he said, "Yes, mother, sometimes I do. It is enough to make any body angry sometimes. Should not you think it was, mother," added he, "when we lose all our marbles, and when the others try to cheat?"

"I should think it would be a great temptation, my son, and

therefore I hope you will not play again."

The next morning before he went to school, his mother repeated the same thing to him; for she was afraid that he might have forgotten it. "Mind, William," said she, "and have nothing to do with marbles to-day."

William remembered all this, when the boys asked him to play: so he said, "No, I don't want to."

It would have been well if he had told them plainly his reason; but he felt a little afraid to do this. He knew some would laugh at him, and he had a great dread of ridicule; so he only said, "I don't want to."

"I know the reason," said Ned Roberts; "he won a good many

last night ; and he's afraid to play, because he thinks he'll lose them." "That is not the reason," said William, calmly. It was easy for him to command his temper, because he knew the other boys would not believe what Ned said. In fact they asked Ned if he was not ashamed to say so, when William had given him a fine piece of red twine for his top, that very afternoon. "That is all the thanks any one gets for doing Ned a kindness," said they. Ned was silent and looked mortified ; for he felt the reproof to be deserved.

"I can guess the reason," said John Maxwell. "I guess his mother won't let him play." Instead of frankly owning the truth, William colored, and looked confus-

ed. The other boys saw this, and were determined that he should play with them yet. "Just play one game with us! We won't ask you to play but *once*. What harm *can* there be in just rolling a marble? My mother lets *me* play."

"Are you afraid of your mother?" said one. "O, no, *he's afraid of rolling a marble*," called out another. At this they all laughed. This last was more than William could bear. "I am not afraid of playing," said he, in a decided tone. "That's right," said one of the boys; "just put down two." He felt in his pocket, then remembered he had left his bag at home. "I have not any to play with. Who'll lend me some?" added he quickly;

for he saw the boys looked as though they thought he wanted to *get off*.

“I will?” said several; “how many do you want?” “Twenty.” There was not one could lend so many, but, getting five from one, and three from another, and six from a third, and so on, he soon completed his number. “Let’s put down five,” said he. They agreed.

William was a remarkably good player. But the first three or four times, he lost all he put down. He felt he was doing wrong, and could take no pleasure in it. But, remembering that he must pay for the borrowed marbles, he summoned up all his skill, and played with his usual success. He became excited,

and interested. He not only returned the twenty he had borrowed, but won twenty more.

It was now late, and the boys put up their marbles. There was scarcely one but felt dissatisfied either with himself or others. They either blamed themselves for being careless, and envied others, or declared there had not been fair play. William returned home with the same uneasy feelings with which he had commenced play. He felt he had done wrong, and he was unhappy. He thought of the marbles he had won, and wished he could return them. "I'll never play again," thought he to himself, "though I won't tell mother this time, for it can't do any good

now, and it will only make her sorry."

As soon as he reached home, instead of going to look for his mother, as he generally did, to tell her what he had done at school, and how he had said his lessons, he went up into his own room, and opening one of his drawers, took out his top. But he felt no pleasure with that. His top was his favorite play-thing; he liked to spin that better than to play marbles; yet, now, it gave him no pleasure. He sat down on a chair near his bedside, sad and unhappy. He thought of his mother,—how kind she always was. He remembered how often she had told him, when he had done wrong, to come and tell her. He resolved

at length to tell her the whole story.

When, however, he found himself alone with his mother, he found it harder to tell her what he wanted her to know than he had thought he should. But making a great effort, "Mother," said he, in a sorrowful tone, "I have done something very wrong this afternoon, and I am very sorry for it. I have been playing marbles, which you wished me not to do." "I am sorry, my son, you forgot so soon what I told you this morning," said his mother seriously, yet kindly, looking towards him. William, if he had been like some boys, might have let the matter rest here; but he knew that if he did, his mother would be deceived: so he said,

“I did not forget it, mother;” and then he told her the whole story.

Mrs. Parker was surprised when she heard him say this; for William was seldom guilty of the sin of disobeying his mother. But she was willing to forgive him; for she saw that he was truly penitent. William sat quietly by her for some time: at last, “Mother,” said he, after a silence of some minutes, “I wish the boys would never laugh at me; I can’t bear to be laughed at.”

“I am not at all surprised that you do not like to be laughed at,” replied his mother. “There never was a person yet who did. But yet we ought always to be willing to do what we know is duty, in spite of the ridicule of

the whole world. It requires a great effort oftentimes, I know—a great deal of what is called *moral courage* ; a term which you have often heard, and which means a readiness to do what we know is right, be the consequences what they may. This is a kind of courage that every body needs, and which you must take pains to cultivate. Many persons have a great deal of what may be called *physical* courage ; that is, they are ready to brave almost any danger to their persons, but at the same time, they will have the greatest fear of being laughed at. They are afraid to do even what they are positive they ought to do, if they think there is any danger that people will censure or ridicule them.

But, now, I want you to rise above such feelings. Always be willing to do what is right, or refuse to do what is wrong, though every boy in school may laugh at you."

William promised that he would try.

The next day, in recess, one of the boys came to William, and asked if he would play a game at marbles.

"No," answered William, firmly, but at the same time, very pleasantly.

"Are you afraid to roll marbles?" asked Ned Roberts, in a sneering tone. "You played yesterday, and you may as well play to-day."

"I did wrong to play then," said William. "My mother is unwilling I should play, because

she knows that I am apt to get out of temper ; and so she wishes me to avoid the temptation. I will play any thing else you would like to have me."

The boys looked at each other, but they said nothing, and no one seemed disposed to laugh. Their feeling was rather that of respect for William's frank behavior.

William found it much easier to act in this manner than he had supposed. He went on acquiring, by degrees, firmness and decision of character. Sometimes, it is true, he would find it very hard to do right ; but whenever he thought of the marbles, there was little danger that he would do wrong from fear of being laughed at.

