

'But what can Howard know? What can he have to tell? No one thinks that he took the peaches.'

'God knows everything,' answered Claude Hamilton, loud enough for Frank to hear: and he did hear, and looked up and smiled.

'"Though he slay me,"' repeated Herbert, from the chapter which they had been reading together that morning; '"though he slay me, yet will I trust in him."'

Rushton hid his face in his hands, and sobbed aloud.

'Never mind,' said Frank, soothingly; 'it will all end well now. Do not grieve for me.'

Rushton startled, and shook off the hand that rested upon his shoulder, with a quick, impatient gesture.

'Leave him alone,' whispered Doyle. 'He is a strange fellow. I do not know what to make of him of late. But I really think that he has a good heart.'

'It is worth while being in trouble,' said Frank, 'to see how kind every one is.' He forgot at that moment all the hard speeches against him. The trials of the past week faded away from his memory like a dream.

Howard had overheard poor Frank's passionate lamentation, as he crouched behind the desk, and his heart smote him for his selfishness. He arose up softly; and having succeeded in leaving the school-room unobserved, ran along the passage, and knocked hastily at the door of Mr. Campbell's study, who half hoped that it might be Frank returned. 'Come in,' said he.

Howard's heart beat, and his knees knocked together as he entered; but he knew that he was doing right at last, and that gave him courage. In a few moments he had told Mr. Campbell every thing he knew: how he had borrowed the pencil-case of Frank, and lost it; and how, in his fear lest he should be accused of stealing the peaches, he had won from him a promise not to betray him. His reasons were given almost in the same words which he had before used. 'I knew,' said he, 'that no one would believe me; but I thought, I hope that every one would believe Frank Netherton. I am sure they would if they knew him as well as I do.'

Encouraged by Mr. Campbell's manner, Howard went on to tell him of all Frank's kindness to him, of his own good resolutions so often broken; and even about the talisman. 'If I had consulted it as he bid me,' added Howard, 'all this would not have happened; but, for the last week, I have not dared to open it.'

'I will venture to promise,' said Mr. Campbell 'that its answer to-night will be one of peace.'

'And yet,' exclaimed Howard, despondingly, 'I have only done what I ought to have done long since.'

'The best of us,' replied Mr. Campbell, 'are but unprofitable servants. We should

never find peace by looking at ourselves. We must look to Christ. He is our peace. You believe this, Howard!'

'I do not know what I should do if I did not believe it, sir; only I am apt to forget it sometimes, and then I feel very miserable.'

'Like Peter, the moment we take our eyes off the Saviour, we begin to sink.'

That evening, Howard opened his whole heart—with all its struggles and weakness; its fears and yearning; its faint hope, and trembling faith; its utter helplessness—to his kind preceptor. It was an era in his life, and he was wont to affirm that from that day everything went better with him. Mr. Campbell understood and helped him more than he had ever been able to do before. And we may be sure that God helped him, because he has promised to help all those who come to him in the name of Jesus Christ. And we know that all God's promises are true.

It seemed a long time to the curious and anxious group assembled in the school-room.

'Poor Howard!' exclaimed one; 'I can fancy him wishing that the ground would open, and swallow him up. What can Mr. Campbell be saying to him?'

'What can he be saying to Mr. Campbell? for it is he who sought the interview,' observed another.

Even Mr. Barlow appeared to be interested in the result of the conference, and spoke kindly to Frank on the subject.

Every voice was hushed when Mr. Campbell entered, at length. Howard had hold of his hand: he was pale, and looked as if he had been crying, but he did not seem frightened. Mr. Campbell explained everything in a few words, expressing his entire conviction that Frank had been unjustly accused, and his sorrow for what he had suffered rather than betray his school-fellow. Howard, he said, had only now done what he ought to have done at first; but, nevertheless, he should abstain from inflicting any punishment on him, as he believed, from what he had confessed to him, that he had been sufficiently punished, and that he would be braver, and wiser, and better for the time to come.

'One thing is certain,' added Mr. Campbell, 'that the real offender has not yet been discovered. It is probable that he never will be now. As I said once before, in an affair almost as mysterious, and in which poor Netherton was also the sufferer, let us leave him to God.'

Mr. Campbell then gave the boys a half-holiday, in honor of Frank's acquittal; and having shaken hands with and congratulated him in the kindest manner, withdrew to his own study, taking Mr. Barlow with him.

CHAPTER XX.

SUNSHINE AFTER STORM.

Most of the boys were sorry now for what they had said against Frank, and a few told

him so with tears in their eyes. They called to remembrance their good resolutions at the time of his illness; and how well he had acted then and since in innumerable instances which came crowding back upon their memories—instances of moral courage, and truthfulness, and forbearance, and loving-kindness, even towards those who had sought to injure him. And now, in a changed spirit, they said, 'After all, there must be something in religion.' Hereafter, perhaps by God's grace, they may be led to confess that there is *everything* in religion.

Frederick was glad that he had stood by his cousin through good and evil report; and could look round and say to his companions, 'I told you from the first that he was innocent.' Hamilton and Doyle also rejoiced with Frank, even as they had sorrowed with him. Herbert, who had been kind to him all along, requested to be numbered among his friends. Frank had a great many friends now.

Howard, to use his own language, felt as if he had wings to his feet. He jumped, he laughed, he danced; he was a different creature. 'O, if I could always do right!' thought he. 'All is so easy, so delightful, and one never need be afraid then.'

Frank thanked Rushton for the the way in which he had behaved during the past week. 'I do not remember you saying a single unkind or mocking word,' said he, 'which, to confess the truth, I rather wondered at.'

'Yes it was a wonder,' replied Rushton. 'But you have nothing to be grateful for. I suppose I must have been thinking of something else.'

'Whatever the cause was,' said Frank, 'I am grateful for your forbearance, and shall not easily forget it.'

'Pshaw!' exclaimed Rushton. 'How do you know but what I may be going to reform, like our friend Howard, and one or two others whom I could name?'

'O Rushton are you serious?'

'Did you ever know me serious for above five minutes?' asked his companion, starting up with a loud laugh that had more of bitterness than mirth in it. 'Not another word, Netherton, if you would not have me forfeit the good opinion which you have so erroneously formed of me. I hate everything serious; and never could endure being preached to. Leave me alone, and I shall do very well.'

'So said the half-frozen traveller,' replied Frank, gently, 'when he sank wearily down in the cold snow to rest. Had they taken him at his word—had they left him alone—he would have perished. But I do not want to preach, only I dislike to hear you talk in that manner.'

'Now for the anecdotes again!' exclaimed Rushton, turning to the rest, and still laughing. 'We have had a week's rest. Tell us a story, Netherton.'

'Not at present,' said Frank; 'my heart is too full, and can only give thanks.'