

Frank was silent; but Howard answered for him.

'The boys call him a Methodist, because he reads his Bible every morning and evening, and says long prayers—longer, that is, than any of the rest of us.'

'The latter may easily be, I should imagine. But what harm is there in Netherton's reading his Bible?'

'I do not know; unless it is because none of the other boys do the same.'

'The more is the pity. But you must not be too sure of that, Howard; only they may not read it so openly as your friend.'

'When I was at home,' said Frank, 'I had a little room to myself; but it is not so now. And after all there is nothing to be ashamed of. We need only be ashamed when we do wrong.'

Claude Hamilton colored slightly.

'Shake hands, Netherton,' exclaimed he, 'for I am as bad as you are. I also read my Bible every morning and night; and I hope to do so as long as I live.'

'I am so glad,' said Frank; and the tears came into his eyes. 'I wish you slept in our room.'

'So do I,' answered Hamilton. 'We may be together some day, perhaps.'

'Then you are a Methodist too,' exclaimed Howard.

'Yes as much as Netherton is,' replied Hamilton, looking fearlessly round, 'So laugh away, all of you.' But no one ventured to laugh at Claude Hamilton.

From that time Frank's heart yearned towards him, and he longed to deserve and gain his friendship; although he scarcely dared to hope that one so much his superior would ever regard him as a friend.

Frederick was partly right in warning his cousin against being too intimate with Howard. But Frank could not forget that he had been the first to be kind to him, or be unmindful of his evident affection. He was not a boy whom he could love, or make a friend of, because he did not respect him; but he could not avoid pitying him very much, and was always ready to help him out of his difficulties as far as it lay in his power.

The time came, however, when even Frank was tempted to desert him. Howard had no punishment to bear; no hard lesson to learn. He was not obliged to remain in the school-room alone, when all the rest were enjoying themselves

without; but he was afraid to go among them, for he knew that no one would speak or play with him. To screen himself, he had told tales of one of his school fellows, and the rest had booted him out of their society. Frank alone lingered, and looked back.

'If you show yourself his friend now,' said Frederick, 'everybody will think you just as bad as he is.'

'As for that, I do not much care what everybody thinks, and I do not think myself that I ought to leave him now he is alone and in trouble. He is not my friend, but he was kind to me when no one else was.'

'Let him go,' said Doyle, laying hold of Frederick's arm, and pulling him away. 'You know the old adage—Birds of a feather flock together.'

His mocking laugh rang in Frank's ears as he rejoined Howard.

'How kind of you to stay, Frank! But are you not afraid of being seen with me?'

'I am not afraid of anything.'

'I wish I was not, for then I should not have told as I did about poor Rushton. I suppose they will never forget it.'

'Never is a long time. It was a wrong and cowardly action. You must tell Rushton how sorry you are; and you must never do it again, come what may.'

'Never, never—that is, I hope that I shall not. But I am always doing wrong; and it is of no use trying to do otherwise. And after all there is no one who cares for me. I have no father or mother, no friend in the world.'

'You must not say that,' replied Frank. 'Have you forgotten One who has promised to be the Father of the fatherless—who has said, As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you—who is the Friend of the friendless, the Saviour of sinners, the good Shepherd, seeking after the lost sheep; and, not content bidding them follow him, bearing them in his arms, and upon his bosom?'

'I know very little of these things,' said Howard; 'I wish that I know more.'

'You will not learn by wishing,' replied Frank. 'You must read your Bible, and ask God to help you to understand it. You have a Bible, I suppose?'

'I believe so.'

'You only believe so. O, Howard! But we will look to-night when we go to bed, and if not, I can lend you mine.'

'You are very kind,' said his companion hopelessly. 'And you will be my friend, and help me?'

'Of course I will be your friend; and I will help you willingly, whenever I can be of any assistance, because you were kind to me the first day I came to school.'

'That was a happy day for me,' said Howard. 'I never liked anyone as I do you. But I deserve that you should despise me.'

'I have too many faults of my own to dare to despise anyone,' answered Frank.

'But what do you advise me to do?'

'Go at once to Mr. Campbell. Tell him how sorry you are for what has occurred; and ask him to forgive Rushton, or else permit you to share his punishment. You would not mind a hard lesson, would you?'

'No, it is not that; but I am afraid of speaking to Mr. Campbell.'

'Nonsense! Think how pleasant it would be if you could carry Rushton his pardon, and ask him to be friends with you. If not you can tell him how sorry you are for what you have done. Rushton is a warm-hearted boy, notwithstanding his provoking ways and speeches.'

'I have a great mind to try,' said Howard.

'Come at once, then, before the rest return.'

Frank went with him, and even knocked at the study door; and when they heard Mr. Campbell's voice bidding them come in, there was nothing left for Howard but to enter.

When Frank returned to the playground, many a mocking voice inquired where his friend Howard was.

'We must take care what we do,' said Doyle, 'or Netherton will be turning tale-bearer next.'

'Not I,' exclaimed Frank, 'if I did for it. But I must say that I do not think it fair the way you all treat Howard. He has done wrong, and he is sorry: what more would you have?'

'Hear him!' exclaimed Doyle, with a laugh.

At that moment Rushton and Howard entered the playground hand in hand, and it soon got whispered about how the latter had gone to Mr. Campbell to beg Rushton off; and even offered to share his punishment. Many of the boys went up and shook hands with him.

'It was well done,' said one. 'I did not think that it had been in him.'

'Little Netherton was right,' observed another. 'Let us say no more about it. He has had his lesson.'