

a school-boy, did just the same thing. Ask N. Netherton, and he will tell you the story.'

'But he did not do it for the sake of the apples, or pears I believe they were,' replied Frank. 'He did it because the others were afraid, and at considerable personal risk, in order to show his own courage. But, as my father says, it was neither true courage nor a just action.'

'Nelson was a hero,' said Rushton, 'and worth a dozen milkops. I will be bound, if the truth were known, half of you at the present moment are afraid to mount that high wall.'

'We are more afraid of doing wrong,' said Claude Hamilton, gently. 'Come Rushton, you cannot be serious.'

'Indeed I am,' said Rushton, shaking off his hand.

'I declare,' exclaimed Howard, 'it is just as bad as stealing the peaches.'

'What do you mean by that?' asked Rushton, turning fiercely towards him.

'I mean to say that if you take those apples, you are just as bad as the person who stole Mr. Campbell's peaches.'

Rushton gazed keenly into his flushed countenance, and was not a little astonished to receive so fearless a reply.

'Bravo, Howard!' exclaimed he, after a pause; 'I did not think that you had so much spirit. You will do yet.'

The tears came into Howard's eyes. 'O Rushton!' said he, 'do not take those apples; please do not!'

'And why not?'

'Because it is wrong.'

'Nonsense; old Hickson is as rich as a Jew, and has plenty more. Besides I have set my mind upon them.'

'Let us buy some,' whispered Howard, showing a bright shilling which he had been hoarding up. 'I saw some almost as fine as we came along.'

'No I have set my heart upon these. Will any one join me in getting them?'

There was no reply.

'Will any one catch them if I climb the wall, and throw them down?'

Several of the boys drew nearer, and began to cast longing looks towards the tree.

Little Donaldson crept forward, and said something to Rushton, in a low voice, which made him change color and hesitate for a moment, but it was only for a moment; and then he laughed, and bid him mind his own business,

and be a good boy, and he would give him one of the apples when he got them.

Donaldson stamped his feet passionately; but he drew back, and said no more.

'Leave him alone,' exclaimed Doyle; 'it is no use speaking to him. Let him steal the apples, and break his neck, if he likes.'

'I said that you were all afraid,' observed Rushton.

'Afraid!' repeated Philip Doyle.

Hamilton laid his hand upon his arm and drew him away. Most of the boys followed—Howard among the number: but Frank still lingered.

'Come, Rushton,' said he gently, 'it is never too late to do right. I know that you do not care about the fruit, any more than Nelson did: You only do it out of bravado. You will be sorry for it to-morrow. Come, will you?'

'No,' answered Rushton, 'I will not. So say no more about it.'

'Remember,' added Frank, to the remaining boys, as he turned away; 'remember that the receiver is as bad as the thief.'

Their laughter rang in his ears as he hastened to overtake his companions. When he had gone a little distance, Frank could not help looking back. Rushton was almost halfway up the wall. Owing to some loose bricks, the ascent was not so difficult as it appeared. A few more steps, and he would be able to bend down the tempting and heavily laden bough, and gather what he pleased. In his eagerness he grew less careful; and one of the bricks giving way, he fell suddenly and violently on the ground.

His sharp, uncontrollable burst of agony awakened the dreaming usher, and brought the boys crowding back. Frank was the first to reach him, for the partners of his crime had shrunk away the moment he fell, and mingled with the rest, leaving him alone.

Rushton opened his eyes, and fixed them upon the face of Frank Netherton, who was bending tenderly over him, and then closed them again with a heavy groan.

Herbert ran and fetched some water in his cup, which Frank sprinkled gently over the pale face of the suffering boy.

Again Rushton unclused his eyes. 'What, you here still?' said he, making a feeble effort to push him away. 'Where are the rest; where is Howard? I wish you would not hold my hand; you make it worse: any one but you.'

'Here I am,' said Howard, as Frank moved

away, feeling somewhat hurt by Rushton's evident aversion to his presence. 'What can I do for you? I am so sorry. Where are you hurt?'

'It is my leg,' replied Rushton. 'I believe I have broken it: and he once more fainted with the pain.'

Assisted by Mr. Barlow, the boys hastened to make a litter of green boughs, upon which Rushton was carefully laid, and conveyed back, to the house.

#### CHAPTER XXII.

##### THE MYSTERY EXPLAINED.

RUSHTON had not broken his leg, but his ankle was found to be severely sprained; and although the surgeon succeeded in alleviating the intense pain from which he was suffering, he warned Rushton that it would, in all probability, be many weeks before he would be able to move. It was not until the good doctor departed, and Mr. Campbell had himself seen that all his directions were obeyed, and Rushton seemed easier and more composed, although still suffering greatly, that he found time to inquire into the particulars of the accident.

Mr. Barlow could tell him nothing. He had no idea how it happened. He thought everything was going on right, and was walking along as quietly as possible, when Rushton's piercing cry fell on his ears, and he turned back and found him lying under the high wall by farmer Hickson's orchard. He supposed Rushton must have tried to climb it. He did not know whether there was any fruit there, but should imagine not, as it was so late in the season.

Mr. Campbell turned to Howard, who happened to be standing near him. 'Perhaps you can tell me something more of this mysterious affair?' said he.

Howard blushed and hesitated; but just then a favourite sentiment of Frank Netherton's darted into his mind: 'If you cannot speak the truth, say nothing.'

'Yes, sir, I could tell you,' answered he, after a pause; 'but I would rather not, if you please.'

'Very well,' said Mr. Campbell, smiling, and patting him on the shoulder; 'then I must not ask any questions, I suppose. Whatever poor Rushton might have been doing, or going to do, he is sufficiently punished.'

Mr. Campbell said no more; but he made up his mind that every day to get a new tutor, which he succeeded in doing in the course of