

shins. So, as she could not punish him herself, she was very eager to get him floggings from his father, and although old Ephraim, who was a staunch believer in "Spare the rod and spoil the child," was often compelled by his conscience, as he phrased it, to flog his little boy, he did not like the job. For one thing, when little Ephraim was born, his mother had died; and, perhaps, old Ephraim, remembering that he had not given his poor wife the happiest of lives, would have liked to try to fancy that he was offering some kind of amends by making much of her last child. For another thing, young Ephraim, in sullen obstinacy, and in tricks of manner, down even to the fingering of the chin, was just old Ephraim in miniature; and the father was proud of his likeness.

A very peculiar young gentleman was Master Ephraim Bines, jun. Keren-happuch got all the fun out of the mischief that he did. Her brother in his wildest pranks looked as grave as a judge. Unhasting, unresting, he was almost always (except when he was asleep) stolidly striving to annoy some one or other, as if from a sense of duty. In short, Master Ephraim Bines, jun. was an insufferable little nuisance, who ought to have been flogged about a dozen times a day.

He kept quiet whilst his father was at home, but old Ephraim generally went away to work before his children had finished their breakfast, and then young Ephraim began *his* day's labour. He scooped the sugar out of Jemima's tea-cup when she was not looking, and put wood-ashes in instead. He peppered Kezia's and Keren-happuch's bread and milk. He got under the table, and pinched his sisters all round with great impartiality—except that he always gave Jemima the hardest pinches. If he could manage to give the cloth a sly jerk, that brought the breakfast things into Jemima's lap, or down upon the floor, Ephraim was satisfied with his morning's indoors performance, and went out to employ himself in open-air mischief until it was time to start for school. If not, he busied himself in pulling the pins out of his sisters' knitting, snipping their frocks on the sly into fire-paper patterns, and other such brotherly attentions. He was always ready to start for school with Keren-happuch. They took their dinners with them, and so Ephraim was free to spend the day as he pleased. As a rule he played truant every fine day, but his sister told no tales, and, after a bit, the governess did not complain either. She was too glad to be rid of Ephraim's company, since, when at school, he was always spilling the ink over copy-books; setting everybody's teeth on edge

by scratching his pencil down his slate, fastening his class-fellows to their seats with cobbler's wax; tilting up the infants' form, and sending all the poor little infants sprawling; flashing the sunlight, when the clouds broke, into Miss Mavor's face with a piece of looking-glass; and firing potato-pellets at her spectacles out of a quill popgun. When Ephraim did not choose to go to school, he amused himself by tying the rusty kettles he picked out of the ditches to stray dogs' tails; scaring geese; cutting off donkeys' clogs; unhasping meadow gates, that horses and cows might stray out into the road; driving them, when he could do so without being seen, into corn, and clover, and lucerne fields, and grass left for cutting; and gathering snails by the half-gallon, to empty into the old ladies' gardens which his father was so proud of because he was the real master of them; and when the old ladies had their garden-gates painted, young Ephraim could not rest until he had bespattered the fresh paint with mud. In the dusky autumn evenings he gave runaway rings at the pear-shaped gate-bell-pulls. He did the same in winter, too, and when the poor shivering little housemaid, who had to leave the warm kitchen fire and trip down the long cold gravel path, peeped out of the gate, and was looking about half-frightened, bang came a snowball on her cheek from Master Ephraim, who was hiding round the corner. He tied cord across the village street in the evening, to trip people up. He even had the impudence, one very dark evening, to tie a string to the parsonage knocker, and he kept it going for nearly an hour; once giving such a rat-a-tat-tat right over the heads of the servants, who were standing in the porch on the look out for the supposed runaway, that the housemaid went into hysterics, the fat cook fainted off as dead as a stone on the doorsteps, and the man-servant rushed into the vicar's study with a face as white as a sheet, and had to drop into a chair, and clutch another by the back, before he could gasp out, "Oh, sir, if you please, sir, the front-door knocker's bewitched, sir."

All the mischief that Ephraim did not do at home or at school he tried to do upon the sly—only telling Keren-happuch of the spiciest of his exploits. But, of course, he was found out now and then, and at last every bit of mischief that was done in or near Sloefield was put down to little Ephraim.

"That boy ain't born to be drowned," the village people used to say. "You mark my words—he'll come to the gallers as sure as his name's Ephraim. A professin' man like Master Bines ought to be ashamed of hisself