

to let un have his own way as he do. Bines is none so easy with his gals."

All this greatly scandalised old Ephraim, who was a leading man at the little Sloefield chapel. He lectured, he thrashed young Ephraim more vigorously than ever; but all without avail.

What was to be done with a boy like this? The only one who seemed to have any influence over him was his second sister, quiet, sickly Kezia. It was not always that she could exert it, but still sometimes she could get him to sit by her, and behave something like a Christian little boy, instead of an imp possessed. And it was Kezia who at last cured Ephraim of his monkey-tricks—so far as he was ever cured.

Old Ephraim had a nice bit of ground attached to his cottage, out of which he had made at odd times a very cosy old-fashioned garden. At the bottom there were cucumber-frames and beehives, and a make-shift little greenhouse, with passion-flower growing over its brick end, and a vine, that bore very creditable little clusters of grapes, peeping, green and purple, through the panes. A few fruit-trees were nailed against the walls like spread-eagles; others, standard and espalier, and laburnum-trees, and white and purple lilac-bushes, marked off great oblongs in the beds devoted to strawberries, raspberries, gooseberries, and currants; rhubarb and celery and artichokes and asparagus; peas, beans, potatoes, cabbages, and cauliflower; radishes and carrots and parsnips; cress, lettuces, leeks, onions, and shalots; parsley and fennel; spinach and mushrooms; and all kinds of fragrant herbs in sunny quarters. The flower-beds outside were very narrow, but they were crammed, according to the season, with stocks, wallflowers, sweet-william, Canterbury bells, pinks, picotees, carnations, polyanthuses, columbine, monk's-hood, flags, jonquils, daffodils, periwinkle, crocuses, snowdrops, double daisies, roses of all hues, lilies of the valley, white lilies, tawny tiger-lilies, peonies, dahlias, marigolds, lavender, ribes and honeysuckle and nasturtiums and convolvuluses, that festooned the trees with blossom-spangled clusters, and claret- and sulphur- and rose-pink-bloomed hollyhocks that nearly overtopped the trees. The paths, as well as the flower-beds, were very narrow, but not a weed was to be seen in them. His garden was the only thing on earth that seemed to give old Ephraim unmixed satisfaction. When he had to join in singing at the chapel—

"No foot of land do I possess,
No cottage in this wilderness,
A poor wayfaring man,"

Ephraim always drew himself up, as if to intimate that he was singing under protest; that in his case, at any rate, the hymn was mere poetry.

Of course, young Ephraim had long helped himself to forbidden fruit in his father's garden, but for long he graciously refrained from doing any wanton mischief in it. After a certain flogging, however, he got two moles and turned them loose in the garden. They burrowed into the soil almost as if they were diving in water, and in a week's time the trim beds and paths were pimpled everywhere with little mounds of earth. Poor old Ephraim was almost beside himself, but at last he managed to trap the moles, and hung them on one of his lilac-trees. He raked the molehills smooth, readjusted the plants which they had disturbed, and once more pottered about in his garden, before he went out to work, and when he came home from work, with great complacency.

His graceless little son, however, had another cross in store for him.

Old Ephraim had a dozen dahlias of which he was very proud—the blooms were so regular and bright and velvety. He wanted to keep them in blossom during the winter, so he potted the tubers in autumn and put them into his little greenhouse. Next afternoon *Jemima* saw Ephraim poking what she thought were potatoes into the fire, and *Keren-happuch* looking on in high glee. "Where did you get those potatoes, you bad boy?" asked *Jemima*.

"They ain't potatoes, *Crossy*," answered Ephraim. "I wanted to see how baked dahlia-roots would taste. Won't father be in a rage? They're his prime uns." And as he spoke, the shameless young varlet brandished the trowel with which he had scooped up the tubers.

At the risk of having her shins kicked, *Jemima* could not help boxing Ephraim's ears and bundling him out of doors. As she did so, up came old Ephraim, who had got away from work earlier than usual, bringing with him a saucer for one of his dahlia-pots that was in want of it. *Jemima* soon told her tale, little Ephraim standing by in dogged silence, with his head down, and his hand up to his chin, just as his father had his. The thrashing old Ephraim gave young Ephraim was so terrific that *Kezia* screamed and, timid though she was, she rushed in between her father and her brother. Her father shook her off, and went on with the flogging. Then he marched little Ephraim to the shed, and locked him in without food for the night. Old Ephraim little thought that any of his daughters—least of all timid *Kezia*—would