

ERIC or LITTLE by LITTLE
By Dean Farrar

“Hurrah! hurrah! hurrah!” cried a young boy, as he capered vigorously about, and clapped his hands. “Papa and mamma will be home in a week now, and then we shall stay here a little time, and *then*, and *then*, I shall go to school.”

The last words were enunciated with immense importance, as he stopped his impromptu dance before the chair where his sober cousin Fanny was patiently working at her crochet; but she did not look so much affected by the announcement as the boy seemed to demand, so he again exclaimed, “And then, Miss Fanny, I shall go to school.”

“Well, Eric,” said Fanny, raising her matter-of-fact quiet face from her endless work, “I doubt, dear, whether you will talk of it with quite as much joy a year hence.”

“Oh, ay, Fanny, that’s just like you to say so; you’re always talking and prophesying; but never mind, I’m going to school, so hurrah! hurrah! hurrah!” and he again began his capering,—jumping over the chairs, trying to vault the tables, singing and dancing with an exuberance of delight, till, catching a sudden sight of his little spaniel Flo, he sprang through the open window into the garden, and disappeared behind the trees of the shrubbery.

Fanny looked up from her work after he had gone, and sighed. In spite of the sunshine and balm of the bright weather, a sense of heaviness and foreboding oppressed her. Everything looked smiling and beautiful, and there was an almost irresistible contagion in the mirth of her young cousin, but still she could not help feeling sad. It was not merely that she would have to part with Eric, “but that bright boy,” thought Fanny, “what will become of him? I have heard strange things of schools; oh, if he should be spoilt and ruined, what misery it would be. Those baby lips, that pure young heart, a year may work sad change in their words and thoughts!” She sighed again, and her eyes glistened as she raised them upwards, and breathed a silent prayer.

She loved the boy dearly, and had taught him from his earliest years. In most things she found him an apt pupil. Truthful, ingenuous, quick, he would acquire almost without effort any subject that interested him, and a word was often enough to bring the impetuous blood to his cheeks, in a flush, of pride or indignation. He required the gentlest teaching, and had received it, while his mind seemed cast in such a mould of stainless honor that he avoided most of the faults to which children are prone. But he was far from blameless. He was proud to a fault; his temper, too, was imperious, and though it always met with prompt correction, his cousin had latterly found it difficult to subdue. She felt, in a word, that he was outgrowing her rule.

Eric Williams was now twelve years old. His father was a civilian in India, and was returning on furlough to England after a long absence. Eric had been born in India, but had been sent to England by his parents at an early age, in charge of a lady friend of his mother. The parting, which had been agony to his father and mother, he was too young to feel; indeed the moment itself passed by without his being conscious of it. They took him on board the ship, and, after a time, gave him a hammer and some nails to play with. These had always been to him a supreme delight, and while he hammered away, Mr. and Mrs. Williams, denying themselves, for the child’s sake, even one more tearful embrace, went ashore in the boat and left him. It was not till the ship sailed that he was told he would not see them again for a long, long time. Poor child, his tears and cries were wild when he first understood it; but the sorrows of four years old are very transient, and before a week was over, little Eric felt almost reconciled to his position, and had become the universal pet and plaything of every one on board, from Captain Broadland down to the cabin boy, with whom he very soon struck up an acquaintance. Yet twice a day at least, he

would shed a tear, as he lisped his little prayer, kneeling at Mrs. Munro's knee, and asked God "to bless his dear dear father and mother, and make him a good boy

When Eric arrived in England, he was intrusted to the care of a widowed aunt, whose daughter, Fanny, had the main charge of his early teaching. Everything was in his favor at the pleasant home of Mrs. Trevor. He was treated with motherly kindness and tenderness, yet firmly checked when he went wrong.

From the first he had a well-spring of strength, against temptation, in the long letters which every mail brought from his parents; and all his childish affections were entwined round the fancied image of a brother born since he had left India. In his bed-room there hung a cherub's head, drawn in pencil by his mother, and this picture was inextricably identified in his imagination with his "little brother Vernon." He loved it dearly, and whenever he went astray, nothing weighed on his mind so strongly as the thought, that if he were naughty he would teach little Vernon to be naughty too when he came home.

And Nature also—wisest, gentlest, holiest of teachers—was with him in his childhood. Fairholm Cottage, where his aunt lived, was situated in the beautiful Vale of Ayrton, and a clear stream ran through the valley at the bottom of Mrs. Trevor's orchard. Eric loved this stream, and was always happy as he roamed by its side. He was allowed to go about a good deal by himself, and it did him good. He grew up fearless and self-dependent, and never felt the want of amusement....

But above all, it was happy for Eric that his training was religious and enlightened. With Mrs. Trevor and her daughter, religion was not a system but a habit—not a theory, but a continued act of life. All was simple, sweet, and unaffected about their charity and their devotions. They loved God, and they did all the good they could to those around them.... Friendship with them was a bond of union among all, and from the vicar to the dairyman every one loved and respected them, asked their counsel, and sought their sympathy.

They called themselves by no sectarian name, nor could they have told to what "party" they belonged. They troubled themselves with no theories of education, but mingled gentle nurture with "wholesome neglect." There was nothing exotic or constrained in the growth of Eric's character.... But to be truthful, to be honest, to be kind, to be brave, these had been taught him, and he never *quite* forgot the lesson; nor amid the sorrows of after life did he ever quite lose the sense—learnt at dear quiet Fairholm—of a present loving God, of a tender and long-suffering Father.

As yet he could be hardly said to know what school was. He had been sent indeed to Mr. Lawley's grammar school for the last half-year, and had learned a few declensions in his Latin grammar. But as Mr. Lawley allowed his upper class to hear the little boys their lessons, Eric had managed to get on pretty much as he liked.

CHAPTER 2.

A NEW HOME.

AT last the longed-for yet dreaded day approached, and a letter informed the Trevors that Mr and Mrs. Williams would arrive at Southampton on 5th July, and would probably reach Ayrton the evening after.... Poor Eric! although he had been longing for the time ever since the news came, yet now he was too agitated to enjoy it. At last the afternoon wore away, and a soft summer evening filled the sky with its gorgeous calm. Far-off they caught the sound of wheels; a carriage dashed up to the door, and the next moment Eric sprang into his mother's arms.

"O mother! mother!"

"My own darling, darling boy!"

And as the pale sweet face of the mother met the bright and rosy child-face, each of them was wet with a rush of ineffable tears. In another moment Eric had been folded to his father's heart, and locked in the arms of his little brother Vernon. Who shall describe the emotions of those few moments? they did not seem like earthly moments; they seemed to belong not to time, but to eternity....

Very happily the next month glided away; a new life seemed opened to Eric in the world of rich affections which had unfolded itself before him. His parents--above all, his mother--were everything that he had longed for; and Vernon more than fulfilled to his loving heart the ideal of his childish fancy. He was never tired of playing with and patronising his little brother, and their rambles by stream and hill made those days appear the happiest he had ever spent. Every evening he said his prayers by his mother's knee; and at the end of one long summer's day, when prayers were finished, and full of life and happiness he lay down to sleep, "Oh, mother," he said, "I am so happy--I like to say my prayers when you are here."

"Yes, my boy, and God loves to hear them."

"Aren't there some who never say prayers, mother?"

"Very many, love, I fear."

"How unhappy they must be! *I shall always love to say my prayers.*"

"Ah, Eric, God grant that you may."

And the fond mother hoped he always would. But these words often came back to Eric's mind in later and less happy days--days when that gentle hand could no longer rest lovingly on his head--when those mild blue eyes were dim with tears, and the poor boy, changed in heart and life, often flung himself down with an unrepenting conscience to prayer-less sleep.

It had been settled that in another week Eric was to go to school in the Isle of Roslyn. Mr Williams had hired a small house in the town of Ellan, and intended to stay there for his year of furlough, at the end of which period Vernon was to be left at Fairholm, and Eric in the house of the head-master of the school. Eric enjoyed the prospect of all things, and he hardly fancied that Paradise itself could be happier than a life at the sea-side with his father and mother and Vernon, combined with the commencement of schoolboy dignity.

When the time for the voyage came, his first glimpse of the sea, and the sensation of sailing over it with only a few planks between him and the deep waters, struck him silent with admiring wonder. It was a cloudless day; the line of blue sky melted into the line of blue wave, and the air was filled with sunlight. At evening they landed, and the coach took them to Ellan. On the way Eric saw for the first time the strength of the hills, so that when they reached the town and took possession of their cottage, he was dumb with the inrush of new and marvellous impressions. Next morning he was awake early, and jumping out of bed, so as not to disturb the sleeping Vernon, he drew up the window-blind, and gently opened the window. A very beautiful scene burst on him, one destined to be long mingled with all his most vivid reminiscences. It had been too dark on their arrival the evening before to

get any definite impression of their residence, so that this first glimpse of it filled him with delighted surprise. Not twenty yards below the garden, in front of the house, lay Ellan Bay, at that moment rippling with golden laughter in the fresh breeze of sunrise. On either side of the bay was a bold headland, the one stretching out in a series of broken crags, the other terminating in a huge mass of rock, called from its shape The Stack. To the right lay the town, with its grey old castle, and the mountain stream running through it into the sea; to the left, high above the beach, rose the crumbling fragment of a picturesque fort, behind which towered the lofty

buildings of Roslyn School. Eric learnt the whole landscape by heart, and thought himself a most happy boy to come to such a place....

That day Eric was to have his first interview with Dr Rowlands. The school had already reopened, and one of the boys passed by the window while they were breakfasting. He looked very happy and engaging, and was humming a tune as he strolled along. Eric started up and gazed after him with the most intense curiosity. At that moment the unconscious schoolboy was to him the most interesting person in the whole world, and he couldn't realise the fact that, before the day was over, he would be a Roslyn boy himself. He very much wondered what sort of a fellow the boy was, and whether he should ever recognise him again, and make his acquaintance. Yes, Eric, the thread of that boy's destiny is twined for many a day with yours; his name is Montagu, as you will know very soon.

At nine o'clock Mr Williams started towards the school with his son. The walk led them by the sea-side, over the sands, and past the ruin, at the foot of which the waves broke at high tide. At any other time Eric would have been overflowing with life and wonder at the murmur of the ripples, the sight of the ships in the bay or on the horizon, and the numberless little shells, with their bright colours and sculptured shapes, which lay about the beach. But now his mind was too full of a single anxiety; and when, after crossing a green playground, they stood by the head-master's door, his heart fluttered, and it required all his energy to keep down the nervous trembling which shook him.

Mr Williams gave his card, and they were shown into Dr Rowlands's study. He was a kind-looking gentlemanly man, and when he turned to address Eric, after a few minutes' conversation with his father, the boy felt instantly reassured by the pleasant sincerity and frank courtesy of his manner. A short examination showed that Eric's attainments were very slight as yet, and he was to be put in the lowest form of all, under the superintendence of the Reverend Henry Gordon. Dr Rowlands wrote a short note in pencil, and giving it to Eric, directed the servant to show him to Mr Gordon's schoolroom.

The bell had just done ringing when they had started for the school, so that Eric knew that all the boys would be by this time assembled at their work, and that he should have to go alone into the middle of them. As he walked after the servant through the long corridors and up the broad stairs, he longed to make friends with him, so as, if possible, to feel less lonely. But he had only time to get out, "I say, what sort of a fellow is Mr Gordon?"

"Terrible strict, sir, I hear," said the man, touching his cap with a comic expression, which didn't at all tend to enliven the future pupil. "That's the door," he continued, "and you'll have to give him the Doctor's note," and, pointing to a door at the end of the passage, he walked off.

Eric stopped irresolutely. The man had disappeared, and he was by himself in the great silent building. Afraid of the sound of his own footsteps, he ran along the passage, and knocked timidly. He heard a low, a very low murmur in the room, but there was no answer. He knocked again a little louder; still no notice; then, overdoing it in his fright, he gave a very loud tap indeed.

"Come in!" said a voice, which to the new boy sounded awful; but he opened the door, and entered. As he came in every head was quickly raised, he heard a whisper of "New fellow," and the crimson flooded his face, as he felt himself the cynosure of some forty intensely-inquisitive pairs of eyes. He found himself in a high airy room, with three large windows opening towards the sea. At one end was the master's throne, and facing it, all down the room, were desks and benches, along which the boys were sitting at work.

Every one knows how very confusing it is to enter a strange room full of strange people, and especially when you enter it from a darker passage. Eric felt dazzled, and not seeing the regular route to the master's desk, went towards it between two of the benches. As these were at no great distance from each other, he stumbled against several legs on his way, and felt pretty sure that they were put out on purpose to trip him, especially by one boy, who pretended to be much hurt, drew up his leg, and began rubbing it, ejaculating *sotto voce*, "Awkward little fool."

In this very clumsy way he had at last reached the desk, and presented his missive. The master's eye was on him, but all Eric had time to observe was, that he looked rather stern, and had in his hand a book which he seemed to be studying with the deepest interest. He glanced first at the note, and then looked full at the boy, as though determined to read his whole character by a single perusal of his face.

"Williams, I suppose?"

"Yes, sir," said Eric.

"Very well, Williams, you are placed in the lowest form--the fourth. I hope you will work well. At present they are learning their Caesar. Go and sit next to that boy," pointing towards the lower end of the room; "he will show you the lesson, and let you look over his book. Barker, let Williams look over you!"

Eric went and sat down at the end of a bench by the boy indicated. He was a rough-looking fellow with a shock head of black hair, and a very dogged look. Eric secretly thought that he a very nice-looking specimen of Roslyn School. However, he sate by him, and glanced at the Caesar which the boy shoved about a quarter of an inch in his direction. But Barker didn't seem inclined to make any further advances, and presently Eric asked in a whisper:

"What's the lesson?"

Instead of answering, Barker stared at him, and grunted:

"What's your name?"

"Eric--I mean Williams."

"Then why don't you say what you mean?"

Eric moved his foot impatiently at this ungracious reception; but as he seemed to have no redress, he pulled the Caesar nearer towards him.

"Drop that; 'tisn't yours."

Mr Gordon heard a whisper, and glanced that way. "Silence!" he said, and Barker pretended to be deep in his work, while Eric, resigning himself to his fate, looked about him. One boy, took his fancy particularly, so, tired of doing nothing, he plucked up courage, and leaning forward, whispered, "Do lend me your Caesar for a few minutes." The boy at once handed it to him with a pleasant smile, and as the lesson was marked, Eric had time to hurry over a few sentences, when Mr Gordon's sonorous voice exclaimed:

"Fourth-form, come up!"

Some twenty of the boys went up, and stood in a large semicircle round the desk. Eric of course was placed last, and the lesson commenced.

"Russell, begin," said the master; and immediately the boy who had handed Eric his Caesar began reading a few sentences, and construed them very creditably, only losing a place or two. He had a frank open face, bright intelligent fearless eyes, and a very taking voice and manner. Eric listened admiringly, and felt sure he should like him.

Barker was put on next. He bungled through the Latin in a grating, irresolute sort of way, with several false quantities.... After a hopeless flounder, during which Mr Gordon left him entirely

to himself, Barker came to a full stop; his catastrophe was so ludicrous, that Eric could not help joining in the general titter. Barker scowled.

"As usual, Barker," said the master, with a curl of the lip. "Hold out your hand!"

Barker did so, looking sullen defiance, and the cane immediately descended on his open palm. Six similar cuts followed, during which the form looked on, not without terror; and Barker, squeezing his hands tight together, went back to his seat.

"Williams, translate the piece in which Barker has just failed."

Eric did as he was bid, and got through it pretty well. He had now quite recovered his ordinary bearing, and spoke out clearly and without nervousness. He afterwards won several places by answering questions, and at the end of the lesson was marked about half-way up the form. The boys' numbers were then taken down in the weekly register, and they went back to their seats. On his desk Eric found a torn bit of paper, on which was clumsily scrawled, "I'll teach you to grin when I'm turned, you young brute." The paper seemed to fascinate his eyes. He felt that he was in for it and Barker meant to pick a quarrel with him. This puzzled and annoyed him, and he felt very sad to have found an enemy already.

While he was looking at the paper the great school-clock struck twelve; and the captain of the form getting up, threw open the folding doors of the schoolroom. "You may go," said Mr Gordon; and leaving his seat, disappeared by a door at the farther end of the room.

Instantly there was a rush for caps, and the boys poured out in a confused and noisy stream, while at the same moment the other schoolrooms disgorged their inmates. Eric naturally went out among the last; but just as he was going to take his cap, Barker seized it, and flung it with a whoop to the end of the passage, where it was trampled on by a number of the boys as they ran out.

Eric, gulping down his fury with a great effort, turned to his opponent, and said coolly, "Is that what you always do to new fellows?"

"Yes, you bumptious young owl, it is, and that too;" and a tolerably smart slap on the face followed--leaving a red mark on a cheek already aflame with anger and indignation,--"should you like a little more?"

He was hurt and offended, but was too proud to cry. "What's that for?" he said, with flashing eyes.

"For your conceit in laughing at me when I was caned."

Eric stamped. "I did nothing of the kind, and you know it as well as I do."

"What? I'm a liar, am I? Oh, we shall take this kind of thing out of you, you young cub; take that;" and a heavier blow followed.

"You brutal cowardly bully," shouted Eric; and in another moment he would have sprung upon him. It was lucky for him that he did not, for Barker was three years older than he, and very powerful. Such an attack would have been most unfortunate for him in every way. But at this instant some boys hearing the quarrel ran up, and Russell among them.

"Hallo, Barker," said one; "what's up?"

"Why, I'm teaching this new fry to be less bumptious, that's all."

"Shame!" said Russell, as he saw the mark on Eric's cheek; "what a fellow you are, Barker. Why couldn't you let him alone for the first day at any rate?"

"What's that to you? I'll kick you too if you say much."

"Cave! cave!" whispered half a dozen voices, and instantly the knot of boys dispersed in every direction, as Mr Gordon was seen approaching. He had caught a glimpse of the scene without

understanding it, and seeing the new boy's red and angry face, he only said, as he passed by, "What, Williams! fighting already? Take care."

This was the cruellest cut of all. "So," thought Eric, "a nice beginning! it seems both boys and masters are against me," and very disconsolately he walked to pick up his cap.

The boys were all dispersed on the playground at different games, and as he went home he was stopped perpetually, and had to answer the usual questions, "What's your name? Are you a boarder or a day scholar? What form are you in?" Eric expected all this, and it therefore did not annoy him. Under any other circumstances, he would have answered cheerfully and frankly enough; but now he felt miserable at his morning's rencontre, and his answers were short and sheepish, his only desire being to get away as soon as possible. It was an additional vexation to feel sure that his manner did not make a favourable impression.

Before he had got out of the playground, Russell ran up to him. "I'm afraid you won't like this, or think much of us, Williams," he said. "But never mind. It'll only last a day or two, and the fellows are not so bad as they seem; except that Barker. I'm sorry you've come across him, but it can't be helped."

It was the first kind word he had had since the morning, and after his troubles kindness melted him. He felt half inclined to cry, and for a few moments could say nothing in reply to Russell's soothing words. But the boy's friendliness went far to comfort him, and at last, shaking hands with him, he said--

"Do let me speak to you sometimes, while I am a new boy, Russell."

"Oh yes," said Russell, laughing, "as much as ever you like. And as Barker hates me pretty much as he seems inclined to hate you, we are in the same box. Good-bye."

So Eric left the field, and wandered home, like Calchas in the Iliad, "sorrowful by the side of the sounding sea." Already the purple mantle had fallen from his ideal of schoolboy life. He got home later than they expected, and found his parents waiting for him. It was rather disappointing to them to see his face so melancholy, when they expected him to be full of animation and pleasure. Mrs Williams drew her own conclusions from the red mark on his cheek, as well as the traces of tears welling to his eyes; but, like a wise mother, she asked nothing, and left the boy to tell his own story,--which in time he did, omitting all the painful part, speaking enthusiastically of Russell, and only admitting that he had been a little teased.

CHAPTER 3.

BULLYING.

...To most boys the first term is a trying ordeal. They are being tested and weighed. Their place in the general estimation is not yet fixed, and the slightest circumstances are seized upon to settle the category, under which the boy is to be classed. A few apparently trivial accidents of his first few weeks at school often decide his position in the general regard for the remainder of his boyhood. And yet these are not accidents; they are the slight indications which give an unerring proof of the general tendencies of his character and training. Hence much of the apparent cruelty with which new boys are treated is not exactly intentional.

At first, of course, as they can have no friends worth speaking of; there are always plenty of coarse and brutal minds that take a pleasure in their torment, particularly if they at once recognise any or innate superiority to themselves. Of this class was Barker. He hated Eric at first sight, simply because his feeble mind could only realise one idea about him, and that was the new boy's striking contrast with his own imperfections. Hence he left no means untried to vent on Eric his low and mean jealousy. He showed undisguised pleasure when he fell in form, and

signs of disgust when he rose; he fomented every little source of disapproval or quarrelling which happened to arise against him; he never looked at him without a frown or a sneer; he waited for him to kick and annoy him as he came out of, or went in to, the schoolroom. In fact, he did his very best to make the boy's life miserable, and the occupation of hating him seemed in some measure to fill up the vacuity of an ill-conditioned and degraded mind.

Hatred is a most mysterious and painful phenomenon to the unhappy person who is the object of it, and more especially if he have incurred it by no one assignable reason. To Eric this opposition was peculiarly painful; he was utterly unprepared for it. In his bright joyous life at Fairholm, he had met with nothing but kindness and caresses, and the generous nobleness of his character had seemed to claim them as a natural element. "And now, why," he asked impatiently, "should this bulldog sort of fellow have set his whole aim to annoy, vex, and hurt me?" incapable himself of so mean a spirit of jealousy at superior excellence, he could not make it out.

It must be admitted that he made matters worse by his own bursts of passion. His was not the temper to turn the other cheek; but, brave and spirited as he was, he felt how utterly hopeless would be any attempt on his part to repel force by force. He would have tried some slight conciliation, but it was really impossible with such a boy as his enemy. Barker never gave him even so much as an indifferent look, much less a civil word. Eric loathed him, and the only good and happy part of the matter to his own mind was, that conscientiously his only desire was to get rid of him, and be left alone, while he never cherished a particle of revenge.

While every day Eric was getting on better in form, and winning himself a very good position with the other boys, who liked his frankness, his mirth, his spirit, and cleverness, he felt this feud with Barker like a dark background to all his enjoyment. He even had to maneuver daily how to escape him, and violent scenes were of constant occurrence between them. Eric could not, and would not, brook his bullying with silence.

Meanwhile Eric was on the best of terms with the rest of the form, and such of the other boys as he knew, although, at first, his position as a home-boarder prevented his knowing many. Besides Russell, there were three whom he liked best, and respected most--Duncan, Montagu, and Owen. They were very different boys, but all of them had qualities which well deserved his esteem. Duncan was the most boyish of boys, intensely full of fun, good nature, and vigour; with fair abilities, he never got on well, because he could not be still for two minutes; and even if, in some fit of sudden ambition, he got up high in the form, he was sure to be put to the bottom again before the day was over, for trifling or talking. But out of school he was the soul of every game; whatever *he* took up was sure to be done pleasantly, and no party of amusement was ever planned without endeavouring to secure him as one of the number.

Montagu's chief merit was, that he was such a thorough little gentleman; "such a jolly little fellow," every one said of him. Without being clever or athletic, he managed to do very fairly both at work and at the games, and while he was too exclusive to make many *intimate* friends, everybody liked walking about or talking with him. Even Barker, blackguard as he was, seemed to be a little uneasy when confronted with Montagu's naturally noble and chivalrous bearing. In nearly all respects his influence was thoroughly good, and few boys were more generally popular.

Owen, again, was a very different boy. His merit was a ceaseless diligence, in which it was doubtful whether ambition or conscientiousness had the greatest share. Reserved and thoughtful, unfitted for or indifferent to most games, he was anything but a favourite with the rest, and Eric rather respected than liked him. When he first came he had been one of the most natural butts for Barker's craving ill-nature, and for a time he had been tremendously bullied....

All this had happened before Eric's time, and he heard it from his best friend Russell. His heart clave to that boy. They became friends at once by a kind of electric sympathy; the first glance of each at the other's face prepared the friendship, and every day of acquaintance more firmly cemented it. Eric could not have had a better friend; not so clever as himself not so diligent as Owen, not so athletic as Duncan, or so fascinating as Montagu, Russell combined the best qualities of them all. And, above all, he acted invariably from the highest principle; he presented that noblest of all noble spectacles--one so rare that many think it impossible—the spectacle of an honourable, pure-hearted, happy boy, who, as his early years speed by, is ever growing in wisdom and stature, and favour with God and man.

"Did that brute Barker ever bully you as he bullies me?" said Eric one day, as he walked on the sea-shore with his friend.

"Yes," said Russell. "I slept in his dormitory when I first came, and he has often made me so wretched that I have flung myself on my knees at night in pretence of prayer, but really to get a little quiet time to cry like a child."

"And when was it he left off at last?"

"Why, you know, Upton in the fifth is my cousin, and very fond of me; he heard of it, though I didn't say anything about it, and told Barker that if ever he caught him at it, he would thrash him within an inch of his life; and that frightened him for one thing. Besides, Duncan, Montagu, and other friends of mine, began to cut him in consequence, so he thought it best to leave off."

"How is it, Russell, that fellows stand by and let him do it?"

"You see," said Russell, "Barker is an enormously strong fellow, and that makes the younger chaps, whom he fags, look up to him as a great hero. And there isn't one in our part of the school who can thrash him. Besides, people never do interfere, you know--at least not often. I remember once seeing a street-row in London, at which twenty people stood by, and let a drunken beast of a husband strike his wife without ever stirring to defend her."

"Well," sighed Eric, "I hope my day of deliverance will come soon, for I can't stand it much longer, and `tell' I won't, whatever Owen may do."

Eric's deliverance came very soon. It was afternoon; the boys were playing at different games in the green playground, and he was waiting for his turn at rounders. At this moment Barker lounged up, and calmly snatching off Eric's cap, shied it over Dr Rowlands's garden-wall.

"There, go and fetch that."

"You blackguard," said Eric, standing irresolutely for a few minutes; and then with tears in his eyes began to climb the wall. It was not very high, but boys were peremptorily forbidden to get over it under any circumstances, and Eric broke the rule not without trepidation. However, he dropped down on one of Mrs Rowlands's flower-beds, got his cap in a hurry, and clambered back undiscovered.

He thought this would have satisfied his tormentor for one day; but Barker was in a mischievous mood, so he again came up to Eric, and calling out, "Who'll have a game at football?" again snatched the cap, and gave it a kick; Eric tried to recover it, but every time he came up Barker gave it a fresh kick, and finally kicked it into a puddle.

Eric stood still, trembling with rage, while his eyes lightened scorn and indignation. "You hulking, stupid, cowardly bully,"--here Barker seized him, and every word brought a tremendous blow on the head; but blind with passion Eric went on--"you despicable bully, I won't touch that cap again; you shall pick it up yourself.

Duncan, Russell, here! do help me against this intolerable brute."

Several boys ran up, but they were all weaker than Barker, who besides was now in a towering fury, and kicked Eric unmercifully.

"Leave him alone," shouted Duncan, seizing Barker's arm; "or I'll get you a sound thrashing from some fellow."

"I won't; mind your own business," growled Barker, roughly shaking himself free from Duncan's hand.

"Barker, I'll never speak to you again from this day," said Montagu, turning on his heel, with a look of withering contempt.

"What do I care? puppy, you want taking down too," was the reply, and some more kicks at Eric followed.

"Barker, I won't stand this any longer," said Russell, "so look out," and grasping Barker by the collar, he dealt him a swinging blow on the face.

The bully stood in amazement, and dropped Eric, who fell on the turf nearly fainting, and bleeding at the nose. But now Russell's turn came, and in a moment Barker, who was twice his weight, had tripped him up,-- when he found himself collared in an iron grasp.

There had been an unobserved spectator of the whole scene, in the person of Mr Williams himself, and it was his strong hand that now gripped Barker's shoulder. He was greatly respected by the boys, who all knew his tall handsome figure by sight, and he frequently stood a quiet and pleased observer of their games. The boys in the playground came crowding round, and Barker in vain struggled to escape. Mr Williams held him firmly, and said in a calm voice, "I have just seen you treat one of your school-fellows with the grossest violence. It makes me blush for you, Roslyn boys," he continued, turning to the group that surrounded him, "that you can even for a moment stand by unmoved, and see such things done. You know that you despise any one who tells a master, yet you allow this bullying to go on, and that, too, without any provocation. Now, mark; it makes no difference that the boy who has been hurt is my own son; I would have punished this scoundrel whoever it had been, and I shall punish him now."

With these words, he lifted the riding-whip which he happened to be carrying, and gave Barker by far the severest castigation he had ever undergone; the boys declared that Mr Rowlands's "swishings" were nothing to it. Mr Williams saw that the offender was a tough subject, and determined that he should not soon forget the punishment he then received. He had never heard from Eric how this boy had been treating him, but he had heard it from Russell, and now he had seen one of the worst specimens of it with his own eyes. He therefore belaboured him till his sullen obstinacy gave way to a roar for mercy, and promises never so to offend again.

At this crisis he flung the boy from him with a "phew" of disgust, and said, "I give nothing for your word; but if ever you do bully in this way again, and I see or hear of it, your present punishment shall be a trifle to what I shall then administer. At present, thank me for not informing your master." So saying, he made Barker pick up the cap, and, turning away, walked home with Eric leaning on his arm.

Barker, too, carried himself off with the best grace he could; but it certainly didn't mend matters when he heard numbers of fellows, even little boys, say openly, "I'm so glad; serves you right." From that day Eric was never troubled with personal violence from Barker or any other boy. But rancor smouldered deep in the mind of the baffled tyrant, and, as we shall see hereafter, there are subtler means of making an enemy wretched than striking or kicking him.