

day – how a child of that age can behave. He's been simply dreadful. I have no control over him – none. I've tried everything, Edward, but it's all no use. The only thing to do," she finished breathlessly, "is to whip him – is for you to whip him, Edward."

In the corner of the drawing-room there was a what-not, and on the top shelf stood a brown china bear with a painted tongue. It seemed in the shadow to be grinning at Dicky's father, to be saying, "Hooray, this is what you've come home to!"

"But why on earth should I start whipping him?" said Edward, staring at the bear. "We've never done it before."

"Because," said his wife, "don't you see, it's the only thing to do. I can't control the child..." Her words flew from her lips. They beat round him, beat round his tired head. "We can't possibly afford a nurse. The servant girl has more than enough to do. And his naughtiness is beyond words. You don't understand, Edward; you can't, you're at the office all day."

The scolding over, Edward sank into a chair.

"What am I to beat him with?" he said weakly.

"Your slipper, of course," said his wife. And she knelt down to untie his dusty shoes.

"Oh, Edward," she wailed, "you've still got your cycling clips on in the drawing-room. No, really –"

"Here, that's enough." Edward nearly pushed her away. "Give me that slipper." He went up the stairs. He felt like a man in a dark net. And now he wanted to beat Dicky. Yes, he wanted to beat something. My, what a life! The dust was still in his hot eyes; his arms felt heavy.

He pushed open the door of Dicky's slip of a room. Dicky was standing in the middle of the floor in his nightshirt. At the sight of him Edward's heart gave a warm throb of rage.

"Well, Dicky, you know what I've come for," said Edward.

Dicky made no reply.

"I've come to give you a whipping."

No answer.

"Lift up your nightshirt."

At that Dicky looked up. He flushed a deep pink. "Must I?" he whispered.

"Come on, now. Be quick about it," said Edward, and, grasping the slipper, he gave Dicky three hard slaps.

"There, that'll teach you to behave properly to your mother."

Dicky stood there, hanging his head.

"Look sharp and get into bed," said his father.

Still he did not move. But a shaking voice said, "I've not done my teeth yet, Daddy."

"Eh, what's that?"

Dicky looked up. His lips were quivering, but his eyes were dry. He hadn't made a sound or shed a tear. Only he swallowed and said, huskily, "I haven't done my teeth, Daddy."

But at the sight of that little face Edward turned, and, not knowing what he was doing, bolted from the room, down the stairs, and out into the garden. What had he done? He strode along and hid in the shadow of the pear tree by the hedge. Whipped Dicky – whipped his little man with a slipper – and what for? He didn't even know. Suddenly he barged into his room – and there was the little chap in his nightshirt. Dicky's father groaned and held on to the hedge. And he didn't cry. Never a tear. If only he'd cried or got angry. But that "Daddy"! And again he heard the quivering whisper. Forgiving like that without a word. But he'd never forgive himself – never. Coward! Fool! Brute! And suddenly he remembered the time when Dicky had fallen off his knee and sprained his wrist while they were playing together. He hadn't cried then, either. And that was the little hero he had just whipped.