

But Mrs. Bendall, threading her needle, pursed up her lips. "We never have whipped our children," she said. "The girls never seem to have needed it. And Dicky is such a baby, and the only boy. Somehow..."

"Oh, my dear," said Mrs. Spears, and she laid her sewing down. "I don't wonder Dicky has these little outbreaks. You don't mind my saying so? But I'm sure you make a great mistake in trying to bring up children without whipping them. Nothing really takes its place. And I speak from experience, my dear. I used to try gentler measures" – Mrs. Spears drew in her breath with a little hissing sound – "soaping the boys' tongues, for instance, with yellow soap, or making them stand on the table for the whole of Saturday afternoon. But no, believe me," said Mrs. Spears, "there is nothing, there is nothing like handing them over to their father."

Mrs. Bendall in her heart of hearts was dreadfully shocked to hear of that yellow soap. But Mrs. Spears seemed to take it so much for granted, that she did too.

"Their father," she said. "Then you don't whip them yourself?"

"Never." Mrs. Spears seemed quite shocked at the idea. "I don't think it's the mother's place to whip the children. It's the duty of the father. And, besides, he impresses them so much more."

"Yes, I can imagine that," said Mrs. Bendall, faintly.

"Now my two boys," Mrs. Spears smiled kindly, encouragingly at Mrs. Bendall, "would behave just like Dicky if they were not afraid to. As it is..."

"Oh, your boys are perfect models," cried Mrs. Bendall.

They were. Quieter, better-behaved little boys, in the presence of grown-ups, could not be found. In fact, Mrs. Spears's callers often made the remark that you never would have known that there was a child in the house. There wasn't – very often.

In the front hall, under a large picture of fat, cheery monks fishing by the riverside, there was a thick, dark horsewhip that had belonged to Mr. Spears's father. And for some reason the boys preferred to play out of sight of this, behind the dog-kennel or in the tool house, or round about the dustbin.

"It's such a mistake," sighed Mrs. Spears, breathing softly, as she folded her work, "to be weak with children when they are little. It's such a sad mistake and one so easy to make. It's so unfair to the child. That is what one has to remember. Now Dicky's little escapade this afternoon seemed to me as though he'd done it on purpose. It was the child's way of showing you that he needed a whipping."

"Do you really think so?" Mrs. Bendall was a weak little thing, and this impressed her very much.

"I do; I feel sure of it. And a sharp reminder now and then," cried Mrs. Spears in quite a professional manner, "administered by the father, will save you so much trouble in the future. Believe me, my dear." She put her dry, cold hand over Mrs. Bendall's.

"I shall speak to Edward the moment he comes in," said Dicky's mother firmly.

The children had gone to bed before the garden gate banged, and Dicky's father staggered up the steep concrete steps carrying his bicycle. It had been a bad day at the office. He was hot, dusty, tired out.

But by this time Mrs. Bendall had become quite excited over the new plan, and she opened the door to him herself.

"Oh, Edward, I'm so thankful you have come home," she cried.

"Why, what's happened?" Edward lowered his bicycle and took off his hat. A red, angry pucker showed where the brim had pressed. "What's up?"

"Come – come into the drawing-room," said Mrs. Bendall, speaking very fast. "I simply can't tell you how naughty Dicky has been. You have no idea – you can't have at the office all