

ponder, mentally digest and form a conclusion from what he had just heard.

It had never previously occurred to him that the stout, dark, beady-eyed, brightly-dressed lady whom he had been taught to call Mamma was not really his mother, but he knew it now. It was revealed to him in one lightning-flash of comprehension that this was the reason why her hands felt so like hands of wood whenever they touched him, and why her kiss,—religiously administered night and morning—was a thing he would much sooner have gone without. He knew,—and something inside him was glad to know—that it was not wicked of him not to love her as he loved Nurse, or Monica, or Ponto the brown retriever. And then his heart dropped like a leaden plummet to the pit of his infant stomach. This was to be a day of discoveries. He had discovered that by kicking out lustily it had been possible to resist the forcible removal of his new breeches. He had discovered that "Mamma" was not his real, real mother! Would Daddy turn out to be Monica's and Alan's and Baba's Daddy, and not Carolan's, after all?

A sob rose in his throat, and his hot, dry eyes began to smart and water. But the manly trampling and clanking came nearer. The door opened—his father was in the room. He could only see his shiny Wellington boots, and the bottoms of the red-striped dark blue breeches that were strapped over them. But familiar knowledge built from the boots the handsome manly figure in the light brick-red coat with the Royal blue facings, the China and Punjab war-medals, the crimson sash and the other martial accoutrements topped by the stiff leather stock, and the head whose wealth of jet-black curls and luxuriant bushy whiskers might have been the glory of a fashionable hair-dresser's window, in combination with the well-cut features, light blue eyes, and fine rosy complexion, as yet scarcely deteriorated by Mess port, whisky punch, and late hours.