

Is there such a thing as a naughty child? Bad temper, according to many authorities, is merely excitability; selfishness is "the self-protective instinct"; falsehoods spring from a similar root, or else are the result of an over-developed imaginative faculty; rudeness is love of candour; disobedience is love of freedom—and so on, until no room seems left at all for plain, old-fashioned "naughtiness." "The naughty child, so-called," say the learned ones of to-day, "is invariably the badly managed child."

Can we, looking back at our old self as a child (the only child, after all, that we ever *really* knew or shall know) pretend that we don't remember having been quite consciously and deliberately "naughty"? We broke rules, we stole jam, not in the least because of any "mismanagement" on the part of our elders, but simply because we wanted to, and because our desires overcame the reproaches of our conscience.

The tendency to look upon children as perfect little beings, only made sinful through the bad example or mismanagement of their elders, is perhaps responsible for a good deal of the "wooliness" of modern nursery discipline. All the same, we have to remember that an unwise parent can make a child a great deal more "naughty" than is necessary. In one of Mrs. Buckrose's understanding books, a little girl of six sobs out, "Oh, Auntie, I didn't start naughty. I only started misrubble. *Why* doesn't nobody know where naughty ends and misrubble begins"? If more of us took the trouble to "know" this and kindred matters, we should find less "naughtiness" to complain of or to excuse.

For instance, take bad temper. "Fighting it out" with baby is all very well, but constant scenes of screaming and fighting are best avoided. A little tact may avert many a battle of this kind; no need to let your tact be *evident* to the small rebel—that would give him a feeling of triumph—but is it not just as easy to talk pleasantly to Toddles while you are dressing him to go out, and so divert his mind from a process he detests, as to bring forward his clothes in a "now-we'll-see-who's-master" spirit, and scold him for fidgeting and whining until the nerves of both of you are on edge and Toddles is in "one of his awful tempers"?

It does no good to meet temper with temper; stick to your point, but hold on tight to your self-control. Don't scold a screaming child; he isn't in a state to listen; have a quiet talk by and by if possible, but don't say more than is absolutely necessary, for youngsters like to feel that they have created a sensation in the home, and it doesn't do to dilate upon the sorrow they have caused you, and so forth.

Of course we ought to realize that the "naughty" child is often the child who needs more attention paid to his health. There is a naughtiness that springs from mere excess of animal spirits, but there's also a naughtiness that means constipation, or adenoids, or the wrong kind of food, or insufficient fresh

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air, or lack of exercise, or want of sleep. We take all these things into account when considering the tantrums of a baby, perhaps we are apt to forget them when deploring the crossness, or laziness, or chronic fidgetings of a child past the baby stage.

Disobedience is a fault that worries many mothers. There is an age, generally between two and four, when normal high-spirited little people will seem to object to obeying even the slightest command. This must be firmly (though quite

pleasantly) dealt with, but it doesn't do to become over-anxious about it; it is just a stage when, the child becoming conscious of his own will-power, he feels it would be rather fun to pit it against other people's.

A good plan at this stage is to issue as few "commands" as possible, and thus avoid stirring up the combative instinct! An intelligent mother can often get a child to do as she wants without seeming to make it do so. Even with older children, this is perhaps worth remembering! And, further, don't

give half-hearted commands; if a thing has really got to be done, see that it *is* done, and as promptly as possible; but don't harass and annoy a child with countless little pieces of arbitrariness, which you don't really mean, and which don't honestly matter to anyone. The child whines, "Oh, *need* I, mother?" and you either give in (which is highly unsatisfactory) or else waste your energy drearily enforcing a trivial order which you wish you had never given!

One more point: let us all try hard to remember that the mere fact that what a child is doing happens to annoy *you* at the minute doesn't necessarily mean that it's being "naughty." My own answer to the question, "Are children ever really naughty?" would be, "Yes, they are—but not nearly so often as we think!"

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