

A Bit of Temper.

JEM. Is that one of your little ones screaming, George? What-ever's wrong with it?

George. Oh, nothing; it's only little Sam. He's hasty if he don't get his own way in a minute; but it's over directly. Fanny has shut him up. I don't like her to beat him for fear of breaking his spirit.

Jem. I don't hold with much beating of children—leastways, not at the minute they are naughty, for several reasons. But as to breaking the child's spirit, I don't seem quite to know what that means.

George. Well, you see Sam's such a fine little lad, as brave as a lion, afraid of nothing, with his eyes looking at you so straight, I shouldn't like him to be cowed while he's so little—stopping to think if he'd get a beating for every bit of mischief.

Jem. No, no, you're right there. An active little chap like that gets into mischief just as ducks run to water—meaning no harm. We never beat ours for a torn frock or a broken mug, or suchlike accidents.

George. Well, with Sam it's his bit of temper stands in the way. It's a word and a blow with the little fellow; but I tell Fanny he'll mend of himself as he grows older and gets more sense.

Jem. I shouldn't let him scream like that, though.

George. It does sound as if he'd bring the place about one's ears. (*Shouts.*) Stop that noise, Sammy, or father'll give you the stick. He'll be quiet now. It's only his hot temper, you see; over in a minute.

Jem. Excuse me, George, but it often puzzles me the way folks have of making a sort of pet of some faults and treating them as if there was even something good about them. Little Sammy's temper, for instance.

George. Well, you see, a child's temper takes it so unawares, it would be hard to punish it every time it broke out.

Jem. You blister Rhoda, don't you, when she has those bad turns with her chest?

George. Yes; doctor said we must. She's so bad with them. But of late she's kept ever so much better since her mother's spoke serious to her about changing her shoes when they are wet and taking care beforehand.

Jem. Why not try that plan with Sammy's tempers? Take and provide against them beforehand.

George. A little chap like that, just gone four!

Jem. Why not? He's sensible, isn't he?

George. As sharp a child as any amongst them.

Jem. I thought so. Just you try talking to him, then.

George. What should I say? I'm a bad hand at that sort of thing.

Jem. Say simply you won't have screaming and slapping; it isn't good. But there, George, you and Fanny know how to manage a child just as well as I do.

George. Well, I do make a stand against the big lads quarrelling or using bad words, but I'm bound to say that little Sam makes me laugh when he flies into a rage, looking like a little turkey cock.

Jem. And yet it is the beginning of a lot of sin—temper is. You heard of little Mark Adams the other day?

George. Taking his little sister's hen and killing it in a pet. Yes, I was up at the farm that day. Farmer Adams was down on the child, though. Kept him a whole day shut up, and forbid him riding the pony till next holidays. He's a fine chap that little Mark, though.

Jem. Those hasty ones often are. Mr. Adams is a very kind father, and I fancy he is grieved enough to punish his only boy, but he sees what temper can do, and he knows it is truest kindness to stop a sin at the beginning.