

A SPOILED CHRISTMAS.

A TRUE STORY ABOUT LYING.

"Yes", said aunt Alice, as the children gathered around her, "I will tell you how I spoiled a Christmas which might have been one of the best I ever saw, had I not done wrong."

"I can't imagine" said Fannie "how anyone could spoil a Christmas. They are always splendid, I think."

"I was a very small girl" continued aunt Alice, "and that must be my excuse for my naughtiness."

"Mamma had made me some presents to carry to my Sabbath School teacher and to an aunt who was always very kind to me. The Sabbath School was to have a Christmas tree at the vestry, and the class which I was in, the 'infant class', was to sing a Christmas carol, and we met at our teacher's house to practice it on the afternoon before the longed-for day. As my present was a very modest one, mamma thought I had better give it to my teacher myself rather than hang it on the tree."

"What was it?" asked impatient little Mollie.

"Wait a minute! I was just going to tell you. In those days pin-balls were in vogue, and mamma had made for me to give my teacher a twenty-sided one, that is, twenty pieces of three-cornered cardboard, each covered with a different kind of silk, and all sewed together very nicely. To my eyes it was beautiful, and I was more than satisfied with the expressions of pleasure from my teacher and the flattering comments of my classmates."

With no intention of mine, in some way, my teacher understood that I had made the pin-ball with my own hands, and then she expressed more delight than ever and said that she should hang it on the tree next night and tell every one what skilful little fingers I had. I knew I ought to explain the matter, but I hadn't the moral courage, and then, too, I found the praise very sweet."

"Ho!" said Archie, "I don't think that was so very bad. You didn't really tell a lie, and then you were such a little girl, only in the infant class."

"But I am not through yet. After the rehearsal I was to go to my aunt's and present the rest of my gifts. On my way to the house my vanity prompted me to tell them that I had made the articles for them, and not wait for any misunderstanding, and perhaps I would receive still more praise."

So while they were looking at the presents I managed to draw attention to the fact that I made them myself and, emboldened by my success, I added, pointing to a place that I imagined didn't look quite so nice as the rest, "That's where mamma sewed."

"O, what an atrocious little wretch you were!" exclaimed uncle Fred, who had been listening unobserved, and with a merry twinkle in his eye added "It's fortunate for you that I didn't know that before I married you."

"No interruptions", said aunt Alice. I must hurry my story, for it is almost time for the children to hang up their stockings and go to bed. I think my aunt should have told me that she did not believe my story, for I know very well that she was not at all deceived, and perhaps then I should have been kept from further wickedness."

When I left for home she gave me a little package which she said was for me, but that I must not look at it, but give it to papa when I got home, and he would hang it on the tree for me. I did not mean to look, but my curiosity got the better of me, and I couldn't resist taking a little peep, just enough to see what it was."

"What was it?" asked all the children.

"I'll tell you by and by. Papa met me on my way home, as it was getting dark, and I gave him the package and the message."

"What do you suppose it is?" he asked me.

"It looks like a little wash-bowl and pitcher," said I, which was the truth.

Before I got home my conscience began to be rather troublesome, and the next day was anything but a Merry Christmas for me. I kept thinking 'What if my teacher or my aunt should say anything to mamma about my being such a capable child to make such pretty presents, and have mamma ask me about it? Why hadn't I thought of that before? And then I should have to pretend to be so surprised and pleased when I opened the package, as it was handed to me from the tree, and how could I, when my heart was so heavy?

I can't stop to tell you how pretty the tree was and how we little ones were complimented on our singing and how nice the supper was, but I didn't enjoy it much, for my thoughts were on my deceit. I was not surprised when I found a little china cup and saucer in my package, but how do you suppose I felt to read on it, 'For a good girl'?

I think since then I've been very careful about telling wrong stories and about claiming praise that was not due me.

Now, good night! And I hope there will not be a spoiled Christmas for anyone to-morrow."

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