



NANNIE'S THANKSGIVING

Isabella Alden

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IT WAS very early in the morning; earlier, in fact, than Nannie was in the habit of being up; but on account of Thanksgiving Day, and the fact that they were all going to Aunt Cornelia's to dinner, Nannie thought she ought to be on hand early. She was waiting for mamma to give her her bath, and sat down to pet Rosamond Catherine Lorinda in the meantime. The middle name, Catherine, was in honor of Grandma Patterson, but Nannie did not like it very well, and felt obliged to place it between two names which she called "delicious" in order to tolerate it. A bright thought occurred to her; she might dress the dollie for the Thanksgiving dinner while she waited. It was while she struggled with the sleeve which did not want to go on that the thought came which caused all her trouble.

"This sleeve is too small," she said. "I b'lieve my child's arm must have grown a great deal since she wore this dress before; she ought to have had a new dress for Thanksgiving; she would look sweet in a white embroidered one trimmed

with lace." Just then the baby in the willow cradle at her side nestled in his sleep, and Nannie turned and looked at him.

"If Rosamond Catherine Lorinda only had one dress like what Teddy has so many of, I should be too perfectly happy," she said. "Just think, I b'lieve he has as many as 'leven or eight! Mamma might borrow me one just for today. It would be too long, but I could cut it off at the bottom; it would be just as easy to sew it on again when Teddy needed it; and the sleeves I could loop up with pink ribbons, and she would look too perfectly sweet!"

The more she thought about it, the more the longing grew; at last it began to seem a positive injustice that Teddy should have so many clothes and not be willing to lend any to Rosamond Catherine Lorinda.

"I know he would, if he understood," said Nannie, looking approvingly upon the sleeping baby. "He loves my Rosamond, and kisses her just as cunning! And he has such a perfectly lovely lot of dresses! I just mean to look in the bruro drawer and count them."

Saying which, she tiptoed toward the bureau behind the cradle, and opened the second drawer. To be sure she was barefooted, and could not have made much noise; besides, if she was doing right, why should she care if her footsteps were heard? Nevertheless, she instinctively tiptoed along, and opened the drawer as softly as she could; and it was not for fear of waking Teddy, either.

There lay the dresses in a fluffy white heap; on the top was the one which Nannie most coveted.

“Teddy hardly ever wears it,” she said reassuringly, as she drew it out. “I guess mamma doesn’t like it very much or she would put it on him oftener; and Rosamond Catherine will look too perfectly sweet for anything in it. I am almost sure mamma would not care. I could cut it off right through all those little embroidery holes, then Grandma could sew them together again just as easy.”

I grieve to tell you that she did exactly that dreadful thing. Not immediately; she resolved to try the dress on first, and see if it would do; and despite the fact that the waist was many times too large, and the limp arms were altogether lost in the sleeves, the waxen-haired beauty looked so enchanting to her mother’s eyes, under those billows of white, that in a very short space of time the shining shears were making a long, crooked line through the costly embroidery with which Teddy’s best dress was trimmed.

Oh, me! The troubles which in this way were stored up for naughty, foolish Nannie! They began almost immediately; for despite the fact that Nannie had coaxed herself into the fancy that there was no harm in what she did, she found she was not willing to have her mother know about it, and crumpled the elegant dress into a small bundle and thrust it under the great rug at her feet when she heard her mother’s footsteps. All through the breakfast hour, and even at family worship, she was engaged in planning how she should get Rosamond Catherine Lorinda dressed and wrapped in her traveling cloak without any one having seen her; for fond as she was of exhibiting the beauty, she found

that today she would rather her charms were hidden from all eyes.

She was still planning ways and means when the discovery came. She was not prepared for it because when Teddy had so many dresses, how could she suppose that when her mother opened the drawer to select one she would exclaim, "Why, what has become of his dress? I laid it on top so as to get it without disturbing the others."

A good deal of talk followed. Papa suggested that she had laid it in some other drawer, and Aunt Laura said perhaps Grandma had taken it to set a stitch in; and Grandma affirmed that she had not, and asked what Nannie was longing to:

"Why don't you take one of the others, daughter, and get the little fellow ready while he is good-natured?"

"Well, but where can it be?" asked the puzzled mother, closing the drawer. "I am sure I laid it here, on the top. I wanted Adelaide to see him in that dress, because she sent me the embroidery for it, you know, and it is more expensive than any I should have bought."

Nannie caught her breath nervously over this; she had not supposed the embroidery was so choice; she might just as well have taken one of the other dresses, if she had only known.

Just at that moment Susan, who was bustling about, packing Teddy's traveling bag, stooped down and pulled at something white under the rug, as she said, "Shall I put in some play-things, Mrs. Walters? Why, what's this?"

What was it, sure enough, but the lost dress cut in two, in a fearful zigzag manner, directly through the costly embroidery! Can you imagine what followed? I am sure you will not be surprised to learn that poor, naughty little Nannie had a spanking then and there. Her mother did not even wait for Susan to leave the room, as she generally did before punishing any of her children. It is true the spanking was not very severe, for Mrs. Walters was never severe; but the disgrace of it was terrible, for Nannie was very rarely spanked.

However, this was by no means the worst of her troubles; behold, mamma declared that she could not go to the Thanksgiving dinner, but must stay at home with Susan and the cat.

Now, when you reflect that they were to ride four miles in a beautiful sleigh drawn by two prancing horses, and meet a baker's dozen of little cousins, some of whom Nannie had never seen, to say nothing of the delights of the Thanksgiving dinner, and the little pies with their names on, done in sugar plums, which were to be ready for each cousin, I am sure you will feel with Nannie that her punishment was greater than she could bear. In truth, the others thought so.

Papa said, "My dear, couldn't you reconsider, somehow?"

Aunt Laura said, "Jennie, I think you are horrid!"

And even Susan ventured to say, "I don't think she knew it was his best dress, ma'am; and she says Grandma can sew it together, poor little heart."

But Mrs. Walters was very firm. She did not deign to answer Laura or Susan, but said to her husband, "Richard, I don't know how I can change, now. I said she couldn't, and you know I ought to keep my word. Besides, the child needs a serious lesson; it is quite as hard for me, I think, as for her," and the mother's lip quivered a little.

Then the father said soothingly, that of course he knew she was doing it for Nannie's best good, and he could trust her judgment where he couldn't his own. But Aunt Laura remained indignant, and the whole household was in trouble.

"Our Thanksgiving is spoiled," said Aunt Laura; "I've a good mind not to go."

Meantime, Grandma said not a word. It was nearly an hour afterwards, and the preparations for starting, which had gone on much more silently, were almost completed, when Grandma opened the door of Mrs. Walters' room, dressed in her best black silk, with her beautiful white satin hair peeping out from under the soft laces of her best cap, and holding by the hand a little girl with very red eyes, and a red nose, who kept up a suspicious little sniffing, as though it was only by great effort she refrained from bursting into fresh tears.

Grandma walked straight toward her daughter, and said, "Mamma, we have come to ask you if you will not forgive poor little Nannie, who is very sorry, and let her go today, for Grandma's sake—not for hers at all, but for Grandma's."

And the handsome mother, with a sudden glad light flashing in her gray eyes, stooped and kissed the cheek of her

sweet old mother, and then of her own little daughter, as she said, “Dear mother, you know what you ask for your own sake I could certainly never refuse.”

The years have rolled on since then, enough of them to make little Nannie twenty-six, and the mother of one Rosamond, who has golden hair like the dollie, her namesake, but who is mischievous, as Rosamond of old never was. And I heard the sweet mother say, last Thanksgiving morning, after having told this story of her past for the benefit of some young mothers, “I am thankful for two things: that I had a mother who taught me that wrong-doing must bring unhappiness, not only to myself, but to others; and that I had a dear Grandmother who taught me what it was to have a powerful friend to come between me and Justice, and say, “For my sake.”



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