Ida-Rose Hall

CRIME AND PUNISHMENT

I would like, of course, for my descendants to think that their grandmother never did anything wrong. But of course that is not true. We all make mistakes, and we all have to repent. Thank goodness for repentance. What would we do without that blessed principle? However, if you think at this point, I am going to pour out all my sins for your sensitive ears, forget it. But there is one thing I did in my childhood that I will never forget.

My mother and father often went to the movies together on a Saturday night. And usually they would buy candy, and the next day they would share the remains with the children. Dad's suit pocket was always good for small change, and whenever Mother needed a dime or some small change she would say to me (and probably to any handy offspring,) "Ida-Rose, go and see if Dad has a quarter (or whatever) in his suit pants pocket." Usually he did. So I found out that Dad's pants pocket was a ready source for small change--and sometimes for candy.

I do not know when it occurred to me that Dad's pants pocket might be a source for me to sneak out pennies to buy candy at the nearest local market, which I had to pass every day on my way to school. But at some time it did--and while I hate to admit it, I started to secret pennies out of Dad's suit coat pocket from time to time to buy candy. I was about eight or nine, I would guess. I can't remember exactly.

Our parents' room was at the east end of the house, and the bedroom door opened directly into the living room, and the front door was only a step or two from the bedroom door. Occasionally mother would pack a lunch for us to eat at the school at noon, but the majority of the time we would walk home at noon for lunch, and then walk back to school. All within an hour's time.

This particular noon, before I went back to school, I sneaked into my parents' bedroom and secreted out a penny or two. In those days a penny could buy a good size piece of candy. A piece of licorice, an all-day sucker, etc. The largest selection of candy in the candy display counter was for penny candy. The choice was almost unlimited. A candy bar cost only five cents. I slipped quickly out of the bedroom door and had the front door open to go out on the porch when I heard behind me:

"Ida-Rose--what were you doing in my bedroom?" My mother's voice was sharp, but calm. My heart began to pound.

"Nothing." I said, but my face was, I am certain, transparent with guilt.

"Let me see what you have in your hand," she said.

Oh, horrors of horrors--what guilty thoughts came flooding through my mind! What had I done? I was a thief! Would I have to go to reform school? Would my mother hate me

forever? And what would my father say?

I don't remember what my mother said when she looked upon my guilty, open, hand with those stolen pennies in it. But I do remember my punishment--and it was worse than a cat-of-nine-tails would have been--far worse. My punishment was the look of disappoint-ment on my mother's face. I would have done anything to have erased that look.

I don't really remember anything else that happened. I doubt if she told my father. She didn't preach to me. She never spanked me. All of which I deserved. She may have told me never to do that again--that she had trusted me. I don't know. But that look of disappointment on my mother's face was the worst punishment I could have had. I will never forget that look! I worshipped my mother.

Needless to say, I never did anything like that again.   After that, I even resisted taking some of the christmas candy that my sister lola always managed to keep until well into June-- long past the time every one else had gobbled theirs down--and which she kept tucked in her drawer. Fortunately, sometimes she would share.

I hope that my grandchildren will never have to see that look of disappointment on their mother's face over something they have done. However, if they do succumb to temptation and do get caught in the act, it's for the best--because crime is best cured if nipped in the bud.