

Pride Goes Before a Fall



Grandma, what is this?"

Grandma looked up from her work.

"Good lands, child, where did you find that?"

"In the attic," I replied. "What is it, Grandma?"

Grandma chuckled and answered, "That's a hoop. The kind that ladies wore under their skirts when I was a little girl."

"Did you ever wear one, Grandma?" I asked.

Grandma laughed. "Indeed I did," she said. "In fact, I wore that very one."

Here, I decided, must be a story. I pulled up the footstool and prepared to listen. Grandma looked at the old hoop fondly.

"I only wore it once," she began. "But I kept it to remind me how painful pride can be."

I was about eight years old when that hoop came into my life. For months I had been begging Ma to let me have a hoopskirt like the big girls wore. Of course, that was out of the question. What would a little girl, not even out of the calicos, be doing with a hoopskirt? Nevertheless, I could envision myself walking haughtily to school with a hoopskirt and having all the girls watching enviously as I took my seat in the front of the room.

This dream was shared by my best friend and seatmate, Sarah Jane. Together we spent many hours picturing ourselves as fashionable young ladies in ruffles and petticoats. But try as we would, we could not come up with a single plan for getting a hoopskirt of our very own.

Finally, one day in early spring, Sarah Jane met me at the school grounds with exciting news. An older cousin had come to their house to visit, and she had two old hoops that she didn't want any longer. Sarah Jane and I could have them to play with, she said. Play with indeed! Little did that cousin know that we didn't want to play with them! Here was the answer to our dreams. All day, under cover of our books, Sarah Jane and I planned how we would wear those hoops to church on Sunday.

There was a small problem. How would I get that hoop into the house without Ma knowing about it? And how could either of us get out of the house with them on when no one

could see us? It was finally decided that I would stop by Sarah Jane's house on Sunday morning. We would have some excuse for walking to church, and after her family had left, we would put on our hoops and prepare to make a grand entrance at the church.

"Be sure to wear your fullest skirt," Sarah Jane reminded me. "And be here early. They're all sure to look at us this Sunday!"

If we had only known how true that would be! But of course, we were happily unaware of the disaster that lay ahead.

Sunday morning came at last, and I astonished my family by the speed with which I finished my chores and was ready to leave for church.

"I'm going with Sarah Jane this morning," I announced, and set out quickly before there was any protest.

All went according to plan. Sarah Jane's family went on in the buggy, cautioning us to hurry and not be late for service. We did have a bit of trouble fastening the hoops around our waists and getting our skirts pulled down to cover them. But when finally we were ready, we agreed that there could not be two finer looking young ladies in the county than we were.

Quickly we set out for church, our fine hoopskirts swinging as we walked. Everyone had gone in when we

arrived, so we were assured of the grand entry we desired. Proudly, with small noses tipped up, we sauntered to the front of the church and took our seats.

Alas! No one had ever told us the hazards of sitting down in a hoopskirt without careful practice! The gasps we heard were not of admiration as we had anticipated—far from it! For when we sat down, those dreadful hoops flew straight up in the air! Our skirts covered our faces, and the startled minister was treated to the sight of two pairs of white pantalettes and flying petticoats.

Sarah Jane and I were too startled to know how to disentangle ourselves, but our mothers were not. Ma quickly snatched me from the seat and marched me out the door.

The trip home was a silent one. My dread grew with each step. What terrible punishment would I receive at the hands of an embarrassed and upset parent? Although I didn't dare look at her, I knew she was upset because she was shaking. It was to be many years before I learned that Ma was shaking from laughter, and not from anger!

Nevertheless, punishment was in order. My Sunday afternoon was spent with the big Bible and Pa's concordance. My task was to copy each verse I could find that had to do with being proud. It was a sorry little girl who learned a lesson about pride going before a fall that day.

The story was ended.

"And you were never proud again, Grandma?" I asked.

Grandma thought soberly for a moment. "Yes," she replied. "I was proud again. Many times. It was not until I was a young lady and the Lord saved me that I had the pride taken from my heart. But many times when I am tempted to be proud, I remember that horrid hoopskirt and decide that a proud heart is an abomination to the Lord!"