

## BILLY AND FLOSS.

By JANE WALLACE MORTIMER

## A Little Christmas Play.

To introduce a Tree and the Distribution of Gifts to Audience of School Children.

Or may be used without the Christmas Tree.

SCENE.—A city street. A doorstep.

TIME.—Twilight, Christmas Eve.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.—BILLY and FLOSS, brother and sister from the poorest quarter of city. (BILLY is about twelve years old; his sister younger and smaller.)

THE FAIRY, who makes things happen.

SANTA CLAUS.

STAGE DIRECTIONS.—No drop-curtain is needed, but the decorated and laden Christmas Tree should be concealed by curtains, at one end of stage or platform.

If possible, it should be arranged that SANTA CLAUS shall emerge from behind or near the Tree, while THE FAIRY shall appear from opposite end of stage.

Boxes should be arranged and covered to represent doorsteps (two or more) about centre of back of stage, against the wall. If a door is there or can be suggested, so much better.

The audience of children may be told what they have to create out of their imagination—a street with tall houses on this side—an open park beyond. A cross-street in the distance with a big house on the corner. There is a light snow on the ground. Street-car tracks glimmer and run out into the distance.

COSTUMES AND STAGE PROPERTY.—Flossie is dressed very poorly, wears coat and small cap (or is bare-headed). Her boots are conspicuously ragged (if necessary, these details may be left to the children's imagination).

BILLY also looks poor. He carries some newspapers under his arm.

THE FAIRY's costume should be as dainty, shining and fairy-like as possible. Stiff muslin and glittering tinsel are suggested for both dress and wings.

The wings may be made on wire frame or merely pleated of very stiff muslin. The appearance of flying may be aided by use of black shoes with light stockings. A lighted "sparkler" sparkling in her wand, as she comes upon the stage adds much to her effectiveness.

The wand should be over a yard long and fluttering with ribbon near the hand.

SANTA CLAUS should have the regulation beard of white, with rosy face, red cap, fat body, red sash over his coat, etc. He must keep away from the lighted candles on the Tree. Grown-up persons should detach gifts and hand them to SANTA CLAUS to be presented.

His bag may be stuffed with almost anything, so long as the desired gifts are within reach, and the skates at the bottom.

If the "red dress with lace on it" cannot be borrowed for the occasion change to blue, pink, white, or whatever is available. Be sure to change all the passages in play relating to it.

FLO. and BILLY appear, FLO a step ahead of BILLY. FLO catches BILLY's hand and points ahead.

FLO. (eagerly).—Come on, Billy! There's the house—that big corner one.

BILLY glances ahead, then from one side of street to other, at the houses. He holds back a bit.

BILLY.—Aw, what 're y' draggin' me up through all these swell streets fer? You don't know 'nybody up here.

FLO.—I do know her—that little girl that was talkin' t' me yesterday. That's where she lives.

BILLY.—Look here! You're not goin' t' any strange little girl's house. She'll think y're beggin' er somethin'. Come on home.

BILLY turns back.

FLO.—Billy! I'm not goin' t' her house. I told y'—I want to see Santa Claus. He goes to her house ev'ry Chris'mas Eve. Is'nt this Chris'mas Eve?

FLO. shakes BILLY's arm with slight impatience.

BILLY.—There ain't no Santa Claus! Y' don't want t' believe all the stuff the rich people tell y'.

BILLY looks at the big houses almost savagely.

FLO gives him a pitiful look which he notices. It is her disappointed look he answers.

Well, I never saw him, anyway. He never comes down our way. I guess he only comes t' the swells up here.

FLO brightens up again and draws BILLY ahead. BILLY turns his head, listening to distant shouts.

FLO.—That's just the reason I came up here to wait for him. If he saw us he might give us some presents. The little girl said he had a big bag with presents for all the children in the world.

FLO looks up at BILLY hopefully, and makes a gesture of "bigness."

BILLY.—There's the fellers on the Park Pond. Jiminy! I wish I had some skates!

FLO.—Oh Billy! If Santa Claus sh'd bring you a pair o' skates! (FLO skips eagerly toward BILLY. BILLY laughs.) and he might bring me a really doll! I'd love t' have a really doll! Oh do let's wait and see him. I'm goin' t' sit on these steps. Come on!

FLO pulls BILLY toward steps (coaxingly).

BILLY.—The cops won't let y'. I don't believe there's anyone livin' in this house.

BILLY glances up at the house, and lets FLO draw him to the steps. FLO seats herself. BILLY still stands.

FLO.—What else d'y wish he'd bring you, Billy?

BILLY.—Aw, Santa Claus don't bring things to the likes of us. (BILLY speaks dubiously as he sits down.) There! I got two more papers I might a' sold! (Lays newspapers on his knees.) Come on home outa this!—makin' fools of ourselves, watchin' fer Santa Claus! (Speaks crossly, getting up, but is held back by FLO.)

FLO. (insistently).—Billy, tell me what else y'd like him to bring you. If he brings me the doll, I'll ask him for some skates for you.

BILLY laughs, a little derisively and speaks as if humoring FLO's fancy.

BILLY.—All right, tell him t' bring me all the candy I can eat in a week.

FLO.—That's what they get off a' the Christmas Tree, she said. There was a big tree with candy on it!

BILLY.—I heard about Christmas Trees, but I never saw one. A few moments' silence—the two children watching.

FLO. (whiningly).—Billy, my feet's cold. They're freezin'.

BILLY.—Well, come on home.

FLO. (decidedly, but still whining).—I'm goin' t' wait here an' see Santa Claus when he goes past t' her house.

BILLY.—Here, get up on that step (FLO moves up to the second step, and BILLY, seated on lower step, puts papers around her feet and covers them by leaning his arm across them). Y'r boots 're not fit fer this snow. Y' better ask Santa Claus fer a pair o' decent boots. Y' ought t' be home in bed, anyway.

FLO.—You're an awful good boy, Billy. (A short silence.) (Musingly) the little girl said the fairies always told him what t' bring. I wish a fairy'd tell him t' bring me a red dress with lace on it.