

Did this picture not recall to her the day when she herself stood as this child in the innocence of youth, awaiting the Bridegroom? On tiptoe the child tenderly threw her arms about her mother's neck and drawing her face to her own lovingly kissed her, then whispered:

"Mama, dear."

"Yes, Mary," was the soft reply.

"To-morrow is Christmas isn't it? Will you give me something I want very much?"

"Whatever you want you have, my darling. What are you so anxious to receive?"

"Please, Mama dear, receive the Christ Child to-night when you come to Church with me."

"O Mary, that's no Christmas gift for you. Why not ask for something you would like very much for yourself?" Her heart was touched, however, by the child's appeal and she struggled hard to control her emotion.

"No, Mama; there is nothing else I want. Only give me this one thing. I know the little Jesus is just longing to give you this gift if you will only go to Him and ask for it. Please come!"

The pleading tone, the look of love and longing in the tearful eyes, the pressure of the little arms about her neck were too much for the Mother. Embracing the little one more tenderly than she had ever done before she replied:

"My own little girl, I will not refuse you even this on your First Communion day, though it is the hardest thing you could possibly ask of me. Pray, Mary, that the Christ Child may give me the grace of a good confession. What others have done, I, too, can do."

"O, Mama, I'm so happy," Mary cried, and tears of joy filled her eyes as with her mother's hand in hers she sought her father in the library.

"Papa," she said, releasing her mother's hand, and stealing softly to her father's side.

He did not answer. This outward display, foolish in his opinion, provoked him and his wrath was enkindled. Entirely against his will was this event taking place, and it angered him to see his wife oppose him so.