



FLOSSIE'S CHRISTMAS PRESENT TO HER MAMMA

It was such a lovely, bright winter day. The snow, which lay in huge piles in the streets in the Canadian city where Flossie had her home, was perfectly pure and dazzlingly white, for it had fallen just the day before, when there was no sunshine to be seen, and the gas had to be lighted very early in the afternoon. There would be no need for gas through the long hours of this bright day, and, better still, nothing to prevent Flossie meeting all her little schoolmates in the pretty schoolroom, and joining with them in the morning hymn and glad songs of welcome to the teachers and the children.

As Flossie listened to the tinkling sleigh-bells, brought out by the recent heavy snow-fall, and to the crisp "crunch, crunch" of the frosty snow beneath her feet, she felt that winter had really come at last, and that Christmas, with all its fun, and its nice times, and candy, and presents, would soon arrive too.

It bothered Flossie, the thought of Christmas coming so soon, for she had not begun to get ready for it. She had not found out what Mamma would like best for a Christmas box. There was not so much trouble about Papa, for Mamma would help her, and Mamma would be sure to know how to please him. But Papa wasn't a bit of good about getting Mamma a present. He would say:—

"Couldn't you get her a wing of the morning for her bonnet?" or

"A faithful follower of her advice," or

"A new little girl who wouldn't steal the sugar."

Now, Flossie thought her Mamma's bonnets were as pretty as they could be, and didn't need a new wing; and about the "follower," he had said she would like that for a present right before her, when she had come into the room suddenly, and she didn't seem to like it, for she just laughed a very little, and said he was a "naughty boy." So funny of Mamma to call Papa a "naughty boy," as she did sometimes. Then, about the little girl who wouldn't steal the sugar,—it wasn't at all nice of him to say that, for Flossie sometimes took a little sugar, but that, of course, wasn't stealing; stealing was wicked, and horrid.

She did really like to go to the sideboard, though, when there was nobody around, and eat a little sugar out of the sugar bowl. She had eaten a good deal a few weeks ago, for she had taken a spoon, and hadn't thought of stopping until the bowl was nearly empty. Then she had been quite sick, and Mamma seemed to know all about it, and had made her promise not to do that again. Flossie hadn't, either, until yesterday, when she had been home all day from school, with nobody at all to play with. Then she had just taken a little. She had heard Mamma coming, so had shut the sideboard door quickly, and had run away.

"Flossie, after your promise!" said Mamma, so reproachfully.

"What, Mamma? I'm not doing anything," said Flossie, trying to lick the stray crumbs off her rosy cheeks.

"You promised not to eat the sugar again."

"Yes, Mamma, I know; I'm not eating it."

And Mamma had said not another word, but turned away looking so grave and sad, and somehow she had not been quite the same to Flossie since. Would she forget before Christmas time, Flossie wondered. She hoped she would, but Mamma didn't forget very soon, when there was anything wrong, until it had all been explained and put right. Flossie didn't want to explain. It wasn't as if she had told a story. She had said that she wasn't eating the sugar, and she wasn't, just at that moment, for it had all melted away in her mouth. Yet, in her heart of hearts, Flossie knew that she had meant to deceive her Mamma, and that so she really had told a story. Her mother knew it too, she saw the falsehood in her little girl's face just as plainly as she saw the sugar grains on her round, red cheeks. Flossie was uncomfortable, thinking about it, and knowing that her mother thought about it too.

Miss Burwell, her teacher, had told all the children that on the next Friday she would tell them of a splendid present they could make to their Mammams, something that would be sure to give them very great pleasure. And Miss

Burwell was so wise she would be sure to know; and this was Friday, and Flossie would soon hear what to get, and there would be nothing to do but buy it.

She wondered how many cents she had, saved up in her little bank. A good many, she hoped, in case Papa didn't give her as much money as she asked for. He sometimes didn't, he was so curious.

"Now, children, what did I promise to tell you?" said Miss Burwell, at the appointed time, as the eager, precious little faces gathered around her whose lonely life was enriched and brightened by their confiding love.

"How to buy a present for Mamma," said Flossie.

"To tell us a secret," from a bright-eyed little elf.

"To tell us how to make Mamma happy at Christmas time," said a dear little lass, whose answer seemed to please Miss Burwell, for she patted the curly head as she answered:—

"Right, my little Lilly; how to make Mamma happy at Christmas time."

"How to buy her a present," corrected bright-eyes.

"What do we give presents for?" said the teacher.

"'Caus folks would be 'spised if we didn't."

"'Caus we want to please people."

"Right, Mary dear, because we want to please people, and make everybody happy. Everybody ought to be happy at Christmas time. Why?"

"It's the Lord's birthday," said Mary, reverently.

"And why should that make us happy, dear?"

"He came to tell us about Heaven."

"Yes, and not only that. He came to give us all a share of Heaven, and all the lovely things there are there. You wouldn't care much about a Christmas Tree if you were not going to have any of the nice things on it, would you?"

"No, no," said all the little voices.

"And we wouldn't care to hear about Heaven if we were not going to have any of its pleasures. But we are all going there if we love the Lord Jesus. How many love the Lord, and are going to Heaven to live with Him, bye and bye?"

Every little hand was up, and the teacher nodded approvingly.

"I am so glad," she said, "and we ought all to be so happy at Christmas time, when we think of how kind the Lord has been. But some people can't be very happy, because they have trouble. Some of your Mammams have very great troubles indeed.

"Oh! oh!" exclaimed many sorrowful voices; and some, incredulously,—*"My Mamma is happy,"* and *"I am sure my Mamma is."*

"Nothing makes Mamma so unhappy as to have her little girl or boy do what is naughty, or say what is untrue."

A shade came over the bright faces, for many knew of naughty ways that seemed to give Mamma much sorrow.

"How many make their Mammams unhappy sometimes?"

A few reluctant hands were raised, and quickly dropped again.

"What does Johnnie do," I wonder.

"Does slidin' wif 'e big boys, and Mosser 'fraid I det hurt," said Johnnie, promptly.

"Yes, Mother is afraid Johnnie will get hurt, but she is more afraid that he will get into the naughty, wicked way of doing what Mother says not to do. How would she feel if Johnnie were to say he would always try to do just what she said?"

"Glad," said Johnnie, without hesitation.

"Which would she rather, have Johnnie say that, or give her some nice present, that would cost a lot of money?"

"Havn't dot a lot of money, doin' to dive her a big or'nge," said Johnnie.

"Which would she like best, to have Johnnie promise always to obey her, or to have a nice big orange? How many think she would rather have the orange?"

A few chubby hands were raised, whose owners were too young to understand the question.

"She'd like best to have Johnnie promise to be good," said one.

"Yes, yes, that's what she'd like!" burst forth from the whole class.

"Is Johnnie's mother different from the other mothers, or would they all like best to have their children promise to be good?" said Miss Burwell.

"Like us to be good," from one and all.

"Very well, then, I want you all to watch yourselves, and find out what your bad habits are, and make Mamma

a Christmas present of a promise to try to get over them,—not to do the naughty thing any more, you know. Now think about it, children, and when you find out what it is you do to make Mamma sorry you will tell me, if you like, and we'll have a little talk about how to stop doing it."

Flossie walked home very slowly and sorrowfully. She was disappointed in Miss Burwell's plan, and told herself it wasn't a bit of good; and yet she knew, quite well, in her heart, that Miss Burwell was right. She tried not to believe it, though. She wanted Mamma to be happy, of course, but she would not tell about having told the story, and promise not to do so again, even though she knew Mamma was unhappy all the time about it.

Christmas came while she was yet undecided to do right. But she met Mamma on Christmas morning with the loveliest bouquet of red and white roses in one hand, and such a dainty basket, containing the rarest, sweetest oranges, in the other.

What's in the basket, Flos? Sugar plums?" said Papa, teasingly.

Mamma stooped to give Flossie her loving kiss, but her smile was still grave and sad. Flossie hesitated but a moment, then bouquet and basket fell unheeded to the floor, while the lovely oranges rolled about everywhere, and Flossie flung her arms around her mother, sobbing:—

"Mamma, Mamma, I will tell you all about it. I did eat the sugar, after you told me not to, and I told you a story about it, and I'm very, very sorry."

"That's my own true, dear little daughter," said Mamma, clasping her very closely in her arms. "You have made me so happy, Flossie, so much happier than I had hoped to be, even on this beautiful Christmas Day. I could not be happy at all while my little girl refused to tell me the truth. Look what dear Papa has given me," and she took from its case a beautiful gold watch, such as she had long been wishing for. "I am so pleased with my beautiful present, yet Papa will not be jealous when I say that he has not given me half the pleasure that my little Flossie has."

Flossie had forgotten all about Papa, and looked around rather bashfully at the reminder of his presence. But there was no laughter in the merry brown eyes as he said:—

"Come here, old girl, you're a soldier, and I'm proud of you. I'll never say 'sugar plums' to you again, unless I have them in my pocket. That's a bargain."

And Flossie knew that he was almost as pleased as Mamma.

Wasn't she a happy little girl! And hadn't she brought happiness into the house that Merry Christmas Day!

Mothers are much the same all over, children; and, "children of a larger growth," think you those you love would rather have the orange?

ANNIE CRAWFORD.

Midwinter Storm in the Lake Region.

Rises the wild, red dawn over the icicled edges
Of black, wet, cavernous rocks, sheeted and winter-scarred,
And heaving of gray-green waves, foaming the ice-blocks
and ledges,
Into this region of death, sky-bounded, solitude-barred.
Turned to the cold kiss of dawn, gilding their weird dark
faces,
Lift the cylopean rocks, salient, motionless, bare;
Where high on each haggard front, in deep-plowed pas-
sionate traces
The storm hath graven his madness, the night hath fur-
rowed her care.

Out of the far, gray skies comes the dread north with his
blowing
That chills the warm blood in the veins, and cuts to the
heart like fate.
Quick as the fall of a leaf the lake-world is white with his
snowing,
Quick as the flash of a blade the waters are black with
his hate.

God pity the sad-fated vessels that over these waters are
driven
To meet the rude shock of his strength and shudder at
blast of his breath.
God pity the tempest-drave sailors, for here naught
wave or in heaven
Is heard but the hate of the night, the merciless grinding
of death.

—WILLIAM WILFRED CAMPBELL in *The Century*.