

A CHRISTMAS GRACE

SOON after this great grace, Therese received another as a Christmas gift from the Holy Child.

Since her mother's death, as we have seen, she had become extremely sensitive. This, however, was much more the result of her deeply affectionate nature than of vanity or self-love. If she did not get good marks at school, she was inconsolable because she thought her father would be disappointed. If she had annoyed or hurt anyone, even without meaning it, she would cry bitterly. When at first they succeeded in comforting her, she would begin to cry again for having cried! The poor child realized this was a weakness, and felt it very much. How could she be a Carmelite unless she overcame it? But Our Lord was about to give her the grace of a victory over herself!

It was Christmas Eve, 1880. Therese, as usual, had put her shoes in the fireplace to be filled with presents. But when the family came in from Mass, she overheard her father saying:

"This is really too babyish for a big girl like Therese. hope it will be the last time she does it!"

His words pierced her sensitive heart to the quick, and, with the tears rushing to her eyes, she was going upstairs to take off her coat when Celine whispered to her:

"Don't go down again just yet; you will only cry if you look at your shoes when Papa is there!"

Suddenly it flashed on Therese that if she wanted to overcome herself she must run downstairs at once, without stopping to think how hard it was, otherwise it would be too late.

In a moment her mind was made up. She did not even wait till Celine had finished speaking, but choking back her tears, she darted downstairs, picked up her shoes, and pulled out the presents, one by one, laughing merrily all the time. Her father was delighted to see her looking so happy, and there was not the slightest trace of annoyance on his face.

As for Celine, she thought she must be dreaming. But it was no dream.

Therese had bravely overcome herself, and from that moment her sensitiveness hardly ever troubled her again.