

Florrie's Sacrifice

Lucy Maud Montgomery
1910

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L. M. Montgomery

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“It is a fortunate thing that I have pretty hair,” said Florrie Wood, as she brushed out the long, glistening strands, “for I certainly have nothing else to recommend me personally.”

She was the commonplace child of the Wood family. Lilian was a beauty, and Josie was clever, and Laura was expected to do wonderful things in music. But no one ever predicted a career for Florrie. She was plain and quiet, and never led her classes. To be sure, she had some merits, even gifts. She was sweet-tempered and a general favorite in a quiet, unobtrusive way. She was “mother’s girl,” and to her fell naturally all the little household duties that a beauty or a musician rarely concerned herself with.

As she said, she had one beauty—her hair. It was magnificent; and, as she was only a flesh and blood girl in her teens, I am not going to say that she did not feel a certain little thrill of vanity at the admiration it always excited.

It was very thick and long, with a natural ripple and gloss, and was of that perfect reddish gold so rarely found and never simulated.

Florrie was proud of her “crown of glory.” She gave it the most careful attention and would never allow a lock of it to be cut. Mr. Wright, the proprietor of the hair-goods store on Weymouth Street, always looked at it longingly. Once he said to her, “Miss Florrie, if you ever want to get rid of that wig of yours, let me know, won’t you? Hair of that color is worth a great deal.”

Florrie had laughed gayly enough. Sell her hair, indeed—her one compensation for snub nose and freckles! She would as soon have thought of selling her head.

It had been planned for a long time in the Wood household that Mrs. Wood should make a visit to her sister in the old home. The Woods were not rich and such journeys were few and far between, especially for the mother. But now it really seemed as if her visit was to be made at last. She expected to be gone for a month and was looking forward to it with great delight.

But finally Mrs. Wood began to feel doubtful about it, and one afternoon she told Florrie, with a little sigh, that she had decided not to go after all; she would wait until next year.

“Why, mother, I thought it was all decided long ago,” exclaimed Florrie. “What is the matter?”

“Well, I am afraid we can’t afford it very well. The trip would cost fifty dollars, you know, and that seems a great deal of money to spend on pleasure. Your father has some bills to meet and Lilian must have a new dress for Mabel Lloyd’s wedding. You see, we didn’t know, when we made our plans, that Mabel was going to be married; and Laura really needs a new violin. So many things seem to be needed, and I have given up the idea of going home for this year.”

In spite of herself Mrs. Wood sighed again. She was more disappointed

than she would acknowledge.

“It is too bad,” thought Florrie. “Mother really needs the change, for she is looking very tired and thin, and she has been disappointed so often. I wish I knew of some way to send her; but it is impossible.”

Later in the day Florrie went down town on an errand, and as she found herself in front of Mr. Wright’s store she suddenly stopped, feeling the shock of a new idea which had darted into her mind in the headlong way new ideas have. She recalled what Mr. Wright had said about her hair. Could she sell it? No, she decided as she hurried on, it was preposterous to think of.

But the question would not stay decided. It kept popping up again and again. She walked on up High Street in a brown study, bumping against comers and goes unheedingly, and holding an animated thought dialogue with herself.

“I simply could not—that’s all. There is no use in thinking of such a thing. I should look like a fright. But mother is not well and she needs change and rest. If I could only make up my mind to do it! But it is the only beauty I have. It would grow out again in time; and the money would do mother so much good—and—and—it’s nothing but vanity that is the matter with you, Florrie Wood.”

Florrie roused herself out of her reflections long enough to attend to her errand, then turned back. Opposite Mr. Wright’s she paused irresolutely. The window was full of long switches of hair, brown and black and golden, but there was not one so long or so beautiful as her own. She hesitated a moment longer, then walked boldly in. Mr. Wright twinkled at her genially from behind the counter.

“Good afternoon, Miss Florrie. Anything in my line to-day?”

“Mr. Wright,” said Florrie, very fast and very breathlessly, “were you really in earnest that day when you said you would buy my hair if I ever wanted to sell it?”

“Most certainly I was. I have coveted that hair of yours ever since I saw it.”

“And what—what would you give me for it?”

Mr. Wright took the end of the braid in his fingers and held it out admiringly. Poor Florrie winced. It almost seemed as if it were gone already.

“Well,” said Mr. Wright, “it is of so rare a color that I will give you fifty dollars for it.”

Florrie gasped. Just the sum she needed! It was like a story book.

“Mr. Wright, you may have it,” she said desperately. “I want fifty dollars very much just now. But, O, do hurry up and cut it up before I can change my mind.”

And the next minute Florrie, biting her lips to keep back the tears, was whisked off into Mr. Wright’s inner sanctum, to come out, a few minutes later,

with very red eyes, a roll of bills in her hand, and all her golden glory gone.

She walked around town for awhile, "to cool off her eyes," as she said, then went home, stalked into the sitting room, and dropped the roll of bills into her mother's lap.

"Florrie Wood, what have you been doing to yourself. Where—is—your—hair?" gasped Lilian.

"My dear child," began Mrs. Wood. But Florrie interrupted her.

"It's all right, mother. Mr. Wright said he would give me fifty dollars for my hair, and that is just what you wanted; so I thought I would accept the offer. And you are to go straight to Aunt Jennie's for your visit."

Mrs. Wood would have sacrificed her visit ten times over rather than have Florrie part with her hair; but she was a woman wise in her generation, and since the mischief was irreparably done there was nothing for her to do but show her appreciation of the motive that had prompted the girl's sacrifice.

"It was very good and unselfish of you, my dear. How can I ever thank you?"

"By going to Aunt Jennie's and coming home again, well and strong. Don't worry a bit about my hair. It will grow again and be long enough by the time I am a young lady and want to 'come out.' Don't you remember that old Aunt Lucinda used to say that what went to brains in other girls went to hair in me? So perhaps I may grow clever now and astonish you all."

Mrs. Wood put the money away with a little trembling of her lips. She knew what it had cost Florrie, in spite of her light-hearted banter, for the eyes were not quite "cooled off," even yet.

"You look like a fright," said Lilian. "Nobody will know you, and all the girls will poke fun at you. How could you do it, child?"

Florrie walked to the mirror and examined herself critically.

"I don't look as bad as I expected," she said, running her fingers through her short locks. "In spite of your assertion, Lil, I think short hair is decidedly becoming to me. And in a short time I shall have a crop of little golden ringlets all over my head that will drive you frantic with envy."

I am not going to say that Florrie did not have more than one little cry in secret over her hair; but they were all forgotten by the time Mrs. Wood came home again, "looking years younger," everybody declared, and so well and strong that the girl felt more than repaid. Moreover, by that time the clipped hair had grown into the predicted crop of little golden ringlets, as fine and soft and glistening as silk, and so becoming that Florrie gayly declared that she was tempted to keep her hair short for the rest of her life.

"I don't feel half so much like a heroine as I did," she said laughingly to her mother. "If it had made a scarecrow of me there might have been some merit in giving up my hair. But when it has resulted in such an improvement I

really can't take any credit at all."

But Mrs. Wood had a different opinion.

TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Mis-spelled words and printer errors have been fixed.

[The end of *Florrie's Sacrifice* by L. M. (Lucy Maud) Montgomery]