



A Crocus Story

“Are you awake?” whispered a little blue crocus to a white one, who had been sleeping by her side under the earth for months.

“Yes, wide awake, and warm all through. I am sure it must be Spring,” the little white one answered.

“Oh, yes, this is Spring,” whispered blue. “Our shoots have been out a week, and all that time the sun has felt warm. Suppose we bloom; the earth will be so glad to see a flower again.”

“I’m willing,” responded little white crocus. “I want nothing so much as to help make the world beautiful and tell people the Spring has come, so let us send round a crocus murmur to all the flower-beds, parks and gardens in the big city; then they will know it is time to wake up and bloom.”

“Don’t venture out yet,” a tulip bulb grumbled from her earth-bed a few inches below the little crocus. “March is only half gone, and you know old Winter will never let him alone. There will be awful cold winds before April comes. You had better stay where you are and keep warm.”

“Dear! oh, dear!” sighed blue and white, “we dread the freezing winds. Perhaps, Miss Tulip, you are wrong. I am sure we ought to be out.”

“Let us venture,” urged a tiny pink crocus near by. “We can at least show Mr. Winter that Spring has come, and that he must go away. Come, let us do our best and not be afraid of a little cold.”

So a crocus murmur went round to all the flower-beds, parks and gardens in the big city, telling the little crocus flowers to wake up and bloom. The next morning everything was beautified by thousands of spring messengers holding up their tiny bell-cups to the sun—some white, some yellow, some blue, and a few pink. The earth was glad to hold on her breast again such beauty. Even the people passing stopped, smiled and said with confidence, “*Now*, spring has *really* come.”

Alas! there was one who gave the flowers no welcome. It was Mr. Winter. “I feel indignant,” he complained to March, “That such tiny little flowers dare come up and make me feel uncomfortable and out of place. Now, I suppose I must take my departure, but before I leave, dear March, you must let me give them a fright and a chill.”

“Oh, Mr. Winter!” begged March, shivering and bewildered, “please leave me and go away. I can’t control my winds when you keep interfering, you mix me all up. Here you come with snow and cold trying to kill the pretty green things that I have had such trouble to wake out of the frozen ground.”

This story contains the unaltered and unabridged text of and illustrations from “A Crocus Story” from *Mary Had a Little Lamb and Other Good Stories*, published in 1905 by Henry Altemus Company, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; with additional modified text and illustration from *Garden Flowers of Spring* by Ellen Eddy Shaw from The Pocket Garden Library published in 1917 by Doubleday, Page & Company; with additional new text by Dan C. Rinnert. Copyright 2004 by Canville Communications. Published by Canville Communications • P.O. Box 1391 • West Chester, Ohio 45071-1391 • www.canville.net • December 2004

Then Mr. Winter sent a gray snow-cloud to cover the sun, and breathed an icy air into the March wind. He laughed when a few feathery flakes settled on his nose. "Only a day more; give me just one day more, friend March," he begged. "I will then go and shut myself up in my big cave for a long snooze."

March nodded his consent, and together they started like a wild express train. The whole thing was a frolic, after all. As the snow covered the flowers it whispered, "Do not fear, I will keep you folded warm until this cold wind blows Mr. Winter away."

The wind was not only merry but busy also. It blew light green into all the willows, red into the maples, a faint white into the plum and apple buds; it tore the dead leaves away from the sweet arbutus, it played a regular game with ladies' skirts and veils, it took off men's hats, and the noses and cheeks that came in its way were painted a deep red. By night all was over and Mr. Winter had departed. A soft breath of April filled the air. As it swept gently over the snow it said, "Melt at once; you are sadly out of place covering spring flowers."

With the morning came a perfect flood of sunshine and warmth, so the birds began to sing.

"Oh, how glad I am," laughed the little blue crocus, "that we came out just when we did."

"I'm glad." "And so am I glad." "And so are we glad." All the others answered.



The Crocus is one of the earliest blooming of the spring flowers, sometimes seen poking their blossoms through the snow. Its bright flowers of various colors and its easy culture combine to make it a plant that is grown by everybody from the millionaire with his large range of greenhouses to the man who has nothing but a window in which to raise plants.

To force the Crocus to bloom indoors for a winter display, the bulbs should be potted in the fall, allowing about one inch between them and covering with one inch of soil. Any kind of soil will do provided it is not too clayey. After potting, place them outdoors and cover them with earth or ashes to a depth of about six inches. In five or six weeks, they will be ready to bring inside where the warmth will cause them to quickly come into bloom.

For outdoor planting, Crocuses should be planted in the grass and in the rock garden, rather than in beds; although they make charming borders for bulb beds. Crocuses need to be planted two inches deep, and from four to six inches apart. When planted in the grass, take a handful and toss them carelessly on the lawn; and where they drop, plant them. Leave them after planting right in their places to spring up anew the following year. Renew with fresh stock about every three years.

Fall blooming Crocus varieties are also available.



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