

"THE GIFT OF LOVE"

A CHRISTMAS STORY
BY MARY E. WILKINS

"I sort of hate to leave you alone," said Julia.

Caroline, fair and delicate, with a middle-aged fairness and delicacy as fine in their way as those of youth, looked up at her sister with her faint, gentle smile. She never smiled broadly, and almost never laughed. She was one of those women in whom extreme tenderness and sentiment exclude the sense of the ridiculous. There is always in humor at least a faint suggestion of cruelty, and a laugh and a jeer are nearly related. Caroline Willis had never in her whole life seen anything ridiculous in other people, she was so tenderly inclined toward all. She had all ways, for instance, been disposed to weep rather than laugh when she had seen anyone fall down.

"I don't mind in the least being left alone," she said to her sister.

"You don't seem to mind much of anything," returned Julia and her tone was inexplicably cross.

"I haven't much to complain of with all you do for me," replied Caroline. "I should be very wicked to complain."

"I don't see as you have either," said Julia, and again her tone was cross.

"Here you have a good home and everything you need, and if I do say it as shouldn't, I have always looked out for you more as if I had been your mother than your sister."

"Yes, you always have," said Caroline lovingly. She was sitting in a soft-cushioned rocking-chair beside a window, on the sill of which stood a row of blooming plants, mostly geraniums. The earthen pots which held the plants were carefully covered with green crepe paper. Caroline had some embroidery work in her hands. She was embroidering a wreath of violets on a centrepiece of white linen for a Christmas present.

"Still," said Julia, "I sort of hate to leave you alone when you have such a cold."

"I think my cold is much better," said Caroline, "and it isn't as if you were going far, or were to be away long."

"I know it," asserted Julia, "and I don't honestly see how I can get out of it, that's a fact."

"Of course you can't," said Julia.

"Here I've been one of the head ones about getting up the tree, and this afternoon, when there is so much to be done, to back out wouldn't seem just right."

"Of course you must go," said Caroline, "and I don't mind a bit. I shall sit here and work on my centrepiece until you get back."

"Mind, you don't stir out of this warm room," said Julia.

"No, I won't stir," said Julia.

"Don't you dare step foot out in the kitchen to get supper. I shall be back by half-past five at the very latest, and there isn't much to do to get supper to-night anyway. I thought we would have some cream toast. I can toast the bread in here."

"Yes, you can," said Julia.

"Mind, you don't stir."

"No, I won't stir," said Julia.

Julia was a short, stout woman with a firm, florid face. She had been called pretty in her youth, and was considered good-looking now, although by some the character showing in her face was esteemed too imperative. She tied on her bonnet before the old-fashioned looking-glass which hung between the sitting room windows, repeated her instructions to her sister, and went out. Caroline watched her trudging down the snowy road, then she took another stitch on her embroidery with a gentle sigh, not so much of sadness as of acquiescence.

When Julia entered the church vestry redolent with the spicy fragrance of evergreen and yir balsam, one girl whispered to another, "Oh, dear; here comes Miss Julia Willis, and now the bossing begins."

"She can't boss me very much," returned the other girl, who had a face of Julia's type. "I don't have much to say to her, nor she to me. She knows I don't like her. I have never forgiven her for what she did about my brother, though it all happened when I was nothing but a child, and I can hardly remember it."

"I suppose she did break off the match between your brother John and her sister Caroline," said the other girl.

"Break it off! I should say she did, and poor John went away to California, and father died without seeing him again, and poor mother has never got over it. Sometimes I think it will shorten her life. I know it shortened father's."

"Does your brother write home?"

"Oh, yes, he writes every week as regular as clock-work. He has done splendidly out there, and he does everything for mother and me. He sends us lots of money and other things, but that doesn't make up to poor mother for losing her only son. I know she dwells on it, and thinks she will die without seeing him, the way father did. The girl took up a sprig of evergreen and tied it to another with a vicious jerk. Her brown eyes cast a sidelong glance of dislike at Julia Willis. "Just hear the way she bosses!" she said. "She thinks she owns this whole church; she always did. There's no sense in putting up that evergreen the way she is telling them to. It looks twice as pretty the way it was before, and she has made them pull it all down."

"That's so," said the other girl.

Julia's rather low, but hard voice of command seemed to fill the whole vestry. Two boys on a step-ladder were anxiously altering the arranging of some garlands, over the arch which surmounted the platform on which the Christmas tree was to stand. Julia was in her element. There was about her something fairly splendid and dominant, on a small scale. The little tuft of velvet roses and the loop of velvet ribbon on her bonnet were as erect as a bird's crest. "People have to be right on the spot to be sure things are done the way they ought to be," she remarked in a triumphant voice to a woman beside her. The woman was a sort of disciple of hers. Julia had a following of weaker feminine souls in the village, who seemed to base their very ideas upon hers.

"I never saw anything like the way they were putting it up," said Julia. "I guess it's lucky I came. But I really didn't now know I was going to. I didn't like to leave Caroline."

"How is Caroline?" asked the other woman, who was tall and slender, and had a way of inclining toward the person whom she was addressing.

"I think she is a little better, but she has a pretty hard cold, and I am all sorts of afraid of pneumonia. I don't think Caroline's lungs are any too strong," replied Julia.

"Have you had a doctor?"

"Doctor? No! I always use a medicine which mother used to make out of herbs and rum and molasses. Then I put lard and ginger on her chest at night. I don't think much of doctors," Julia sniffed in a way she had when she said "doctors." It expressed infinite contempt. The other woman sniffed almost, though more mildly. "I guess you are about right," said she.

The two young girls, who were

covertly watching them, noticed the sniffs. "See them turn up their noses!" said one. "Mrs. Watson is just about as bad as Miss Willis."

"Yes, she is. But I do think Miss Caroline Willis is lovely. I don't wonder your brother fell in love with her."

"He set his life by her."

"Well, I don't wonder."

"She's just as sweet as she can be; and her whole life and my brother's have been ruined just by that woman's selfishness. I declare! sometimes when I look at Miss Julia Willis and think what she has done, I feel fairly wicked. The idea of spoiling two lives, to say nothing of poor mother's and father's, for the sake of one!"

"Miss Julia wasn't in love with your brother?"

"In love with him? No! She was never in love with anyone but herself. She just didn't want Caroline to get married and go off and leave her. I guess it wouldn't have hurt her to live alone. I guess nobody would have molested her. The girl gave a fairly malevolent glance at Julia.

"Your brother must have fairly worshipped her sister," the other girl observed with a sentimental sigh.

In the meantime while Julia was superintending—"boasting" as the irreverent young girls called it—the Christmas decorations in the church vestry, Caroline continued to sit by herself at the window embroidering.

She was in a fairly pretty room. There were pieces of fine old mahogany, but the paper and carpet were faded, and so were the handworked roses on the chairs and footstools. On the table between the windows stood a lamp hung about with prisms which caught the afternoon sunlight and sent rainbows wavering over the dull elegance of the room. Beside the lamp books were carefully arranged—old autograph albums and volumes of poetry. Just before Caroline was one book bound in red and gold upon which she occasionally cast a glance. The "brother John," of whom the young girls had talked, had given it to her. It was the one gift that she had kept. There had been others—a pearl spray, a rosewood work box, a shell comb and various other pretty things, but she had returned all these gifts when she was hidden to do so by Julia. But somehow Julia had overlooked the book; Julia did not read much. Caroline was quite aware, when she dusted that red and gold book every day, that Julia had forgotten whence it came. She felt guilty, but she could not give it up. Besides, the book was late. It would be ridiculous to send that book of a by-gone age of sentiment, entitled "The Gift of Love," and filled with a compilation of sentimental tales and poems, with some fine steel engravings, to its donor in California. Very probably he too had forgotten all about the poor little book. That reflection used always to sting gently as she bore everything.

Caroline was still very pretty. That afternoon as she sat embroidering she wore a violet-colored gown of soft wool, and her blue eyes took on the color of the gown. She had always taken great care of her hair. Julia did not know why she looked so finely, and every night and morning, but it was because John Leavitt, the old lover of her youth, had admired it. She could hear his young ardent voice after all these years—"There isn't a girl in the whole village with such beautiful hair as yours, Caroline." She still arranged her hair in the way which he had liked, although it was long out of fashion. However, it suited her thin, delicate face; the loose, soft curls on each side shaded

her faintly pink cheeks. Julia wore her own hair in a hard aggressive pompadour. Although not in the least vain, she had a keen eye to the race, and was not to be left behind in any respect if she knew it. "I should think you would do up your hair like other folks, Caroline," she told her sister sometimes. "You would look ten years younger."

"I like it better this way," Caroline would reply, meekly.

"Well, have your own way, you always were set," Julia would answer. "Your hair is a good deal nicer than mine, but the way you do it up nobody would think so." Julia's hair was an iron gray, and so thin that she was obliged to wear a rat under her firm pompadour.

Caroline had a little girlish trick of putting up one slender white hand to see if her knot of hair was secure and her curls were properly adjusted. She had used to do so, although she was alone, and had resumed her needle when somebody passed the window. She looked and saw a man, a stranger, whose heart gave a little leap. She thought of a tramp, but to her swift glimpse the man did not look like a tramp. Then there came a ring at the door. Caroline was all alone in the house. There was no maid. Caroline was very timid. It occurred to her to hide, not to answer the ring at all. Then she reflected that the man had probably seen her, and visions of doors and windows being forced flashed across her mind. She had a fertile imagination for ill.

The bell rang a second time, and Caroline laid her work on the table, rose, shook out her violet skirts carefully and went to the door. She had to traverse the length of an icy entry, and her sister's parting injunction came to her mind. "But I didn't have time to get a shawl," she said to herself. She further reflected that the man was probably a book-agent, and Julia never knew anything about it. Caroline, through concealing her sorrows, had acquired the habit of harmless concealments in other directions. She was moreover afraid of Julia, and the mere anticipation of a child from her was enough to make her feel as she did so. That she ran a frightful risk, but when it was over, so firmly had the conviction of the book-agent seized upon her, that she said directly, "We don't care to buy any books to-day, thank you."

But the man laughed. "Books?" said he. "I haven't any book. Don't you remember me, Caroline? This Caroline looked up at him, and he was smiling as she did so. That she ran a frightful risk, but when it was over, so firmly had the conviction of the book-agent seized upon her, that she said directly, "We don't care to buy any books to-day, thank you."

But the man laughed. "Books?" said he. "I haven't any book. Don't you remember me, Caroline? This Caroline looked up at him, and he was smiling as she did so. That she ran a frightful risk, but when it was over, so firmly had the conviction of the book-agent seized upon her, that she said directly, "We don't care to buy any books to-day, thank you."

But the man laughed. "Books?" said he. "I haven't any book. Don't you remember me, Caroline? This Caroline looked up at him, and he was smiling as she did so. That she ran a frightful risk, but when it was over, so firmly had the conviction of the book-agent seized upon her, that she said directly, "We don't care to buy any books to-day, thank you."

But the man laughed. "Books?" said he. "I haven't any book. Don't you remember me, Caroline? This Caroline looked up at him, and he was smiling as she did so. That she ran a frightful risk, but when it was over, so firmly had the conviction of the book-agent seized upon her, that she said directly, "We don't care to buy any books to-day, thank you."

But the man laughed. "Books?" said he. "I haven't any book. Don't you remember me, Caroline? This Caroline looked up at him, and he was smiling as she did so. That she ran a frightful risk, but when it was over, so firmly had the conviction of the book-agent seized upon her, that she said directly, "We don't care to buy any books to-day, thank you."

But the man laughed. "Books?" said he. "I haven't any book. Don't you remember me, Caroline? This Caroline looked up at him, and he was smiling as she did so. That she ran a frightful risk, but when it was over, so firmly had the conviction of the book-agent seized upon her, that she said directly, "We don't care to buy any books to-day, thank you."

But the man laughed. "Books?" said he. "I haven't any book. Don't you remember me, Caroline? This Caroline looked up at him, and he was smiling as she did so. That she ran a frightful risk, but when it was over, so firmly had the conviction of the book-agent seized upon her, that she said directly, "We don't care to buy any books to-day, thank you."

But the man laughed. "Books?" said he. "I haven't any book. Don't you remember me, Caroline? This Caroline looked up at him, and he was smiling as she did so. That she ran a frightful risk, but when it was over, so firmly had the conviction of the book-agent seized upon her, that she said directly, "We don't care to buy any books to-day, thank you."

But the man laughed. "Books?" said he. "I haven't any book. Don't you remember me, Caroline? This Caroline looked up at him, and he was smiling as she did so. That she ran a frightful risk, but when it was over, so firmly had the conviction of the book-agent seized upon her, that she said directly, "We don't care to buy any books to-day, thank you."

But the man laughed. "Books?" said he. "I haven't any book. Don't you remember me, Caroline? This Caroline looked up at him, and he was smiling as she did so. That she ran a frightful risk, but when it was over, so firmly had the conviction of the book-agent seized upon her, that she said directly, "We don't care to buy any books to-day, thank you."

But the man laughed. "Books?" said he. "I haven't any book. Don't you remember me, Caroline? This Caroline looked up at him, and he was smiling as she did so. That she ran a frightful risk, but when it was over, so firmly had the conviction of the book-agent seized upon her, that she said directly, "We don't care to buy any books to-day, thank you."

But the man laughed. "Books?" said he. "I haven't any book. Don't you remember me, Caroline? This Caroline looked up at him, and he was smiling as she did so. That she ran a frightful risk, but when it was over, so firmly had the conviction of the book-agent seized upon her, that she said directly, "We don't care to buy any books to-day, thank you."

But the man laughed. "Books?" said he. "I haven't any book. Don't you remember me, Caroline? This Caroline looked up at him, and he was smiling as she did so. That she ran a frightful risk, but when it was over, so firmly had the conviction of the book-agent seized upon her, that she said directly, "We don't care to buy any books to-day, thank you."

But the man laughed. "Books?" said he. "I haven't any book. Don't you remember me, Caroline? This Caroline looked up at him, and he was smiling as she did so. That she ran a frightful risk, but when it was over, so firmly had the conviction of the book-agent seized upon her, that she said directly, "We don't care to buy any books to-day, thank you."

But the man laughed. "Books?" said he. "I haven't any book. Don't you remember me, Caroline? This Caroline looked up at him, and he was smiling as she did so. That she ran a frightful risk, but when it was over, so firmly had the conviction of the book-agent seized upon her, that she said directly, "We don't care to buy any books to-day, thank you."

But the man laughed. "Books?" said he. "I haven't any book. Don't you remember me, Caroline? This Caroline looked up at him, and he was smiling as she did so. That she ran a frightful risk, but when it was over, so firmly had the conviction of the book-agent seized upon her, that she said directly, "We don't care to buy any books to-day, thank you."

But the man laughed. "Books?" said he. "I haven't any book. Don't you remember me, Caroline? This Caroline looked up at him, and he was smiling as she did so. That she ran a frightful risk, but when it was over, so firmly had the conviction of the book-agent seized upon her, that she said directly, "We don't care to buy any books to-day, thank you."

But the man laughed. "Books?" said he. "I haven't any book. Don't you remember me, Caroline? This Caroline looked up at him, and he was smiling as she did so. That she ran a frightful risk, but when it was over, so firmly had the conviction of the book-agent seized upon her, that she said directly, "We don't care to buy any books to-day, thank you."

But the man laughed. "Books?" said he. "I haven't any book. Don't you remember me, Caroline? This Caroline looked up at him, and he was smiling as she did so. That she ran a frightful risk, but when it was over, so firmly had the conviction of the book-agent seized upon her, that she said directly, "We don't care to buy any books to-day, thank you."

But the man laughed. "Books?" said he. "I haven't any book. Don't you remember me, Caroline? This Caroline looked up at him, and he was smiling as she did so. That she ran a frightful risk, but when it was over, so firmly had the conviction of the book-agent seized upon her, that she said directly, "We don't care to buy any books to-day, thank you."

But the man laughed. "Books?" said he. "I haven't any book. Don't you remember me, Caroline? This Caroline looked up at him, and he was smiling as she did so. That she ran a frightful risk, but when it was over, so firmly had the conviction of the book-agent seized upon her, that she said directly, "We don't care to buy any books to-day, thank you."

But the man laughed. "Books?" said he. "I haven't any book. Don't you remember me, Caroline? This Caroline looked up at him, and he was smiling as she did so. That she ran a frightful risk, but when it was over, so firmly had the conviction of the book-agent seized upon her, that she said directly, "We don't care to buy any books to-day, thank you."

But the man laughed. "Books?" said he. "I haven't any book. Don't you remember me, Caroline? This Caroline looked up at him, and he was smiling as she did so. That she ran a frightful risk, but when it was over, so firmly had the conviction of the book-agent seized upon her, that she said directly, "We don't care to buy any books to-day, thank you."

But the man laughed. "Books?" said he. "I haven't any book. Don't you remember me, Caroline? This Caroline looked up at him, and he was smiling as she did so. That she ran a frightful risk, but when it was over, so firmly had the conviction of the book-agent seized upon her, that she said directly, "We don't care to buy any books to-day, thank you."

But the man laughed. "Books?" said he. "I haven't any book. Don't you remember me, Caroline? This Caroline looked up at him, and he was smiling as she did so. That she ran a frightful risk, but when it was over, so firmly had the conviction of the book-agent seized upon her, that she said directly, "We don't care to buy any books to-day, thank you."

But the man laughed. "Books?" said he. "I haven't any book. Don't you remember me, Caroline? This Caroline looked up at him, and he was smiling as she did so. That she ran a frightful risk, but when it was over, so firmly had the conviction of the book-agent seized upon her, that she said directly, "We don't care to buy any books to-day, thank you."

But the man laughed. "Books?" said he. "I haven't any book. Don't you remember me, Caroline? This Caroline looked up at him, and he was smiling as she did so. That she ran a frightful risk, but when it was over, so firmly had the conviction of the book-agent seized upon her, that she said directly, "We don't care to buy any books to-day, thank you."

But the man laughed. "Books?" said he. "I haven't any book. Don't you remember me, Caroline? This Caroline looked up at him, and he was smiling as she did so. That she ran a frightful risk, but when it was over, so firmly had the conviction of the book-agent seized upon her, that she said directly, "We don't care to buy any books to-day, thank you."

But the man laughed. "Books?" said he. "I haven't any book. Don't you remember me, Caroline? This Caroline looked up at him, and he was smiling as she did so. That she ran a frightful risk, but when it was over, so firmly had the conviction of the book-agent seized upon her, that she said directly, "We don't care to buy any books to-day, thank you."

But the man laughed. "Books?" said he. "I haven't any book. Don't you remember me, Caroline? This Caroline looked up at him, and he was smiling as she did so. That she ran a frightful risk, but when it was over, so firmly had the conviction of the book-agent seized upon her, that she said directly, "We don't care to buy any books to-day, thank you."

But the man laughed. "Books?" said he. "I haven't any book. Don't you remember me, Caroline? This Caroline looked up at him, and he was smiling as she did so. That she ran a frightful risk, but when it was over, so firmly had the conviction of the book-agent seized upon her, that she said directly, "We don't care to buy any books to-day, thank you."

But the man laughed. "Books?" said he. "I haven't any book. Don't you remember me, Caroline? This Caroline looked up at him, and he was smiling as she did so. That she ran a frightful risk, but when it was over, so firmly had the conviction of the book-agent seized upon her, that she said directly, "We don't care to buy any books to-day, thank you."

But the man laughed. "Books?" said he. "I haven't any book. Don't you remember me, Caroline? This Caroline looked up at him, and he was smiling as she did so. That she ran a frightful risk, but when it was over, so firmly had the conviction of the book-agent seized upon her, that she said directly, "We don't care to buy any books to-day, thank you."

But the man laughed. "Books?" said he. "I haven't any book. Don't you remember me, Caroline? This Caroline looked up at him, and he was smiling as she did so. That she ran a frightful risk, but when it was over, so firmly had the conviction of the book-agent seized upon her, that she said directly, "We don't care to buy any books to-day, thank you."

But the man laughed. "Books?" said he. "I haven't any book. Don't you remember me, Caroline? This Caroline looked up at him, and he was smiling as she did so. That she ran a frightful risk, but when it was over, so firmly had the conviction of the book-agent seized upon her, that she said directly, "We don't care to buy any books to-day, thank you."

But the man laughed. "Books?" said he. "I haven't any book. Don't you remember me, Caroline? This Caroline looked up at him, and he was smiling as she did so. That she ran a frightful risk, but when it was over, so firmly had the conviction of the book-agent seized upon her, that she said directly, "We don't care to buy any books to-day, thank you."

But the man laughed. "Books?" said he. "I haven't any book. Don't you remember me, Caroline? This Caroline looked up at him, and he was smiling as she did so. That she ran a frightful risk, but when it was over, so firmly had the conviction of the book-agent seized upon her, that she said directly, "We don't care to buy any books to-day, thank you."

But the man laughed. "Books?" said he. "I haven't any book. Don't you remember me, Caroline? This Caroline looked up at him, and he was smiling as she did so. That she ran a frightful risk, but when it was over, so firmly had the conviction of the book-agent seized upon her, that she said directly, "We don't care to buy any books to-day, thank you."

But the man laughed. "Books?" said he. "I haven't any book. Don't you remember me, Caroline? This Caroline looked up at him, and he was smiling as she did so. That she ran a frightful risk, but when it was over, so firmly had the conviction of the book-agent seized upon her, that she said directly, "We don't care to buy any books to-day, thank you."

But the man laughed. "Books?" said he. "I haven't any book. Don't you remember me, Caroline? This Caroline looked up at him, and he was smiling as she did so. That she ran a frightful risk, but when it was over, so firmly had the conviction of the book-agent seized upon her, that she said directly, "We don't care to buy any books to-day, thank you."

But the man laughed. "Books?" said he. "I haven't any book. Don't you remember me, Caroline? This Caroline looked up at him, and he was smiling as she did so. That she ran a frightful risk, but when it was over, so firmly had the conviction of the book-agent seized upon her, that she said directly, "We don't care to buy any books to-day, thank you."

But the man laughed. "Books?" said he. "I haven't any book. Don't you remember me, Caroline? This Caroline looked up at him, and he was smiling as she did so. That she ran a frightful risk, but when it was over, so firmly had the conviction of the book-agent seized upon her, that she said directly, "We don't care to buy any books to-day, thank you."

But the man laughed. "Books?" said he. "I haven't any book. Don't you remember me, Caroline? This Caroline looked up at him, and he was smiling as she did so. That she ran a frightful risk, but when it was over, so firmly had the conviction of the book-agent seized upon her, that she said directly, "We don't care to buy any books to-day, thank you."

But the man laughed. "Books?" said he. "I haven't any book. Don't you remember me, Caroline? This Caroline looked up at him, and he was smiling as she did so. That she ran a frightful risk, but when it was over, so firmly had the conviction of the book-agent seized upon her, that she said directly, "We don't care to buy any books to-day, thank you."

But the man laughed. "Books?" said he. "I haven't any book. Don't you remember me, Caroline? This Caroline looked up at him, and he was smiling as she did so. That she ran a frightful risk, but when it was over, so firmly had the conviction of the book-agent seized upon her, that she said directly, "We don't care to buy any books to-day, thank you."

But the man laughed. "Books?" said he. "I haven't any book. Don't you remember me, Caroline? This Caroline looked up at him, and he was smiling as she did so. That she ran a frightful risk, but when it was over, so firmly had the conviction of the book-agent seized upon her, that she said directly, "We don't care to buy any books to-day, thank you."

But the man laughed. "Books?" said he. "I haven't any book. Don't you remember me, Caroline? This Caroline looked up at him, and he was smiling as she did so. That she ran a frightful risk, but when it was over, so firmly had the conviction of the book-agent seized upon her, that she said directly, "We don't care to buy any books to-day, thank you."

But the man laughed. "Books?" said he. "I haven't any book. Don't you remember me, Caroline? This Caroline looked up at him, and he was smiling as she did so. That she ran a frightful risk, but when it was over, so firmly had the conviction of the book-agent seized upon her, that she said directly, "We don't care to buy any books to-day, thank you."

But the man laughed. "Books?" said he. "I haven't any book. Don't you remember me, Caroline? This Caroline looked up at him, and he was smiling as she did so. That she ran a frightful risk, but when it was over, so firmly had the conviction of the book-agent seized upon her, that she said directly, "We don't care to buy any books to-day, thank you."

But the man laughed. "Books?" said he. "I haven't any book. Don't you remember me, Caroline? This Caroline looked up at him, and he was smiling as she did so. That she ran a frightful risk, but when it was over, so firmly had the conviction of the book-agent seized upon her, that she said directly, "We don't care to buy any books to-day, thank you."

But the man laughed. "Books?" said he. "I haven't any book. Don't you remember me, Caroline? This Caroline looked up at him, and he was smiling as she did so. That she ran a frightful risk, but when it was over, so firmly had the conviction of the book-agent seized upon her, that she said directly, "We don't care to buy any books to-day, thank you."

But the man laughed. "Books?" said he. "I haven't any book. Don't you remember me, Caroline? This Caroline looked up at him, and he was smiling as she did so. That she ran a frightful risk, but when it was over, so firmly had the conviction of the book-agent seized upon her, that she said directly, "We don't care to buy any books to-day, thank you."

But the man laughed. "Books?" said he. "I haven't any book. Don't you remember me, Caroline? This Caroline looked up at him, and he was smiling as she did so. That she ran a frightful risk, but when it was over, so firmly had the conviction of the book-agent seized upon her, that she said directly, "We don't care to buy any books to-day, thank you."

But the man laughed. "Books?" said he. "I haven't any book. Don't you remember me, Caroline? This Caroline looked up at him, and he was smiling as she did so. That she ran a frightful risk, but when it was over, so firmly had the conviction of the book-agent seized upon her, that she said directly, "We don't care to buy any books to-day, thank you."

But the man laughed. "Books?" said he. "I haven't any book. Don't you remember me, Caroline? This Caroline looked up at him, and he was smiling as she did so. That she ran a frightful risk, but when it was over, so firmly had the conviction of the book-agent seized upon her, that she said directly, "We don't care to buy any books to-day, thank you."

But the man laughed. "Books?" said he. "I haven't any book. Don't you remember me, Caroline? This Caroline looked up at him, and he was smiling as she did so. That she ran a frightful risk, but when it was over, so firmly had the conviction of the book-agent seized upon her, that she said directly, "We don't care to buy any books to-day, thank you."

But the man laughed. "Books?" said he. "I haven't any book. Don't you remember me, Caroline? This Caroline looked up at him, and he was smiling as she did so. That she ran a frightful risk, but when it was over, so firmly had the conviction of the book-agent seized upon her, that she said directly, "We don't care to buy any books to-day, thank you."

But the man laughed. "Books?" said he. "I haven't any book. Don't you remember me, Caroline? This Caroline looked up at him, and he was smiling as she did so. That she ran a frightful risk, but when it was over, so firmly had the conviction of the book-agent seized upon her, that she said directly, "We don't care to buy any books to-day, thank you."

But the man laughed. "Books?" said he. "I haven't any book. Don't you remember me, Caroline? This Caroline looked up at him, and he was smiling as she did so. That she ran a frightful risk, but when it was over, so firmly had the conviction of the book-agent seized upon her, that she said directly, "We don't care to buy any books to-day, thank you."

But the man laughed. "Books?" said he. "I haven't any book. Don't you remember me, Caroline? This Caroline looked up at him, and he was smiling as she did so. That she ran a frightful risk, but when it was over, so firmly had the conviction of the book-agent seized upon her, that she said directly, "We don't care to buy any books to-day, thank you."

But the man laughed. "Books?" said he. "I haven't any book. Don't you remember me, Caroline? This Caroline looked up at him, and he was smiling as she did so. That she ran a frightful risk, but when it was over, so firmly had the conviction of the book-agent seized upon her, that she said directly, "We don