

her good and bring a warmth to her heart—I hope so, anyhow.” Rene ended a little doubtfully, a vision of Aunt Lorena’s cold face flitting before her. But after all, her heart could not be so hard and cold as they had thought, else she never would have sent that money. “Let’s get her a book. There’s always room in a library for another book,” she added.

The shopping done the girls went home with glad hearts and radiant faces and with their arms full of bundles. They had chosen to take the things home themselves “to realize the blissfulness of it,” Rene said; and most blissful of all was the great doctor’s receipt for fifty dollars, tucked away in her pocketbook. He was coming the day after Christmas to see the little mother.

“There’s Aunt Lorena’s carriage at the door this minute!” exclaimed Katrina, as they came in sight of the house.

“Well, I’m glad. I just want to confess to her how horrid I’ve been and how ashamed I am,” cried impulsive Rene. She never could bear to put off an hard thing that she had to do; so, in her pretty impetuous fashion she dashed into the sitting room, her eyes shining, her cheeks flushed with joyous excitement.

“Oh, Aunt Lorena,” she began; then she stopped abruptly, a sudden, dreadful fear tugging at her heart. What did it mean—that look of pity and distress on her mother’s face and the cold suspicion in Aunt Lorena’s. Rene felt her knees trembling under her and she sank weakly down into the nearest chair, and stared silently at the stern face before her. Her sisters had followed her and now stood pale and anxious waiting for what was to come. It was the little mother who spoke first, her voice trembling a bit in spite of her utmost efforts to steady it.

“Children, it was a mistake about the money—”

Aunt Lorena interrupted her, looking severely from one to the other of the girls. “A mistake! I should think so. I don’t see how you could for a moment have supposed that I meant to send you all that money—a hundred dollars.”

“I don’t—now,” Rene breathed the words in a dull, slow fashion utterly unlike the joyous, ringing tone in which she had spoken before.

“What shall we do?” cried Katrina, despairingly, her eyes filling with miserable tears.

“Do!” Aunt Lorena turned upon her so abruptly that the girl started nervously and dropped two of her bundles. “Do you mean to say that you’ve spent all that money already?”

“Every dollar of it,” returned Rene, dully.

“I never heard of such extravagance!” exclaimed Aunt Lorena, her voice shrill with anger. “That just shows how foolish it would be to trust you girls with money. It will be a lesson to me.”

“Girls, couldn’t you carry back the things you’ve bought?” The little mother made the suggestion shrinkingly. She knew well how hard a thing she was suggesting, and her heart ached for her children.

The color faded suddenly from Rene’s face and her eyes flashed stormily. Kitty turned aside with a little moaning-sob. Mollie stood like a statue, gazing with a sort of piteous appeal into Aunt Lorena’s angry face. In a moment Rene stood up and faced her aunt.

“Yes,” she said, deliberately, “we will go and ask every storekeeper of whom we’ve bought anything—to take it back. It will be a pleasant thing to do, very—of course, we can do it.”

“Are you going now, Rene?” faltered Mollie, as her sister turned towards the door.

“Of course—Aunt Lorena is suffering for her money. I am going this minute. Aunt Lorena, some of the shopmen

may refuse to take back the goods. In that case you will have to wait until we can earn the money. Mollie, you stay with mother—Kit and I can carry everything.”

“Stop!” cried Aunt Lorena, sharply. “This is all foolishness. You know I can’t ask you to do such a thing as that.”

“Do you think we could wear one of these things or eat a mouthful of the food—now?” Rene flashed out. “If you do you are mistaken.”

“Rene—child!” pleaded her mother with a half-smothered sob.

At that Rene suddenly dropped her armful of packages pell-mell on the floor, and flying across the room, buried her bright head on her mother’s shoulder.

“Oh, mamma; oh, mamma! I can’t bear it!” she whispered.

But Aunt Lorena has risen and was speaking with cold severity.

“This is all nonsense. Of course since the money is spent there is nothing more to be said; and I do not approve of all this high tragedy—it is in very bad taste,” and with the briefest of farewells she swept from the room.

“Mamma, what shall we do? We can’t keep the things—I should hate the very sight of them!” Rene broke forth, stormily, as the door closed behind her aunt.

“We might send them all to Aunt Lorena,” suggested Katrina, doubtfully.

Rene sprang up with a laugh that was half a sob. “So we can,” she cried. “It didn’t seem to me that I could go around and ask the shopkeepers to take them back—but we can do that.”

“But what can Aunt Lorena do with them. The shoes won’t fit her,” objected Mollie, with a nervous laugh.

“She can send them to the heathen if she likes,” replied Rene. “All I want is to get them out of this house.”

So a big bundle was left that evening at Aunt Lorena’s door. It contained everything even to the doctor’s receipt for fifty dollars, and the book which Rene had bought for her. The book was done up daintily in white paper tied with narrow scarlet ribbon, with a little spray of holly fastened in the knot. Inside there was a note that Rene had written—a note full of warm, girlish love and gratitude. She had slipped into the public library and written it so that it would be sure to reach Aunt Lorena that night. She had said that she “couldn’t wait to thank her.” When the bundle was returned Rene had forgotten all about that note.

At sight of the big bundle Aunt Lorena set her lips angrily and her face took on an added hardness. Then a curious impulse moved her to open it and see what those foolish extravagant girls had spent all that money for. She opened it at once.

“Shoes—well, that wasn’t so bad—they were good sensible shoes; and gloves—three pair. There was no need of Rene’s having any. Hadn’t she sent Rene a pair, and to think of her being so careless as to send that bill in those gloves! She remembered now, when she had hidden that money away there. She tucked money away in so many odd places in her constant fear of burglars. And here were some warm undergarments, and yes, actually some ribbons and fine handkerchiefs. And night-gowns, all trimmed with fine embroidery—those girls might get along without embroidery surely, poor as they were! But—oh, yes, probably these were for their mother. And here were grocers’ and butchers’ bills—chicken, steak, fruit, a box of candy and flowers. Well, well, flowers at Christmas time when they cost a fortune—and a book, too! Now what foolish book had they spent her money on? She would open it and see. And even tied up with ribbon—well, of all things!

She opened the book and a dainty little note fluttered out. It was directed to Aunt Lorena and Aunt Lorena read it. It seemed to have a strange effect upon her, too. For a few minutes she sat quite still, scowling savagely with Rene’s little note in her hand, and then quite suddenly and to her own utter amazement she found herself crying—actually crying!

Half an hour later Aunt Lorena’s carriage stopped again before the little cottage and dignified Dennis handed in a note addressed to Rene. Rene took it with a chilling glance at the innocent servant who delivered it, but as she read it her face changed.

“What is it; oh, what is it, Rene?” cried Mollie, and Katrina in one breath.

“It’s—girls—Aunt Lorena. Oh, dear, I’m crying again and I vowed I would n’t—but don’t look so worried, mamma, dear; it’s a different kind of crying this time, and we can have a Christmas after all. Whoever would have believed that Aunt Lorena could write a note like that!” She flung it across the table and Kitty snatched it and read it aloud:

“My Dear Lorena: Can you forgive your hard old auntie—all of you—and take back these things? If you can’t, it will be a miserable Christmas Day for me. I hope that the new treatment will help your mother. Have her give it a fair trial, and let me pay the bill, whatever it may be over fifty dollars. I shall spend Christmas day reading my new book.

Your affectionate aunt,

“Lorena B. Beverly.”

The girls looked at each other too amazed for words. Before anybody had spoken the bell rang again.

“It’s the bundle. The madame she told me to leave it here,” the man said, and was gone, leaving Mollie holding Aunt Lorena’s Christmas package in her arms.

WELSH LULLABY.

As a blossom sweet and rosy

Folds its petals for the night,

In my bosom curling cosy

Hush you, hush you, baby bright!

While I’m by thee, nothing cruel,

Not one harmful sound or sight

Shall come nigh thee, O my jewel!

O my armful of delight!

Little flowerets in the meadows,

Little nestlings in the trees,

Now are sleeping in the shadows

To the cradling of the breeze;

But the blossoms of my bosom,

But the birdie on my knees.

While I lock him there and rock him

Has a warmer nest than these.

Start not! ‘tis the ivy only

Tapping, tapping o’er and o’er,

Start not! ‘tis the willow lonely

Lapping, lapping on the shore.

Through your dreaming you are heaming

O so purely now, my store,

You must see your angel, surely,

Smiling through heaven’s open door.

—(Alfred Perceval Graves.)

There was a dinner party at the mayor’s and the servant had the misfortune to drop the turkey when bringing it in.

“It is all right, ma’am,” she cried, with great sangfroid, picking up the turkey and going out with it. “I will bring in the other one.”

Father Tyrell, the English Jesuit, who is one of the Catholic scholars at whom the Pope’s recent encyclical on “The Doctrines of the Modernists” was aimed, has been excommunicated for his criticism of the encyclical. The excommunication of Father Tyrell will, it is said, probably be followed by the adoption of similar measures against Germans, Italian and French modernists.