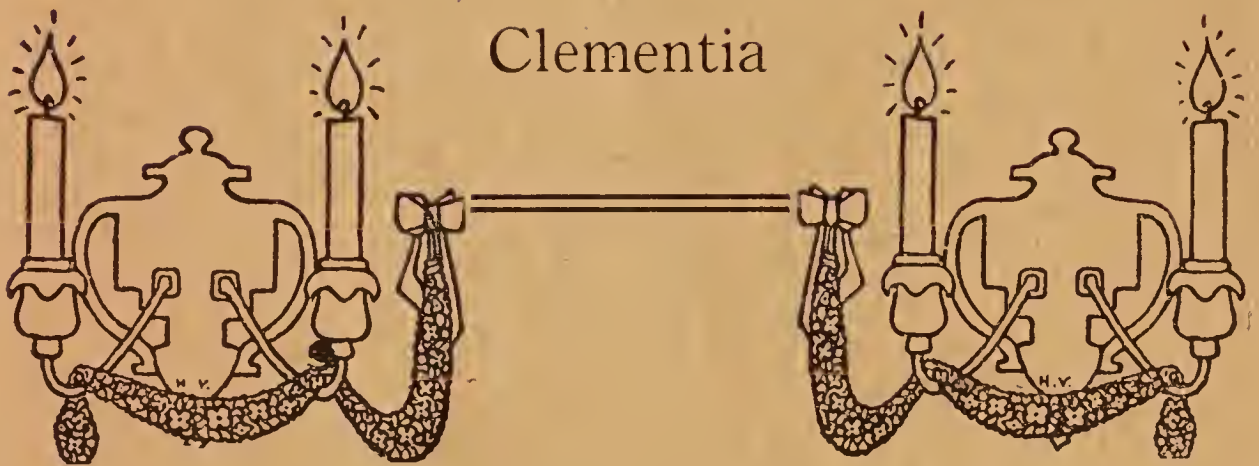


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A Wonderful Christmas Gift

Clementia



A Wonderful Christmas Gift

Dramatization of UNCLE FRANK'S MARY, Chapter XI

CLEMENTIA, *pseud.*

Sister Mary Edward Freehan



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CHARACTERS

Mary Selwyn,	}	10 to 13 years.
Wilhelmina Marvin, from Georgia,		
Isabel,		
Catherine,		
Maria Valdez,		
Margaret (14 or 15 years).	}	Members of the No-Slang Club.
Florence (8 years).		
Josephine,		
Helen,		(6 or 7 years).
Bertha Ashmere (not more than 4 years, if possible).		
Mother Madeline, Mary's aunt, Superior of the Convent of Maryvale.		
Sister Austin, Directress of Boarders.		
Father Hartley, Chaplain (an elderly man)	}	May be easily played by girls.
Doctor Carlton, Mary's Uncle Frank.		
Dan, the old gardener, of whom Mary is a great favorite.		

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DEC 18 1916

No. 1.

ACT I

Recreation room at Maryvale. All of above children, except Mary and Wilhelmina, finishing Christmas presents or playing games at table. Three little ones with dolls. — — Time: toward evening on the Friday before Christmas.

Enter Mary and Wilhelmina. Latter attired in black velvet coat, hat, fur collar and muff, carrying small valise and purse.

Wilhelmina:—Good-by, girls! Good-by, everybody! Wish you all a merry Christmas! Hope everyone will have as jolly a time as I expect to have myself. Good-by, you old sugar-plum! (drops valise and stoops to hug Bertha). I just wish I could take you with me? Wouldn't mother give you the best coddling ever was?

Bertha:—Dood-by, my Willy-mean! Tum back aden yight twick!

Wil.:—As soon as the holidays are over, precious. O Mary! (rising and catching up the valise), please mark off the last day, the twentieth, on my calendar. It hangs near the window in my room. You know, I've been marking off the days ever since September, and somehow it has made time pass quicker. I meant to scratch off today, too, but forgot. I'm so rattled!

Isa. and Cath.:—Fine! Fine! *Rattled* is slang!

Wil.:—Now, girls, have pity on me this once. Besides, I can't pay it. I'm broke. Goodness! there's another! But truly, I haven't a cent. I'm only carrying this purse for show. If father hadn't sent Mother Madeline a check for my ticket, I'd have to either borrow the money or else walk home. Make out a bill for all the fines I owe, and send it to father. I want all my debts paid before New Year's Day. Really, though, I think some allowance ought to be made for a girl with eight brothers. You-all would talk slang, too, if you'd played with boys all your life. Take Mary, for instance. She doesn't use hardly any slang because she's been brought up among grown-ups. If she ever does say anything slangy it's what she's learned from me and some of you-all. Mary, I wish you'd come to the parlor with me. I've never met Mrs. Farley, and you'll help to break the ice. Just imagine traveling a whole night with someone you've never met. I'm thankful, though, that I'm going to meet Phil and Harry at Richmond, tomorrow morning, and go the rest of the way with them.

Mary:—But I traveled *all* the way to Georgia last summer with your father, though I had never met him before, and we had a beautiful trip. (Both withdraw to side of stage.)

Wil.:—Oh, that was different. I do wish you were coming home with me for the holidays, Mary. Mother and father and all of them will be so disappointed.

Mary:—I want you to explain to them just how it is, Wilhelmina. I wrote to your mother, Sunday, but you can tell them better. You see, Uncle has only me, and he always comes out here Christmas, for the Midnight Mass, and then he goes down to the Chaplain's house and comes back in the morning for the other Masses. We have breakfast together, and he usually stays here with me most of the day, or else, in the afternoon, we go in to the city, and I stay with him for a few days. There are some little girls that he likes to have me visit, and they come to see me, and he takes me to places, and we always have such a good time together. So, you see, I really couldn't think of leaving him.

Wil.:—I wonder what mother will say to these beauties. (Strokes her muff.) It was perfectly grand of you and your uncle to give them to me. I never owned a set of furs in my life. It's too warm for them down home, but I've always wished I lived up North so I could have some. They'll be mighty comfortable in this climate, I tell you.

Mary:—I didn't know whether you care for mink (or—); but I thought it would go well with your coat and hat.

Wil.:—There isn't anything I like better.

Enter Mother M.:—It takes you little girls a long time to say good-by. Come, dear, (to Wilhelmina) Mrs. Farley is waiting, and if you miss the next train, you will not be able to make the desired connections in New York.

Mary:—The elastic came off Wilhelmina's hat at the last minute, Aunt Mary, and Sister Benigna insisted on sewing it.

Wil.:—Yes, Mother, I wanted to pin it to save time, but she was shocked at the idea.

Mother (laughing):—Poor Wilhelmina! I can easily imagine how happy you are to escape for awhile from all the rules and regulations of boarding school.

Wil. (merrily):—It *will* be lovely to sleep until daylight, Mother, and not to go to bed with the chickens.

Sister:—Good-by, dear. God bless you. Remember me to all at home, and tell them that I wish them every Christmas joy and blessing.

Wil.:—Thank you, Mother. They all wish you the same, I know. I guess you've met them all except Dick and the baby. Mother will have to bring them the next time she comes. Good-by, Mother. May Mary come with me to the parlor?

Mother:—Yes, dear, but don't delay on the way.

Wil.:—We won't, Mother. Good-by. Good-by, girls!

All:—Good-by, Wilhelmina, good-by! (Exit Wil. and Mary.)

Mother:—I see you all have enough to keep you busy until Sister Austin returns, so I shall go to see Wilhelmina off. (Exit.)

Isa.:—Wilhelmina is the last to go. Oh, dear, I wish I was going home for Christmas. Don't see why in the world mother ever sent me so far to school when there are hundreds of good ones much nearer home. Just because Mother Madeline is an old school friend of hers, isn't much of a reason. And not a living soul nearer than San Francisco to come to see me all the year round. It's a shame, so it is!

Cath.:—San Francisco isn't as far as Vancouver, anyway. I'd like to meet the folks that invented boarding schools. I'd soon tell them what I think.

Flo.:—Well, I think I'm worse off than any of you, 'cause heaven's lots farther away than those two places, and that's where my father and mother are. I haven't anyone but grandma, and she lives in a boarding house. She says I'm better off here than there.

Marg.:—So you are, Florence, though maybe you don't think so. Really, girls, we have a pretty good time here during the holidays. Of course, it isn't the same as being at home—

Isa. and Cath.:—Well! I should say not!

Marg.:—But the Sisters do everything they can to give us a good time, and the days pass very quickly.

Maria (in broken English):—To me, it does seem zat ze days vill

nevair haf an ending. Oh! I so long to see my lofed ones again! (Bows her head on table).

Marg.:—Poor Maria! But you get such beautiful letters from them, and there is an immense box for you in the room next the office right now.

Isa.:—Oh! I wonder if mine came yet.

Cath.:—Did you see one with my name on it, Margaret?

Marg.:—Yes, I saw one for each of us, and two or three for some. But Bertha's! She'll need a stocking as big as a seven league boot to put her things in!

Josephine:—Who'll need a stocking as big as a sevenly boot, or whatever you said, Margaret? (Three little ones join the group near table.)

Marg.(taking Bertha on her lap):—You little folks must measure your stockings, and choose the very biggest one you have to hang up by the chimney Christmas Eve.

Helen:—But ours are so little, Margaret. Oh, maybe you'd lend us yours.

Isa.:—That's a compliment, Margaret, sure enough!

Marg.:—Never mind. Of course, I'll lend you each one of mine, Helen.

Bertha:—I is going to ask my Danny to lend me his. He's dot drand bid feet, so he has.

Flo.:—But he wears socks, Bertha, and even though the feet are big, the leg part is short, so they won't hold much.

Bertha:—Zen I is going to ask Patwick for his boots. Zey is dreat, *dreat*, bid fings. (Returns to dolls.)

Cath.:—I should say they are. But you can talk all you want to, Margaret; you'll never make me believe we'll have any fun here during the holidays.

Marg.:—Wait and see. Mary is the only one that I'm really sorry for.

Cath.:—Mary Selwyn! Why, she's the luckiest one of the crowd, with Mother Madeline for an aunt, and the Doctor, her uncle, who just dotes on her.

Marg.:—It's easy to see that you weren't here last year, Catherine. Poor Mary has had more sorrow in her life than most grown-up people have in theirs.

Isa.:—She *has*? Well, I thought there was something the matter, but she never talks about it, and I didn't like to ask her. Not that she's a bit mopey or dumpy, but there's a something about her that I've never quite understood.

Marg.:—She's the dearest, bravest little girl in the world, and I don't blame her uncle for *doting* on her, as Catherine puts it. I think it would have killed me if I had gone through what she has suffered.

Flo.:—Tell us about it, Margaret, please do. I just love Mary with all my might. She knows that grandma thinks candy and such things aren't good for children, and she never gets a box of goodies but what she gives me a lot. And she's always lending me her story books and games and things. Why, this one we're playing with is one of hers.

Marg.:—I suppose you know that her father and mother are dead; but it's not only that. It's more the way it happened. Three years ago in November, her father had to go to Rome on some kind of business. He was to be gone a year, so Mrs. Selwyn went with him and took

Mary's little twin sisters, who were only three or four months old. Mary was just getting over pneumonia at the time, and as her father had to go right away, he left her in care of the Doctor, her mother's brother. When the year was up, the doctor in Rome wouldn't let them come home on account of Beth, one of the twins, because he said the winter here would be too hard on her after the mild climate in Italy. So they had to wait until spring. I remember how disappointed Mary was, for she expected them for Christmas. Well, in the meantime, Mr. Selwyn went with a party of friends on a trip to India, intending to return to Rome early in May, and then start for home; but at their very last camping place on the way back to Calcutta, he was killed by a terribly poisonous snake, and poor Mrs. Selwyn got so sick from the shock and everything, that she wasn't able to travel for a long time. Last June, just before Commencement, Mary received a cablegram saying that her mother and little sisters were coming, and I never saw anyone so happy as she was. Her uncle came out to see her, and they planned to go to meet the steamer, which was to land the day before Commencement. But, girls, that steamer never, never landed. It struck a field of ice off the Newfoundland Banks, one of the very foggiest regions in the world, and went down. All the passengers, except Mrs. Selwyn and her two little ones, were saved. I suppose she had a hard time getting out on deck, because it was in the middle of the night, and, of course, she had the babies to look after. They kept it all from poor Mary until the Sunday after Commencement, for they hoped and hoped that there might be some mistake. By that time they were sure that her mother and the babies were lost, and the Doctor came out and told her. The poor man was heart-broken; it nearly killed him, I guess, to have to tell Mary. Mother Madeline, too, felt it terribly. Mrs. Selwyn was her only sister, you know. Most of the girls had gone home by that time, but I was here until the next week, and I'll never forget it. Yes, girls, Mary is the one to be pitied, this year. She didn't expect to come back to boarding school at all, and, of course, she just can't help thinking how different it all would have been. Don't, though, for goodness' sake, every say anything about it to her.

Josephine:—What was her other little sister's name? You said one was Beth.

Marg.:—Yes; her right name was Elizabeth, after her mother. The other one was Roberta, for her father; but they called her Berta. Berta and Beth. Pretty, wasn't it?

Maria:—Vairy pretty! Yez.

Helen:—I guess that's why Mary loves little Bertha so much, 'cause she's just about as big as her baby sisters would be; don't you think so? (Bertha draws near.)

Marg.:—Yes; she told me the other day that she likes to pretend that Bertha is one of her little sisters.

Bertha:—Ess, Maywy did say I tould have half of her dood uncle and auntie,—ze half of her uncle what has his tick-tock on. He's tum-min' to see us pitty soon aden. I always goes to ze parlor wif Maywy ven he tums, 'tause my muzzer and fazer am in hebben, jes' like hers. But my auntie is bad, *bad!*

Isa.:—Why, Bertha! What a thing to say about your aunt; and she sends you such lovely things, too.

Bertha (beginning to cry):—But she made muzzer cwyl, so she did: and she stweezed me tight and wouldn't let me go to hebben wif muzzer.

Marg:—Don't cry, darling. Your auntie couldn't let you go to heaven unless God took you, you know.

Bertha:—Ëss— —she— —tould— —'tause muzzer— —talled me. She was in— —ze yitty— —boat, muzzer and yitty sissoo— —and it went — —way, way down— —in ze dark— —and— —Auntie wouldn't— —let me go. Oh! oh! (clinging tightly to Marg., and peering around the room). Auntie did say I mustn't talk 'bout zat. She did say if I talk 'bout zat, I is a bad yitty dirl and tan't go to hebben wif muzzer, and (wailing) now I is bad, and I tan't go to hebben at all.

Cath. (indignantly):—You're not bad! You're the best little girl in the house. You beat Josephine, here, all to pieces. (Josephine pouts.) You didn't mean to do what your auntie told you not to, so you're not bad at all.

Isa.:—The idea of scaring a poor baby that way. It's a shame not to let her talk about her own mother if she wants to.

Flo.:—What does she mean by the little boat?

Cath.:—The coffin, I suppose. Perhaps her aunt thinks it better for her not to think about the funeral, and that may be the reason why she won't let her talk about it.

Isa.:—Oh, she needn't frighten the poor little thing to death by telling her she'll never see her mother again.

Marg.:—Sh! sh! Bertha! Don't, darling, don't cry like that. Of course you will go to heaven with your mother. Just try to be a good little girl, and some day, perhaps not very far away, God will take you to heaven, too.

Bertha:—Muzzer did say zat I has a dood auntie and uncle and a bid sissoo; but Aunt Berfa, she says zey all went to hebben wif muzzer. But zey wasn't in ze yitty boat wif her.—Oh! oh! I fordot aden! I is always fordettin' what Aunt Berfa did say. (Begins to cry again.)

Isa.:—Sh—! here comes Mary, Bertha, and you'll make her feel bad if she sees you crying. (Bertha hurriedly dries her tears, and runs to meet Mary, who receives her with outstretched arms.)

Bertha:—I isn't cwying, Maywy, I isn't cwying now!

Mary:—Why, who ever said such a terrible thing about you, I'd just like to know.

Bertha:—Ze dirls finked I was and— —

Flo.:—Here's a chair for you, Mary. Sit here by me. This is the best of all your games.

Mary (seats herself at table, while Bertha climbs on a chair and sits on table with her arms about Mary's neck):—I like that game myself. Perhaps Santa Claus will bring me some new ones. He usually does; and some books, too.

Cath.:—Did you see a box for Mary, Margaret?

Marg.:—Two great big wooden ones.

Mary:—Two! Why, I expect only one.

Flo.:—Grandma always says, "Blessed is she who doesn't expect, for she'll never be disappointed."

Isa. (laughing):—I guess your grandmother's about right, Florence. But talking of games, girls, made me think of a perfectly grand scheme for the holidays.

Marg.:—Out with it, then; for I've been racking my brain for some new way of amusing ourselves. We don't want any little bits of girls (glances warningly at Josephine) moping around in corners with tears in their eyes, like some folks did last year. There's a good reason why every one of us has to stay here during these holidays, and I don't see why we shouldn't get all the fun we possibly can out of them. (Josephine sniffles, and begins to search for her handkerchief.)

Cath.:—Now, Josephine, don't begin!

Josephine:—I don't care! I'm lonesome right now; so there!

Flo.:—You don't look a bit like it, so there's no use trying to squeeze out any tears. Sit down and listen to Isabel's plan.

Isa.:—Well, I thought if each of us older girls took turns at giving a function of some kind—

Maria:—But what *is* zat? I do not know if I half one what you call a *function* to gif to you.

Cath.:—Isabel just means for each of us to give some kind of a little party, or entertainment, or feast, Maria.

Maria:—Oh, yez, I can gif zat.

Isa.:—You see, we can have one every afternoon, and each of us will have to send out invitations, and plan games or something to entertain her guests, and give some kind of a prize—any little thing will do,—a pretty ribbon, or something she gets off the tree; and she must serve refreshments—we'll all have candy and goodies enough to do that—

Helen:—But why can't we little girls be in it?

Isa.:—Why, of course you'll be in it; but I didn't know whether you could get up a function or not. You'll be invited to all of ours, you know.

Josephine (tossing her head):—Huh! I guess Helen and I are the only ones who have dishes to serve 'freshments on. You'll all have to use box covers for plates, and pieces of stiff paper for spoons. Yes, I guess we can have a *funkshow* as well as any of you, and we won't invite you, so there!

Helen:—But they *are* going to invite us, Josephine; and I'm going to invite them to mine, and I'll lend them my dishes, too, if they want them.

Josephine (with a gasp):—But—but—

Cath.:—Good for you, Helen! I'll help you write your invitations, and maybe we'll be glad to borrow your dishes. Of course, Mary has her set, and Wilhelmina said I could use her tea-things, but yours may be needed, too. (Bertha wriggles around until she has a good view of Josephine.)

Bertha:—Josy—feem! Josy—feem! you told Sissoo Aus'n zat you was goin' to be a dood dirl always and always and always; and now you is as bad as nennyfing. If you don't det dood yight twick, Sandy Tlaws will put a bundle of switches in your stocking. (Girls try to hide their amusement.)

Marg.:—But, Isabel, it seems to me it will be a good deal for one to get a party ready all alone.

Isa.:—I thought of that, and we can manage this way. We shall draw numbers, and whoever gets number one, will have to be ready the second day after Christmas. Each of us can ask one girl to help her prepare things. Remember, we must all dress up just like for a real

function, and if the hostess asks us to play or sing, we must be polite and do it. We'll have to send our acceptance or regrets, too.

Cath.:—But there won't be any regrets. We'll all come, you may be sure.

Mary:—I'm afraid I'll have to send my regrets to some of the functions. You know, I always spend part of the holidays with Uncle in the city. I may go back with him Christmas night and stay over Sunday. He likes me to visit the girls I know in town, and I always have a little party and invite them. I didn't expect to have one this year, but Uncle thinks we ought to do what we know mother would like best, so (sighs) I guess I'm to have it. (An uncomfortable pause.) Every year, Uncle and I have teased Aunt Mary to let all the girls who stay here for the holidays, come to my party; but she won't listen to us at all, and lets me take only one with me,—the one who is in my class. This year, there isn't anybody here in my class, but I know the one I'm going to ask for. (Hugs Bertha.)

Flo.:—There's the supper-bell. Hurry up, everybody! I'm hungry as a bear. (Exit all.)

ACT II

Scene I

The same. Time: Christmas Eve, 9:30 A. M. Girls, except the three little ones, gathered around table, filling tarlatan socks and bags with popcorn, etc. Tree ornaments piled on end of table.

Flo.:—When Sister Austin talked about work the other evening, I didn't know she meant this kind.

Isa.:—Neither did I; and I didn't fancy doing any kind of work in vacation.

Marg.:—I told you that you would like the kind that Sister had for us.

Cath.:—Yes; that's all that saved me from making a goose of myself. Do we have the tree in here?

Marg.:—Up at the end of the room, in the big bay window. We all hang our stockings around the chimney at the other end; and in the morning, after the third Mass, we come down here and get our presents before we go to breakfast.

Isa.:—But I thought we had Midnight Mass.

Marg.:—We do. Mary, you begin at the beginning and go through the program for them. I can't work and talk, and you can. By the way, did the last one in lock the door? We don't want those babies surprising us at this work.

Flo.:—Yes, I locked it; but they are too busy in the dormitory to think of coming down here. They have all their stockings out on their cribs, and they're measuring them to see which are the biggest. I didn't tell them that Sister has an immense tarlatan one for each of them. Just as well to keep them out of mischief one way as another.

Cath.:—Mary, do tell us all that we are going to do.

Mary:—Well, when we finish here, if it is eleven o'clock, we are going up to the chapel to get ready for Confession, because Father Hartley wants to hear us this morning so as to leave the afternoon for the people in the neighborhood. You know, there is no church in the

village, and that is why the few Catholics come here to Mass. After dinner we get our clothes ready for tomorrow. We don't have to wear our uniforms, but can put on any dress we like. Most of the girls don't bring anything but their uniforms and a white dress for entertainments; so we always wear the white ones Christmas. But if you have one you like better, you can wear it. After we get our things all spread out and see that there are no buttons off our shoes and all that, we can go out to play if we want to; but sometimes Sister needs some of us to help in the sacristy or about the crib.

Cath.:—Oh, I hope I'll be one of those to help her!

Mary:—Sister asked me to come up today for awhile, but you can go in my place, if you like. Uncle Frank phoned this morning, and wants me to attend to something for him, and that will be the only time I can do it. Now, where was I? Oh yes! Then, about half past three, Patrick drives around with the big old sleigh, and we all squeeze in and go with him to leave Christmas baskets at the homes of the poor. By the way, we must decide on the hymns and songs. We all get out of the sleigh at each house, and stand outside the door and sing. When we get back here, we just have time before supper to hang up our stockings. Santa Claus comes early.

Flo.:—Pooh! Santa Claus!

Marg.:—All right! You just wait until tonight. If you don't believe in Santa Claus after what you see *then*— —

Flo.:—Well, I won't; so you needn't be trying to fool *me*.

Marg.:—We'll see.

Mary:—At five o'clock we have supper. Then Sister reads about the first Christmas night, and at half-past six we go to bed so as to be ready to get up for the Midnight Mass. Sister calls us about a quarter past eleven; and oh! you never were at anything so grand as the Midnight Mass. After it is over we have a nice lunch; then we go back to bed, and at six o'clock we get up for the other two Masses; after that we come down here to get our presents.

Flo.:—You girls that talk about Santa Claus, what about all these things that Sister said Mary's uncle sent?

Marg.:—But Doctor Carlton is one of Santa Claus' assistants: didn't you know that? He helps to look after his place and one of the big hospitals in the city. Dan is an assistant, too. Just you wait! (Loud knock at door.)

Isa.:—For goodness' sake, girls! don't open it until we cover up these things.

Mary:—It can't be those little ones. They would never stop to knock.

Marg. (opening door):—Oh, come in, Dan? (Dan enters dragging a huge Christmas tree.)

All:—What a beauty! Did you ever see one so grand! Just wait until it has all the things on it!

Dan. (beaming on children):—I suppose you want it in its usual place. Miss Mary. Yes; I see you have the stand ready. (Goes to end of room and sets the tree firmly in stand, which should be one of the revolving, musical variety.) Now, wind her up, Miss Mary, and let's see if she's in good order. If she needs oiling or anything, now's the time to do it; not tonight, when the little old gentleman himself appears on the scene. (Winks knowingly at the children. Mary creeps under

tree and winds stand. Others stand in silent expectancy, then show surprise and delight as the tree begins to revolve, and they hear the music.)

Mary (clapping her hands):—It's beautiful just as it is, without any of the things on it. It's the very finest one we have had, Mr. Daniel.

Dan. (rubbing his hands, gleefully):—Right you are, Miss Mary. I've had my eye on that same tree for five years past, and you'll search the mansions of New York from Battery Park to Fordham, without finding one to compare with it. (Turns to leave room. Mary accompanies him to door.)

Mary:—Mr. Daniel, do you think you could spare an hour or so this afternoon to help me attend to an errand for Uncle? Aunt Mary said to ask you. Uncle has sent a big wooden box of things for Mrs. Rooney and her poor crippled boy. You know, the people who live in that tiny cottage down the road. I thought we could put the box on my sled and take it down there after dinner.

Dan.:—To be sure, we can, any time you say, Miss Mary.

Mary:—Oh, thank you, Mr. Daniel. Suppose we go about two o'clock. The box is in the vestibule at the side door, and I shall be there at the right time. Uncle doesn't want the girls to know.

Dan.:—All right, Miss Mary; mum's the word. Your uncle is one of these men who don't let their right hand know what their left's doing. No blow or show about him! (Exit Dan. Mary returns to the girls.)

Isa.:—Mary, why do you always call Dan, *Mr. Daniel*? Everbody else calls him just *Dan*.

Mary:—But he always calls me *Miss Mary*, and he says *Miss* to all of you, too. It seems to me *Mr. Daniel* sounds better for an old, old man like him.

Isa.:—Well, yes; I suppose it does.

Marg.:—Come, girls; it's nearly eleven o'clock. Let's spread our aprons over these things, and I'll lock the door and give Sister Austin the key. (All exit.)

Scene 3.

The same.—Time: 5 P. M. same day.

Enter Sister Austin accompanied by all the children, attired in coats, furs, etc.

Children:—O Sister! We've had the grandest time, and we weren't a bit cold.

Marg.:—The poor people were so grateful, Sister, for all the good things.

Isa.:—And, Sister, you can never, *never* guess what happened at—

Cath.:—O Sister! The most wonderful thing you ever did—

Flo.:—Mrs. Rooney said, Sister, that Saint Joseph—

Helen:—And a wonderful doctor is going to—

Sister (laughing):—I think I could understand better if some one of you would tell me all about it. Margaret, suppose you try.

Marg.:—When we went to Mrs. Rooney's, Sister, we thought Santa Claus had already been there—

Josephine:—O Sister! There were books and games and puzzles for Tommie, and lots—

Bertha:—Josy—feem, I don't fink zats bery p'lite for you to interruck Marget like zat. Say 'scuse me, please,' like a dood yitty dirl.

Jos.:—Scuse me, please, Margaret; but it takes so long for you to tell about it.

Marg.:—I'll try to go faster, Josephine, and you can all put in the parts that I leave out. As Josephine says, Sister, Tommie had all kinds of lovely presents, and he was dressed up in a beautiful red dressing robe, and fur-trimmed slippers; and there was a roaring fire in the grate. Mrs. Rooney's presents were a fine warm coat, and shoes and rubbers, and an umbrella and a dress and lots of other things that I can't remember. But she said that it wasn't Santa Claus who brought them at all; but that the Blessed Babe of Bethlehem sent a golden-haired angel and an old, old man with them—

Flo.(nodding her head):—He must have been Saint Joseph; don't you think so, Sister?

Sister:—But who does Mrs. Rooney think he was? Didn't he tell her?

Cath.:—She wouldn't tell, Sister; and when Florence guessed that he was Saint Joseph, she only smiled.

Flo.:—Well, isn't that what everybody does when you guess right?

Isa.:—And the angel brought "good tidings of great joy," too, Sister.

Helen:—Oh! let me tell about that. I started to, before. Mrs. Rooney said, Sister, that a wonderful doctor is coming out from the city tomorrow to see if he can't cure poor Tommie.

Bertha:—And Mrs. Wooney did give us some takes, Sissoo. I has dot one for you in my pottet. There 'tis. (Gives Sister a crumbled cooky.)

Sister:—Thank you, dear. It was just lovely of you to bring this to me. And, children, you must all pray very fervently to the Divine Infant that this famous doctor will be able to help Tommie. He is all that poor Mrs. Rooney has. But take off your wraps, and let us hang the stockings before supper. (While girls remove wraps, she takes from a box some large tarlatan stockings.) I was afraid that your own stockings would not be large enough, so I made these.

All:—Oh, thank you, Sister! These are lovely! (Hang them about fireplace. Bell rings.)

Sister:—There is the bell. After you have had your supper, it will be time to watch for Santa Claus. (Exit all.)

ACT III

Scene I

Convent parlor. Time: 1:15 A.M. Christmas Day.

Enter Mary and Doctor Carlton. (Latter in long overcoat, hat in hand.)

Doctor:—So you thought your old uncle had forgotten his little girl, did you?

Mary:—You know I could never think that; but I *had* given up all hope of seeing you tonight. Was the train late, or did you get lost in the snowdrifts on the way from the station?

Doctor:—Neither. I was obliged to consult Aunt Mary about a wonderful present that I have for you. By the way, you will not find in your stocking the usual number of odds and ends that I suppose little

girls have a right to expect for Christmas. I had made out a quite respectable list of things, which I fully intended to purchase this morning, or rather yesterday morning; but my time was so occupied with this wonderful gift that I could think of nothing else. I sent a box containing a few books and games last week; but I fear you will pay little attention to them when you see this other thing.

Mary:—Why, whatever can it be? Do give me just a teeny weeny hint, Uncle.

Doctor:—Not a word. And there's another point. Don't come to me in the morning until I send for you. It will take me fifteen or twenty minutes to get it in place and in working order.

Mary:—Hm! that sounds like a machine of some kind.

Doctor:—It is the most wonderful piece of machinery I have ever seen, and one that your aunt and I can enjoy as well as you.

Mary:—Oh, that's lovely! May I bring Bertha with me to see it?

Doctor:—You may if she is with you at the time. But come promptly when you get my message, or you will be apt to lose some of the best effects.

Mary:—And you say Aunt Mary knows what it is?

Doctor:—Yes; but you need not expect any light from that quarter. She has promised to keep out of your way until I send for you. Yes, Father, (to the chaplain who, in cassock and overcoat, appears in the doorway), I am ready; and I assure you that you have come just in time. These women folk can't keep a secret themselves, and they seem determined that no one else shall. (Mary runs to Father Hartley.)

Mary:—Happy, happy Christmas, Father. Please give me a big Christmas blessing. (Kneels.)

Father H.:—May the Blessed Babe of Bethlehem keep you one of His little lambs forever.

Doctor (kneels beside Mary):—And what can you say to an old sinner like me, Father?

Father H.:—God bless you, my son, God bless you. (Doctor rises. Both men button their coats and turn up the collars.)

Mary (archly):—Hm! I have a secret, too, and I am not going to tell what it is, either. You will find it under your plate at breakfast.

Doctor:—Not another pair of slippers, I hope!

Mary:—O Uncle, Uncle! that's *too* funny. Just imagine a pair of slippers *your* size under a breakfast plate. (All laugh heartily.) But Father doesn't know our joke about the slippers. When I came here to school, Father, I learned to crochet slippers, and as I had an idea that men wore out things very fast, I gave Uncle—let me see, how many? (counts on her fingers). There were your birthday and Christmas and Easter the first year; and two pairs the next,—yes, I gave him five pairs altogether. There were black ones with pink bows, and black ones with red bows, and red ones with black bows, and another red pair—you see, Father, I didn't really want to make two pairs the same color, but Sister said I couldn't be so conscravagant as to buy more worsted when I already had enough. (Enter Sister Austin.)

Doctor:—Here is Sister Austin to see why I am keeping you so long. A happy Christmas, Sister.

Sister:—Thank you, Doctor; I wish you the same. And Father,

many, many happy returns. I asked the Divine Infant to spare you to us for many more years.

Father:—Thank you, my child. God bless you, and fill your heart with every Christmas joy. (Men move towards door.)

Mary:—But, Uncle, you are not going without giving me just a little bit of a hint as to what that is? Why, I won't sleep a wink, I know.

Doctor:—Not a hint will I give you; and if you are sleepy and tired all day, you will not be able to enjoy my gift half so well. Besides, if you were to try from now until doomsday, you could never guess my secret.

Mary (eagerly):—Try me, Uncle! Give me three guesses and see if I can't.

Doctor (laughing):—No, no, no! (opens door for chaplain).

Mary (clinging to his arm):—I'll tell *my* secret if you'll tell yours.

Doctor:—Do you hear that, Father? A clear case of bribery! Sister, keep the culprit in strict custody until I send for her. (Frees himself from Mary's grasp and hurries out of room).

Mary (with a little sigh):—Dear, dear Uncle. He is always planning to make me happy. I wish I could do something worth while for him.

Sister:—But you do many things, Mary, that please him very much. Only yesterday, Mother Madeline remarked what a little comfort you are to both of them.

Mary:—Oh, did Aunt Mary say that? I am so glad she feels that way, because no matter what they do for me, I can't help being lonely sometimes. Uncle and I had planned everything so differently, and it has all been *such* a disappointment. I can't help wanting my mother, Sister, I just can't!

Sister:—Of course you can't, dear; neither do your aunt and uncle expect you to help that. All they desire is that you will not grieve so much for her as to make yourself positively unhappy. Days like this are apt to be very trying to those who have lost their dear ones; but I know you will strive to be bright and cheerful, and in that way show those who love you so much that you appreciate all their efforts to make you happy. Do you ever try to imagine what heaven is, especially on a great feast like today? Think how many joyful surprises are in store for your loved ones on this, their first Christmas there. I sometimes wonder if, on this day, our Lord does not again take the form of the little Infant in the arms of our Blessed Mother; and I picture to myself those good simple shepherds, surely saints now, and the three Wise Men, and all the other saints, gathering about Him for a special Christmas blessing; and around and over all, myriads of bright angels filling heaven with their *Gloria in Excelsis*. Yes, that is the way I like to imagine heaven on Christmas Day, and it seems to me, thoughts like these would soon transform sad memories into a feeling of real happiness. Suppose you try it today.

Mary:—You have made it better already, Sister. What you say reminds me of Bertha, when I took her to the Crib after Mass. Somehow, she got an idea that the statues and sheep were living, and she was so disappointed when she couldn't hold the little Infant and wrap Him in her new coat to keep Him warm. O Sister! there is something that I have been intending to ask you about all day.

Sister:—The day is still very young, my dear.

Mary (laughing):—I'm all twisted, Sister. You see, I am not used to being up so late, or so early—which shall I say? But this is what I want to ask. Have you opened the boxes that came for the girls?

Sister:—Yes, Mary; I always do so as soon as they arrive and remove from them any of the perishable things that should be kept in a cool place.

Mary:—Yes, Sister; but did you find any boxes that haven't anything real Christmasy in them? any with just useful things? Of course, (hastily) the useful things are very nice; but it seems to me that every little girl ought to get something besides them for Christmas.

Sister:—I agree with you, Mary, and there is one box which is not the least bit Christmasy, as you say. It is for Florence. You know she is dependent on her grandmother, a very good, sensible old lady, but one who thinks a child should have done with toys as soon as she is old enough to go to school. She has sent a fine warm outfit of knitted goods—cap, jacket, leggings, mittens, and so on—her own work and beautifully made, it is true; but all of a dull slate color without so much as a red scallop or a brass button to relieve the monotony.

Mary:—I know the very thing, then. Do, please, wait here just a minute, Sister. (Runs swiftly away, returning immediately with a flat square box.) There are colors enough in this to please anyone. Liza and Tom gave them to me my last birthday.

Sister (removing cover, displays a number of handsome hair-ribbons.):—My dear child, I cannot think of taking all these from you. One or two will be quite sufficient.

Mary:—But, Sister, Florence may as well have them, because I never intend to use them myself. That's not a very generous reason for giving them away, is it? (laughs). But really, you know I never wear anything but blue and white, in honor of our Blessed Mother, and these are pink, and green, and every color of the rainbow. There were two blue ones in the box, and I always make a point of wearing one of them when I go to the city, so as not to hurt the feelings of Liza and Tom. So please take them, Sister, and let us go down to see if there isn't something that will do for Florence in the box which Uncle sent.

Sister:—We must be quick, or the others will think we are up to some mischief. (Exit both).

Scene 3.

Same. Large, closely woven hamper about size of steamer trunk, in which Bertha is concealed, in center of room.—Time: 7:30 Christmas morning.

(A knock at door. Enter Mary. Looks about her.)

Mary:—Sister must have made a mistake. There's no one here. Uncle plainly said that the thing was a machine of some kind, and that he wanted to have it in working order. There's nothing in here but that basket, and that's not a machine. I wonder whom it's for. Sister must have meant the *east parlor*. (Leaves room; returns immediately.) No one there, either, and no sign of a machine of any kind. I will have to ask Sister again. (Looks out into the hall.) Dear, dear! where *has* she gone? Uncle said to come promptly, and now I can't find him. There isn't a soul in sight. Guess I'll take a look at that basket, any-

way. Uncle is up to some trick, I know, and he is hiding somewhere so he can see all I do. He never before made such a fuss even when he gave me something really beautiful; so it makes me think all the more that this is a joke. Well, I'll let him have all the fun he wants. (Examines hamper.) No name on it. Mercy on us! it's something alive!! (Retreats a few steps, still keeping her eyes fixed on the basket.) It moved, I know it did. It's something white. (Walks slowly around the mystery at a safe distance from it.) Maybe it's a dog. But a dog isn't a machine,—still, I s'pose anything alive is a most wonderful machine. Oh, I just must see what it is! (falls on her knees and begins to untie rope which fastens cover.) Uncle knows I don't like knots. (Pauses to rest and examine her fingers.) If that animal has to be tied down like this, I had better be ready to run when the cover flies off. (Looks about to see in which direction lies her surest means of escape.) But Uncle wouldn't give me anything that would hurt me. I wonder if they will let me keep a dog here. Mr. Daniel would take care of it for me. Well, whatever it is, I think I'll untie that last knot standing up. (Rises and looks about her.) I wonder where Uncle is hiding. He will laugh and tease me for being such a coward; but really, that animal is getting terribly frisky. (Bends over hamper.) Why, there's a card! It must have been tucked in under the ropes. (Reads.) *Wishing my dear sister every Christmas joy. Wishing my dear sister—wishing my dear—why, I have no sisters or brothers to send me a Christmas present! Wishing my dear sister—*(rubs her eyes). What does it all mean! Can it be—oh! can it be that Uncle has found one of the darling babies, and this is her present to me? But I don't want presents; I want *her!* (Springs to her feet and looks eagerly around her.) Uncle! Aunt Mary! oh, where are you! Can it be, oh! can it be? (Starts toward door. Pauses, and again reads card.) Dear, dear, (sadly) what a silly goosie I am! Poor, dear Uncle just made a mistake and wrote *sister* instead of *niece*. I'm glad he didn't hear me. (Turns card over and over, and returns slowly to basket.) I do wish Uncle would come help me open it. (Wistfully.) It's so much nicer not to be the only one in a surprise.—But what's the matter with me, anyway! This isn't my present at all. It's Aunt Mary's, of course. That's what Uncle means by *my dear sister*. How glad I am that I didn't open it! But *where* is my machinery? Oh, now I know! *Sister* meant the little parlor away down at the west end of the hall. Uncle will wonder what has kept me so long. (Starts from room. Bertha laughs softly. Mary wheels about and regards basket with suspicion.) That sounded like—(looks at card). Oh! (runs and falls on her knees before basket) Oh! (tugs and strains frantically at the last knot. Cover flies back, Bertha springs up, throwing her arms about Mary's neck).

Bertha:—Happy Twisma's! Happy Twismas! I'm your yitty sissoo!

Mary:—I know! I know! O Berta! Berta! my own, dear, darling Berta! (Clings passionately to Berta, covering her face with kisses.)

Berta:—Yes! Yes! *Zat's* my name! *Berta!* not ugly old *Berfa*, what Auntie did always say. But why is you cwying, Maywy? Isn't you glad you found me? (in an aggrieved tone).

Mary:—Glad, precious! glad! I'm so happy I don't know what I'm doing!

Berta:—That's bery funny. I neber cwying ven I is happy; only ven I

falls me down or sumpin. (Brushes tears from Mary's face with soiled fingers, leaving it streaked.) And you finked I was a doggie, and you was goin' away. So I laughed a yitty bit so you would tum back, and zey was hiding, zey was. (Doctor enters unobserved.) And now you is my bid sissoo, and I is your yitty sissoo, and your auntie is my auntie, and Uncle Fwank is my weally Uncle Fwank, and not a only *make b'lieve*, nenny more,—

Doctor:—Well, well, well! Who ever said there was anything *make believe* about me, I should like to know? (Mary springs to her feet and grasps both her uncle's hands. If a girl acts part of Doctor, she imprisons Mary with one arm.) Now, my little culprit, who says I cannot keep a secret, and what about that fine you owe—halloo! what's the matter here? Surely, you two haven't been at it already? Berta, have you been trying to give Mary two black eyes at once?

Berta (hopping delightedly about the two, pauses when she hears her name.):—Zat's where I was wiping away ze cwies, and (apologetically) I is afwaid my fingers isn't so bery tlean.

Doctor (laughing):—That is evident.

Mary:—Oh, it was just a beautiful secret, Uncle!—and mother?—and Beth? (looks eagerly about room).

Doctor (tenderly, after a short pause):—Little one, will not our joy and gratitude for the restoration of even one of our loved ones lessen in some degree the sorrow we feel at our separation from the others? And can't you and I help each other to rejoice in their joy, which is as far above ours as heaven is above earth?

Mary (smiling bravely up at him, whispers huskily):—Yes, Uncle, we can.

Doctor (cheerily):—After a little while, I shall tell you when and how I learned my secret. (Enter Mother M.) Here is Aunt Mary. Her hiding place was farther away than mine.

Mother M. (kissing Mary affectionately):—Not so far but what I could see and hear all that went on. Indeed, more than once, I was strongly tempted to come to your assistance, Mary. Uncle is a master hand at tying knots, isn't he, dear?

Mary:—Indeed, he is, Aunt Mary! My fingers ache yet. Oh! Isn't it just too beautiful for anything, Auntie? I can hardly believe it's true. Do shake me so I can be sure it isn't all a dream.

Mother M.:—I think some breakfast will prove that you are quite wide awake. Come. (Takes Berta's hand.)

Mary:—Uncle! I *must* send a telegram!

Doctor:—Well, well; is it a matter of life and death, or will there be time for breakfast first.

Mary (laughing):—Oh, it will do after breakfast; but the Marvins must know our good news as soon as possible.

Doctor:—Would it not be better to *tell* it to them? Telegrams are rather unsatisfactory things, I think.

Mary:—But, Uncle, just think how long it will take for a letter to reach them.

Doctor (innocently):—I said nothing about a letter, did I? I was thinking of the long-distance phone. Surely, an occasion of this kind warrants a little bit of extravagance.

Mary:—Oh, you dear old Uncle. You always *do* think of the most

beautiful plans. Just imagine some men going to the trouble of getting that big basket to put Berta in! No; they would have sent for me and said, "My dear niece, this is your little sister; and if you are not good to her, I will——." Then they'd go home and get out an extredishun about the wonderful thing they did. That is what Margaret says some men are like, and her father is a newspaper man, so I s'pose she knows. But *how did* you ever find her, Uncle? You haven't told me a word, yet.

Doctor:—The mystery to me is how you and Aunt Mary *didn't* find her. You two, who pride yourselves on being able to guess all *my* secrets, have lived with Berta nearly four months without even suspecting the truth.

Mary (lamely):—I always said she reminded me of someone. See, (opens her locket), isn't she the image of father?

Berta:—Why, Maywy, where *did* you det my yocket?

Mary:—This isn't yours, Berta. Have you a locket like this?

Berta (sadly):—I *had* one, but *Auntie* she did say I'd lose it, and she taked it away from me.

Doctor:—Thought you might be identified by means of it.

Mary:—Never mind, Berta; you can wear mine until Uncle gets yours for you. Come here and let me put it on you now.

Doctor (hands Mary an official-looking envelope):—Here are two letters, Mary, which will explain the mystery better than I can do. Read the shorter one first. It is from your Aunt Bertha's lawyer and will help you to understand the other.

Mary:—Hm! it isn't very good writing for a grown man, I must say.

"Dear Sir:—The enclosed has just been dictated to me by Mrs. Herbert Ashmere, the sister of Robert Selwyn, your late brother-in-law. You will observe that it is unfinished, owing to the fact that the lady, who is seriously ill, was overcome by a sudden weakness, followed by a state of unconsciousness from which she has not yet rallied. The doctors say her condition is critical, and, as she is most anxious to see you before she dies, I urge you, sir, to come with the least possible delay. Yours truly, George Greydon. (Opens second letter.) In the Convent of Maryvale, on the outskirts of the town of——, New York, there is a little child, known as Bertha Ashmere. I have allowed it to be thought that she is the niece of my deceased husband, Herbert Ashmere; but such is not the case. The little girl is Berta Selwyn, one of the twin daughters of my favorite brother, Robert Selwyn, whose conversion to the Catholic Faith, and subsequent marriage to a Catholic, so embittered me that I would never consent to meet his wife, your sister. I first met the child, with her mother and little sister, on board the steamer *Helena*, where, under an assumed name, I became sufficiently acquainted with the mother to learn of my brother's death and several other facts. On account of her resemblance to my brother, I became passionately attached to Berta; but the child seemed to have an instinctive dread of me, and repelled all my advances. However, on that awful night when the *Helena* sank, I succeeded in getting possession of her and afterwards brought her here, where I strove in my own selfish way to make her happy. But she shrank from me and never ceased her piteous appeals to be restored to her mother. The annoyance this caused me, together with my failing health, made me resolve to place her for a time at Maryvale. As I was obliged to make the necessary ar-

rangements by letter, I met none of the Sisters until November when the Superior with a companion called to see me. I listened eagerly to their accounts of Berta and her little friends, and you may imagine my surprise when, in the course of the conversation, I learned that my darling was being loved and cared for by her own. Nevertheless, I kept my secret, and in response to your sister's inquiries about the child's relations, I assured her that I was the only one remaining to her. A few words of sympathy which your sister addressed to me before leaving, opened my eyes to the fact that my illness was a blessing from a merciful God. As the days went by, I began to realize the enormity of the crime I had committed, and the general selfishness and sinfulness of my life. Many a bitter hour did I spend alone with these reflections; but that same Mercy which opened the eyes of my soul, also inspired me with a firm hope of pardon. You are probably aware that I never professed any religious belief; but tomorrow I am to be received into the Catholic Church. The physicians tell me I have not many days to live, but I cannot die in peace until I hear from your own lips that you and yours forgive me the terrible wrong I have done you. I have to tell you myself—(turns the paper over.)

Doctor:—Your aunt was unable, as Mr. Greydon says, to write more.

Mary (eagerly): But you went, Uncle, you went to see her?

Doctor:—Yes, Mary. Those letters reached me yesterday while I was at breakfast, and I took the first train that I could get to Albany. But when I arrived at your aunt's home, I found that she had been dead some hours.

Mary (in shocked tones):—Uncle! Then she didn't become a Catholic!

Doctor (gently):—But she had the desire, dear; and though she did not regain consciousness for one instant, the priest gave her conditional baptism.

Mary (with a relieved sigh):—I'm *so* glad! (slight pause. Then in dismay): You say she didn't regain consciousness, but, Uncle, hadn't she ever told the nurse, or the priest, or anyone, what it was she was so anxious to tell you? See, here at the end of the letter, she says she wants to tell you something. Oh, she must have meant about mother and Beth, and didn't she ever tell anyone, so they could tell you?

Doctor:—My dear little girl, all that your aunt had to make known to me is told in that letter. Of that, I am positive. She probably wished to say how sorry she was, or something of that kind; but as for giving us any information about mother and Beth—why, dear, you may rest assured that, after getting possession of Berta, she took particular care to keep away from mother or anyone else who might recognize her. Mary, the one point which has been a mystery to me, is cleared up at last. No one could ever make me believe that your mother, having once made her escape with the children from the stateroom, could be induced to return to it for money or anything else which she had left there. I knew there must be some grave reason for such an act, and there it is. (Nods at Berta.)

Mary (piteously):—But where *was* Aunt Bertha that mother couldn't find her?

Doctor:—You may be sure that your aunt had managed to find a place in one of the first boats lowered.

Mary:—Uncle, it's all wrong! There is some terrible mistake somewhere! Berta told me that her mother and sister went down in a little white boat, and that her aunt held her tight and wouldn't let her go with them; and every time Berta talks about it, she cries and says she is naughty, and that her aunt will punish her for telling about it. So you see, mother *couldn't* have been lost in the ship.

Doctor (gently):—But, Mary, if mother and Beth were lowered in one of the boats, why were they not among the passengers picked up by the rescuing steamers? I was assured by the officers and the sailors that every one who entered a life boat was finally put aboard one or other of those vessels. No, no, dear; Berta is mistaken. In her terror at being separated from mother, she probably caught sight of someone in a boat who resembled her; or perhaps she dreamed something of the kind and afterwards fancied that it had really happened. Little children have very lively imaginations. By the way, that little sister of yours is quite an heiress. With the exception of a large legacy to the Convent here—a token of gratitude for the kindness shown Berta and to insure the prayers of the Community for your aunt as a benefactor—and a neat sum to her faithful nurse, Bertha Ashmere has left our little one her entire fortune, consisting of an estate in England, her beautiful home in Albany, the old Virginia plantation, and investments of various kinds. So you and I must resign ourselves to the fate of “poor relations.”

Mary:—We don't care for the money, just so we have her, do we? It was nice, though, yesterday, to have those checks that you gave me for the poor women. Not one of the girls saw me give them, either. I knew you wouldn't want them to know. And I told Mrs. Rooney that you would go down there this afternoon about three o'clock. That will give her plenty of time after dinner to put things in order. O Auntie! does Sister Austin know about Berta?

Mother M.:—No, dear, I did not have an opportunity of seeing her, and besides, I felt that you yourself should be the first to know of it.

Mary:—Then, please let me ask her to come in and bring the girls to see my wonderful present.

Mother M. (laughing):—One would think that they had never seen her.

Mary:—But she is different, now. Please let me.

Mother M.:—Very well; but hurry back. You must remember that Uncle did not have the substantial lunch which you enjoyed after the Midnight Mass. (Exit Mary. Others seat themselves; Doctor takes Berta on his knee.)

Berta:—I did make you a most beauty Twismas pwesent, 'tause you was my dweat fwend; and tomorrow I is going to make you anoizzer one, 'tause now you is my weally Uncle Fwank, and not a only “make b'lieve” Uncle Fwank, nenny more.

Doctor:—And what have you made for me?

Berta:—I did make a dweat bid book wif piczers in it—woses and v'lets; and all kinds of amanals—taggers, and zebyas, and ev'yfing. But ze effalunt am ze bery nicest of all. Maywy showed me how wif ze first one, but I made all ze west by mine own self, so I did. Maywy did put it under your plate for breaksas. (Reenter Mary, with Sister Austin and the girls.)

Mary:—Now, Sister, girls! See! see the wonderful present I found in that great big basket! (Sister and girls look about room. Latter laugh as if at a joke.) I mean it, Sister! (Runs and throws her arms about Berta.) She is mine, *mine!* My very own! Oh! don't you understand?

Sister (devoutly):—God be praised! My dear child, do you mean that Bertha is one of your little—

Mary:—Yes, yes, Sister! She is *Berta—Berta Selwyn*—my own, darling little sister. There never was any Bertha Ashmere at all! (Great rejoicing and congratulations.) Just think, Sister, she has been here all this time, and I never knew that she was mine at all.

Sister:—My dear little girl, even had you known it, you could not have shown her any greater affection and care. I have never seen any one more devoted to her own sister than you have been to Berta. The Sisters have all remarked it, too.

Mary:—I couldn't tell why it was, Sister, but I loved her the minute I saw her, and I have ever since been pretending that she *was* my little sister.

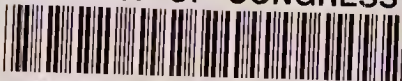
Berta:—And I was making b'lieve zat Maywy's uncle and auntie was bofe mine, too.

Sister:—So now, all the "making believe" has come true, as in the fairy stories, and all that you have to do is to "live happy ever after."

CURTAIN



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