

# CHARLOTTE MESSENGER.

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## The Chickens.

Said the first little chicken,  
With a queer little squirm  
"I wish I could find  
A fat little worm!"

Said the next little chicken,  
With an odd little shrug:  
"I wish I could find  
A fat little bag!"

Said the third little chicken,  
With a sharp little squeal:  
"I wish I could find  
Some nice yellow meal!"

Said the fourth little chicken,  
With a small sigh of grief:  
"I wish I could find  
A green little leaf!"

Said the fifth little chicken,  
With a faint little moan:  
"I wish I could find  
A wee gravel-stone!"

"Now, see here!" said the mother,  
From the green garden-patch:  
"If you want any breakfast,  
Just come here and scratch!"

—Frank S. Bondy.

## PAPA'S BLESSING.

"I have asked Wynn to come out this evening to talk over a little business, Dora. If he should arrive before I get here you must see to him until I come. Be kind and polite to him, my dear. He is really a very well-meaning and unassuming fellow, and the most useful bookkeeper I have ever had. He has seemed a little out of sorts lately, and I am sure would be most grateful for any little attention from you."

This Richard Blair, the rich tea merchant, had said to his daughter in the morning, on leaving his pretty villa at Richmond for the city, with an amount of pompous condescension kind.

Dora was an obedient daughter, as her reception to her father's guest that evening plainly showed; but certainly the worthy tea merchant would have found abundant cause to retract his opinion as to the same guest's modest and unassuming character if he had been a witness of his demeanor on that occasion; for no sooner had the door closed upon the servant who ushered him into the presence of his young mistress than—totally unabashed and unblushing—he took the young girl into his arms, only releasing her after leaving upon her ripe red lips at least half a dozen warm kisses.

Dora, not appearing in the least surprised or disconcerted at this greeting, bore unflinchingly the situation for fully two minutes before she blushing drew back and endeavored to bring into something like order her soft brown hair, which, with the dainty ruffles at her throat, had become somewhat disarranged by the welcome she had so obediently given her father's guest.

"It is a long time since I have seen you, Harry," she remarked, with a bewildering glance from beneath the thick lashes shading the large gray eyes.

"I should think so, indeed—quite an age!" responded the bookkeeper, dismally. "I managed to get away half an hour before the time your father told me he should be home, hoping to see you alone; but he'll be sure to turn up before he's expected—it's just my luck!"

"Harry, do you know why my father has sent for you to-night?"

"I haven't an idea, except that it's something about the branch business in Hong Kong."

"I can enlighten you a little, then, though I hardly think you will be as pleased as my father seems to expect. One of the men in the house out there has just died; he had rather a responsible position, I believe, and papa wants to send you out to take his place."

"As if anything could induce me to leave England and you, Dora?" cried the young man. "Why, the separation would probably be for years!"

"I am afraid you must go, Harry," was the girl's rather sorrowful response. "You know my father; your refusal to obey his wishes would probably make something very like an enemy of him, and render matters between us even more hopeless than they are at present."

"Dora, I must speak to your father," cried the young man, excitedly. "When he finds that his daughter's happiness is involved he can't be heartless enough to refuse our united prayers. He seems to feel rather kindly toward me. Anything would be better than this uncertainty!"

"No, dear Harry. Believe me, it would only be exchanging uncertainty for positive resignation of all our hopes. I know my father well, and it is useless to hide from myself and you that he loves money far better than his child. He has declared over and over again that he will never give his consent to my marriage with a man poorer than himself; and I know he will never retract his word."

"And you advise me to go off to China, with the probability of never seeing you again, Dora? Nothing can be worse than that, surely!"

"Oh, Harry. I must have time to think. I heard of it only this morning," cried Dora, on the verge of tears. "There comes papa now, and I have so much still to say to you. I must see you again. Could you manage to come down on Thursday at this time for half an hour? My father is going to a dinner in the city on that evening."

"Of course I can," responded Harry, just as the door opened to admit the master of the establishment.

"Oh, Wynn, you arrived first! Prompt as ever—a most excellent quality in a young man. I hope my daughter has made you comfortable—eh, Dora?"

"I tried to do so, papa," responded the young lady, demurely. "I suppose my company can be dispensed with now?"

"Yes, my dear, you may go."

"Well, Wynn," began the merchant, when the two men were left alone, as he walked up and down the room, evidently satisfied with himself and all the world, "I have to tell you that there is excellent news from America; we have closed the contract with that firm in New York of which you have heard me speak, and the transaction will bring us in something very like twenty thousand pounds. Not at all a bad job—eh, Wynn?"

will interest you more nearly, my boy. We have just heard of the death of Jones, our secretary at Hong Kong, and I am called upon to send some one to fill his place. It's rather a good position, and we need some one we can trust. I've been rather pleased with the way you've done your duties lately, and I've been thinking—hem!—in short, I've made up my mind to give you the place."

"But, sir," began Wynn, in desperation.

"Oh, no thanks! I know you appreciate it and all that, of course, and I'm sure we shall be satisfied with you. Could you be ready to go next month?"

"I will think it over, sir. I suppose it is not necessary to give you my answer for a day or two?"

"No, certainly not," replied the merchant, a little surprised at Wynn's way of receiving such a piece of good fortune.

Then followed an announcement which, for an instant, caused the bookkeeper to turn hot and cold with lightning rapidity.

"Perhaps you will be interested in a piece of family news which has given me the greatest satisfaction, Wynn. My daughter is to be married?"

"Impossible! I mean, sir, I had heard nothing of it," stammered poor Wynn.

"Eh?" exclaimed the merchant, staring at his companion in astonishment. "No, I suppose not. The fact of the matter is Miss Blair doesn't know of it herself yet; but she will, of course, be as pleased as I am. The letter only came to-day from an old friend of mine who has made millions—millions, my boy—in sugar, and writes proposing a marriage between his only son and my daughter. The young man has seen my Dora somewhere, it seems, and was quite smitten with the sly little puss. He is coming to us on a visit next week. Now, haven't I cause for rejoicing to-day, Wynn?"

"Pray accept my congratulations, sir," replied the bookkeeper, lugubriously.

"By the way, Wynn," the merchant went on, after a moment's pause devoted to golden anticipations, "it has struck me that you have been rather down in the mouth lately. Are you out of health?"

"Oh, no, sir, thank you—not at all!" responded the young man, hurriedly, rather disconcerted by this unusual solicitude in his behalf.

The delight with which the merchant had that day heard of the success of business schemes likely to make an important addition to the banking account of the firm, and especially anticipations of the brilliant marriage to be made by his daughter, had filled

his heart with a sort of comfortable condescending benevolence and goodwill to all the world, which descended even to the affairs of so unimportant a personage as his bookkeeper.

"Have you had any bad news?"

"No, sir."

"Perhaps you are in debt. Don't be afraid to tell me the truth, Wynn. I feel quite a fatherly interest in you, I assure you, and I might do something to help you. I shouldn't at all mind advancing a hundred pounds or so."

"I thank you most gratefully, Mr. Blair; but I have no debts."

"Then there is nothing else for it, boy; you certainly are in love!"

Wynn started, blushing to the very roots of his hair, but could find no words to reply, while the merchant stared at him for a moment, and then laughed uproariously, rubbing his hands with glee as he exclaimed:

"There, I have it at last! Come, out with it, young man; what's the trouble? won't she have you?"

"Yes, sir," stammered Wynn, in an agony; "but she is rich and I am poor. Her father would never consent."

"Pooh, pooh! Is that all? You surely ought to be able to manage that somehow. Is it indiscreet to ask who the young lady is? Do I know the family?"

"I am afraid—it wouldn't do—to mention her name," said poor Wynn, looking wildly about for some means of escape.

"Well, do I know the father?"

"Yes, sir."

The merchant reflected for a moment, then brought his fist down upon the table with vehemence.

"I have it now!"

Wynn turned fairly cold.

"You needn't say 'Yes' or 'No,' nor commit yourself in any way; but I think I've got your secret. It's old Brooks' daughter! I've seen, you'd like to be even with him. Any way, whoever the girl is, I'm disposed to help you."

"How, sir?" gasped Wynn.

"Why—hem! If the old fellow won't give his consent, why shouldn't you do without it? What do you think of eloping with her?"

"What, sir?" cried Wynn, hardly believing his ears. "You really advise me to do that?"

"Yes—why not? What's more, I'll give you the price of the license for a wedding present and lend you my carriage any night you like to be off, besides throwing in my blessing into the bargain! I know a clergyman a few miles from here who would do the job willingly, especially if I give you a note to him. I did him a favor once."

"And you positively will give us your blessing and assistance, no matter who the young lady may be?" exclaimed the bookkeeper, almost involuntarily.

"Positively," replied his employer, firm in the conviction that here was a delightful opportunity of becoming revenged upon a man who had assailed him in his weakest point—his pocket.

"I will help you without asking any questions. We must teach the grasping old sinner that his daughter's affections are not an article of merchandise. Nobody need be ashamed of you for a son-in-law, Wynn, my boy."

"Thank you, sir," responded the young man, faintly.

"Just consult the young woman, and if it's all right in that quarter let me know the day, and the carriage and the price of the license shall not be wanting. I shall not go back from my promise."

Wynn did not fail to keep his appointment at Richmond on the following Thursday evening, finding Clara at home and alone, as he had hoped; and the next morning, when Mr. Blair entered his counting-house, he found his bookkeeper waiting anxiously to speak to him.

"Well, Wynn, is anything the matter?" asked the merchant, a little surprised at seeing the young man at so unusual an hour. "Has anything new turned up about the American affair?"

"No, sir," Wynn stammered, blushing like the veriest schoolgirl. "I am not here to speak of business. I must beg your pardon for trespassing upon your time at this hour; but you were so very kind a few days ago as to promise—"

"Well, out with it, man!"

"That you would assist me—"

"Aha—the young woman! I remember, now!" exclaimed Mr. Blair, laughing heartily. "So you have seen her? What does she think of my plan?"

"She has consented, sir," faltered the bookkeeper, keeping his face care-

fully hidden behind the lid of a desk, at which, to all appearances, he was searching busily. "On the day after to-morrow evening, if convenient to you—"

"The sooner the better! My boy, I am quite ready to keep my word." As he spoke, the merchant turned to his desk and filled up a check, which he handed to his companion. "There is the wedding present of which I spoke. Of course, you must get a special license. My carriage will also be at your service at whatever time and place you choose to appoint. By the way, what does the young lady think of the China project? I hope your marriage will not affect your decision with regard to it."

"She is anxious that I should do whatever is most pleasing to you, sir."

"Ah, I see she is a sensible woman! I should like to call in the course of the evening, after the ceremony is over, and offer my congratulations, if you and Mrs. Wynn intend to remain in London."

"Thank you, sir. I was going to ask something of the kind. We expect to be at the Grosvenor hotel."

"Should you like a week's holiday?"

"Not at present, thank you," answered Wynn, feeling guiltily that he was extremely likely to be given a much more prolonged holiday than he desired.

"Very well, my boy. I wish you all manner of luck. Return in the course of the morning and I will give you the letter I promised to my friend the clergyman."

About 9 o'clock p. m. on the day of the marriage Mr. Blair, adorned with the unusual splendor of light kid gloves and a white necktie, and carrying an enormous bouquet of roses and orange blossoms, entered the Grosvenor hotel and inquired for Mr. and Mrs. Wynn. He was told that they were in the lady's room.

"Then I will wait in their rooms until they arrive; it can't belong now," replied the merchant; and he was shown into the pleasant, little sitting-room reserved for the pair whom the astute clerk had already settled in his own mind to be bride and groom.

Mr. Blair had not long to wait, though in his present state of good humor he could very easily have borne a longer delay than the half hour he passed in well-satisfied musing over the good luck which lately seemed to have attended his every movement. He had received a letter from the young man whom he hoped to call his son-in-law, appointing a day for his visit to Richmond, and the prospect of this marriage was above all a source of self-congratulation with him.

Then, too, this evening's event afforded him indescribable amusement, as he pictured to himself the wrath and consternation of the man who, he had firmly convinced himself, had injured him deeply when he discovered that his only daughter had bestowed herself upon an impecunious bookkeeper. All alone to himself Mr. Blair chuckled with malicious enjoyment over this most delightful of jokes, and rejoiced in his own share in bringing his enemy to confusion.

"I wonder how soon papa is to be told of the happy event," he soliloquized. "Who knows? Perhaps it will be a family party to-night!"

Later the merchant had taken out his pocketbook and was deep in an abstract calculation as to certain weighty transactions which might be undertaken when a little of the wealth of his prospective son-in-law had filtered into the firm, when there was a sound of voices and footsteps in the hall, pausing at the door, and Mr. Blair knew that the bridal party had arrived.

Thrusting the book into his pocket and seizing the bouquet he rose and stood in readiness, when the door was thrown open by the waiter, and, sure enough, Wynn entered, having on his arm a lady closely veiled.

The merchant advanced, bowing low, with outstretched hand, which was rather hesitatingly taken by the bookkeeper, who muttered only a few half incoherent words of thanks in reply to the congratulations offered him. Mr. Blair scarcely noticed the young man's evident confusion, so occupied was he in vainly trying to discover his companion's identity through the thick veil which she had not as yet raised.

There seemed to him something oddly familiar in her figure, though, much to his chagrin, he saw instantly that she was certainly some inches shorter than Miss Brooks.

"And your wife? Am I not to have the pleasure of making her acquaint-

ance?" he said, feeling somehow vaguely uneasy.

Then the veil was slowly raised, to reveal the face of the merchant's own daughter, pale, frightened, beseeching; but still for a moment the man failed to understand.

"Dora," he said, in bewilderment, "what are you doing here?"

Dead silence followed; then the faintest of the merchant's castles in Spain fell with a crash.

"Can it be possible that you are this man's wife?"

"Yes, dear father, it is quite true," said the girl's pleading voice. "Won't you try to forgive us? It can't make much difference to you. You can't miss me, you know, for you never needed me, and I needed so sorely some one to love me!"

The bookkeeper was holding his wife's hand firmly all the time, and only drew her a little closer to him as he added:

"We are far from deserving it, I know, but I hope you don't forget that you promised us your blessing, Mr. Blair."

"This is a great disappointment to me, as you of course must know, Dora," he said at last, turning to his companions, who were awaiting his words in almost breathless suspense. "However, the deed is done, and I suppose the most sensible thing is to make the best of what I consider a rather bad job. I promised you my blessing, Wynn, and you shall have it, upon two conditions. The first is that you—and I suppose your wife—shall go to China, as I proposed."

"We are quite willing, sir," the bookkeeper replied, eagerly. "And the second condition?"

"That you never, either of you, disclose to any human being who was the promoter and instigator of your elopement."

## Misleading Titles.

Unfortunately, writers are not careful in their choice of names, and titles are occasionally adopted which, instead of explaining the nature of the book, serve only to mislead the buyer. Mr. Ruskin, who is noted for such unintelligible titles as "Fors Clavigera" and "Sesame and Lilies," issued a theological discourse under the name of "A Treatise on Sheepfolds," thus leading astray many librarians and indexers, as well as unsuspecting farmers and shepherds. The "Divisions of Purley," at the time of its publication, was ordered by a village book-club under the impression that it was a book of amusing games. The "Essay on Irish Bulls" was another work which was thought by some folks to deal with live stocks. "Moths," a novel by "Ouida," has been asked for under the impression that it was an entomological work, and Charles Kingsley's "Yeast," by those in search of information on the Torula cerevisia, or yeast plant. Coleridge's "Ancient Mariner" was sold largely to seafaring men, who concluded from the name that it had some relation to nautical matters.

## Married in Presence of Royalty.

An Indian youth and maiden belonging to one of the tribes of British Columbia who had intended to postpone their marriage until such time as the instructions of their missionary should have fitted them to go through the ceremony after the manner of Christians, changed their minds when the Princess Louise arrived in their settlement. It was their ardent desire to be married in the presence of their "great white mother's daughter," and the princess cheerfully acquiesced. The friends of the contracting parties were arranged in two long rows facing each other, the chiefs, the bride and groom and the nearest relatives occupying a cross seat at the head of the two rows. The father of the bride made an address, in the course of which he said that he was giving his daughter to the young man and that thereafter she would be the same as dead to him. Thereupon a large dish was placed upon the ground, into which the friends of the groom cast money to compensate the old man for his loss. This consolatory offering occupied considerable time, and when the count was made the dish was found to contain \$400. The ceremony ended with a feast.

Subscribers to the *Boomerang* who find cross-bones and skull with crest of metallic burial casket drawn in blood on the wrapper of their paper will know that their subscription has expired and that something has got to be done.—*Boomerang*.