

The Wife's Secret, OR A BITTER RECKONING By CHARLOTTE M. BRAEME

CHAPTER IX.

For some reason Pauline Malling was in a very irritable state of mind. Perhaps she was regretting the moment's impulse that had prompted her to accept a nameless young painter, Babette, too, seemingly had a weight on her mind. She crept about her work, laying out Miss Malling's elegant evening toilet with a subdued air very different from her usual noiseless activity. Babette was doing her best to get through her duties, when, as ill luck would have it, memory for a moment asserted itself and brought before her a picture of a pretty black-eyed archer tossing from side to side in his small cot and crying out her name unceasingly as he refused the cooling drink offered by a hand he did not love. The maid sobbed—sobbed audibly.

Miss Malling raised her eyes from their contemplation of the carpet and looked in dignified surprise at the young Frenchwoman. Noting for the first time the signs of tears on her face, Miss Malling felt angry.

"What in heaven's name is the matter with you, Babette? Pray don't let me have any weeping and wailing. If there is one thing that exasperates me more than another, it is a crying woman."

"Pardon, mademoiselle; the grief overcame me in spite of myself. I did not intend to speak; but, as you have noticed my sorrow, I will make bold to tell you that I have a little secret, the only being in the world who is related to me and I have here a letter telling me he is very ill, and that he asks for me night and day—night and day. The poor girl's voice broke for a moment; but she rallied and went on. "If mademoiselle could spare me for just enough time to get to Boulogne and back to see the poor little fellow!"

"And what am I to do in the meantime?" Pauline asked icily. "Of course you can go if you like; but you need not come back. I am surprised you should ask me such an insane thing, when you know the house will be full of people the day after tomorrow. I could not possibly do without you. Pray do not say another word about it, and please leave off crying."

Babette moved away to the far end of the room, wiped her eyes, and stood for an instant quite still, repressing the sobs that shook her frame.

"If my little Pierre dies without seeing me I will never forgive you—never! I will watch for a chance of doing you a great harm; and it will come if I am patient," the girl thought.

After dressing Miss Malling and making the dressing room tidy, Babette passed through the picture gallery on her way to Mrs. Perkins' sanctum for her usual cup of tea. Thinking everybody must be downstairs, she stopped at Jack's easel and looked at Pauline's picture.

"So you think the world is made for your pleasure? You are too high a lady to trouble yourself with your servants' affairs; but perhaps they will trouble themselves with yours, madame! I have seen you flinch and shiver up for nothing, unless they have a fear of something; and if they have a secret fear, there must be something bad to cause it. If my little darling dies without the comfort of kissing his Babette once, it will be your fault; and all my life long I will watch, watch, watch, to try to repay your cruelty to me and him!"—and she looked as if she meant it.

Jack, who had stopped until the last moment finishing his rather difficult letter to Ethel in his own room, was struck by the intense hatred in the woman's face as he opened the door, wondered for the moment what could have caused it, wished the next that he could call it up, and the next moment forgot all about it. Throwing his letter on the hall table, he hurried into the drawing room to make his peace for being late.

Babette had her quiet cup of tea with Mrs. Perkins, and, with a plentiful shedding of tears, wrote to the woman who had charge of little Pierre, to say that she could not come to her darling just now.

The letter was full of loving messages and promises, and the poor girl's heart felt very heavy as she put it into the bag. She had taken it into the hall herself. There was another letter lying there ready stamped for the post; she took it up carelessly, recognized it by the red seal as the one Jack had had in his hand when he passed her in the gallery, and stood transfixed with surprise as she read the address.

"The address of that pretty demoiselle that I followed home from the museum, by her orders! Why, there is something in this! Why, if she wants the address of a lady who is known to Monsieur Dornton, does she not ask him, instead of setting me to follow her like a policeman? I shall have that to find out!"

"Babette, I want you," Mrs. Perkins called from the door that shut off the servants' quarters.

Something in the voice, some subtle touch of sympathy, struck Babette's quick ear. She turned so sharply that Mrs. Perkins had not time to conceal the black-bordered letter she held in her hand. With a heart-rending cry, Babette started forward and snatched the letter from her.

She was a quick, impetuous, unreasoning and unreasonable creature; she did not stop to consider that she could not have reached the child even if Pauline had given her instant consent. She remembered only that her mistress had been cruel to her in the time of her trouble; and she registered a vow that, if there was any secret in Pauline Malling's past life, she would hunt it out and humiliate her.

A letter lay by Ethel's plate; but she did not touch it. Mr. Mallett, self-absorbed as ever, did not notice how his daughter was struggling to preserve her usual composure all through the breakfast time.

Jack Dornton had not intended to be cruel when he wrote; but, after destroy-

ing a dozen sheets of paper in his desire to be neither too soft nor too hard, he decided at last that the shorter and plainer he made it the better; and this was what he had written:

"My Dear Ethel—I should not have had the courage to do as you have done; but perhaps you are right—as indeed you always are. For the future will you allow me to consider myself

"Your faithful friend,

"JOHN DORNTON?"

"I am glad—so very glad I wrote it. It would have been dreadful if we had married, and Jack had found out that he did not care for me afterward. Now I had better destroy that anonymous letter. I thought that perhaps Jack might have wished the engagement to continue, in which case I should have sent the letter to him and asked for an explanation."

So Ethel went bravely about her home duties, though her very lips were white with the restraint she was putting on her feelings. She tried with all her strength of mind she possessed to put her humiliating grief away from her.

"Why should I sorrow for him if he can throw me off without one word of regret?" she asked herself, angrily.

Still, in spite of her determination to crush her love under the weight of self-respect, she now and again felt as if her heart would break. She resolutely denied herself the relief of tears, and suffered far more intensely in consequence.

The thrushes and the lively robins and perky sparrows were having a good time of it on the lawn at the Wigwam that morning. Captain Pelling was fond of these small birds, and liked to see them about the place, and he had determined to do what he could to tame them during the hard winter weather, should he decide to stay on in the Wigwam, which he had taken furnished for six months. He did not take much notice of the little creatures this morning, though. He was in a "brown study," and sat so motionless on his comfortable cane chair under the veranda that the more courageous of the birds hopped about within a yard of his feet.

The fact was Captain Pelling was disappointed. He had expected a letter either from Ethel or Mr. Mallett that morning, to settle their visit on the morrow.

"Even if they do not care to come," he told himself, "they might have been civil enough to send some conventional excuse."

After awhile it occurred to him that perhaps the Malletts had written, and that the letter had miscarried—and he felt somewhat relieved at the bare idea. He made up his mind that he would go up to town in any case; and as he went along he would decide upon what course he would pursue. And all through his vacillation he never once admitted to himself that it was his longing to see Ethel again that had for the moment transformed him into a human shuttlecock.

Notwithstanding a short notice, the phaeton was ready a minute before the appointed time, looking perfect in every detail. Pelling had the reins in his hand and his foot on the step, when he noticed a telegraph boy coming toward the house. He waited a moment. Yes, it was for him!

"From Geoffrey Mallett, Buckingham street, Bloomsbury, to Captain Pelling, The Wigwam, Wimbledon. Shall be with you at 2 o'clock to-morrow. Get sketches in inspection order."

And the man of thirty felt a lad again in his light-heartedness, as he sent his handsome boys along the road.

CHAPTER X.

Jack's love-making went on swimmingly during the lovely summer weather, and among the beauties of Mallingford. The house was full of visitors now, and in accordance with Pauline's wishes, their engagement was kept strictly private. Still, in spite of all their care, the state of affairs was pretty shrewdly guessed at by most of the people about them, and the well-bred guests wondered immensely at Miss Malling's sudden fit of unworlship. Strangely enough, Babette, with all her sharpness, was one of the last to hear of her mistress' infatuation for the "artist chap," as he was scornfully named among the servants; but at the moment she did hear of it she began wondering and watching until in her own mind she was sure that Miss Malling was really deeply in love with this good-looking Mr. Dornton. Babette liked Jack, and, knowing, as she believed she did, the evil of Pauline's heart, she was sorry to think that such an altogether too charming young man should be so thrown away.

So Babette was always on the watch for some clue that would help her to discover her young mistress' secret; and at this time she showed great interest in Mrs. Perkins' gossip about the family hoping to glean some scrap of information that might be of use to her in furthering her revengeful purpose.

"And if mademoiselle had married against the wishes of Milord Summers, or without his consent, she would have lost the whole estate?" she asked, one evening in August, as she sipped her tea leisurely.

"That is so," observed Babette, with a disappointed air. She reflected for a few moments, and a flash of intelligence crossed her face as she asked, "And if mademoiselle had married in her extreme youth—before she was known as the heiress of the property—how then?"

"I think she would lose everything."

"Who would have it after her?"

"Sir Geoffrey, then, late baronet's brother."

"To be sure! It must have been a great

blow to him when he found himself robbed of everything by his brother's injustice. What did he do? Where did he go?"

"I don't know. He is as proud as any of the family, and, when his brother told him never to come near the place again, he put on his hat without one word, and walked away with his head as high as if he were the heir of thousands. We've never seen a sight of him since that day, and it's my belief we never shall."

Babette believed she had found the keynote to Pauline's secret trouble. That there was secret trouble she never doubted for an instant. She had observed her mistress too closely to be misled on that point; she knew that nothing but some mighty fear could cause those sudden starts, followed by periods of anxious, heavy-browed thought, to which she was subject. And, when Babette went upstairs, she reasoned the matter out.

"I have heard that she never knew she was her uncle's heiress until after her father's death. What is more likely than that she should have married an idiot who was caught by her pretty face? And then, when my lady suddenly finds that she is a rich woman, she is tired of this poor fool, and runs away and enjoys her life by herself. I believe I have found the dark spot in my fine lady's life! If this is as I think, I can take from her her beloved fiancé and her riches at one blow. How glorious that would be!"

Her face glowed with savage satisfaction at the bare thought of so complete a revenge. She left her seat by the bay window of Pauline's dressing room, and paced up and down, her excitement being too great for her to remain still. The dusky gloom deepened until the room was all in shadow, and presently a housemaid came in and lighted the candles in the large silver branches on the toilet table.

As the door closed behind the maid Babette resumed her promenade, and came to a sudden stop as her eyes rested on the key left in the lock of a small bronze box. This box contained Miss Malling's private keys. She looked up very little; but what she did look up she was rather particular about, and her keys were invariably kept in this Indian box, the key of which she carried about with her.

As Babette stood looking with a dull, fascinated gaze at the key, she heard the rustle of silken skirts in the gallery outside. With a swoop like a hawk's, so swift and noiseless was it, she plucked the little key from the lock and slipped it into the pocket of her dainty frilled apron. The next instant Miss Malling turned the handle of the door and saw Babette rearranging the lace draperies round the looking glass. She crossed the room and went straight to the table, glanced quickly at the box, and then turned to Babette.

"Have you seen the key of this box?"

"Not to-day, mademoiselle."

"Provoking!" She took it up in her hands and shook it. Yes, the keys are inside. Babette, I wish you not to leave these rooms to-night until I come up to bed. I have dropped the key somewhere. I don't suppose it will be found until we have daylight to help us—it is so small. Have your supper sent up to you here."

"Very good, mademoiselle."

Babette stood with her hands held tightly over her heart, listening to the rustle of the silken skirts along the gallery and down the stairs. Then her expression changed from strained attention to vivid triumph. She threw her clasped hands high over her head. She looked both doors, closed one window to prevent the blinds from fluttering, and then unlocked the small bronze box. She laughed as she picked out a key from the bunch and tried to unlock Pauline's large desk.

"At last!" she whispered, as the lock of the desk flew back.

(To be continued.)

Just Resentment.

"You say your beard began to grow when you were 16," remarked the visitor at the dime museum. "May I ask how long it has taken you to bring it to its present magnificent proportions?"

"Sir," said the Bearded Lady, justly incensed, "you are the first man that has ever dared to ask my age!"—Chicago Tribune.

Chance for Him.

"Ah!" sighed the fair maid. "I know what it is to have loved and lost."

"Indeed!" exclaimed the surprised youth, who had hopes that her father would give him a job as son-in-law some day.

"Yes," explained the fair one. "Poor, dear Fido passed in his checks this morning."

Saying and Thinking.

"Why is it," asked the young widow, "that you old bachelors say such horrid things? Married men never talk that way."

"That's easily explained," replied the o. b. "A bachelor is in a position to say what a married man is only permitted to think."

Feminine Way.

Mrs. Homer—Our new neighbor is an awfully forward woman.

Homer—In what way?

Mrs. Homer—Why, when I called on her this afternoon she proceeded to tell me all about the trouble she has with servants before I had a chance to tell her mine.

Artful Dodger.

He—Then I may hope.

She—Well, you may ask papa.

He—Impossible.

She—Why do you say that?

He—Because I haven't been able to get sight of him since I loaned him \$10 before Christmas.

His Idea of It.

The Minister—Young man, you should be making preparations for eternity.

Young Man—I am, sir. The girl I am engaged to is taking lessons at a cooking school.

The red snow, which is found in the Alps and in some parts of the Rocky Mountains, owes its hue to a microscopic plant of a bright red color.



Along about Thanksgiving time, when all the leaves are down, and the hills are turnin' brown, There's somethin' in the air that seems to stir your blood a bit. That makes you glad you're in the world and that you're part of it; The song the wind goes singin' in the ever-green's sublime; There's a glimmer in a man along about Thanksgiving time.

There's somethin' wonderful about the ice so thin and white Across the narrow little rut that dried up in the night; It's criss-crossed in a hundred ways with streaks and veins and lines, And sparkles out like diamonds when the sun spunks up and shines, And when you break it with your heel you can't hardly tell Its rattle from the jingle of a little silver bell.

Along about Thanksgiving time it seems somehow, as though The sky was nearer to us than it is a while ago; And when it's clear how clear it is—the crisp, fresh air, I mean— You'd almost think it blew through sieves somewhere to make it clean. Oh, when it's whistlin' strong and free, it's nothin' but a crime To not get out and stir, along about Thanksgiving time.

It's almost like a miracle to see the first snow fly The million little chunks come dartin' from the sky. To hear them bounce against the panes, to watch the wild things tamed, Go tumblin' down to melt as though they were kind of fish ashamed, And when darkness comes and lets the wind go murrurin', It's like the sweet old lullabies our mothers used to sing.

Along about Thanksgiving time there's somethin' in the air That seems to make you brisk and strong, that kind of crimps your hair; You feel all ready for the storms you know you'll have to meet. You're not afraid of anything that's walkin' round on feet, And lookin' at it any way, the old earth's quite sublime, Although it's bare and brown along about Thanksgiving time.

—S. E. Kiser, in Chicago Record-Herald.

EDIE'S MISSION.

"Susie, to-morrow's Thanksgiving."

Lower over her sewing dropped the golden head, and a tear trembled on her eyelash as she answered:

"Yes, darling."

"Aren't we going to have Thanksgiving?" continued the child, "a little bit of a Thanksgiving, Susie? How mean Uncle Ralph is to let you work so wretched."

"Hush, Edie! you must not talk thus. Uncle Ralph is very kind in letting us have this cottage rent free, otherwise my needle would not support us."

But little Edie could not help thinking of the great grim house upon the hill, and the great grim man who utterly ignored his poor relation. She thought so long and so intently about it that at last a daring resolution entered her early head.

"I'll go and see him and tell him all about it, so I will! I'm not afraid of him if he is big and grim and cross."

And without pausing to consider the doubtful undertaking, away she went in the direction of the stately mansion dark and gloomy which was the home of the misanthropic uncle, who from being one of the pleasantest of young fellows, in bygone days, had changed thus sadly. Rumor said for two reasons—because his betrothed, beautiful Nellie Clyde, had deserted him for her German music teacher, and because his petted, idolized young sister had fallen in love with a poor clerk and married him.

"I will never forgive you, never," he had said to her, sternly, "not because your husband is poor, but because he is shifless."

And she had gone, proudly, with brave trust in her young husband—alas, but to find her brother's words prophetic. The knowledge broke her heart, and she died, and was soon followed by her drunken husband, leaving their two daughters in bitter poverty.

Edie rang the bell of the great house with such violence that it brought the footman in great haste to the door.

"I have come to see my Uncle Ralph," she said, breathlessly. "I suppose he's in his study? Oh, you needn't show me the way; I know it," and she coolly ran by him up the polished stairway—for had not her mother told her of every nook and cranny in the old home?

At the far end of a gloomy room a fire glowed sleepily, and a gray-haired man sat in an armchair motionless before it. Edie crept in softly.

As she neared him she perceived that his face was very sad and weary looking. Some look upon his face made her think like a stray sunbeam. Her lovely new dress and dainty slippers burdened her none; she enjoyed them among the other good things that had befallen them. But Susie protested feebly.

"Indeed, Uncle Ralph, you are more than kind, more than generous; how can I ever repay you?"

Thanksgiving

"Edie, little Edie!" he cried; "is it little Edie, a child again, and come back to me?"

"Yes," said the child, clinging about his neck; "I was mamma's little Edie, and I will be yours if you will let me."

Then he comprehended. It was not his own little sister, but it was her child; it was her gentle, loving spirit speaking to him through her. And his hard heart became tender, as he folded the child to his breast and bowed his head upon the soft, fair curls and wept.

Susie wearily wending her way homeward, pondering how best to expend the small change which she dared spare for a Thanksgiving dinner, was overtaken by Karl Schilling, her own true love.

"Oh, Susie!" he cried, breathlessly, "what do you think has happened? Look! here is an invitation to Bleak Hall, from my employer, requesting the presence of my mother and myself at his Thanksgiving dinner to-morrow. What is the world coming to?"

"I'm sure I don't know," smiled Susie. "Uncle Ralph is no doubt beginning to appreciate you, Karl."

"But he was that cross this morning, he resembled an icicle more than anything else. There must be some mistake."

"No," said Susie, gravely; "it is a very kind invitation, and you must accept it."

"Oh, certainly; but how very surprising. What will mother say? Our paths divide here, Susie, so, for the present I will say good-night."

His mother surprised! If she was, she betrayed it only by a sudden paleness, then a slight color, and placing her bowed head in her hands she sobbed softly.

"By forgiving my former cruelty and loving me a little, and wearing the pretty things your maid has selected. It will please me to have you wear them."

And when Susie entered the parlor in her lovely trailing blue satin, Edie sprang from her uncle's arms with a little cry of rapture.

"Oh! how beautiful you are, Susie!"

The sound of carriage wheels here diverted her attention. "It is Karl!" she cried, running to the window.

Yes, it was Karl, and the surprise he felt upon meeting his betrothed, robed like a princess, in her uncle's parlor, increased when he presented his pale, lovely mother to his employer.

"My mother, Mr. Morley," he began, then paused, for a glance at his employer's white, agitated face, and his mother's downcast and softly-flushed, told him they had met before.

"Nellie! Nellie Clyde!"

"Yes," she answered, softly. "Nellie Clyde Schilling, a widow, old and poor, to whom you sent an invitation to a Thanksgiving dinner."

"Nellie!" he repeated, eagerly, "you would not have come to mock me in my solitude and loneliness, unless—unless the past was to be forgotten! Shall it not be as it was, twenty years ago?"

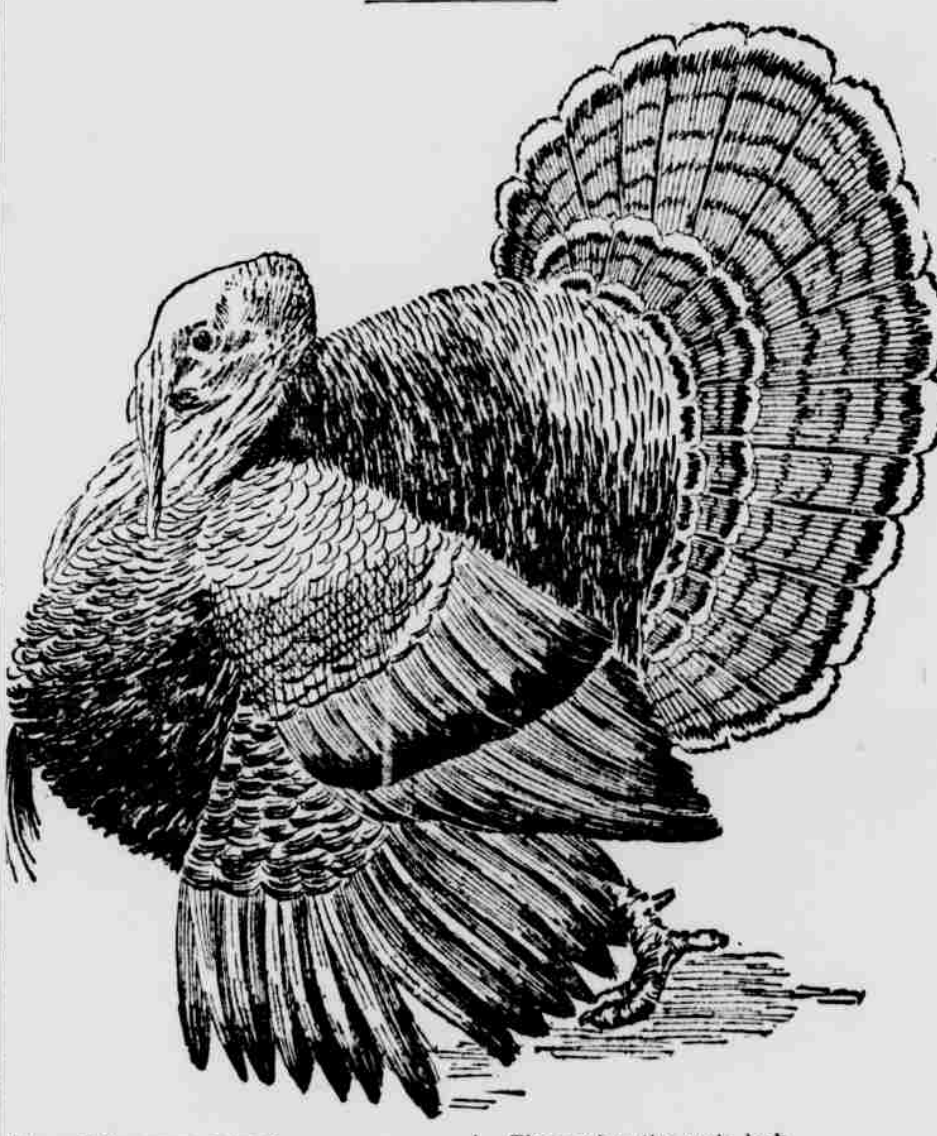
"I—I did not suppose you would feel thus, at this late day," she said, in confusion. "I only thought we might be friends once more."

"And so we will," he cried, "the very best friends the world has ever known. Oh, what a Thanksgiving you brought me, little Edie!"—The Heartstone.

The Thanksgiving Day Spirit.

Better is a dinner of herbs where love is than a stalled ox and hatred therewith. And that applies to the Thanks-

A HANDFUL OF TURKEY THOUGHTS.



The gobbler grows rotund, And so we shout "Ho-ho-ho!" Like seven cents.

On high therat And romp and fink and play, And sigh, by sudden rapture stung: "A turkey, a well-a-day!" While thus we flap our wings And gaily skip Joy's saraband.

We watch him spread his tail As on he proudly struts, And see him puff and And crisp and stuffed With bread and sage and nuts, Till we would on the fork impale His choicest juicy cuts— While fancy's breeze— Fills us as a sigh With argot.

Oh, bird of rare renown

That makes the eagle look To all intents Like seven cents.

You're greater when the cook, Who knows just how to do you brown, And knows it like a book, Makes you in give A roasted dream— Of bliss supreme! Full soon o'er you, blithe fowl, The knife and fork will clash; And first we'll hold You hot, then cold, And later in that hash Which whisks the whiskers off the scowl, Of sorrow like a flash; While hand in hand We sigh and swoon In fairy land Beneath the moon.

—R. K. Munkittrick, in Sunday Magazine.

giving dinner as well as to any other feast. No costly or skillfully prepared viands can make up for the lack of that genial affection and sympathy which we all understand through sympathy, but which is so difficult to describe. While you cannot extemporize this sentiment, you can avoid doing the things that prevent it from having free play. There is a season for everything; and the season for those truthful remarks or justifiable actions that might provoke resentment and ill feeling is not on such a day as Thanksgiving. It is remarkable how much the coldness, indifference or failure to enter into the spirit of an occasion may do to spoil its whole atmosphere and to make the feast a dismal failure. Whatever else you are on these high festivals at home, do not be a "kill joy." Do not suffer your pride or vanity, or even your desire to lead others to adopt courses that you regard as best for them, make you indifferent or unsympathetic to the mood of the hour. There are many occasions and Thanksgiving day is one of them, when our highest duty is not to impose our consciences upon other people, but to contribute to the common stock of happiness and sympathy.—The Watchman.

Somewhat of a Dampener.

Mrs. Jimpson—Just see what mother has sent us—a lovely big turkey for our Thanksgiving dinner! It came by express this morning.

Jimpson (joyfully)—Bless her heart! That's just like her!

Mrs. Jimpson—And she sent a note saying she would be here to help us eat it.

Jimpson (not quite so joyfully)—The dickens! That's just like her, too!—New York Times.