



# THE CHIMES

**CHARLES DICKENS**

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**THE CHIMES**  
A GOBLIN STORY  
OF SOME BELLS THAT RANG AN OLD  
YEAR OUT AND A NEW YEAR IN

BY  
CHARLES DICKENS

1844

The Chimes By Charles Dickens.

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‘—Kissing Meg,’ suggested Richard. Doing it too!

‘No. Not a bit more,’ said Meg. ‘But I wouldn’t let him, father. Where would have been the use!’

‘Richard my boy!’ cried Trotty. ‘You was turned up Trumps originally; and Trumps you must be, till you die! But, you were crying by the fire to-night, my pet, when I came home! Why did you cry by the fire?’

‘I was thinking of the years we’ve passed together, father. Only that. And thinking that you might miss me, and be lonely.’

Trotty was backing off to that extraordinary chair again, when the child, who had been awakened by the noise, came running in half-dressed.

‘Why, here she is!’ cried Trotty, catching her up. ‘Here’s little Lilian! Ha ha ha! Here we are and here we go! O here we are and here we go again! And here we are and here we go! and Uncle Will too!’ Stopping in his trot to greet him heartily. ‘O, Uncle Will, the vision that I’ve had to-night, through lodging you! O, Uncle Will, the obligations that you’ve laid me under, by your coming, my good friend!’

Before Will Fern could make the least reply, a band of music burst into the room, attended by a lot of neighbours, screaming ‘A Happy New Year, Meg!’ ‘A Happy Wedding!’ ‘Many of ’em!’ and other fragmentary good wishes of that sort. The Drum (who was a private friend of Trotty’s) then stepped forward, and said:

‘Trotty Veck, my boy! It’s got about, that your daughter is going to be married to-morrow. There an’t a soul that knows you that don’t wish you well, or that knows her and don’t wish her well. Or that knows you both, and don’t wish you both all the happiness the New Year can bring. And here we are, to play it in and dance it in, accordingly.’

Which was received with a general shout. The Drum was rather drunk, by-the-bye; but, never mind.

‘What a happiness it is, I’m sure,’ said Trotty, ‘to be so esteemed! How kind and neighbourly you are! It’s all along of my dear daughter. She deserves it!’

They were ready for a dance in half a second (Meg and Richard at the top); and the Drum was on the very brink of feathering away with all his power; when a combination of prodigious sounds was heard outside, and a good-humoured comely woman of some fifty years of age, or thereabouts, came running in, attended by a man bearing a stone pitcher of terrific size, and closely followed by the marrow-bones and cleavers, and the bells; not *the* Bells, but a portable collection on a frame.

Trotty said, 'It's Mrs. Chickenstalker!' And sat down and beat his knees again.

'Married, and not tell me, Meg!' cried the good woman. 'Never! I couldn't rest on the last night of the Old Year without coming to wish you joy. I couldn't have done it, Meg. Not if I had been bed-ridden. So here I am; and as it's New Year's Eve, and the Eve of your wedding too, my dear, I had a little flip made, and brought it with me.'

Mrs. Chickenstalker's notion of a little flip did honour to her character. The pitcher steamed and smoked and reeked like a volcano; and the man who had carried it, was faint.

'Mrs. Tugby!' said Trotty, who had been going round and round her, in an ecstasy.—'I *should* say, Chickenstalker—Bless your heart and soul! A Happy New Year, and many of 'em! Mrs. Tugby,' said Trotty when he had saluted her;—'I *should* say, Chickenstalker—This is William Fern and Lilian.'

The worthy dame, to his surprise, turned very pale and very red.

'Not Lilian Fern whose mother died in Dorsetshire!' said she.

Her uncle answered 'Yes,' and meeting hastily, they exchanged some hurried words together; of which the upshot was, that Mrs. Chickenstalker shook him by both hands; saluted Trotty on his cheek again of her own free will; and took the child to her capacious breast.

'Will Fern!' said Trotty, pulling on his right-hand muffler. 'Not the friend you was hoping to find?'

'Ay!' returned Will, putting a hand on each of Trotty's shoulders. 'And like to prove a'most as good a friend, if that can be, as one I found.'



‘O!’ said Trotty. ‘Please to play up there. Will you have the goodness!’

To the music of the band, and, the bells, the marrow-bones and cleavers, all at once; and while the Chimes were yet in lusty operation out of doors; Trotty, making Meg and Richard, second couple, led off Mrs. Chickenstalker down the dance, and danced it in a step unknown before or since; founded on his own peculiar trot.

Had Trotty dreamed?

Or, are his joys and sorrows, and the actors in them, but a dream; himself a dream; the teller of this tale a dreamer, waking but now? If it be so, O listener, dear to him in all his visions, try to bear in mind the stern realities from which these shadows come; and in your sphere—none is too wide, and none too limited for such an end—endeavour to correct, improve, and soften them.

So may the New Year be a happy one to you, happy to many more whose happiness depends on you! So may each year be happier than the last, and not the meanest of our brethren or sisterhood debarred their rightful share, in what our Great Creator formed them to enjoy.

THE END

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