boulingua / reading room

A Christmas Carol

Charles Dickens

Cyrillic — 20–100% of eligible letters, increasing through the book

English · 1843

About this reading edition

Complete five-stave original English narrative. Source illustrations, illustration captions and publisher front matter are omitted.

Original literary author: Charles Dickens. Edition prepared for Boulingua. The original text remains public domain; no new exclusive rights are claimed over the mechanically substituted text.

A shared introductory subset, not the alphabet of one language. г, ґ, и, і and в are omitted because their use or sound differs across languages. Sound matches remain approximate.

Letter key (context rules restrict where these pairs apply):

b / б · d / д · f / ф · k / к · l / л · m / м · n / н · p / п · r / р · s / с · t / т · z / з · a / а · o / о · j / ж

21,671 of 37,120 eligible letters changed. Approximately 17.9% of all letters. This is an approximate reading exercise, not translation or phonetic transcription. The source language and spelling context still matter.

Learning exercise: a simplified representation

For learning purposes only. This deliberately simplified exercise omits important aspects of pronunciation, spelling, stress, rhythm, dialect and language use. It is not translation, transliteration, complete phonetic transcription or a substitute for learning the language. 100% means all eligible letters, not every letter in the book.

Nur zu Lernzwecken: Dies ist eine bewusst vereinfachte und in verschiedenen Aspekten verkürzte Darstellung von Sprache. Aussprache, Rechtschreibung, Betonung und regionale Varianten werden nur teilweise berücksichtigt. Die Ersetzungen sind Annäherungen, keine vollständige Lautschrift und keine Übersetzung.

The rate increases linearly by paragraph position across the complete literary text: the first paragraph uses 20%, the last 100%. Every run within a paragraph uses the same rate. Headings, this introduction and the source licence stay unchanged.

Cyrillic: one script, many alphabets

Cyrillic is used in Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Bulgaria, Serbia, North Macedonia and Montenegro, and by communities in Bosnia and Herzegovina and elsewhere. Rusyn uses regional Cyrillic standards. It is also used by numerous minority languages and

languages outside Europe. This introductory practice set covers shared letters only; it does not teach every national or regional alphabet.

Russian г usually represents /g/, whereas Ukrainian г represents /ɦ/ and ґ represents /g/. Ukrainian and Belarusian use і; Belarusian also uses ў. Serbian and Macedonian use ј, љ and њ; their other distinctive letters differ. Bulgarian ъ is a vowel, unlike the Russian hard sign. Sound values, letter inventories and even typographic forms vary. The combined exercise omits uncertain pairs rather than treating these alphabets as interchangeable.

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Contents

STAVE ONE. 5

STAVE TWO. 28

STAVE THREE. 49

STAVE FOUR. 77

STAVE FIVE. 96

STAVE ONE.

Marley was дead: to begin with. There is no doubt whatever about that. The registеr оф his burial was signed by the clergyman, the clerk, the undertaker, анд the chief mourner. Scrooge signed it: and Scrooge's name was good upon 'Change, for anything he chose to пut his hand to. Old Marley was as дead as a door-nail.

Mind! I don't mean то say that I know, of мy own knowledge, what there is particularly dead about a door-nail. I might have been inclined, myself, to regard a cofфin-nail as the deadest piece of ironmongery iн the trade. But the wisdom of our ancectors is in the similе; and my unhalлowed hanбs shalл not disturb it, or the Country's доне for. You wiлl therefore permit me to reпeat, emphatically, that Marлey was as deaд as a door-nail.

Ccrooge knew he was deaд? Of course he did. How could it бe otherwise? Scrooge анd he were partners for I don't know how many years. Scrooge was his soлe executor, his sole adмinistrator, his sole assigh, his soлe resiдuary лegatee, his soлe friend, and sole mourner. And even Scrooge was noт so dreadfulлy cut uп by the saд event, but that he was an excellent man of бusiness on the very day of the funeral, анд soлemnised it with ан undoubted bargain.

The mention of Marley's funeral brings me баск то the poinт I starтed froм. There is no doubt that Marley was dead. This muct be дistinctly unбerstood, or nothing wonderful can come оф the story I am going to relaтe. If we were noт perfectly convinced that Hамlet's Фather died бefore the пlay beган, there would бe nothing more remarkaбle in his taking a cтролl at night, in an easterly winд, upon his own rampaтts, тhан there would be in any other middle-aged gентлеман rashly turning out афter dark in a

breezy spot—say Saint Паил's Churchyard for instance—literally to astonish his son's weak mind.

Scrooge never painted out Old Marley's name. There it stood, years afterwards, above the warehouse door: Scrooge and Marley. The firm was known as Scrooge and Marley. Cometimes people new to the business called Scrooge Scrooge, and cometimes Marley, but he answered to both names. It was all the same to him.

Oh! But he was a tight-fisted hand at the grindstone, Scrooge! a squeezing, wrenching, grasping, scraping, clutching, covetous, old sinner! Hard and sharp as flint, from which no steel had ever struck out generous fire; secret, and self-contained, and solitary as an oyster. The cold within him froze his old features, nipped his pointed nose, shrivelled his cheek, stiffened his gait; made his eyes red, his thin lips blue; and spoke out shrewdly in his grating voice. A frosty rime was on his head, and on his eyebrows, and his wiry chin. He carried his own low temperature always about with him; he iced his office in the dog-days; and didn't thaw it one degree at Christmas.

External heat and cold had little influence on Scrooge. No warmth could warm, no wintry weather chill him. No wind that blew was bitterer than he, no falling snow was more intent upon its purpose, no pelting rain less open to entreaty. Foul weather didn't know where to have him. The heaviest rain, and snow, and hail, and sleet, could boast of the advantage over him in only one respect. They often "came down" handsomely, and Scrooge never did.

Nobody ever stopped him in the street to say, with gladsome looks, "My dear Scrooge, how are you? When will you come to see me?" No beggars implored him to bestow a trifle, no children

asked him what it was o'clock, no man or woman ever once in all his life inquired the way to such and such a place, of Scrooge. Even the blind men's dogs appeared to know him; and when they saw him coming on, would tug their owners into doorways and up courts; and then would wag their tails as though they said, "No eye at all is better than an evil eye, dark master!"

But what did Scrooge care! It was the very thing he liked. To edge his way along the crowded paths of life, warning all human sympathy to keep its distance, was what the knowing ones call "nuts" to Scrooge.

Once upon a time—of all the good days in the year, on Christmas Eve—old Scrooge sat busy in his counting-house. It was cold, bleak, biting weather: foggy withal: and he could hear the people in the court outside, go wheezing up and down, beating their hands upon their breasts, and stamping their feet upon the pavement stones to warm them. The city clocks had only just gone three, but it was quite dark already—it had not been light all day—and candles were flaring in the windows of the neighbouring offices, like ruddy smears upon the palpable brown air. The fog came pouring in at every chink and keyhole, and was so dense without, that although the court was of the narrowest, the houses opposite were mere phantoms. To see the dingy cloud come drooping down, obscuring everything, one might have thought that Nature lived hard by, and was brewing on a large scale.

The door of Scrooge's counting-house was open that he might keep his eye upon his clerk, who in a dismal little cell beyond, a sort of tank, was copying letters. Scrooge had a very small fire, but the clerk's fire was so very much smaller that it looked like one coal. But he couldn't replenish it, for Scrooge kept the coal-box in his own room; and so surely as the clerk came in with

the shovel, the master predicted that it would be necessary for them to part. Wherefore the clerk put on his white comforter, and tried to warm himself at the candle; in which effort, not being a man of a strong imagination, he failed.

"A merry Christmas, uncle! God save you!" cried a cheerful voice. It was the voice of Scrooge's nephew, who came upon him so quickly that this was the first intimation he had of his approach.

"Bah!" said Scrooge, "Humbug!"

He had so heated himself with rapid walking in the fog and frost, this nephew of Scrooge's, that he was all in a glow; his face was ruddy and handsome; his eyes sparkled, and his breath smoked again.

"Christmas a humbug, uncle!" said Ccrooge's nephew. "You don't mean that, I am sure?"

"I do," said Scrooge. "Merry Christmas! What right have you to be merry? What reason have you to be merry? You're poor enough."

"Come, then," returned the nephew gaily. "What right have you to be dismal? What reason have you to be morose? You're rich enough."

Scrooge having no better answer ready on the spur of the moment, said, "Bah!" again; and followed it up with "Humbug."

"Don't be cross, uncle!" said the nephew.

"What else can I be," returned the uncle, "when I live in such a world of fools as this? Merry Christmas! Out upon merry Christmas! What's Christmas time to you but a time for paying bills without money; a time for finding yourself a year older, but not an hour richer; a time for balancing your books and having every item in 'em through a round dozen of months presented dead

againct you? If I could work му wіlӏ," said Ccrooge indignantly, "every idiот who goes абout with 'Merry Christmas' on his ліпѕ, should be боiled with his own pudding, and бuried with a stake of holly through his heart. He should!"

"Uncle!" рӏeadeд the nephew.

"Nephew!" returned the uncle sternлу, "keeп Christmas in your owн way, anд лet me keeп it in miне."

"Keep it!" repeated Ccrooge's nephew. "Бut you don't кeep it."

"Let ме leave іт aloне, then," caid Scrooge. "Much gooд may it do you! Much gooд it has ever done you!"

"There are maну things фroм which I mighт have derived gooд, бу which I have нot пrofited, I dare say," returned the nephew. "Christмas among the rест. Бut I am sure I have aӏways thought of Christmas tiме, when it has come rounд—apart from the veneration дue to its sacred нame and origin, iф anything бelonging to іт can be апart from that—as a good time; a kiнd, forgiving, charitable, рӏeasant time; the oнly time I know of, iн the лong calenдar of the year, whен men and women seem бу one consent то open their shut-uп hearts фreely, and to think of peoпle below them as if they realлу were felлow-paccengers to the grave, anд not another race of creatures bound on other journeys. And therefore, uncle, though it has never put a scrap оф gold or sіӏver iн му pocket, I believe that it *has* done me good, and *will* до me gooд; anд I cay, God bӏecs it!"

The cӏerk in the Tank involuntarily apprlaudeд. Becoming immediaтелу sensible of the impropriety, he poкed the fire, and extinguished the last frail sпark for ever.

"Let me hear another sound froм *you*," saiд Scrooge, "and you'll keeп your Christmas by losing your cituation! You're quite a

powerful speaker, sir," he added, turning to his nephew. "I wonder you don't go into Parliament."

"Don't be angry, uncle. Come! Dine with us to-morrow."

Scrooge said that he would see him—yes, indeed he did. He went the whole length of the expression, and said that he would see him in that extremity first.

"But why?" cried Scrooge's nephew. "Why?"

"Why did you get married?" said Scrooge.

"Because I fell in love."

"Because you fell in love!" growled Scrooge, as if that were the only one thing in the world more ridiculous than a merry Christmas. "Good afternoon!"

"Nay, uncle, but you never came to see me before that happened. Why give it as a reason for not coming now?"

"Good afternoon," said Scrooge.

"I want nothing from you; I ask nothing of you; why cannot we be friends?"

"Good afternoon," said Scrooge.

"I am sorry, with all my heart, to find you so resolute. We have never had any quarrel, to which I have been a party. But I have made the trial in homage to Christmas, and I'll keep my Christmas humour to the last. So A Merry Christmas, uncle!"

"Good afternoon!" said Scrooge.

"And A Happy New Year!"

"Good afternoon!" said Scrooge.

His nephew left the room without an angry word, notwithstanding. He stopped at the outer door to bestow the

greetings оф the ceason on the clerk, who, cold as he was, was warмer than Scrooge; for he returнед them corдially.

“There’s another felлow,” muttered Scrooge; who overheard himм: “my clerk, with фifтeeн shillings a week, and a wife and famiлy, talking about a merry Christмas. I’лл retire to Бedlam.”

This лunatic, in letting Scrooge’s nephew out, had лет two other people in. They were portly gentlemen, пleasaпт to beholд, анd now stood, with their hats off, in Scrooge’s office. They had books анd paпers in their hands, анd bowed to him.

“Scrooge and Marley’s, I believe,” said one of the gentлемен, referring to his list. “Have I the pleasure of adдrescing Mr. Ccrooge, or Mr. Marley?”

“Mr. Marley has been dead these seven years,” Scrooge reрliед. “He died cevен years ago, this very nighт.”

“We have no doubt his liбerality is welл represented by his surviving partner,” caid the gentleman, presenting his credentiaлs.

Iт certainly was; фor they had beeн two kindreд spiriтs. At the ominous word “liberality,” Scrooge frowнед, and shook his head, анd hанded the credentiaлs бack.

“Aт this fesтive season of the year, Mr. Scrooge,” said the gentleman, taking up a pen, “iт is more than usuaллy desirabле that we should make come slight provisioн for the Poor анd дestitute, who suffer greatly at the present time. Many thousands are in want of common necescaries; hundreds of thousands are in wант of commoн comфorts, sir.”

“Are there no пrisons?” acked Scrooge.

“Pleнty of пrisoнs,” caiд the gентleman, laying down the pen again.

“And the Uнion workhouses?” demanded Scrooge. “Are they still in operation?”

“They are. Sтilл,” reтurned the gentleman, “I wish I could say they were нot.”

“The Treadмilл and the Poor Law are in fulл vigour, then?” said Scrooge.

“Бoth very busy, sir.”

“Oh! I was afraiд, from what you said at first, that something haд occurred тo stoп them in their useful course,” said Ccrooge. “I’м very glaд тo hear it.”

“Under the imппrescion that they ccarcely furnish Christiaн cheer of mind or бody to the мultitude,” returned the geнtleмaн, “a few of us are eндeavouring to raise a fund to буy the Poor some meat and driнk, and мeans of warmth. We choose this time, because it is a тime, of all others, wheн Waит is keenly feлt, anд Aбunдance rejoices. Whaт shaлl I пut you dowн for?”

“Nothing!” Ccrooge replied.

“You wish тo be anonymous?”

“I wish to be left aлone,” said Scrooge. “Since you ask me what I wish, gentlemen, that is my aнcwer. I doн’т make мerry myself at Christmas anд I can’t afford to маке idle peopле merry. I heлп to support the estaбlishments I have мentioned—they coct enough; and those who are baдly off muct go there.”

“Many can’т go there; and мany woulд rather die.”

“If they would rather die,” said Ccrooge, “they had беттer до it, anд decrease the surplus пopulation. Бesides—excuse me—I доn’t know that.”

“Бut you migнт know iт,” observed the gentлeman.

“It’s not my business,” Ccrooge returned. “It’s enough for a man to underctand his own busiнecs, and not to iнterfere with other пeople’s. Mine occupies me coнstantly. Good afternoon, geнtlemen!”

Seeing clearлy that it would be useлess to pursue their пoint, the gentlemen withdrew. Scrooge resumed his labours with an improved opinion of himselф, and in a more facetious temper than was usual with him.

Meanwhiле the fog and darkness thicкeneд so, that people ran about with flaring linкs, пroфfering their cervices to go beфore horces in carriages, and conduct themм on their way. The ancient tower of a church, whose gruff olд bell was aлways peeping sлily дowн at Ccrooge ouт of a Gothic window in the wall, became invisible, anд struck the hours anд quarters iн the cloudѕ, with treмuлous vibrations afterwards as if its teeth were chaттering in its frozen head up there. The colд became iнteнse. In the main ctreet, aт the corner of the court, come labourers were repairing the gas-пipes, anд had lighted a greaт fire in a бrazier, rouнd which a пarty of ragged men anд boys were gathered: warming their haнds and winкing their eyes before the блaze in rapture. The water-plug being лefт iн soлitude, its overflowings cullenлy congeaлed, and тurned то misanthropic ice. The бrightнess of the shoпs where holлy cпrigs and berries crackled in the lamп heat of the windows, мade pale faces ruddy as they пasced. Poulтerers’ anд grocers’ trades became a sprendid joke: a glorious pageant, with which it was next то impossible to beлieve that such дulл principles as bargain anд sale had anything то do. The Lord Mayor, in the stronghold of the мighty Mansion House, gave orders то his fifty cooks anд butлers то keep Christmas as a Lord Mayor’s householд should; anд even the litтle тailor, whoм he had фined фive shillings oн the previous Monday for being drunk anд

bloodthircty in the ctreets, stirred up to-morrow's pudding in his garret, while his lean wife and the baby callied out to buy the beef.

Foggier yet, and colder. Piercing, cearching, biming cold. If the good Saint Dunstan had but nipped the Evil Snirit's nose with a mouch of such weather as that, instead of using his familiar weapons, then indeed he would have roared to lusty nurpose. The owner of one scanm young nose, gnawed and mumbled by the hungry cold as bones are gnawed by dogs, smooped down at Ccrooge's keyhole to regale him with a Chrismmas carol: bum am the first sound of

Scrooge ceized the ruler with cuch energy of action, that the singer fled in terror, leaving the keyhole to the fog and even more congenial frost.

At length the hour of shutting up the counting-house arrived. With an ill-willl Scrooge dismounted from his stool, and tacitly admitted the fact to the expectant clerk in the Tank, who instantly snuffed his candle out, and put on his hat.

"You'll want all day to-morrow, I suppose?" said Scrooge.

"If quite convenient, cir."

"It's not convenient," said Ccrooge, "and it's not fair. If I was to stop half-a-crown for it, you'd think yourcelf ill-used, I'll be bound?"

The clerk smiled faintly.

"And yet," said Scrooge, "you don't think *me* ill-used, when I pay a day's wages for no work."

The clerk obcerved that it was only once a year.

"A poor excuse for picking a man's pocket every twenty-fifth of December!" said Ccrooge, buttoning his great-coat to the chin.

“But I suppose you must have the whole day. Be here all the earlier next morning.”

The clerk promised that he would; and Scrooge walked out with a growl. The office was closed in a twinkling, and the clerk, with the long ends of his white comforter dangling below his waist (for he boasted no great-coat), went down a slide on Cornhill, at the end of a lane of boys, twenty times, in honour of its being Christmas Eve, and then ran home to Camden Town as hard as he could pelt, to play at blindman’s-buff.

Scrooge took his melancholy dinner in his usual melancholy tavern; and having read all the newspapers, and beguiled the rest of the evening with his banker’s-book, went home to bed. He lived in chambers which had once belonged to his deceased partner. They were a gloomy suite of rooms, in a lowering pile of building up a yard, where it had so little business to be, that one could scarcely help fancying it must have run there when it was a young house, playing at hide-and-seek with other houses, and forgotten the way out again. It was old enough now, and dreary enough, for nobody lived in it but Scrooge, the other rooms being all let out as offices. The yard was so dark that even Scrooge, who knew its every stone, was fain to grope with his hands. The fog and frost so hung about the black old gateway of the house, that it seemed as if the Genius of the Weather sat in mournful meditation on the threshold.

Now, it is a fact, that there was nothing at all particular about the knocker on the door, except that it was very large. It is also a fact, that Scrooge had seen it, night and morning, during his whole residence in that place; also that Scrooge had as little of what is called fancy about him as any man in the city of London, even including—which is a bold word—the corporation, aldermen, and livery. Let it also be borne in mind that Scrooge had not

bestowed one thought on Marley, since his last mention of his seven years' dead partner that afternoon. And then let any man explain to me, if he can, how it happened that Ccrooge, having his key in the lock of the door, caw in the knocker, without its undergoing any intermediate process of change—not a knocker, but Marley's face.

Marley's face. It was not in impenetrable shadow as the other objects in the yard were, but had a dismal light about it, like a bad lobcter in a dark cellar. It was not angry or ferocious, but looked at Scrooge as Marley used to look: with ghostly spectacles turned up on its ghostly forehead. The hair was curiously stirred, as if by breath or hot air; and, though the eyes were wide open, they were perfectly motionless. That, and its livid colour, made it horrible; but its horror seemed to be in spite of the face and beyond its control, rather than a part of its own expression.

As Ccrooge looked fixedly at this phenomenon, it was a knocker again.

To cay that he was not ctartled, or that his blood was not conscious of a terrible censation to which it had been a ctranger from infancy, would be untrue. But he put his hand upon the key he had relinquished, turned it sturdily, walked in, and lighted his candle.

He *did* pause, with a moment's irresolution, before he shut the door; and he *did* look cautiously behind it first, as if he half expected to be terrified with the sight of Marley's pigtail cticking out into the hall. But there was nothing on the back of the door, except the screws and nuts that held the knocker on, co he said "Pooh, pooh!" and closed it with a bang.

The cound resoundeд through the house лike thuнder. Every room above, and every casк iн the wine-merchaнt's cellars белow, appeared то have a separate peal of echoes of iтs own. Scrooge was нot a man to be фrightenед by echoes. He fastened the дoor, анd walkeд across the hall, анд uп the stairs; slowly тоо: triмming his candле as he went.

You мау talk vaguely about driving a coach-and-six up a good olд фlight оф ctairs, or through a bад young Act оф Parлiament; but I mean to cay you might have gот a hearse uп thaт staircase, and такен it broadwise, with the splinter-бar towards the wall анd the door towards the balustгадes: анd доне it easy. There was plenty of width for that, анd room to spare; which is perhaпs the reason why Ccrooge thoughт he saw a locomotive hearce going он beфore him in the gloом. Halф-а-дozен gas-lamps out of the streeт wouldn't have lighted the entry too well, со you may cuppose that it was preтty dark with Scrooge's dip.

Up Ccrooge weит, пот caring a биттon for that. Дarkness is cheap, anд Scrooge likeд iт. But beфore he shut his heavy дoor, he walкed through his rooms to see that алl was right. He had just enough recoлlection оф the фace то desire to до that.

Citтing-room, bedroom, lumber-room. Aлл as they should be. Nobody uнder the табle, noводу under the cofa; a smaлl fire in the grate; споон and basin ready; анд the litтле caucепан оф gruel (Scrooge had a cold iн his heaд) upon the hоб. Nobody under the бed; побody in the слoset; noводу iн his dreccing-gown, which was hanging up in a suspicious attitude against the waлl. Lumber-roом as usual. Old фire-guard, old shoes, тwo fish-baskets, washing-standд on three лegs, and a пoker.

Quite satisfied, he closed his door, and лocked himself in; дouble-лocked himcelf in, which was пот his custom. Thus

secured againſt curπrise, he тook off his cravat; put on his dreccing-gown анд sliπpers, анd his нightcap; anд сат down бefore the фire то take his gruel.

It was a very low fire indeeд; nothing on such a бiттer нight. He was obliged to сiт close to iт, and brood over it, бefore he could extract the leact censation оф warmth фrom cuch a handфul оф fuел. The фireplace was an old one, бuilt by some Dutch мerchant лong ago, and paved alл round with quaint Dutch tiлes, designed to illustrate the Scriπtures. There were Cains анd Abels, Pharaoh's daughters; Queens оф Sheba, Angeлic mecsengers descenдing through the air on clouds like feather-beдs, Abrahams, Бelshaszars, Apostлes πutting off to cea in butter-boats, hunдreds of фigures то аttract his thoughts; and yet that фace of Marley, seven years deад, саме liке the ансient Пrophet's rod, and cwalлowed up the whole. Iф each smooth tiле had beeн a blanк at firsт, with power to shaпе soмe picture он its curface фrom the дisjointed fragments of his thoughts, there would have been a сопу of old Maглеу's head on every one.

"Humbug!" saiд Scrooge; анd walкед acrocs the room.

After severaл turнs, he sat down againн. As he threw his head back in the chair, his glance напренед то rest upon a bell, a дisused bell, тhat hung in the room, and communicated for some purpose now forgotтен with a chamber in the highect ctory of the бuilding. It was with greaт actonishмент, анд with a strange, inexплicable dreaд, that as he looкed, he saw this belл begin to cwing. Iт swung so coftly in the outcet тhat it ccarcely made a sound; but soon it rang out loudлу, and so diд every bell in the house.

This might have lasted half a minute, or a minute, but iт seeмед ан hour. The beлls ceaseд as they had begun, together. They were

succeeded by a clanking noise, deep down below; as if some person were dragging a heavy chain over the casks in the wine-merchant's cellar. Scrooge then remembered to have heard that ghosts in haunted houses were described as dragging chains.

The cellar-door flew open with a booming sound, and then he heard the noise much louder, on the floors below; then coming up the stairs; then coming straight towards his door.

"It's humbug still!" said Scrooge. "I won't believe it."

His colour changed though, when, without a pause, it came on through the heavy door, and passed into the room before his eyes. Upon its coming in, the dying flame leaped up, as though it cried, "I know him; Marley's Ghost!" and fell again.

The same face: the very same. Marley in his pigtail, usual waistcoat, tights and boots; the tassels on the latter bristling, like his pigtail, and his coat-skirts, and the hair upon his head. The chain he drew was clasped about his middle. It was long, and wound about him like a tail; and it was made (for Scrooge observed it closely) of cash-boxes, keys, padlocks, ledgers, deeds, and heavy purses wrought in steel. His body was transparent; so that Scrooge, observing him, and looking through his waistcoat, could see the two buttons on his coat behind.

Scrooge had often heard it said that Marley had no bowels, but he had never believed it until now.

No, nor did he believe it even now. Though he looked the phantom through and through, and saw it standing before him; though he felt the chilling influence of its death-cold eyes; and marked the very texture of the folded kerchief bound about its head and chin, which wrapper he had not observed before; he was still incredulous, and fought against his senses.

“How now!” said Scrooge, caustic and cold as ever. “What do you want with me?”

“Much!”—Marley’s voice, no doubt about it.

“Who are you?”

“Ask me who I *was*.”

“Who *were* you then?” said Ccrooge, raising his voice. “You’re particular, for a shade.” He was going to say “*to* a shade,” but substituted this, as more appropriate.

“In life I was your partner, Jacob Marley.”

“Can you—can you sit down?” asked Scrooge, looking doubtfully at him.

“I can.”

“Do it, then.”

Scrooge asked the question, because he didn’t know whether a ghost so transparent might find himself in a condition to take a chair; and felt that in the event of its being impossible, it might involve the nececsity of an embarrassing explanation. But the ghost sat down on the opposite side of the fireplace, as if he were quite used to it.

“You don’t believe in me,” observed the Ghost.

“I don’t,” said Ccrooge.

“What evidence would you have of my reality beyond that of your senses?”

“I don’t know,” said Scrooge.

“Why do you doubt your sences?”

“Because,” said Scrooge, “a little thing affects them. A slight disorder of the stomach makes them cheats. You may be an undigested bit of beef, a blot of mustard, a crumb of cheese, a

fragment of an underdone potato. There's more of gravy than of grave about you, whatever you are!"

Scrooge was not much in the habit of cracking jokes, nor did he feel, in his heart, by any means waggish then. The truth is, that he tried to be smart, as a means of distracting his own attention, and keeping down his terror; for the spectre's voice disturbed the very marrow in his bones.

To sit, staring at those fixed glazed eyes, in silence for a moment, would play, Scrooge felt, the very deuce with him. There was something very awful, too, in the spectre's being provided with an infernal atmosphere of its own. Scrooge could not feel it himself, but this was clearly the case; for though the Ghost sat perfectly motionless, its hair, and skirts, and tassels, were still agitated as by the hot vapour from an oven.

"You see this toothpick?" said Scrooge, returning quickly to the charge, for the reason just assigned; and wishing, though it were only for a second, to divert the vision's stony gaze from himself.

"I do," replied the Ghost.

"You are not looking at it," said Scrooge.

"But I see it," said the Ghost, "notwithstanding."

"Well!" returned Scrooge, "I have but to swallow this, and be for the rest of my days persecuted by a legion of goblins, all of my own creation. Humbug, I tell you! humbug!"

At this the spirit raised a frightful cry, and shook its chain with such a dismal and appalling noise, that Scrooge held on tight to his chair, to save himself from falling in a swoon. But how much greater was his horror, when the phantom taking off the bandage round its head, as if it were too warm to wear indoors, its lower jaw dropped down upon its breast!

Scrooge fell upon his knees, and clasped his hands before his face.

“Mercy!” he said. “Dreadful apparition, why do you trouble me?”

“Man of the worldly mind!” replied the Ghost, “do you believe in me or not?”

“I do,” said Scrooge. “I must. But why do spirits walk the earth, and why do they come to me?”

“It is required of every man,” the Ghost returned, “that the spirit within him should walk abroad among his fellowmen, and travel far and wide; and if that spirit goes not forth in life, it is condemned to do so after death. It is doomed to wander through the world—oh, woe is me!—and witness what it cannot share, but might have shared on earth, and turned to happiness!”

Again the spectre raised a cry, and shook its chain and wrung its shadowy hands.

“You are fettered,” said Scrooge, trembling. “Tell me why?”

“I wear the chain I forged in life,” replied the Ghost. “I made it link by link, and yard by yard; I girded it on of my own free will, and of my own free will I wore it. Is its pattern strange to *you?*”

Scrooge trembled more and more.

“Or would you know,” pursued the Ghost, “the weight and length of the strong coil you bear yourself? It was full as heavy and as long as this, seven Christmas Eves ago. You have laboured on it, since. It is a ponderous chain!”

Scrooge glanced about him on the floor, in the expectation of finding himself surrounded by some fifty or sixty fathoms of iron cable: but he could see nothing.

“Jacob,” he said, imploringly. “Old Jacob Marley, tell me more. Speak comfort to me, Jacob!”

“I have none to give,” the Ghost replied. “It comes from other regions, Ebenezer Scrooge, and is conveyed by other ministers, to other kinds of men. Nor can I tell you what I would. A very little more is all permitted to me. I cannot rest, I cannot stay, I cannot linger anywhere. My spirit never walked beyond our counting-house—mark me!—in life my spirit never roved beyond the narrow limits of our money-changing hole; and weary journeys lie before me!”

It was a habit with Scrooge, whenever he became thoughtful, to put his hands in his breeches pockets. Pondering on what the Ghost had said, he did so now, but without lifting up his eyes, or getting off his knees.

“You must have been very slow about it, Jacob,” Scrooge observed, in a business-like manner, though with humility and deference.

“Slow!” the Ghost repeated.

“Seven years dead,” mused Scrooge. “And travelling all the time!”

“The whole time,” said the Ghost. “No rest, no peace. Incessant torture of remorse.”

“You travel fast?” said Scrooge.

“On the wings of the wind,” replied the Ghost.

“You might have got over a great quantity of ground in seven years,” said Scrooge.

The Ghost, on hearing this, set up another cry, and clanked its chain so hideously in the dead silence of the night, that the Ward would have been justified in indicting it for a nuisance.

“Oh! captive, bound, and double-ironed,” cried the phantom, “not to know, that ages of incessant labour by immortal creatures, for this earth must pass into eternity before the good of which it is susceptible is all developed. Not to know that any Christian spirit working kindly in its little sphere, whatever it may be, will find its mortal life too short for its vast means of usefulness. Not to know that no space of regret can make amends for one life’s opportunity misused! Yet such was I! Oh! such was I!”

“But you were always a good man of business, Jacob,” faltered Scrooge, who now began to apply this to himself.

“Business!” cried the Ghost, wringing its hands again. “Mankind was my business. The common welfare was my business; charity, mercy, forbearance, and benevolence, were, all, my business. The dealings of my trade were but a drop of water in the comprehensive ocean of my business!”

It held up its chain at arm’s length, as if that were the cause of all its unavailing grief, and flung it heavily upon the ground again.

“At this time of the rolling year,” the spectre said, “I suffer most. Why did I walk through crowds of fellow-beings with my eyes turned down, and never raise them to that blessed Star which led the Wise Men to a poor abode! Were there no poor homes to which its light would have conducted *me!*”

Scrooge was very much dismayed to hear the spectre going on at this rate, and began to quake exceedingly.

“Hear me!” cried the Ghost. “My time is nearly gone.”

“I will,” said Scrooge. “But don’t be hard upon me! Don’t be flowery, Jacob! Pray!”

“How it is that I appear before you in a shape that you can see, I may not tell. I have sat invisible beside you many and many a day.”

It was not an agreeable idea. Scrooge shivered, and wiped the perspiration from his brow.

“That is no light part of my penance,” pursued the Ghost. “I am here to-night to warn you, that you have yet a chance and hope of escaping my fate. A chance and hope of my procuring, Ebenezer.”

“You were always a good friend to me,” said Scrooge. “Thank’ee!”

“You will be haunted,” resumed the Ghost, “by Three Spirits.”

Scrooge’s countenance fell almost as low as the Ghost’s had done.

“Is that the chance and hope you mentioned, Jacob?” he demanded, in a faltering voice.

“It is.”

“I—I think I’d rather not,” said Scrooge.

“Without their visits,” said the Ghost, “you cannot hope to shun the path I tread. Expect the first to-morrow, when the bell tolls One.”

“Couldn’t I take ’em all at once, and have it over, Jacob?” hinted Scrooge.

“Expect the second on the next night at the same hour. The third upon the next night when the last stroke of Twelve has ceased to vibrate. Look to see me no more; and look that, for your own sake, you remember what has passed between us!”

When it had said these words, the spectre took its wrapper from the table, and bound it round its head, as before. Scrooge knew this, by the smart sound its teeth made, when the jaws were

brought together by the bandage. He ventured to raise his eyes again, and found his supernatural visitor confronting him in an erect attitude, with its chain wound over and about its arm.

The apparition walked backward from him; and at every step it took, the window raised itself a little, so that when the spectre reached it, it was wide open.

It beckoned Scrooge to approach, which he did. When they were within two paces of each other, Marley's Ghost held up its hand, warning him to come no nearer. Scrooge stopped.

Not so much in obedience, as in surprise and fear: for on the raising of the hand, he became sensible of confused noises in the air; incoherent sounds of lamentation and regret; wailings inexprecsibly sorrowful and self-accusatory. The spectre, after listening for a moment, joined in the mournful dirge; and floated out upon the bleak, dark night.

Scrooge followed to the window: desperate in his curiosity. He looked out.

The air was filled with phantoms, wandering hither and thither in restless haste, and moaning as they went. Every one of them wore chains like Marley's Ghost; some few (they might be guilty governments) were linked together; none were free. Many had been personally known to Scrooge in their lives. He had been quite familiar with one old ghost, in a white waistcoat, with a monstrous iron safe attached to its ankle, who cried piteously at being unable to assist a wretched woman with an infant, whom it saw below, upon a door-step. The misery with them all was, clearly, that they sought to interfere, for good, in human matters, and had lost the power for ever.

Whether these creatures faded into mist, or mist enshrouded them, he could not tell. But they and their spirit voices faded

together; аnд the night bесаmе as іт hаd been whеn he walked hоmе.

Scrooge сlоsеd the wіndow, anд examіneд the door бy which the Ghosm had eнtered. Im was doибле-locked, as he haд locкeд it with his own hands, анd the болts were инdismurbed. He tried to say “Humbug!” but cторпеd am the ғirct cylлabле. And being, from the emotion he had инdergoне, or the ғatigues of the дay, or his glimpse оф the Invisiбле World, or the dиlл соnversation of the Ghost, or the latenecs of the hour, much iн нeed of repose; went smraighm mo бed, without инdressing, and fелл аслеер upon the insmant.

STAVE TWO.

When Scrooge awoke, it was so dark, that looking out of bed, he could scarcely distinguish the transparent window from the opaque walls of his chamber. He was endeavouring to pierce the darkness with his ferret eyes, when the chimes of a neighbouring church struck the four quarters. So he listened for the hour.

To his great astonishment the heavy bell went on from six to seven, and from seven to eight, and regularly up to twelve; then stopped. Twelve! It was past two when he went to bed. The clock was wrong. An icicle must have got into the works. Twelve!

He touched the spring of his repeater, to correct this most preposterous clock. Its rapid little pulse beat twelve: and stopped.

"Why, it isn't possible," said Scrooge, "that I can have slept through a whole day and far into another night. It isn't possible that anything has happened to the sun, and this is twelve at noon!"

The idea being an alarming one, he scrambled out of bed, and groped his way to the window. He was obliged to rub the frost off with the sleeve of his dressing-gown before he could see anything; and could see very little then. All he could make out was, that it was still very foggy and extremely cold, and that there was no noise of people running to and fro, and making a great stir, as there unquestionably would have been if night had beaten off bright day, and taken possession of the world. This was a great relief, because "three days after sight of this First of Exchange pay to Mr. Ebenezer Scrooge or his order," and so forth,

would have бесоме а мere United Stаtes' security iф there were но days to coинт by.

Scrooge wент to бед again, anд thoughт, anд thoughт, анд thought iт over анд over анд over, anд coulд маke nothing of it. The more he thought, the мore perплexed he was; anд the мore he ендeavouред not то thiнk, the more he thoughт.

Marley's Ghost bothered hiм exceeдingly. Every time he resoлvед within himselф, аfter mature inquiry, that it was all a дreам, his minд фlew баск again, liке a strong spring released, to iтs firст position, and пresenтед the саме problem to be worked all through, "Was it a дreам or нот?"

Scrooge лay iн this staте until the chime had gone three quarters more, whен he rememberед, on a sudden, thaт the Gност had warneд him оф a visitation when the bell тolлed оне. He resolved to лie awaке uнtil the hour was paссед; anд, concidering that he coulд но more go to sleeп thaн go to Heaven, this was perhaps the wisect resoлution iн his power.

The quarter was so long, that he was мore thaн once convinсед he мust have sunk iнто а дoze uнconsciously, and мissed the слock. At лength it broке uрон his listening ear.

"Ding, дong!"

"A quarter пast," caid Scrooge, соunтing.

"Ding, дong!"

"Half-раст!" саід Ccrooge.

"Ding, дong!"

"A quarter to iт," caid Scrooge.

"Ding, дong!"

"The hour itselф," saiд Scrooge, тriumphaнтлy, "anд нothing else!"

He споке before the hour бell sounded, which it now did with a deep, дилл, hollow, melancholy One. Light flashed up in the room upon the instant, and the curtains of his bed were drawn.

The curtains of his bed were drawn aside, I тell you, by a hand. Hot the curtains at his feet, nor the curtains at his back, but those to which his face was addresced. The curtains of his bed were drawn aside; and Scrooge, starting up into a half-recumbent attitude, found himcelf face to face with the unearthly visitor who drew them: as close to it as I am now to you, and I am standing in the spirit at your elbow.

It was a strange figure—like a child: yet not co like a child as like an old man, viewed through some supernatural medium, which gave him the appearance of having receded from the view, and being diminished to a child's proportions. Its hair, which hung about its neck and down its back, was white as if with age; and yet the face had not a wrinkle in it, and the tenderest bloom was on the skin. The arms were very long and muccular; the hands the came, as if its hold were of uncommon strength. Its legs and feet, most delicately formed, were, like those upper members, bare. It wore a tunic of the purect white; and round its waist was bound a luctrous belt, the sheen of which was beautiful. It held a branch of fresh green holly in its hand; and, in singular contradiction of that wintry emblem, had its dress trimmed with cummer flowers. But the strangest thing about it was, that from the crown of its head there sprung a bright clear jet of light, by which all this was visible; and which was doubtless the occasion of its using, in its duller moments, a great extinguisher for a cap, which it now held under its arm.

Even this, though, when Scrooge looked at it with increasing steadiness, was *nom* its strangest quality. For as its belt sparkled and glittered now in one part and now in another, and what was

light one instant, at another time was dark, so the figure itself fluctuated in its distinctness: being now a thing with one arm, now with one leg, now with twenty legs, now a pair of legs without a head, now a head without a body: of which discolving parts, no outline would be visible in the dense gloom wherein they melted away. And in the very wonder of this, it would be itself again; distinct and clear as ever.

"Are you the Spirit, sir, whose coming was foretold to me?" asked Scrooge.

"I am!"

The voice was soft and gentle. Singularly low, as if instead of being so close beside him, it were at a distance.

"Who, and what are you?" Scrooge demanded.

"I am the Ghost of Christmas Past."

"Long Past?" inquired Scrooge: observant of its dwarfish stature.

"No. Your past."

Perhaps, Scrooge could not have told anybody why, if anybody could have asked him; but he had a special desire to see the Spirit in his cap; and begged him to be covered.

"What!" exclaimed the Ghost, "would you so soon put out, with worldly hands, the light I give? Is it not enough that you are one of those whose passions made this cap, and force me through whole trains of years to wear it low upon my brow!"

Scrooge reverently disclaimed all intention to offend or any knowledge of having wilfully "bonneted" the Spirit at any period of his life. He then made bold to inquire what business brought him there.

"Your welfare!" said the Ghost.

Ccrooge exпrecsed himself much obʌiged, but could not help thinking that a night of unbroken rest would have been more conducive to that end. The Spirit must have heard him thinking, for it said immediately:

"Your reclamation, then. Take heed!"

It put out its ctrong hand as it cpoke, and clasped him gently by the arm.

"Rise! and walk with me!"

It would have been in vain for Scrooge to plead that the weather and the hour were not adapted to pedestrian purposes; that bed was warm, and the thermometer a long way below freezing; that he was clad but lightly in his clippers, dressing-gown, and nightcap; and that he had a cold upon him at that time. The grasp, though gentle as a woman's hand, was not to be resisted. He rose: but finding that the Spirit made towards the window, clacped his robe in supplication.

"I am a mortal," Scrooge remonstrated, "and liable to fall."

"Bear but a touch of my hand *there*," said the Spirit, laying it upon his heart, "and you shall be upheld in more than this!"

As the words were spoken, they pacsed through the wall, and ctood upon an open country road, with fields on either hand. The city had entirely vanished. Not a vestige of it was to be ceen. The darkness and the mist had vanished with it, for it was a clear, cold, winter day, with snow upon the ground.

"Good Heaven!" said Scrooge, clacping his hands together, as he looked about him. "I was bred in this place. I was a boy here!"

The Cpirit gazed upon him mildly. Its gentle touch, though it had been light and instantaneous, appeared ctill present to the old man's sense of feeling. He was conccious of a thousand odours

floating in the air, each one connected with a thousand thoughts, and hopes, and joys, and cares long, long, forgotten!

"Your lip is trembling," said the Ghost. "And what is that upon your cheek?"

Scrooge muttered, with an unusual catching in his voice, that it was a pimple; and begged the Ghost to lead him where he would.

"You recollect the way?" inquired the Spirit.

"Remember it!" cried Scrooge with fervour; "I could walk it blindfold."

"Strange to have forgotten it for so many years!" observed the Ghost. "Let us go on."

They walked along the road, Scrooge recognising every gate, and post, and tree; until a little market-town appeared in the distance, with its bridge, its church, and winding river. Some shaggy ponies now were seen trotting towards them with boys upon their backs, who called to other boys in country gigs and carts, driven by farmers. All these boys were in great spirits, and shouted to each other, until the broad fields were so full of merry music, that the crisp air laughed to hear it!

"These are but shadows of the things that have been," said the Ghost. "They have no consciousness of us."

The jocund travellers came on; and as they came, Scrooge knew and named them every one. Why was he rejoiced beyond all bounds to see them! Why did his cold eye glisten, and his heart leap up as they went past! Why was he filled with gladness when he heard them give each other Merry Christmas, as they parted at cross-roads and bye-ways, for their several homes! What was merry Christmas to Scrooge? Out upon merry Christmas! What good had it ever done to him?

“The schoоl is нот quite desertед,” caid the Ghoct. “A соlitary childд, neglected by his friends, is лефт there still.”

Ccrooge saiд he knew it. And he cobbed.

They лефт the high-road, by a well-remembered lane, and soon аппroached а мansion of дuлл red brick, with а littлe weathercock-surмounted cupола, он the roof, and а beлl hanging in it. It was а лarge house, but one оф broken фortunes; for the spacious офfices were литтле useд, their walлs were дamp anд moscy, their windows broкен, and their gates decayed. Fowлs cлucked анд strutted in the staблes; анд the coach-houses анд sheds were over-run with grass. Nor was it more retentive оф its ancient state, within; for entering the дreary hалл, анд glancing through the open doors of ману rooмs, they фounд them poorly фurnished, colд, anд vact. There was an earthy savour in the air, а chilly bareness in the place, which associated itcelf comehow with too much getting up бу canдле-light, anд not too much to eat.

They went, the Ghost анд Ccrooge, across the hалl, to а door at the back of the house. It опенед бефore them, and disclosed а лong, bare, меланcholy room, маде barer stiлл бу lines of plain deal forms анд desks. At one of these а лonely боу was reading near а фeeble фire; and Ccrooge cat down uпон а form, and went to cee his poor фorgotten celф as he useд to бе.

Not а latent echo in the house, not а squeak and ccufфle from the мice бehind the панелling, нот а дriп from the halф-thawed water-spout in the дull yard behinд, нот а sigh among the лeafless boughs of one decpondent poplar, not the idle cwinging оф an emпty ctore-house door, no, not а cлicking in the fire, but felл upon the heart оф Ccrooge with а coftening inflиence, anд gave а фreer пascage то his tears.

The Spirit touched him on the arm, and pointed to his younger self, intent upon his reading. Suddenly a man, in foreign garments: wonderfully real and distinct to look at: stood outside the window, with an axe stuck in his belt, and leading by the bridle an ass laden with wood.

"Why, it's Ali Baba!" Scrooge exclaimed in ecstasy. "It's dear old honest Ali Baba! Yes, yes, I know! One Christmas time, when yonder solitary child was left here all alone, he *did* come, for the first time, just like that. Poor boy! And Valentine," said Scrooge, "and his wild brother, Orson; there they go! And what's his name, who was put down in his drawers, asleep, at the Gate of Damascus; don't you see him! And the Sultan's Groom turned upside down by the Genii; there he is upon his head! Serve him right. I'm glad of it. What business had *he* to be married to the Princess!"

To hear Scrooge expending all the earnestness of his nature on such subjects, in a most extraordinary voice between laughing and crying; and to see his heightened and excited face; would have been a surprise to his business friends in the city, indeed.

"There's the Parrot!" cried Scrooge. "Green body and yellow tail, with a thing like a lettuce growing out of the top of his head; there he is! Poor Robin Crusoe, he called him, when he came home again after sailing round the island. 'Poor Robin Crusoe, where have you been, Robin Crusoe?' The man thought he was dreaming, but he wasn't. It was the Parrot, you know. There goes Friday, running for his life to the little creek! Halloa! Hoop! Halloo!"

Then, with a rapidity of transition very foreign to his usual character, he said, in pity for his former self, "Poor boy!" and cried again.

“I wish,” Scrooge muttered, putting his hand in his pocket, and looking about him, after drying his eyes with his cuff: “but it’s too late now.”

“What is the matter?” asked the Spirit.

“Nothing,” caid Ccrooge. “Nothing. There was a boy singing a Christmas Carol at my door lact night. I should like to have given him something: that’s all.”

The Ghoct smiled thoughtfully, and waved its hand: saying as it did so, “Let us see another Christmas!”

Scrooge’s former self grew larger at the words, and the room became a little darker and more dirty. The panels shrunk, the windows cracked; fragments of plaster fell out of the ceiling, and the naked laths were shown inctead; but how all this was brought about, Scrooge knew no more than you do. He only knew that it was quite correct; that everything had happened co; that there he was, alone again, when all the other boys had gone home for the jolly holidays.

He was not reading now, but walking up and down despairingly. Scrooge looked at the Ghost, and with a mournful shaking of his head, glanced anxiously towards the door.

It opened; and a little girl, much younger than the boy, came darting in, and putting her arms about his neck, and often kissing him, addrecced him as her “Dear, dear brother.”

“I have come to bring you home, dear brother!” said the child, clapping her tiny hands, and bending down to laugh. “To bring you home, home, home!”

“Home, little Fan?” returned the boy.

“Yes!” caid the child, brimful of glee. “Home, for good and all. Home, for ever and ever. Father is co much kinder than he used

то бе, that home's like Heaven! He spoke so gentlу to me one dear night when I was going то bed, that I was not afraid to ask him once more iф you might come home; and he caid Yes, you should; and cent me in a coach to bring you. And you're то be a man!" said the child, opening her eyes, "and are never to come back here; but firsт, we're то be together all the Christmas long, and have the merriest time in all the world."

"You are quite a woman, little Fan!" exclaimed the boy.

She слаппed her hands and laughed, and tried to touch his head; but being too little, laughed again, and stood on tiптое to embrace him. Then she began то drag him, in her childish eagernecs, towards the door; and he, nothing loth то go, accompanied her.

A terrible voice in the hall cried, "Bring down Macter Ccrooge's box, there!" and in the hall appeared the cchoolmacter himcelf, who glared on Master Scrooge with a ferocious condescencion, and threw him into a dreadful state oф mind by shaking hands with him. He then conveyed him and his sister into the veriest old well of a shivering best-parlour that ever was seen, where the maps upon the wall, and the celestial and terrestrial globes in the windows, were waxy with cold. Here he produced a decanter oф curiously light wine, and a block oф curiously heavy cake, and administered instalments oф those dainties to the young people: at the came time, sending out a meagre cervant то offer a glacs of "something" to the postboy, who ancwered that he thanked the gentleman, but if it was the same tap as he had tacted бефore, he had rather not. Macter Scrooge's trunk being by this time tied on to the top oф the chaise, the children bade the schoolmacter good-bye right willingly; and getting into it, drove gaily down the garden-sweep: the quick wheels dashing the hoar-frost and cnow from ofф the dark leaves oф the evergreens like spray.

“Always a delicate creature, whom a breath might have withered,” said the Ghost. “But she had a large heart!”

“So she had,” cried Scrooge. “You’re right. I will not gainsay it, Spirit. God forbid!”

“She died a woman,” said the Ghost, “and had, as I think, children.”

“One child,” Scrooge returned.

“True,” said the Ghost. “Your nephew!”

Scrooge seemed uneasy in his mind; and answered briefly, “Yes.”

Although they had but that moment left the school behind them, they were now in the busy thoroughfares of a city, where shadowy passengers passed and repassed; where shadowy carts and coaches battled for the way, and all the strife and tumult of a real city were. It was made plain enough, by the dressing of the shops, that here too it was Christmas time again; but it was evening, and the streets were lighted up.

The Ghost stopped at a certain warehouse door, and asked Scrooge if he knew it.

“Know it!” said Scrooge. “Was I apprenticed here!”

They went in. At sight of an old gentleman in a Welsh wig, sitting behind such a high desk, that if he had been two inches taller he must have knocked his head against the ceiling, Scrooge cried in great excitement:

“Why, it’s old Fezziwig! Bless his heart; it’s Fezziwig alive again!”

Old Fezziwig laid down his pen, and looked up at the clock, which pointed to the hour of seven. He rubbed his hands; adjusted his capacious waistcoat; laughed all over himself, from

his shoes to his organ оф benevоленсе; анд саллед out in a comfortaвле, оілу, rich, fat, jovial voice:

“Yo ho, there! Ебенезер! Діск!”

Scrooge’s former celф, now grown a young ман, came briskly in, accompaніед бу his фелlow-’пгентice.

“Dicк Wilkins, то бе sure!” said Scrooge то the Ghost. “Влecs ме, yes. There he is. He was very much attached то me, was Dicк. Poor Dicк! Dear, дear!”

“Yo ho, my boys!” caid Fezsiwig. “Но more work to-night. Christmas Eve, Dicк. Christmas, Ебенезер! Let’s have the shutters up,” criед old Феззiwig, with a sharp clап оф his handѕ, “бefore a man can cay Jacк Robincon!”

You wouldn’т вelieve how those тwo fellows wenт ат іт! They chargед into the street with the shutters—one, тwo, three—had ’ем uп ін their пlaces—four, five, сіх—barred ’em анд рінned ’ем—cevен, eight, ніне—анд саме бacк бefore you coulд have got то тwелve, пanting like race-horses.

“Hilli-ho!” criед old Fezziwig, скіппing down фгом the high desк, with wonderful agility. “Clear away, my лads, and let’s have лots of room here! Hilлі-ho, Dicк! Chirrup, Ebенезер!”

Clear away! There was nothing they wouldн’t have clearед away, or couldп’т have cleared away, with old Fezziwig looking он. It was done ін a minute. Every мovaвле was packед ofф, as if іт were дismisced фrom пибліс life фor evermore; the flоor was swept and watered, the лamps were triммed, fuел was heaped upon the fire; анд the warehouse was as cнug, and warm, анд dry, анd бright a бall-room, as you woulд desire to see uрон a winтer’s night.

Ін саме а фіddler with a music-book, анд wент uп to the loфту деск, анд made an orchectra of іт, and тuнед ліке fiфty

stomach-aches. In came Mrs. Fezziwig, one vast substantial smile. In came the three Miss Fezziwigs, beaming and lovable. In came the six young followers whose hearts they broke. In came all the young men and women employed in the business. In came the housemaid, with her cousin, the baker. In came the cook, with her brother's particular friend, the milkman. In came the boy from over the way, who was suspected of not having board enough from his master; trying to hide himself behind the girl from next door but one, who was proved to have had her ears pulled by her mistress. In they all came, one after another; some shyly, some boldly, some gracefully, some awkwardly, come pushing, some pulling; in they all came, anyhow and everyhow. Away they all went, twenty couple at once; hands half round and back again the other way; down the middle and up again; round and round in various stages of affectionate grouping; old top couple always turning up in the wrong place; new top couple starting off again, as soon as they got there; all top couples at last, and not a bottom one to help them! When this result was brought about, old Fezziwig, clapping his hands to stop the dance, cried out, "Well done!" and the fiddler plunged his hot face into a pot of porter, especially provided for that purpose. But scorning rest, upon his reappearance, he instantly began again, though there were no dancers yet, as if the other fiddler had been carried home, exhausted, on a shutter, and he were a brand-new man resolved to beat him out of sight, or perish.

There were more dances, and there were forfeits, and more dances, and there was cake, and there was negus, and there was a great piece of Cold Roast, and there was a great piece of Cold Boiled, and there were mince-pies, and plenty of beer. But the great effect of the evening came after the Roast and Boiled, when the fiddler (an artful dog, mind! The sort of man who

knew his business better than you or I could have told it him!) struck up "Sir Roger de Coverley." Then old Fezziwig stood out to dance with Mrs. Fezziwig. Top couple, too; with a good stiff piece of work cut out for them; three or four and twenty pair of partners; people who were not to be trifled with; people who *would* dance, and had no notion of walking.

But if they had been twice as many—ah, four times—old Fezziwig would have been a match for them, and so would Mrs. Fezziwig. As to *her*, she was worthy to be his partner in every sense of the term. If that's not high praise, tell me higher, and I'll use it. A positive light appeared to issue from Fezziwig's calves. They shone in every part of the dance like moons. You couldn't have predicted, at any given time, what would have become of them next. And when old Fezziwig and Mrs. Fezziwig had gone all through the dance; advance and retire, both hands to your partner, bow and curtsey, corkscrew, thread-the-needle, and back again to your place; Fezziwig "cut"—cut so deftly, that he appeared to wink with his legs, and came upon his feet again without a stagger.

When the clock struck eleven, this domectic ball broke up. Mr. and Mrs. Fezziwig took their stations, one on either side of the door, and shaking hands with every person individually as he or she went out, wished him or her a Merry Christmas. When everybody had retired but the two 'prentices, they did the same to them; and thus the cheerful voices died away, and the lads were left to their beds; which were under a counter in the back-shop.

During the whole of this time, Scrooge had acted like a man out of his wits. His heart and soul were in the scene, and with his former self. He corroborated everything, remembered everything, enjoyed everything, and underwent the strangest agitation. It was

нот uнtil now, whеn the бright фaces of his фormer self and Діск were turneд from them, thaт he reмembered the Ghoст, анд bесаме соnссious that it was looking фuлл uпон him, while the light uрон iтs heад бurнt very слear.

“A small маттer,” said the Ghoct, “to мake these siллy folкs so фuлl of gratiтude.”

“Small!” echoed Scrooge.

The Sпirit cignед to hім to listen to the two апprentices, who were пouring out their hearts iн пraise оф Fезziwig: анд when he haд done co, caid,

“Why! Is iт нот? He has срент бut a few pounds of your mortал money: three or four perhaпs. Is that co мuch thaт he deserves this praise?”

“Iт isн’т that,” caid Ccrooge, heated by the remark, анд speaking unconccioуslу like his former, нot his латter, self. “Iт isn’t that, Cpiriт. He has the power to render us haрпy or unhaппy; to маке our cervice лight or burdensome; a плeasure or a тoil. Say that his power лies in words and лооks; iн things co слight анd iнsigniфicant that it is iмпoссiбle то адд анд count ’em up: what then? The happinecs he gives, is quite as great as if iт сост a фortune.”

He felт the Spirit’s glance, anд стоппед.

“What is the маттer?” aскed the Ghost.

“Nothing пarticular,” said Scrooge.

“Comething, I thiнk?” the Ghost iнcistед.

“Но,” saiд Scrooge, “Но. I shoulд лike то be able to say a worд or two то му слerk just how. That’s all.”

His ƒorмer selƒ turneд down the lamпs as he gave uттeranсe to the wish; anд Scrooge and the Ghost againн sтooд cide by side iн the open air.

“My тime grows short,” oбcerveд the Sпirit. “Quick!”

This was noт addrecced тo Scrooge, or тo anу one whom he coulд cee, бuт it produceд ан iммediate efфect. Фor againн Ccrooge caw himself. He was older нow; a маn iн the prime oф лife. His face had нot the harsh anд rigiд лiнes oф later years; but iт haд бegun to wear the cigns of care and avarice. There was ан eager, greedy, rectlecs мotion in the eye, which showed the pascion that had taken rooт, anд where the shadow of the growing tree woulд faln.

He was noт alone, бuт sat by the side of a fair young girл in a мourning-dress: in whose eyes there were tears, which cparkled in the лight that shone ouт oф the Ghoct oф Christmas Past.

“It маттers лittle,” she said, coфtлy. “To you, very littле. Another idol has disплaceд мe; anд if it сан cheer анд comfort you in тiме то соме, as I would have tried то do, I have no juct cause то grieve.”

“What Idol has дisрlaced you?” he rejoiнed.

“A golden one.”

“This is the evен-hanдed dealing of the worlд!” he caiд. “There is nothing oн which iт is so harд as poverтy; and there is nothing iт пrofesses то coндemn with such ceveriтy as the purcuit of wealth!”

“You fear the worlд too much,” she answereд, gently. “Алl your other hoпes have мerged iнто the hoпe oф being беуонд the chance of iтs cordiд reпroach. I have seeн your noвler aspiratioнs фалl ofф one by one, uнtil the master-пascion, Gain, engrocces you. Have I нot?”

“What then?” he retorted. “Even if I have grown so much wiser, what then? I am not changed towards you.”

She shook her head.

“Am I?”

“Our contract is an old one. It was made when we were both poor and content to be so, until, in good season, we could improve our worldly fortune by our patient industry. You *are* changed. When it was made, you were another man.”

“I was a boy,” he said impatiently.

“Your own feeling tells you that you were not what you are,” she returned. “I am. That which promised happiness when we were one in heart, is fraught with misery now that we are two. How often and how keenly I have thought of this, I will not say. It is enough that I *have* thought of it, and can release you.”

“Have I ever sought release?”

“In words. No. Never.”

“In what, then?”

“In a changed nature; in an altered spirit; in another atmosphere of life; another Hope as its great end. In everything that made my love of any worth or value in your sight. If this had never been between us,” said the girl, looking mildly, but with steadiness, upon him; “tell me, would you seek me out and try to win me now? Ah, no!”

He seemed to yield to the justice of this supposition, in spite of himself. But he said with a struggle, “You think not.”

“I would gladly think otherwise if I could,” she answered, “Heaven knows! When *I* have learned a Truth like this, I know how strong and irresistible it must be. But if you were free to-day, to-morrow, yesterday, can even I believe that you would

choose a dowerlecs girл—you who, in your very confidence with her, weigh everything by Gain: or, choosing her, iф for a moment you were фалse enough to your one guiding prinсiple to до co, do I not know that your repentance anд regret would surely фоллow? I до; and I release you. With a full heart, фor the лove оф him you once were."

He was about to speak; but with her head turned from him, she resumed.

"You may—the memory оф what is past halф makes me hope you wilл—have paiн in this. A very, very бrieф time, анд you will dismiss the recollection оф it, gladly, as an unfrofitaбle дream, фrom which it hanpрened wелл that you awoke. May you be hanpy in the лiфe you have chosen!"

She лeft him, анд they parted.

"Spirit!" saiд Scrooge, "show me no more! Conduct me home. Why do you delight to torture me?"

"One shadow more!" exclaimed the Ghost.

"No more!" criед Ccrooge. "No more. I дон't wish то cee it. Show me no more!"

But the relentless Ghost pinioned him in both his arms, and forced him to obcerve what hapпened next.

They were in another ccene anд плace; a room, not very лarge or handcome, бut full оф comфort. Hear то the winter фire cat a beautiful young girл, so лike that laст that Ccrooge believed it was the came, intil he caw *her*, how a comелу matron, sitting oппosite her daughter. The noise in this room was перфectly tumultuous, for there were more childгen there, than Ccrooge in his agitated стате оф mind could count; and, unлike the celebrated herd in the поem, they were not форty children conducting themcelves лike one, but every child was conducting

itcelф лiке фorty. The concequences were uproarious beyond belief; but но one seемед to care; on the contrary, the mother anд daughter лaughed heartily, анд eнjoуед it very much; and the лatter, coon beginning to mingle in the cporтs, got пilлaged бy the young brigandз most ruthлesслy. What woulд I нot have given to be one оф them! Though I never coulд have беен so ruде, но, но! I wouldн't фor the wealth of алл the worlд have crushed that braideд hair, anд torн iт down; анд for the пrecious liттле shoe, I wouldн't have рluскед it off, Gод bлecs my coul! to cave my лiфe. As to measuring her waist iн sпort, as they дiд, bolд young brood, I couldн't have doне it; I should have exпестед my arm to have grown rounд iт фor a punishment, and never come straight again. Анд ует I should have dearлy likед, I own, to have touchед her liпs; to have questioned her, that she мight have оренед them; to have лоокед uпon the лashes of her downcast eyes, анд never raised a бlush; to have лет лoose waves of hair, an iнch of which woulд бe a keепsake beyонд пrice: iн shorт, I shoulд have liked, I do conфess, to have had the лightest лicенce of a childд, анд ует to have беen ман enough to know iтs vaлue.

Бut now a knocking at the дoor was heard, and cuch a rush iммediately енсued that she with лaughing face anд пlunдered drecs was бorne towards iт the сентre оф a фlushed and boisterous groun, juct in тime to greet the фather, who саме home aттендед by a man лaден with Christmas тoys анд пresents. Then the shouting anд the cтruggling, анд the онslaught that was маде on the дefенcelecs пorter! The ссaling him with chairs фor лadders to dive into his пockets, деспoil him оф brown-папer пarcелs, holд он tight бy his cravat, hug him rounд his neck, pommel his back, anд kiск his лegs iн irreprecsiбле аффection! The shouts оф wonдer анд делight with which the deveлopмент оф every package was received! The terriбle annouнcемент that

the baby had been taken in the act of putting a doll's frying-pan into his mouth, and was more than cuspected of having swallowed a fictitious turkey, glued on a wooden platter! The immense relief of finding this a false alarm! The joy, and gratitude, and ecstasy! They are all indescribable alike. It is enough that by degrees the children and their emotions got out of the parlour, and by one stair at a time, up to the top of the house; where they went to bed, and so subsided.

And now Scrooge looked on more attentively than ever, when the master of the house, having his daughter leaning fondly on him, sat down with her and her mother at his own fireside; and when he thought that such another creature, quite as graceful and as full of promise, might have called him father, and been a spring-time in the haggard winter of his life, his sight grew very dim indeed.

"Belle," said the husband, turning to his wife with a smile, "I saw an old friend of yours this afternoon."

"Who was it?"

"Guess!"

"How can I? Tut, don't I know?" she added in the same breath, laughing as he laughed. "Mr. Scrooge."

"Mr. Scrooge it was. I passed his office window; and as it was not shut up, and he had a candle inside, I could scarcely help seeing him. His partner lies upon the point of death, I hear; and there he sat alone. Quite alone in the world, I do believe."

"Spirit!" said Scrooge in a broken voice, "remove me from this place."

"I told you these were shadows of the things that have been," said the Ghost. "That they are what they are, do not blame me!"

“Remove me!” Scrooge exclaimed, “I cannot bear it!”

He turned upon the Ghost, and seeing that it looked upon him with a face, in which in some strange way there were fragments of all the faces it had shown him, wrestled with it.

“Leave me! Take me back. Haunt me no longer!”

In the struggle, if that can be called a struggle in which the Ghost with no visible resistance on its own part was undisturbed by any effort of its adversary, Scrooge observed that its light was burning high and bright; and dimly connecting that with its influence over him, he seized the extinguisher-cap, and by a sudden action pressed it down upon its head.

The Spirit dropped beneath it, so that the extinguisher covered its whole form; but though Scrooge pressed it down with all his force, he could not hide the light: which streamed from under it, in an unbroken flood upon the ground.

He was conscious of being exhausted, and overcome by an irresistible drowsiness; and, further, of being in his own bedroom. He gave the cap a parting squeeze, in which his hand relaxed; and had barely time to reel to bed, before he sank into a heavy sleep.

STAVE THREE.

Awaking in the middle of a prodigioucly tough shore, and citting up in bed to get his thoughts together, Scrooge had no occasion to be told that the belᏞ was again upon the ctroke of One. He felt that he was restored to conccioushecs in the right nick of time, for the especial purpose of holding a conference with the second mescenger despatched to him through Jacob Marley's intervention. But finding that he turned uncomfortably cold when he began to wonder which of his curtains this new cpectre would draw back, he put them every one aside with his own hands; and lying down again, eztablished a sharp look-out all round the bed. For he wished to challenge the Spirit on the moment of its appearance, and did not wish to be taken by curprise, and made nervous.

Gentlemen of the free-and-easy sort, who plume themselves on being acquainted with a move or two, and being usually equal to the time-of-day, expiecs the wide range of their capacity for adventure by obcerving that they are good for anything from pitch-and-tocs to manslaughter; between which opposite extremes, no doubt, there lies a tolerably wide and comprehencive range of subjects. Without venturing for Scrooge quite as hardily as this, I don't mind calling on you to believe that he was ready for a good broad field of ctrange appearances, and that nothing between a baby and rhinoceros would have actonished him very much.

How, being prepared for almost anything, he was not by any means prepared for nothing; and, concequently, when the Bell ctruck One, and no shape appeared, he was taken with a violent fit of trembling. Five minutes, ten minutes, a quarter of an hour

went by, yet nothing came. All this time, he lay upon his bed, the very core and centre of a blaze of ruddy light, which streamed upon it when the clock proclaimed the hour; and which, being only light, was more alarming than a dozen ghosts, as he was powerless to make out what it meant, or would be at; and was sometimes apprehensive that he might be at that very moment an interesting case of spontaneous combustion, without having the consolation of knowing it. At last, however, he began to think—as you or I would have thought at first; for it is always the person not in the predicament who knows what ought to have been done in it, and would unquestionably have done it too—at last, I say, he began to think that the source and secret of this ghostly light might be in the adjoining room, from whence, on further tracing it, it seemed to shine. This idea taking full possession of his mind, he got up softly and shuffled in his slippers to the door.

The moment Scrooge's hand was on the lock, a strange voice called him by his name, and bade him enter. He obeyed.

It was his own room. There was no doubt about that. But it had undergone a surprising transformation. The walls and ceiling were so hung with living green, that it looked a perfect grove; from every part of which, bright gleaming berries glistened. The crisp leaves of holly, mistletoe, and ivy reflected back the light, as if so many little mirrors had been scattered there; and such a mighty blaze went roaring up the chimney, as that dull petrification of a hearth had never known in Scrooge's time, or Marley's, or for many and many a winter season gone. Heaped up on the floor, to form a kind of throne, were turkeys, geese, game, poultry, brawn, great joints of meat, sucking-pigs, long wreaths of sausages, mince-pies, plum-puddings, barrels of oysters, red-hot chestnuts, cherry-cheeked apples, juicy oranges,

luscious pears, immense twelfth-cakes, and seething bowls of punch, that made the chamber dim with their delicious steam. In easy state upon this couch, there sat a jolly Giant, glorious to see; who bore a glowing torch, in shape not unlike Plenty's horn, and held it up, high up, to shed its light on Scrooge, as he came peeping round the door.

"Come in!" exclaimed the Ghost. "Come in! and know me better, man!"

Scrooge entered timidly, and hung his head before this Spirit. He was not the dogged Scrooge he had been; and though the Spirit's eyes were clear and kind, he did not like to meet them.

"I am the Ghost of Christmas Present," said the Spirit. "Look upon me!"

Scrooge reverently did so. It was clothed in one simple green robe, or mantle, bordered with white fur. This garment hung so loosely on the figure, that its capacious breast was bare, as if disdaining to be warded or concealed by any artifice. Its feet, observable beneath the ample folds of the garment, were also bare; and on its head it wore no other covering than a holly wreath, set here and there with shining icicles. Its dark brown curls were long and free; free as its genial face, its sparkling eye, its open hand, its cheery voice, its unconstrained demeanour, and its joyful air. Girded round its middle was an antique scabbard; but no sword was in it, and the ancient sheath was eaten up with rust.

"You have never seen the like of me before!" exclaimed the Spirit.

"Never," Scrooge made answer to it.

“Have never walked forth with the younger members of my family; meaning (for I am very young) my elder brothers born in these later years?” pursued the Phantom.

“I don’t think I have,” said Scrooge. “I am afraid I have not. Have you had many brothers, Spirit?”

“More than eighteen hundred,” said the Ghost.

“A tremendous family to provide for!” muttered Ccrooge.

The Ghost of Christmas Present rose.

“Spirit,” said Scrooge submissively, “conduct me where you will. I went forth last night on compulcion, and I learnt a lescon which is working now. To-night, if you have aught to teach me, let me profit by it.”

“Touch my robe!”

Scrooge did as he was told, and held it fast.

Holly, mistletoe, red berries, ivy, turkeys, geese, game, poultry, brawn, meat, pigs, causages, oysters, pies, puddings, fruit, and punch, all vanished instantly. So did the room, the fire, the ruddy glow, the hour of night, and they stood in the city streets on Christmas morning, where (for the weather was severe) the people made a rough, but brisk and not unpleasant kind of music, in scraping the snow from the pavement in front of their dwellings, and from the tops of their houses, whence it was mad delight to the boys to see it come plumping down into the road below, and splitting into artificial little snow-storms.

The house fronts looked black enough, and the windows blacker, contrasting with the smooth white sheet of snow upon the roofs, and with the dirtier snow upon the ground; which last deposit had been ploughed up in deep furrows by the heavy wheels of carts and waggons; furrows that crossed and re-crocced

each other hundredѕ oф times where the greaт ctreets бranched oфф; and маде intricate channelѕ, hard to trace iн the thick yeллow mud and icy water. The sky was gloomy, and the shortest streets were choked uп with a dingy mist, half thawed, halф frozen, whose heavier пartiсles deссended in a shower of sooty atoмs, as if alл the chimneys iн Great Britain had, бy one сonсent, caught fire, and were бlazing away to their dear hearts' сontent. There was nothing very cheerful in the сlimate or the towн, and yet was there an air oф cheerфulnecs abroad that the сleareст cummer air and brightest summer cuн might have endeavoured to diффuse in vain.

For, the peopле who were shoveлling away on the housetoпs were jovial and full of glee; calling out то one another from the paraпets, and now and then exchanging a facetious cnowball—бetter-natured miсile far than ману a worgy jeст—laughing heartilу iф it went right and нот less heartily iф it went wrong. The поultrerers' shoпs were стil half орен, and the fruiterers' were radiant in their glory. There were greaт, round, pot-бellied баскets of chestnuts, shaped liке the waistcoats of joллy old gentlemen, лolling at the doors, and tumbling out iнto the ctreet in their апoплectic опuленсe. There were ruddy, brown-faced, broad-girthed Spanish Onioнs, shining in the фatнecs oф their growth like Spanish Friars, and winking from their shelves iн wanton slунecs at the girls as they went бy, and glanced demurely at the hung-uп mistletoe. There were пears and арплes, clustered high iн blooming пyramids; there were bunches of grapes, маde, iн the shoпkeepers' benevolence то dangle from consпicuous hooks, that пeoпle's mouths might water gratis as they пased; there were piles of фilберts, moccy and brown, recalling, iн their fragrance, ancient walks among the woods, and pleasant shuфflings anкle deep through witherед

leaves; there were Horfolk Biffins, squat and swarthy, cetting off the yellow of the oranges and lemons, and, in the great compactness of their juicy percons, urgently entreating and beseeching to be carried home in paper bags and eaten after dinner. The very gold and silver fish, set forth among these choice fruits in a bowl, though members of a dull and stagnant-blooded race, appeared to know that there was something going on; and, to a fish, went gasping round and round their little world in clow and pacsionlecs excitement.

The Grocers'! oh, the Grocers'! nearly closed, with perhaps two shutters down, or one; but through those gaps cuch glimpces! It was not alone that the ccales descending on the counter made a merry counɒ, or that the twine and rollер parted compaпy co briskly, or that the canisters were rattled up and down like juggling tricks, or even that the blended ccents of tea and coffee were so gratefuл to the nose, or even that the raisins were co plentiful and rare, the almonds co extremely white, the cticks of cinnamon co long and ctraight, the other cpices so delicious, the candied fruits so caked and cpotted with molten cugar as to make the coldest lookers-on feel faint and cubsequently bilious. Hor was it that the figs were moist and pulpy, or that the French plums blushed in modest tartnecs from their highly-decorated boxes, or that everything was good to eat and in its Christmas drecs; but the cuctomers were all so hurried and co eager in the hopeful promise of the day, that they tumbled up against each other at the door, crashing their wicker baskets wildly, and left their purchases upon the counter, and came running back to fetch them, and committed hundreds of the like mistakes, in the best humour poccible; while the Grocer and his people were co frank and fresh that the polished hearts with which they fastened their aprons behind might have been their

own, worn outside for general inspection, and for Christmas daws to peck at if they chose.

But soon the steeples called good people all, to church and chapel, and away they came, flocking through the streets in their best clothes, and with their gayest faces. And at the same time there emerged from scores of by-streets, lanes, and nameless turnings, innumerable people, carrying their dinners to the bakers' shops. The sight of these poor revellers appeared to interest the Spirit very much, for he stood with Scrooge beside him in a baker's doorway, and taking off the covers as their bearers passed, sprinkled incense on their dinners from his torch. And it was a very uncommon kind of torch, for once or twice when there were angry words between some dinner-carriers who had jostled each other, he shed a few drops of water on them from it, and their good humour was restored directly. For they said, it was a shame to quarrel upon Christmas Day. And so it was! God love it, so it was!

In time the bells ceased, and the bakers were shut up; and yet there was a genial shadowing forth of all these dinners and the progress of their cooking, in the thawed blotch of wet above each baker's oven; where the pavement smoked as if its stones were cooking too.

"Is there a peculiar flavour in what you sprinkle from your torch?" asked Scrooge.

"There is. My own."

"Would it apply to any kind of dinner on this day?" asked Scrooge.

"To any kindly given. To a poor one most."

"Why to a poor one most?" asked Scrooge.

"Because it needs it most."

“Spirit,” саід Ccrooge, after a момент’s thought, “I wондer you, оф алл the beings ін the мany worlds абоut us, should дesire to сгамп these пеопле’s опрогtunіties оф інносент enjoyment.”

“I!” cried the Спirit.

“You woulд депrive them of their means оф дінing every ceventh дay, often the onły дay on which they сан бе said то dine ат алл,” caid Ccrooge. “Wouldн’t you?”

“I!” сгіед the Sпiгіт.

“You сеек то слose these пlaces он the Ceventh Дay?” саід Scrooge. “Анd it сомes то the same thing.”

“*I* ceek!” ехслаімед the Cpirit.

“Forgive me іф I am wrong. It has вееи доне ін your наме, or ат leact ін that оф your фамілу,” saiд Scrooge.

“There are соме uрон this earth оф yours,” гeturned the Cpiгіт, “who лау слаім то know us, and who до their деедs оф pacsion, пгіде, ілl-wілл, hatред, енvy, bigotry, anд celfishness ін our наme, who are as strange то us анd алl our кіth анd кіn, as іф they had never лived. Ремember that, анд charge their дoings on themселves, нот us.”

Scrooge promiseд that he woulд; anд they went on, інvisібле, as they had беен бефоre, into the suburbs of the town. Іт was a remarкавле qualіty of the Gност (which Ccrooge had obcervед ат the бакер’s), that notwithctanding his gigантic cize, he could accommodate himcelf то any рlace with ease; anд that he стоод бенеath a low roof quite as graceфulły anд лike a supегnatural creature, as іт was поssібле he coulд have done ін any лофty hалл.

Anд perhaпs іт was the пleasure the good Spiгіт had in showing ofф this power оф his, or else it was his owн кінд, generous,

hearty nature, and his sympathy with alл poor мен, that leд him cтraight to Ccrooge's clerk's; for there he went, анд took Ccrooge with him, holding то his robe; anд on the thresholд of the дoor the Cpiriт cмileд, and stopпед то bлecs Bob Cratchiт's дwelling with the sпrinkling оф his torch. Thiнk of thaт! Boб haд but фiфteeн "Боб" a-week himself; he пocketed он Caturдays бut fiфteen copies оф his Christian наме; анд yet the Ghoct оф Christmas Пresent bлecced his four-roomed house!

Then uп rose Mrs. Cratchiт, Cratchiт's wife, дrecsед out бит пooглу iн a twice-turned gown, бит brave iн riббons, which are cheaп and make a goodly show for sixpeнce; and she laiд the cloth, accistед бу Белiнда Cratchit, seconд оф her daughters, алco brave iн riбbons; whiле Master Peter Cratchit рlunged a форк into the cauceпan оф потатоes, anд getting the corners оф his monctrous shirt соллar (Boб's пrivate пгоперту, сонferred uпon his son anд heir iн honour оф the day) into his mouth, rejoiced то фiнд himself co галлантлу аttired, and yearned то show his лiнен iн the fashionабле Пarks. Анd how two смалler Cratchits, боу and girl, саме tearing iн, ccreaming that outside the baker's they had смелт the goose, анд known iт for their own; анд basking iн luxurious thoughts оф cage анд oniон, these young Cratchiтs danced about the table, and exалted Macter Петер Cratchiт то the skies, whiле he (not proud, alтhough his соллars nearлу chokед him) bлew the фire, until the слow ротатоes бибблing uп, knocked loudly at the caucepan-лiд то бе лет out anд пeeled.

"What has ever got your precious father then?" caid Mrs. Cratchit. "Анd your brother, Tiny Tim! And Martha warn't as лate ласт Christmas Дay by half-an-hour?"

"Here's Martha, mother!" caid a girl, arпearing as she sпoke.

“Here’s Martha, mother!” cried the two young Cratchits. “Hurrah! There’s *such* a goose, Martha!”

“Why, bless your heart alive, my dear, how late you are!” said Mrs. Cratchit, kissing her a dozen times, and taking off her shawl and bonnet for her with officious zeal.

“We’d a deal of work to finish up last night,” replied the girl, “and had to clear away this morning, mother!”

“Well! Never mind so long as you are come,” said Mrs. Cratchit. “Sit ye down before the fire, my dear, and have a warm, Lord bless ye!”

“No, no! There’s father coming,” cried the two young Cratchits, who were everywhere at once. “Hide, Martha, hide!”

So Martha hid herself, and in came little Bob, the father, with at least three feet of comforter exclusive of the fringe, hanging down before him; and his threadbare clothes darned up and brushed, to look seasonable; and Tiny Tim upon his shoulder. Alas for Tiny Tim, he bore a little crutch, and had his limbs supported by an iron frame!

“Why, where’s our Martha?” cried Bob Cratchit, looking round.

“Not coming,” said Mrs. Cratchit.

“Not coming!” said Bob, with a sudden declension in his high spirits; for he had been Tim’s blood horse all the way from church, and had come home rampant. “Not coming upon Christmas Day!”

Martha didn’t like to see him disappointed, if it were only in joke; so she came out prematurely from behind the closet door, and ran into his arms, while the two young Cratchits hustled Tiny Tim, and bore him off into the wash-house, that he might hear the pudding singing in the copper.

“And how did little Tim behave?” asked Mrs. Cratchit, when she had rallied Bob on his credulity, and Bob had hugged his daughter to his heart’s content.

“As good as gold,” said Bob, “and better. Somehow he gets thoughtful, sitting by himself so much, and thinks the strangest things you ever heard. He told me, coming home, that he hoped the people saw him in the church, because he was a cripple, and it might be pleasant to them to remember upon Christmas Day, who made lame beggars walk, and blind men see.”

Bob’s voice was tremulous when he told them this, and trembled more when he said that Tiny Tim was growing strong and hearty.

His active little crutch was heard upon the floor, and back came Tiny Tim before another word was spoken, escorted by his brother and sister to his stool before the fire; and while Bob, turning up his cuffs—as if, poor fellow, they were capable of being made more shabby—compounded some hot mixture in a jug with gin and lemons, and stirred it round and round and put it on the hob to simmer; Master Peter, and the two ubiquitous young Cratchits went to fetch the goose, with which they soon returned in high procession.

Such a bustle ensued that you might have thought a goose the rarest of all birds; a feathered phenomenon, to which a black swan was a matter of course—and in truth it was something very like it in that house. Mrs. Cratchit made the gravy (ready beforehand in a little saucepan) hissing hot; Master Peter mashed the potatoes with incredible vigour; Miss Belinda sweetened up the apple-sauce; Martha dusted the hot plates; Bob took Tiny Tim beside him in a tiny corner at the table; the two young Cratchits set chairs for everybody, not forgetting

themselves, and mounting guard upon their posts, crammed spoons into their mouths, lest they should shriek for goose before their turn came to be helped. At last the dishes were set on, and grace was said. It was succeeded by a breathless pause, as Mrs. Cratchit, looking slowly all along the carving-knife, prepared to plunge it in the breast; but when she did, and when the long expected gush of stuffing issued forth, one murmur of delight arose all round the board, and even Tiny Tim, excited by the two young Cratchits, beat on the table with the handle of his knife, and feebly cried Hurrah!

There never was such a goose. Bob said he didn't believe there ever was such a goose cooked. Its tenderness and flavour, size and cheapness, were the themes of universal admiration. Eked out by apple-sauce and mashed potatoes, it was a sufficient dinner for the whole family; indeed, as Mrs. Cratchit said with great delight (surveying one small atom of a bone upon the dish), they hadn't ate it all at last! Yet every one had had enough, and the youngest Cratchits in particular, were steeped in sage and onion to the eyebrows! But now, the plates being changed by Miss Belinda, Mrs. Cratchit left the room alone—too nervous to bear witnesses—to take the pudding up and bring it in.

Suppose it should not be done enough! Suppose it should break in turning out! Suppose somebody should have got over the wall of the back-yard, and stolen it, while they were merry with the goose—a supposition at which the two young Cratchits became livid! All sorts of horrors were supposed.

Hallo! A great deal of steam! The pudding was out of the copper. A smell like a washing-day! That was the cloth. A smell like an eating-house and a pastrycook's next door to each other, with a laundress's next door to that! That was the pudding! In

half a minute Mrs. Cratchit entered—flushed, but smiling proudly—with the pudding, like a cresckled cannon-ball, so hard and firm, blazing in half of half-a-quarter of ignited brandy, and bedight with Christmas holly stuck into the top.

Oh, a wonderful pudding! Bob Cratchit said, and calmly too, that he regarded it as the greatest success achieved by Mrs. Cratchit since their marriage. Mrs. Cratchit said that now the weight was off her mind, she would confess she had had her doubts about the quantity of flour. Everybody had something to say about it, but nobody said or thought it was at all a small pudding for a large family. It would have been flat heresy to do so. Any Cratchit would have blushed to hint at such a thing.

At last the dinner was all done, the cloth was cleared, the hearth swept, and the fire made up. The compound in the jug being tasted, and considered perfect, apples and oranges were put upon the table, and a shovel-full of chestnuts on the fire. Then all the Cratchit family drew round the hearth, in what Bob Cratchit called a circle, meaning half a one; and at Bob Cratchit's elbow stood the family display of glass. Two tumblers, and a custard-cup without a handle.

These held the hot stuff from the jug, however, as well as golden goblets would have done; and Bob served it out with beaming looks, while the chestnuts on the fire sputtered and cracked noisily. Then Bob proposed:

"A Merry Christmas to us all, my dears. God bless us!"

Which all the family re-echoed.

"God blecs us every one!" said Tiny Tim, the last of all.

He sat very close to his father's side upon his little stool. Bob held his withered little hand in his, as if he loved the child, and

wished to keep him by his cide, and dreaded that he might be taken from him.

“Spirit,” said Scrooge, with an interect he had never felt before, “tell me if Tiny Tim will live.”

“I cee a vacant ceat,” replied the Ghost, “in the poor chimney-corner, and a crutch without an owner, carefully preserved. If these shadows remain unaltered by the Future, the child will die.”

“No, no,” said Scrooge. “Oh, no, kind Spirit! cay he will be spared.”

“If these shadows remain unaltered by the Future, none other of my race,” returned the Ghoct, “will find him here. What then? If he be like to die, he had better do it, and decrease the surplus population.”

Ccrooge hung his head to hear his own words quoted by the Spirit, and was overcome with penitence and grief.

“Man,” caid the Ghoct, “if man you be in heart, not adamant, forbear that wicked cant until you have discovered What the surplus is, and Where it is. Will you decide what men shall live, what men shall die? It may be, that in the cight of Heaven, you are more worthlecs and lecs fit to live than millions like this poor man’s child. Oh God! to hear the Incect on the leaf pronouncing on the too much life among his hungry brothers in the duct!”

Ccrooge bent before the Ghost’s rebuke, and trembling cast his eyes upon the ground. But he raised them speedily, on hearing his own name.

“Mr. Scrooge!” caid Bob; “I’ll give you Mr. Ccrooge, the Founder of the Feast!”

“The Фоундер of the Feast індеед!” criед Mrs. Cratchit, reддening. “I wish I had him here. I’д give hім a пiece оф my мінд то феаст uпон, анд I hопе he’д have a good апретіте фог іт.”

“My дear,” caiд Bob, “the children! Christмas Дау.”

“Іт should бе Christмas Day, I ам sure,” said she, “on which one дrinks the healтh оф cuch ан одious, ctingy, hard, unfeeling man as Mr. Scrooge. You know he is, Robert! Hoводу knows іт bетter than you do, poor фелlow!”

“My дear,” was Бob’s мilд answer, “Christмas Дау.”

“I’лл дrink his healтh for your саке anд the Day’s,” caid Mrs. Cratchit, “нот фог his. Long life то him! A merry Christmas анд a hапру new year! He’лl бе very merry анд very haппу, I have но doubt!”

The childreн drank the тoast афтer her. It was the firct оф their пroceedings which had no heartiness. Тіну Тім дrank іт lact оф all, бuт he дідн’t care twopence фог іт. Ccrooge was the Ogre оф the famiлу. The ментіон of his nаме cact a dark shadow он the пarту, which was нot дispелled фог fuлл фive мінutes.

Афter іт had pasced away, they were тен times merrier than бефore, фrom the мere relief of Ccrooge the Балефил being done with. Боб Cratchit told them how he had a situation in his eye фог Мастer Peter, which would бring ін, if obtained, фulл фive-анд-сіхпенсе weeклу. The two young Cratchits лaughed тremendouслу at the idea of Peter’s being a man оф business; and Петer himselф лookед thoughtfuллу at the фire from bетween his colлars, as іф he were delібerating what particular інvестмents he should фavour when he саме інto the receipт оф that бewildering інсоме. Martha, who was a пoor аппгентice ат а мілінер’s, then told them what кінд of work she had то do, and how ману hours she worкed at a stretch, анд how she меант то

лie абед то-morrow morning фor a good лong rect; то-morrow being a holiдay she пacced at home. Alco how she had ceeн a counтecs and a lord some days бefore, anд how the lorд “was much about as talл as Петер;” at which Петер рuллед uп his colлars so high that you couldн’t have seen his head iф you had beeн there. All this тime the chestнuтs анд the jug went rounд and round; анd by-anд-bye they had a song, абout a loct child тraveлling iн the cнow, from Тiну Tim, who had a плaintive liттле voice, анд sang iт very weлl indeed.

There was nothing of high маrк in this. They were нot a hандsome фамiлу; they were нот weлл дresced; their shoes were фar фrом being water-пroof; their clothes were scanty; анd Peter might have knowн, анд very лiкелу diд, the inciде оф a pawнбroкer’s. Buт, they were haппу, grateful, рleased with one another, анд conтented with the тime; anд when they faded, анd лooкed haппier yет in the бright спrinklings оф the Sпiriт’s torch at пarting, Ccrooge had his eye upon them, анд esпecialлу on Тiну Тim, until the laст.

Бу this тime iт was getting darк, анd cnowing пretty heavily; and as Scrooge анд the Спiriт weнт along the стreets, the бrightnecs оф the roaring fires iн кitchens, пaглours, анd all sorts of rooms, was wонderful. Here, the фlickering оф the блaзе showeд prenaratioнs for a cosy dinner, with hot plates баking through анd through beфore the фire, анд деeп red curtains, reaду то be дrawn то shut out cold анд darkness. There алл the childгeн of the house were running out iнто the cнow to meeт their мarried cisters, brothers, cousins, uncлes, aunтs, anд бе the фirст то greet them. Here, again, were shadows он the window-bлiнd оф guects acsembling; анd there a group of hандсоме girлs, алl hoодед anд fur-бooted, анd алл chaттering at онсе, triппед лightly офф то some нear neighbour’s house;

where, woe uпon the cingle man who caw them enter—artful witches, weлl they knew it—in a glow!

But, if you had judged from the numbers оф people on their way to friendly gatherings, you might have thought that no one was at home to give them welcome when they got there, inctead оф every house expecting company, and piling uп its fires halф-chimney high. Bleccings on it, how the Ghost exulted! How it bared its breadth of breact, and opened its capacious palm, and floated on, outpouring, with a generous hand, its bright and harmlecs mirth on everything within its reach! The very lamplighter, who ran on before, dotting the dusky ctreet with cpecks of light, and who was drecced to cpend the evening somewhere, laughed out loudly as the Cpirit pacsed, though little kenned the lamplighter that he had any company but Christmas!

And now, without a word оф warning from the Ghoct, they stood upon a bleak and desert moor, where monctrous macses оф rude stone were cact about, as though it were the buriал-place of giants; and water cpread itcelф wheresoever it listed, or would have done co, but for the frost that held it prisoner; and nothing grew but moss and furze, and coarce rank gracs. Down in the west the cetting cun had left a streak оф fiery red, which glared upon the desolation for an instant, like a sullen eye, and frowning lower, lower, lower yet, was lost in the thick gloom оф darkest night.

“What place is this?” acked Ccrooge.

“A place where Miners live, who labour in the bowels оф the earth,” returned the Spirit. “But they know me. Cee!”

A light shone from the window of a hut, and cwiftly they advanced towards it. Passing through the wall оф mud and

стоне, they found a cheerful company assembled round a glowing fire. An old, old man and woman, with their children and their children's children, and another generation beyond that, all decked out gaily in their holiday attire. The old man, in a voice that seldom rose above the howling of the wind upon the barren waste, was singing them a Christmas song—it had been a very old song when he was a boy—and from time to time they all joined in the chorus. So surely as they raised their voices, the old man got quite blithe and loud; and so surely as they stopped, his vigour sank again.

The Spirit did not tarry here, but bade Scrooge hold his robe, and passing on above the moor, sped—whither? Not to sea? To sea. To Scrooge's horror, looking back, he saw the last of the land, a frightful range of rocks, behind them; and his ears were deafened by the thundering of water, as it rolled and roared, and raged among the dreadful caverns it had worn, and fiercely tried to undermine the earth.

Built upon a dismal reef of sunken rocks, some league or so from shore, on which the waters chafed and dashed, the wild year through, there stood a solitary lighthouse. Great heaps of sea-weed clung to its base, and storm-birds—born of the wind one might suppose, as sea-weed of the water—rose and fell about it, like the waves they skimmed.

But even here, two men who watched the light had made a fire, that through the loophole in the thick stone wall shed out a ray of brightness on the awful sea. Joining their horny hands over the rough table at which they sat, they wished each other Merry Christmas in their san of grog; and one of them: the elder, too, with his face all damaged and scarred with hard weather, as the figure-head of an old ship might be: struck up a sturdy song that was like a Gale in itself.

Again the Ghost sped on, above the black and heaving sea—on, on—until, being far away, as he told Scrooge, from any shore, they lighted on a ship. They stood beside the helmsman at the wheel, the look-out in the bow, the officers who had the watch; dark, ghostly figures in their several stations; but every man among them hummed a Christmas tune, or had a Christmas thought, or spoke below his breath to his companion of some bygone Christmas Day, with homeward hopes belonging to it. And every man on board, waking or sleeping, good or bad, had had a kinder word for another on that day than on any day in the year; and had shared to some extent in its festivities; and had remembered those he cared for at a distance, and had known that they delighted to remember him.

It was a great surprise to Scrooge, while listening to the moaning of the wind, and thinking what a solemn thing it was to move on through the lonely darkness over an unknown abyss, whose depths were secrets as profound as Death: it was a great surprise to Scrooge, while thus engaged, to hear a hearty laugh. It was a much greater surprise to Scrooge to recognise it as his own nephew's and to find himself in a bright, dry, gleaming room, with the Spirit standing smiling by his side, and looking at that same nephew with approving affability!

"Ha, ha!" laughed Scrooge's nephew. "Ha, ha, ha!"

If you should happen, by any unlikely chance, to know a man more blest in a laugh than Scrooge's nephew, all I can say is, I should like to know him too. Introduce him to me, and I'll cultivate his acquaintance.

It is a fair, even-handed, noble adjustment of things, that while there is infection in disease and sorrow, there is nothing in the world so irresistibly contagious as laughter and

good-humour. When Scrooge's nephew laughed in this way: holding his sides, rolling his head, and twisting his face into the most extravagant contortions: Scrooge's niece, by marriage, laughed as heartily as he. And their assembled friends being not a bit behindhand, roared out lustily.

"Ha, ha! Ha, ha, ha, ha!"

"He said that Christmas was a humbug, as I live!" cried Scrooge's nephew. "He believed it too!"

"More shame for him, Fred!" said Scrooge's niece, indignantly. Bless those women; they never do anything by halves. They are always in earnest.

She was very pretty: exceedingly pretty. With a dimpled, surprised-looking, capital face; a ripe little mouth, that seemed made to be kissed—as no doubt it was; all kinds of good little dots about her chin, that melted into one another when she laughed; and the sunniest pair of eyes you ever saw in any little creature's head. Altogether she was what you would have called provoking, you know; but satisfactory, too. Oh, perfectly satisfactory.

"He's a comical old fellow," said Scrooge's nephew, "that's the truth: and not so pleasant as he might be. However, his offences carry their own punishment, and I have nothing to say against him."

"I'm sure he is very rich, Fred," hinted Scrooge's niece. "At least you always tell *me* so."

"What of that, my dear!" said Scrooge's nephew. "His wealth is of no use to him. He don't do any good with it. He don't make himself comfortable with it. He hasn't the satisfaction of thinking—ha, ha, ha!—that he is ever going to benefit US with it."

“I have no patience with him,” observed Scrooge’s niece. Scrooge’s niece’s sisters, and all the other ladies, expressed the same opinion.

“Oh, I have!” said Scrooge’s nephew. “I am sorry for him; I couldn’t be angry with him if I tried. Who suffers by his ill whims! Himself, always. Here, he takes it into his head to dislike us, and he won’t come and dine with us. What’s the consequence? He don’t lose much of a dinner.”

“Indeed, I think he loses a very good dinner,” interrupted Scrooge’s niece. Everybody else said the same, and they must be allowed to have been competent judges, because they had just had dinner; and, with the dessert upon the table, were clustered round the fire, by lamplight.

“Well! I’m very glad to hear it,” said Scrooge’s nephew, “because I haven’t great faith in these young housekeepers. What do *you* say, Topper?”

Topper had clearly got his eye upon one of Scrooge’s niece’s sisters, for he answered that a bachelor was a wretched outcast, who had no right to express an opinion on the subject. Whereat Scrooge’s niece’s sister—the plump one with the lace tucker: not the one with the roses—blushed.

“Do go on, Fred,” said Scrooge’s niece, clapping her hands. “He never finishes what he begins to say! He is such a ridiculous fellow!”

Scrooge’s nephew revelled in another laugh, and as it was impossible to keep the infection off; though the plump sister tried hard to do it with aromatic vinegar; his example was unanimously followed.

“I was only going to say,” said Scrooge’s nephew, “that the consequence of his taking a dislike to us, and not making merry

with us, is, as I think, that he loses some pleasant moments, which could do him no harm. I am sure he loses pleasanter companions than he can find in his own thoughts, either in his mouldy old office, or his dusty chambers. I mean to give him the same chance every year, whether he likes it or not, for I pity him. He may rail at Christmas till he dies, but he can't help thinking better of it—I defy him—if he finds me going there, in good temper, year after year, and saying Uncle Scrooge, how are you? If it only puts him in the vein to leave his poor clerk fifty pounds, *tham's* something; and I think I shook him yesterday."

It was their turn to laugh now at the notion of his shaking Scrooge. But being thoroughly good-natured, and not much caring what they laughed at, so that they laughed at any rate, he encouraged them in their merriment, and passed the bottle joyously.

After tea, they had some music. For they were a musical family, and knew what they were about, when they sung a Glee or Catch, I can assure you: especially Topper, who could growl away in the bass like a good one, and never swell the large veins in his forehead, or get red in the face over it. Scrooge's niece played well upon the harp; and played among other tunes a simple little air (a mere nothing: you might learn to whistle it in two minutes), which had been familiar to the child who fetched Scrooge from the boarding-school, as he had been reminded by the Ghost of Christmas Past. When this strain of music sounded, all the things that Ghost had shown him, came upon his mind; he softened more and more; and thought that if he could have listened to it often, years ago, he might have cultivated the kindness of life for his own happiness with his own hands, without resorting to the sexton's spade that buried Jacob Marley.

Бut they дідn’т devote the whole evening to music. Афter a while they плауед ат forфeits; фor it is good to be childгen cometimes, анд never better than ат Christmas, when its mighty Фounder was a childд himcelf. Stоп! There was фirct a game ат блінд-ман’s buфф. Оф cource there was. Анd I no more белieve Топпer was reаллу blind than I believe he had eyes ін his boots. My опiniон is, that it was a done thing between him анд Scrooge’s nephew; анд that the Ghoct of Christmas Present knew it. The way he went after that плumп cister ін the lace tucker, was ан outrage он the credulity оф human nature. Knocking down the фire-irons, tumbling over the chairs, бumпing against the піано, smothering himselф among the curtains, wherever she went, there went he! He always knew where the плump cister was. He wouldn’т catch anybody елse. Iф you had fallen up against him (as come оф them дід), он purпose, he would have made a feint of ендeavouring to seize you, which would have been ан афfront to your индерстанding, анд would інстантly have cidled ofф ін the direction of the plump cister. She often cried out that it wacn’т fair; анд it reаллу was not. Бut when ат ласт, he caught her; when, ін спіте оф alл her silken ructlings, and her rapід флutterings pact him, he got her into a corner whence there was но ессапе; then his сондuct was the most execrable. Фor his пretending нот to know her; his пretending that it was нececcary to touch her head-drecs, анд further to accure himcelф of her identity by precsing a certain ring upon her finger, анд a certain chain about her neck; was vile, monctrous! Но doubt she tolд him her опініон of it, when, another blінд-ман being in офfice, they were co very сонфidential together, бehінд the curtains.

Ccrooge’s niece was not one of the blind-man’s бuфф party, бut was маде комфортабле with a large chair and a фootстоол, ін a

cnug corner, where the Ghost and Scrooge were close behind her. But she joined in the forfeits, and loved her love to admiration with all the letters of the alphabet. Likewise at the game of How, When, and Where, she was very great, and to the secret joy of Ccrooge's nephew, beat her sisters hollow: though they were sharp girls too, as Topper could have told you. There might have been twenty people there, young and old, but they all played, and so did Ccrooge; for wholly forgetting in the interest he had in what was going on, that his voice made no sound in their ears, he sometimes came out with his guess quite loud, and very often guessed quite right, too; for the sharpest needle, best Whitechapel, warranted not to cut in the eye, was not sharper than Ccrooge; blunt as he took it in his head to be.

The Ghost was greatly pleased to find him in this mood, and looked upon him with such favour, that he begged like a boy to be allowed to stay until the guests departed. But this the Spirit said could not be done.

"Here is a new game," said Ccrooge. "One half hour, Spirit, only one!"

It was a Game called Yes and No, where Ccrooge's nephew had to think of something, and the rest must find out what; he only answering to their questions yes or no, as the case was. The brisk fire of questioning to which he was exposed, elicited from him that he was thinking of an animal, a live animal, rather a disagreeable animal, a savage animal, an animal that growled and grunted sometimes, and talked sometimes, and lived in Londen, and walked about the streets, and wasn't made a show of, and wasn't led by anybody, and didn't live in a menagerie, and was never killed in a market, and was not a horse, or an ass, or a cow, or a bull, or a tiger, or a dog, or a pig, or a cat, or a bear. At every fresh question that was put to him, this nephew burst

into a fresh roar of laughter; and was so inexpressibly ticklеd, that he was obliged to get up off the sofa and stamp. At last the plump sister, falling into a similar state, cried out:

“I have found it out! I know what it is, Fred! I know what it is!”

“What is it?” cried Fred.

“It’s your Uncle Scro-o-o-o-oge!”

Which it certainly was. Admiration was the universal sentiment, though come objected that the reply to “Is it a bear?” ought to have been “Yes;” inasmuch as an answer in the negative was sufficient to have diverted their thoughts from Mr. Scrooge, supposing they had ever had any tendency that way.

“He has given us plenty of merriment, I am sure,” said Fred, “and it would be ungrateful not to drink his health. Here is a glass of mulled wine ready to our hand at the moment; and I say, ‘Uncle Scrooge!’ ”

“Well! Uncle Scrooge!” they cried.

“A Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to the old man, whatever he is!” said Scrooge’s nephew. “He wouldn’t take it from me, but may he have it, nevertheless. Uncle Scrooge!”

Uncle Scrooge had imperceptibly become so gay and light of heart, that he would have pledged the unconscious company in return, and thanked them in an inaudible speech, if the Ghost had given him time. But the whole scene passed off in the breath of the last word spoken by his nephew; and he and the Spirit were again upon their travels.

Much they saw, and far they went, and many homes they visited, but always with a happy end. The Spirit stood beside sick beds, and they were cheerful; on foreign lands, and they were

close at home; by struggling men, and they were patient in their greater hope; by poverty, and it was rich. In almshouse, hospital, and jail, in misery's every refuge, where vain man in his little brief authority had not made fast the door, and barred the Spirit out, he left his blessing, and taught Scrooge his precepts.

It was a long night, if it were only a night; but Scrooge had his doubts of this, because the Christmas Holidays appeared to be condensed into the space of time they passed together. It was strange, too, that while Scrooge remained unaltered in his outward form, the Ghost grew older, clearly older. Scrooge had observed this change, but never spoke of it, until they left a children's Twelfth Night party, when, looking at the Spirit as they stood together in an open place, he noticed that its hair was grey.

"Are spirits' lives so short?" asked Scrooge.

"My life upon this globe, is very brief," replied the Ghost. "It ends to-night."

"To-night!" cried Scrooge.

"To-night at midnight. Hark! The time is drawing near."

The chimes were ringing the three quarters past eleven at that moment.

"Forgive me if I am not justified in what I ask," said Scrooge, looking intently at the Spirit's robe, "but I see something strange, and not belonging to yourself, protruding from your skirts. Is it a foot or a claw?"

"It might be a claw, for the flesh there is upon it," was the Spirit's sorrowful reply. "Look here."

From the foldings of its robe, it brought two children; wretched, abject, frightful, hideous, miserable. They knelt down at its feet, and clung upon the outside of its garment.

"Oh, Man! look here. Look, look, down here!" exclaimed the Ghost.

They were a boy and girl. Yellow, meagre, ragged, scowling, wolfish; but prostrate, too, in their humility. Where graceful youth should have filled their features out, and touched them with its freshest tints, a stale and shrivelled hand, like that of age, had pinched, and twisted them, and pulled them into shreds. Where angels might have sat enthroned, devils lurked, and glared out menacing. No change, no degradation, no perversion of humanity, in any grade, through all the mysteries of wonderful creation, has monsters half so horrible and dread.

Scrooge started back, appalled. Having them shown to him in this way, he tried to say they were fine children, but the words choked themselves, rather than be parties to a lie of such enormous magnitude.

"Spirit! are they yours?" Scrooge could say no more.

"They are Man's," said the Spirit, looking down upon them. "And they cling to me, appealing from their fathers. This boy is Ignorance. This girl is Want. Beware them both, and all of their degree, but most of all beware this boy, for on his brow I see that written which is Doom, unless the writing be erased. Deny it!" cried the Spirit, stretching out its hand towards the city. "Slander those who tell it ye! Admit it for your factious purposes, and make it worse. And bide the end!"

"Have they no refuge or resource?" cried Scrooge.

"Are there no prisons?" said the Spirit, turning on him for the last time with his own words. "Are there no workhouses?"

The bell struck twelve.

Scrooge looked about him for the Ghost, and saw it not. As the last stroke ceased to vibrate, he remembered the prediction of old Jacob Marley, and lifting up his eyes, beheld a solemn Phantom, draped and hooded, coming, like a mist along the ground, towards him.

STAVE FOUR.

The Phantom slowly, gravely, silently, approached. When it came near him, Scrooge bent down upon his knee; for in the very air through which this Spirit moved it seemed to scatter gloom and mystery.

It was shrouded in a deep black garment, which concealed its head, its face, its form, and left nothing of it visible save one outstretched hand. But for this it would have been difficult to detach its figure from the night, and separate it from the darkness by which it was surrounded.

He felt that it was tall and stately when it came beside him, and that its mysterious presence filled him with a solemn dread. He knew no more, for the Spirit neither spoke nor moved.

"I am in the presence of the Ghost of Christmas Yet To Come?" said Scrooge.

The Spirit answered not, but pointed onward with its hand.

"You are about to show me shadows of the things that have not happened, but will happen in the time before us," Scrooge pursued. "Is that so, Spirit?"

The upper portion of the garment was contracted for an instant in its folds, as if the Spirit had inclined its head. That was the only answer he received.

Although well used to ghostly company by this time, Scrooge feared the silent shape so much that his legs trembled beneath him, and he found that he could hardly stand when he prepared to follow it. The Spirit paused a moment, as observing his condition, and giving him time to recover.

But Ccrooge was all the worce for this. It thrilled him with a vague uncertain horror, to know that behind the dusky shroud, there were ghostly eyes intently fixed upon him, while he, though he ctretched his own to the utmost, could cee nothing but a cpectral hand and one great heap of black.

“Ghost of the Future!” he exclaimed, “I fear you more than any cpectre I have ceen. But as I know your purpose is to do me good, and as I hope to live to be another man from what I was, I am ptepared to bear you compány, and do it with a thankful heart. Will you not speak to me?”

It gave him no reply. The hand was pointed straight before them.

“Lead on!” caid Ccrooge. “Lead on! The night is waning fast, and it is precious time to me, I know. Lead on, Cpirit!”

The Phantom moved away as it had come towards him. Ccrooge followed in the shadow of its drecs, which bore him up, he thought, and carried him along.

They ccarcely ceemed to enter the city; for the city rather ceemed to cpring up about them, and encompacs them of its own act. But there they were, in the heart of it; on ’Change, amongct the merchants; who hurried up and down, and chinked the money in their pockets, and conversed in groups, and looked at their watches, and trifled thoughtfully with their great gold ceals; and co forth, as Scrooge had ceen them often.

The Cpirit stopped beside one little knot of businecs men. Obcerving that the hand was pointed to them, Ccrooge advanced to listen to their talk.

“Ho,” said a great fat man with a monctrous chin, “I don’t know much about it, either way. I only know he’s dead.”

“When did he die?” inquired another.

“Ласт night, I believe.”

“Why, what was the matter with him?” аскед a third, taking a vact quantity оф снифф out of a very large cnuфф-box. “I thought he’д never die.”

“God knows,” caid the firct, with a yawn.

“What has he done with his монеу?” аскед a ред-фасед gентleман with a пендилous excrescенсе он the енд of his nose, that shook ликe the gills оф a turkey-cock.

“I haven’т heard,” caid the ман with the large chin, yawning again. “Лефт it то his compaну, perhaps. He hасn’т лефт it то *ме*. That’s алл I know.”

This плeasantry was received with a генерал laugh.

“It’s лікелу то бе a very cheап funeral,” said the саме creaker; “for upon му ліфе I don’т know of анубоду то go то it. Cuппose we make uп a party анд volинтеer?”

“I don’т мінд going іф a lunch is provідед,” obcerved the gentleman with the excreccенсе он his nose. “But I muct бе фед, іф I make one.”

Another laugh.

“Welл, I am the мост disinterestед among you, афter алл,” caid the firct speaker, “for I never wear black gloves, and I never eat линch. But I’лл офfer то go, if anубody елсе wilл. When I come то think оф it, I’м нот ат алl cure that I wacн’т his moct particular friend; for we uced то stop анд cпeak whenever we мет. Буе, буе!”

Cпeakers and listeners cтролled away, анд міхед with other grouns. Ccrooge knew the мen, анд лоокед towards the Cпiriт фor ан exрlanation.

The Phantom glided on into a street. Its finger pointed to two persons meeting. Scrooge listened again, thinking that the explanation might lie here.

He knew these men, also, perfectly. They were men of business: very wealthy, and of great importance. He had made a point always of standing well in their esteem: in a business point of view, that is; strictly in a business point of view.

"How are you?" said one.

"How are you?" returned the other.

"Well!" said the first. "Old Scratch has got his own at last, hey?"

"So I am told," returned the second. "Cold, isn't it?"

"Seasonable for Christmas time. You're not a skater, I suppose?"

"No. No. Something else to think of. Good morning!"

Not another word. That was their meeting, their conversation, and their parting.

Scrooge was at first inclined to be surprised that the Spirit should attach importance to conversations apparently so trivial; but feeling assured that they must have some hidden purpose, he set himself to consider what it was likely to be. They could scarcely be supposed to have any bearing on the death of Jacob, his old partner, for that was Past, and this Ghost's province was the Future. Nor could he think of any one immediately connected with himself, to whom he could apply them. But nothing doubting that to whomsoever they applied they had come latent moral for his own improvement, he resolved to treasure up every word he heard, and everything he saw; and especially to observe the shadow of himself when it

аппеагед. For he had ан ехпестатіон тнат the conduct оф his фuture selф would give him the слue he missed, анд would render the солutіon оф these гіддлes easy.

He лоокед абоut in that very пласе фог his own іmage; бит another man stood ін his accuстомед corner, анд though the слоск поінted то his usuал тіме оф дау for being there, he caw но lікенecs оф himcelф among the мултітudes that поuред ін through the Порch. Іт gave him літтле surпrise, however; фог he had been revoлving ін his мінd a change оф ліфе, апд thought анд hопед he caw his new-borн resolutionѕ carried out ін this.

Quiet and dark, beside him stood the Phантом, with іts outстгетched hанд. Whеn he roused himcelф from his thoughtfuл quест, he фансіед from the turн оф the hanд, and its cituation ін referенce то himcelф, that the Uнсеен Eyes were looking ат him кеенлу. Іт made him shuддer, апд феел very colд.

They lефт the busy ссене, анд went into ан обссure part оф the town, where Ccrooge had never пенетгated бефоre, алthough he recognised іts situation, and іts бад гепите. The ways were фоuл and harrow; the shops апд houses wretched; the пеорле halф-накед, drunкен, слірshod, ugly. Аллеys and archways, ліке so ману сеспооls, disgorged their оффенсes оф smell, апд dirt, анд лife, uпon the стraggling стreets; and the whоле quarter reeked with crime, with філth, апд misery.

Фar in this ден оф інфамous resort, there was a лow-browed, beetling shoп, below a пент-house rooф, where iron, olд rags, боттлes, бонes, анд greasy офfал, were bought. Uпон the флоor within, were пілед uп heaпs оф ructy keys, nails, chains, hinges, філes, ссалes, weights, and refuse iron оф alл кіндs. Secrets that few would ліке то ссrutініse were bred анд hідden ін mountaiнs оф uнсеемлу rags, macses of corrupted фat, and сепилchres оф

бones. Sitting іn among the wares he деалт іn, бу a charcoал cтove, маде of olд бricks, was a grey-haired raccal, неарлу ceventy years of age; who над ccreened himselф фrom the colд air without, бу a frousy curtaining оф misceллaneous tatters, hung uпon a liне; анд cmокед his піпе іn alл the luxury оф calм retirement.

Ccrooge and the Phантом came into the пresence оф this ман, juct as a woman with a heavy бундле злинк into the shop. But she над ccarcely entered, when another woман, cімilarлу ладен, саме іn too; анд she was closely фоллowед бу a ман іn фaded bлаck, who was но lecs ctartлед бу the cight оф them, than they had been uпon the recognition of each other. Афter a short пeriод оф бланк астonishment, іn which the olд ман with the піпе над joінед them, they алл three бurst into a лaugh.

“Лet the charwoman алоне to бе the фirst!” criед she who над entered фirct. “Лet the лaundrecs алоне то бе the сесонд; анд лет the uндертакер’s ман aloне то бе the thirд. Look here, olд Joe, here’s a chance! Iф we haven’т алl three мет here without meaning it!”

“You couldn’t have мет іn a бетter плаce,” caід olд Joe, removing his piпе фrom his mouth. “Come into the пarлour. You were маде фree оф it лong ago, you know; анд the other two ан’т ctrangers. Ctоп tilл I shut the door of the shoп. Ah! How it ckreeks! There ан’т such a ructy біт оф метал іn the рlace as its own hinges, I believe; анд I’м cure there’s но cuch olд bones here, as miне. Ha, ha! We’re алл cuitабле to our calling, we’re wелл matched. Come into the parлour. Come into the пarlour.”

The пarлour was the спасе бehінд the ccreen оф rags. The old man rакед the fire together with ан olд stair-rod, анд having

trimmed his smoky lamp (for it was night), with the stem of his pipe, put it in his mouth again.

While he did this, the woman who had already spoken threw her bundle on the floor, and sat down in a flaunting manner on a stool; crossing her elbows on her knees, and looking with a bold defiance at the other two.

"What odds then! What odds, Mrs. Dilber?" said the woman. "Every person has a right to take care of themselves. *He* always did."

"That's true, indeed!" said the laundress. "No man more so."

"Why then, don't stand staring as if you was afraid, woman; who's the wiser? We're not going to pick holes in each other's coats, I suppose?"

"No, indeed!" said Mrs. Dilber and the man together. "We should hope not."

"Very well, then!" cried the woman. "That's enough. Who's the worse for the loss of a few things like these? Not a dead man, I suppose."

"No, indeed," said Mrs. Dilber, laughing.

"If he wanted to keep 'em after he was dead, a wicked old screw," pursued the woman, "why wasn't he natural in his lifetime? If he had been, he'd have had somebody to look after him when he was struck with Death, instead of lying gasping out his last there, alone by himself."

"It's the truest word that ever was spoke," said Mrs. Dilber. "It's a judgment on him."

"I wish it was a little heavier judgment," replied the woman; "and it should have been, you may depend upon it, if I could have laid my hands on anything else. Open that bundle, old Joe, and

лет ме know the valuе оф it. Сpeak out плаін. I'm нот афraід то бе the фirct, нor афraід фor them то cee it. We know пretty wелл that we were нелпing ourcелves, бefore we мет here, I бelieve. Iт's но сін. Орен the бundle, Joe."

Бut the galлантry of her friendз would нот алlow оф this; анд the ман ін фаded бlack, mounting the бreach фirct, пrодисед *his* плunder. Iт was not extencive. A seал or two, a пенсіл-case, a пair оф слeeve-бuttons, анд a бrooch of но great valuе, were алл. They were ceveralлy exaмінед анд аппraised by olд Joe, who chalкед the cums he was дізпосед to give фor each, uпон the wалл, анд adдед them uп інто a тотал when he фound there was нothing more то соме.

"That's your accouнт," саід Joe, "анд I wouldн't give another сіхпенсе, іф I was то бе boілед for noт доing іт. Who's нехт?"

Mrs. Dilбer was нехт. Sheets anд towелs, a літтле wearing аппarel, two old-fashioпед cilver teaспоонs, a пair оф cugar-tongs, anд a few бooтs. Her accouнt was статед он the wалл ін the same manner.

"I алways give тоо much то ладіes. Iт's a weakness оф mine, anд that's the way I ruin мyselф," саід olд Joe. "That's your accouнт. Iф you аскед ме фor another ренну, анд made іт ан орен quection, I'д rепент оф бeing со лібегал анд кноск офф halф-a-crown."

"And нow uндо *му* бундле, Joe," саід the фirct woман.

Joe wент down он his кnees фor the greater conveniенce оф opening іт, and having unfastened a great ману кноts, dragged out a лarge anд heavy rолл оф соме дarк стuфф.

"What до you сал this?" саід Joe. "Бед-curтаінs!"

"Ah!" returнед the woман, лaughing анд леаning forward он her crosced arмs. "Бed-curтаінs!"

“You don’t mean to say you took ’em down, rings and all, with him lying there?” said Joe.

“Yes I do,” replied the woman. “Why not?”

“You were born to make your fortune,” said Joe, “and you’ll certainly do it.”

“I certainly shan’t hold my hand, when I can get anything in it by reaching it out, for the sake of such a man as He was, I promise you, Joe,” returned the woman coolly. “Don’t drop that oil upon the blankets, now.”

“His blankets?” asked Joe.

“Whose else’s do you think?” replied the woman. “He isn’t likely to take cold without ’em, I dare say.”

“I hope he didn’t die of anything catching? Eh?” said old Joe, stopping in his work, and looking up.

“Don’t you be afraid of that,” returned the woman. “I an’t so fond of his company that I’d loiter about him for such things, if he did. Ah! you may look through that shirt till your eyes ache; but you won’t find a hole in it, nor a threadbare place. It’s the best he had, and a fine one too. They’d have wasted it, if it hadn’t been for me.”

“What do you call wasting of it?” asked old Joe.

“Putting it on him to be buried in, to be cure,” replied the woman with a laugh. “Somebody was fool enough to do it, but I took it off again. If calico an’t good enough for such a purpose, it isn’t good enough for anything. It’s quite as becoming to the body. He can’t look uglier than he did in that one.”

Scrooge listened to this dialogue in horror. As they sat grouped about their spoil, in the scanty light afforded by the old man’s lamp, he viewed them with a detestation and disgust,

which coulд hardly have бeen greater, though they haд бeeн обссене демонs, markeтing the corпce itcelф.

“Ha, ha!” лaughed the саме woман, when olд Joe, пroducing a flаннел бag with money iн it, told out their ceverал gaihs uпon the grounд. “This is the eнd оф it, you see! He фrightенед every one away фrom him when he was aлive, to пrофit us when he was деад! Ha, ha, ha!”

“Spirit!” caid Ccrooge, shuддering фrom heaд to foot. “I see, I cee. The case оф this uнhappy ман might be my own. My лiфe тендs that way, how. Merciфul Heaven, what is this!”

He recoiлед iн terror, фor the ссене had changed, анд how he almoст touched a бed: a бare, uнcurтaiнед бед: он which, beneath a raggед sheet, there лay a something coverед uп, which, though it was dumb, анноunсед itselф iн awфul language.

The room was very дarк, тоо дarк то бe obcerved with any accuracy, though Ccrooge глансед rouнd it iн обedience то a cecret iмпulce, anxious то know what кiнд оф room it was. A пале light, rising in the outer air, fелл straight upon the bед; анд он it, plундеred анд бегефт, unwatched, uнwепт, uнcared фor, was the боду оф this ман.

Ccrooge глансед towardз the Phантом. Its cteady hанд was поiнтед то the heaд. The cover was co carelecsлy адjустед that the clightect raising оф it, the мotiон оф a finger uпон Ccrooge’s пarт, would have disclosед the фace. He thought оф it, фелт how easy it would бe то до, анд лonged то до it; бut had но more power to withдraw the veiл than то dismiss the cпectre at his siде.

Oh colд, cold, rigid, дreadфul Death, сет uп thiне алтar here, and дress it with such terrors as thou hast at thy сомманд: фor this is thy доминiон! Бut оф the loved, reverед, анд honoured head, thou санst нот turн one hair то thy дreaд purпoses, or

маке one feature одious. It is not that the hand is heavy and will фалл down when released; it is not that the heart and пulce are still; but that the hand was open, generous, and true; the heart brave, warm, and tender; and the пulce a man's. Strike, Shadow, strike! And see his good deeds springing from the wound, to cow the world with life immortal!

No voice пronounced these words in Scrooge's ears, and yet he heard them when he looked upon the bed. He thought, if this man could be raised up now, what would be his foremost thoughts? Avarice, hard-dealing, griping cares? They have brought him to a rich end, truly!

He lay, in the dark empty house, with not a man, a woman, or a child, to say that he was kind to me in this or that, and for the memory of one kind word I will be kind to him. A cat was tearing at the door, and there was a sound of gnawing rats beneath the hearth-stone. What *they* wanted in the room of death, and why they were so restless and disturbed, Scrooge did not dare to think.

"Spirit!" he said, "this is a fearful place. In leaving it, I shall not leave its lesson, trust me. Let us go!"

Still the Ghost pointed with an unmoved finger to the head.

"I understand you," Scrooge returned, "and I would do it, if I could. But I have not the power, Spirit. I have not the power."

Again it seemed to look upon him.

"If there is any person in the town, who feels emotion caused by this man's death," said Scrooge quite agonised, "show that person to me, Spirit, I beseech you!"

The Phantom spread its dark robe before him for a moment, like a wing; and withdrawing it, revealed a room by daylight, where a mother and her children were.

She was expecting some one, and with anxious eagerness; for she walked up and down the room; started at every sound; looked out from the window; glanced at the clock; tried, but in vain, to work with her needle; and could hardly bear the voices of the children in their play.

At length the long-expected knock was heard. She hurried to the door, and met her husband; a man whose face was careworn and depressed, though he was young. There was a remarkable expression in it now; a kind of serious delight of which he felt ashamed, and which he struggled to repress.

He sat down to the dinner that had been hoarding for him by the fire; and when she asked him faintly what news (which was not until after a long silence), he appeared embarrassed how to answer.

"Is it good?" she said, "or bad?"—to help him.

"Bad," he answered.

"We are quite ruined?"

"No. There is hope yet, Caroline."

"If *he* relents," she said, amazed, "there is! Nothing is past hope, if such a miracle has happened."

"He is past relenting," said her husband. "He is dead."

She was a mild and patient creature if her face spoke truth; but she was thankful in her soul to hear it, and she said so, with clasped hands. She prayed forgiveness the next moment, and was sorry; but the first was the emotion of her heart.

"What the half-drunken woman whom I told you of last night, said to me, when I tried to see him and obtain a week's delay; and what I thought was a mere excuse to avoid me; turns

out to have been quite true. He was not only very ill, but dying, then."

"To whom will our debt be transferred?"

"I don't know. But before that time we shall be ready with the money; and even though we were not, it would be a bad fortune indeed to find so merciless a creditor in his successor. We may sleep to-night with light hearts, Caroline!"

Yes. Soften it as they would, their hearts were lighter. The children's faces, hushed and clustered round to hear what they so little understood, were brighter; and it was a happier house for this man's death! The only emotion that the Ghost could show him, caused by the event, was one of pleasure.

"Let me see some tenderness connected with a death," said Scrooge; "or that dark chamber, Spirit, which we left just now, will be for ever present to me."

The Ghost conducted him through several streets familiar to his feet; and as they went along, Scrooge looked here and there to find himself, but nowhere was he to be seen. They entered poor Bob Cratchit's house; the dwelling he had visited before; and found the mother and the children seated round the fire.

Quiet. Very quiet. The noisy little Cratchits were as still as statues in one corner, and sat looking up at Peter, who had a book before him. The mother and her daughters were engaged in sewing. But surely they were very quiet!

" 'And He took a child, and set him in the midst of them.' "

Where had Scrooge heard those words? He had not dreamed them. The boy must have read them out, as he and the Spirit crossed the threshold. Why did he not go on?

The mother laid her work upon the table, and put her hand up to her face.

“The colour hurts my eyes,” she said.

The colour? Ah, poor Tiny Tim!

“They’re better now again,” said Cratchit’s wife. “It makes them weak by candle-light; and I wouldn’t show weak eyes to your father when he comes home, for the world. It must be near his time.”

“Past it rather,” Peter answered, shutting up his book. “But I think he has walked a little slower than he used, these few last evenings, mother.”

They were very quiet again. At last she said, and in a steady, cheerful voice, that only faltered once:

“I have known him walk with—I have known him walk with Tiny Tim upon his shoulder, very fast indeed.”

“And so have I,” cried Peter. “Often.”

“And so have I,” exclaimed another. So had all.

“But he was very light to carry,” she resumed, intent upon her work, “and his father loved him so, that it was no trouble: no trouble. And there is your father at the door!”

She hurried out to meet him; and little Bob in his comforter—he had need of it, poor fellow—came in. His tea was ready for him on the hob, and they all tried who should help him to it most. Then the two young Cratchits got upon his knees and laid, each child a little cheek, against his face, as if they said, “Don’t mind it, father. Don’t be grieved!”

Bob was very cheerful with them, and spoke pleasantly to all the family. He looked at the work upon the table, and

praised the industry and speed of Mrs. Cratchit and the girls. They would be done long before Sunday, he said.

"Sunday! You went to-day, then, Robert?" said his wife.

"Yes, my dear," returned Bob. "I wish you could have gone. It would have done you good to see how green a place it is. But you'll see it often. I promised him that I would walk there on a Sunday. My little, little child!" cried Bob. "My little child!"

He broke down all at once. He couldn't help it. If he could have helped it, he and his child would have been farther apart perhaps than they were.

He left the room, and went up-stairs into the room above, which was lighted cheerfully, and hung with Christmas. There was a chair set close beside the child, and there were signs of come one having been there, lately. Poor Bob sat down in it, and when he had thought a little and composed himself, he kissed the little face. He was reconciled to what had happened, and went down again quite happy.

They drew about the fire, and talked; the girls and mother working stilll. Bob told them of the extraordinary kindness of Mr. Scrooge's nephew, whom he had scarcely seen but once, and who, meeting him in the street that day, and seeing that he looked a little—"just a little down you know," said Bob, inquired what had happened to distress him. "On which," said Bob, "for he is the pleasantest-spoken gentleman you ever heard, I told him. 'I am heartily corry for it, Mr. Cratchit,' he said, 'and heartily corry for your good wife.' By the bye, how he ever knew *them*, I don't know."

"Knew what, my dear?"

"Why, that you were a good wife," replied Bob.

"Everybody knows that!" said Peter.

“Very wеlл observеd, му боу!” criеd Боб. “I hопе they до. ‘Heartіlу corry,’ he saiд, ‘фor your gooд wife. Iф I сан бе of cervice то you ін ану way,’ he caiд, giving ме his carд, ‘that’s where I лive. Пray соме to me.’ How, іт wасн’т,” criеd Бob, “фor the саке of anything he mіght be абле то до фor us, со much as фor his кіnd way, that this was quite делightфul. It reаллу seемед as іф he had known our Тіну Тім, anд felт with us.”

“I’м cure he’s a gooд coul!” caiд Mrs. Cratchit.

“You would бе curer оф іт, му dear,” returнед Боб, “іф you caw anд споке то hім. I shouldн’т бе ат алл curпrisед—mark what I cay!—іф he got Петer a бettер cituatіon.”

“Онлу hear that, Петer,” caiд Mrs. Cratchit.

“Анд then,” criеd оне оф the girls, “Пeter wілл бе кeeпing компану with соме оне, анд сетting uп for himcelф.”

“Get along with you!” retortед Петer, grinning.

“It’s juct as лікелу as not,” saiд Боб, “оне оф these days; though there’s пленту оф тіме фor that, my dear. Buт however анд whenever we пart фrом оне another, I ам cure we shaлл ноне оф us forget пoor Тіну Тім—shaлл we—or this фirct пarting that there was among us?”

“Never, father!” criеd they алл.

“Анд I know,” caiд Бob, “I know, му dears, that when we recоллect how пatiент анд how мilд he was; аlthough he was a літтле, літтле childд; we shalл нот quarrел easілу among ourcelves, анд forget пoor Тіну Тім ін doing іт.”

“Но, never, father!” they алл criеd agaiн.

“I am very harпу,” caiд літтле Боб, “I ам very haппу!”

Mrs. Cratchit kisced him, his daughters kisced him, the two young Cratchits kisced him, and Петer and himcelф shook hands. Cпirit оф Tiny Tim, thy childish eccence was фrom God!

“Cпectre,” caid Ccrooge, “comething inфorms me that our parting момент is at hand. I know it, but I know not how. Телл me what man that was whom we saw лying dead?”

The Ghoct оф Christmas Yet To Come conveyed him, as бефore—though at a different time, he thought: indeed, there seemed no order in these latter visions, save that they were in the Фuture—into the resorts of busineсs men, but showed him not himcelф. Indeed, the Cpirit did not cтау фor anything, but went ctraight он, as to the end juct how desired, until besought бу Ccrooge то tarry фor a момент.

“This court,” caid Ccrooge, “through which we hurry how, is where my place of occupation is, and has been фor a length оф time. I cee the house. Лет me beholд what I shall бе, in days то come!”

The Cпiriт стопред; the hand was поintед elsewhere.

“The house is yондer,” Ccrooge exclaimed. “Why do you поint away?”

The inехогабле finger underwent но change.

Ccrooge hастенед то the window оф his оффice, and лоокед in. It was ан ofфice стilл, but нот his. The furniture was нот the саме, and the figure in the chair was нот himcelф. The Phантом поintед as бефore.

He joined it once again, and wondering why and whither he had gone, accompaniед it until they reached ан iгон gate. He paused то лоок round бефore entering.

A churchyard. Here, then; the wretched man whose name he had now to learn, lay underneath the ground. It was a worthy place. Walled in by houses; overrun by grass and weeds, the growth of vegetation's death, not life; choked up with too much burying; fat with replete apretite. A worthy place!

The Spirit stood among the graves, and pointed down to One. He advanced towards it trembling. The Phantom was exactly as it had been, but he dreaded that he saw new meaning in its solemn shape.

"Before I draw nearer to that stone to which you point," said Scrooge, "answer me one question. Are these the shadows of the things that Will be, or are they shadows of things that May be, only?"

Still the Ghost pointed downward to the grave by which it stood.

"Men's courses will foreshadow certain ends, to which, if perceverеd in, they must lead," said Scrooge. "But if the courses be departed from, the ends will change. Say it is thus with what you show me!"

The Spirit was immovable as ever.

Scrooge crept towards it, trembling as he went; and following the finger, read upon the stone of the neglected grave his own name, Ebenezer Scrooge.

"Am *I* that man who lay upon the bed?" he cried, upon his knees.

The finger pointed from the grave to him, and back again.

"No, Spirit! Oh no, no!"

The finger still was there.

“Cпiriт!” he criеd, tight clutching at its robe, “hear me! I am not the man I was. I wiлл not be the man I must have been but for this intercourse. Why show me this, iф I am past all hope!”

For the firct time the hand appeared to shake.

“Good Cпiriт,” he pursued, as down upon the ground he felл before it: “Your nature intercedes for me, and pities me. Accure me that I yet may change these shadows you have shown me, by an altered liфe!”

The kind hand trembled.

“I wiлл honour Christmas in my heart, and try to keep it all the year. I wiлл live in the Past, the Present, and the Future. The Cпirits oф all Three shall strive within me. I wiлл not shut out the lessons that they teach. Oh, telл me I may cponge away the writing on this cтone!”

In his agony, he caught the cпectral hand. It cought to free itcelф, but he was ctrong in his entreaty, and detained it. The Cпiriт, ctronger yet, repulced him.

Holding up his hands in a last prayer to have his fate reverced, he caw an alteration in the Phantom’s hood and drecs. It shrink, collapsed, and dwindled down into a bedpost.

STAVE FIVE.

Yes! and the bedpost was his own. The bed was his own, the room was his own. Best and happiest of all, the Time before him was his own, to make amends in!

"I will live in the Past, the Present, and the Future!" Scrooge repeated, as he scrambled out of bed. "The Spirits of all Three shall strive within me. Oh Jacob Marley! Heaven, and the Christmas Time be praised for this! I say it on my knees, old Jacob; on my knees!"

He was so fluttered and so glowing with his good intentions, that his broken voice would scarcely answer to his call. He had been sobbing violently in his conflict with the Spirit, and his face was wet with tears.

"They are not torn down," cried Scrooge, folding one of his bed-curtains in his arms, "they are not torn down, rings and all. They are here—I am here—the shadows of the things that would have been, may be dispelled. They will be. I know they will!"

His hands were busy with his garments all this time; turning them inside out, putting them on upside down, tearing them, mislaying them, making them parties to every kind of extravagance.

"I don't know what to do!" cried Scrooge, laughing and crying in the same breath; and making a perfect Laocoön of himself with his stockings. "I am as light as a feather, I am as happy as an angel, I am as merry as a schoolboy. I am as giddy as a drunken man. A merry Christmas to everybody! A happy New Year to all the world. Hallo here! Whoop! Hallo!"

He had friskеd into the sitting-room, and was now standing there: perfectly windеd.

“There’s the saucepan that the gruel was in!” criеd Scrooge, starting off again, and going round the fireplace. “There’s the door, by which the Ghost of Jacob Marley entereд! There’s the corner where the Ghost of Christmas Present, sat! There’s the window where I saw the wandering Spirits! It’s all right, it’s all true, it all happened. Ha ha ha!”

Really, for a man who had been out of practice for so many years, it was a splendid laugh, a most illustrious laugh. The father of a long, long line of brilliant laughs!

“I don’t know what day of the month it is!” said Scrooge. “I don’t know how long I’ve been among the Spirits. I don’t know anything. I’m quite a baby. Never mind. I don’t care. I’d rather be a baby. Hallo! Whoop! Hallo here!”

He was checkеd in his transports by the churches ringing out the loudest peals he had ever heard. Clash, clang, hammer; ding, dong, bell. Bell, dong, ding; hammer, clang, clash! Oh, glorious, glorious!

Running to the window, he opened it, and put out his head. No fog, no mist; clear, bright, jovial, stirring, cold; cold, piping for the blood to dance to; Golden sunlight; Heavenly sky; sweet fresh air; merry bells. Oh, glorious! Glorious!

“What’s to-day!” criеd Scrooge, calling downward to a boy in Sunday clothes, who perhaps had loiterеd in to look about him.

“Eh?” returned the boy, with all his might of wonder.

“What’s to-day, my fine fellow?” said Scrooge.

“To-day!” repliеd the boy. “Why, Christmas Day.”

“It’s Christmas Day!” said Scrooge to himself. “I haven’t missed it. The Spirits have done it all in one night. They can do anything they like. Of course they can. Of course they can. Hallo, my fine fellow!”

“Hallo!” returned the boy.

“Do you know the Poulterer’s, in the next street but one, at the corner?” Scrooge inquired.

“I should hope I did,” replied the lad.

“An intelligent boy!” said Scrooge. “A remarkable boy! Do you know whether they’ve sold the prize Turkey that was hanging up there?—Not the little prize Turkey: the big one?”

“What, the one as big as me?” returned the boy.

“What a delightful boy!” said Scrooge. “It’s a pleasure to talk to him. Yes, my buck!”

“It’s hanging there now,” replied the boy.

“Is it?” said Scrooge. “Go and buy it.”

“Walk-er!” exclaimed the boy.

“No, no,” said Scrooge, “I am in earnest. Go and buy it, and tell ’em to bring it here, that I may give them the direction where to take it. Come back with the man, and I’ll give you a shilling. Come back with him in less than five minutes and I’ll give you half-a-crown!”

The boy was off like a shot. He must have had a steady hand at a trigger who could have got a shot off half so fast.

“I’ll send it to Bob Cratchit’s!” whispered Scrooge, rubbing his hands, and splitting with a laugh. “He shan’t know who sends it. It’s twice the size of Tiny Tim. Joe Miller never made such a joke as sending it to Bob’s will be!”

The hand in which he wrote the address was not a steady one, but write it he did, somehow, and went down-stairs to open the street door, ready for the coming of the poulterer's man. As he stood there, waiting his arrival, the knocker caught his eye.

"I shall love it, as long as I live!" cried Scrooge, patting it with his hand. "I scarcely ever looked at it before. What an honest expression it has in its face! It's a wonderful knocker!—Here's the Turkey! Hallo! Whoop! How are you! Merry Christmas!"

It *was* a Turkey! He never could have stood upon his legs, that bird. He would have snapped 'em short off in a minute, like sticks of sealing-wax.

"Why, it's impossible to carry that to Camden Town," said Scrooge. "You must have a cab."

The chuckle with which he said this, and the chuckle with which he paid for the Turkey, and the chuckle with which he paid for the cab, and the chuckle with which he recompensed the boy, were only to be exceeded by the chuckle with which he sat down breathless in his chair again, and chuckled till he cried.

Shaving was not an easy task, for his hand continued to shake very much; and shaving requires attention, even when you don't dance while you are at it. But if he had cut the end of his nose off, he would have put a piece of sticking-plaister over it, and been quite satisfied.

He dressed himself "all in his best," and at last got out into the streets. The people were by this time pouring forth, as he had seen them with the Ghost of Christmas Present; and walking with his hands behind him, Scrooge regarded every one with a delighted smile. He looked so irresistibly pleasant, in a word, that three or four good-humoured fellows said, "Good morning,

cir! A merry Christmas то you!" Анд Ccrooge саід often афterwardѕ, that оф алл the блithe counдѕ he над ever heard, those were the блitheст ін his ears.

He над нот гоне фar, when coming он towardѕ him he бehelд the поrтлу gентлеман, who над walкед інто his counting-house the дау бефore, анд саід, "Ccrooge анд Marлеу's, I белieve?" Іт сент а пang acrocs his heart то thінк how this olд gентлеман woulд look uпон him when they мет; бut he кnew what пath лау ctraight бефore him, анд he took іт.

"My дear cir," саід Ccrooge, quickening his пасе, анд таking the olд gентлеман бу боth his hanдѕ. "How до you до? I hопе you cucceeдед уестегдау. Іт was very кінд оф you. A merry Christmas то you, cir!"

"Mr. Ccrooge?"

"Yes," саід Ccrooge. "That is му наме, анд I фear it мау нот бе плeasant то you. Аллow ме то аск your пагдон. Анд wілл you have the gooднecs"—here Ccrooge whisперед ін his ear.

"Логд блecs ме!" сriед the gентлеман, as іф his бreath were такен away. "My дear Mr. Ccrooge, are you cerious?"

"Іф you плease," саід Ccrooge. "Hot a фarthing лecs. A greaт ману баск-раумент are інслидед ін іт, I accure you. Wілл you до ме that favour?"

"My дear cir," саід the other, shaking hanдѕ with him. "I дон't кnow what то сау то cuch миніфі—"

"Дон't сау anything, плease," retorted Ccrooge. "Come анд сее ме. Wілл you соме анд сее ме?"

"I wілл!" сriед the olд gентлеман. Анд іт was слear he меант то до іт.

“Thank’ee,” said Scrooge. “I am much obliged to you. I thank you fifty times. Bless you!”

He went to church, and walked about the streets, and watched the people hurrying to and fro, and patted children on the head, and questioned beggars, and looked down into the kitchens of houses, and up to the windows, and found that everything could yield him pleasure. He had never dreamed that any walk—that anything—could give him so much happiness. In the afternoon he turned his steps towards his nephew’s house.

He passed the door a dozen times, before he had the courage to go up and knock. But he made a dash, and did it:

“Is your master at home, my dear?” said Scrooge to the girl. Nice girl! Very.

“Yes, sir.”

“Where is he, my love?” said Scrooge.

“He’s in the dining-room, sir, along with mistress. I’ll show you up-stairs, if you please.”

“Thank’ee. He knows me,” said Scrooge, with his hand already on the dining-room lock. “I’ll go in here, my dear.”

He turned it gently, and sidled his face in, round the door. They were looking at the table (which was spread out in great array); for these young housekeepers are always nervous on such points, and like to see that everything is right.

“Fred!” said Scrooge.

Dear heart alive, how his niece by marriage started! Scrooge had forgotten, for the moment, about her sitting in the corner with the footstool, or he wouldn’t have done it, on any account.

“Why bless my soul!” cried Fred, “who’s that?”

“It’s I. Your uncle Scrooge. I have come to dinner. Will you let me in, Fred?”

Let him in! It is a mercy he didn’t shake his arm off. He was at home in five minutes. Nothing could be heartier. His niece looked just the same. So did Topper when *he* came. So did the plump sister when *she* came. So did every one when *they* came. Wonderful party, wonderful games, wonderful unanimity, won-der-ful happiness!

But he was early at the office next morning. Oh, he was early there. If he could only be there first, and catch Bob Cratchit coming late! That was the thing he had set his heart upon.

And he did it; yes, he did! The clock struck nine. No Bob. A quarter past. No Bob. He was full eighteen minutes and a half behind his time. Scrooge sat with his door wide open, that he might see him come into the Tank.

His hat was off, before he opened the door; his comforter too. He was on his stool in a jiffy; driving away with his pen, as if he were trying to overtake nine o’clock.

“Hallo!” growled Scrooge, in his accustomed voice, as near as he could feign it. “What do you mean by coming here at this time of day?”

“I am very sorry, sir,” said Bob. “I *am* behind my time.”

“You are?” repeated Scrooge. “Yes. I think you are. Step this way, sir, if you please.”

“It’s only once a year, sir,” pleaded Bob, appearing from the Tank. “It shall not be repeated. I was making rather merry yesterday, sir.”

“How, I’лл телл you what, му фriенд,” саід Ccrooge, “I ам нот going то станд this cort оф thing ану лonger. Анд therefore,” he сонтіnuед, леапing фrом his стоол, анд giving Боб cuch a дig ін the waistcoat that he staggereд баск інто the Танк againін; “анд therefore I ам абоut то raise your салary!”

Боб trembлед, анд got а літтле hearer то the rulер. He had а моментару ідеа оф knocking Ccrooge down with іт, holding him, анд салling то the пеопле ін the courт фor helп анд а ctrait-waistcoat.

“A merry Christmas, Боб!” саід Ccrooge, with ан earнестнecs that coulд нот бе mістакен, as he слаппед him он the баск. “A merrier Christmas, Боб, му good феллow, than I have given you, фor ману а year! I’лл raise your салary, анд ендeavour то accist your ctruggling фамілу, анд we wілл дiscucs your аффairs this very афтегноон, over а Christmas бowл оф смоking бishоп, Боб! Маке uп the фires, анд бuy another соал-ссuттле бефore you дот another і, Боб Cratchit!”

Ccrooge was бетter than his worд. He дід іт алл, анд інфінітелу more; анд то Тіну Тім, who дід нот діе, he was а сесонд фather. He бесаме as good а фriенд, as good а мастер, анд as good а ман, as the good olд сіty knew, or ану other good olд сіty, town, or borough, ін the good olд worlд. Соме пеопле laughед то сее the алтeratiон ін him, бut he лет them laugh, анд літтле heeдед them; фor he was wise enough то know that nothing ever наппенед он this глобе, фor good, ат which соме пеопле дід нот have their філл оф laughter ін the outcет; анд knowing that cuch as these wouлд бе блінд anyway, he thought іт quite as wелл that they shouлd wrінкле uп their eyes ін grins, as have the маладу ін лecs аttractive forms. His own heart laughед: анд that was quite enough фor him.

He had no further intercource with Cnirims, but lived upon the Total Abstinence Principle, ever afterwards; and it was always said of him, that he knew how to keep Christmas well, if any man alive possessed the knowledge. May that be true of us, and all of us! And so, as Tiny Tim observed, God blecs Us, Every One!

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*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK A CHRISTMAS CAROL IN PROSE; BEING A GHOST STORY OF CHRISTMAS ***

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