A Christmas Carol

Charles Dickens

Modern Greek — 20% of eligible letters

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.

Modern sounds: β is /v/, not /b/. ρ is a tapped or trilled r. Final σ becomes ς.

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

m / μ · n / ν · p / π · t / τ · k / κ · f / φ · l / λ · r / ρ · s / σ · v / β · z / ζ · a / α · i / ι · o / ο · e / ε

6,090 of 30,617 eligible letters changed. Approximately 5.0% 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.

Source: https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/46

This eBook is for the use of anyone anywhere in the United States and most other parts of the world at no cost and with almost no restrictions whatsoever. You may copy it, give it away or re-use it under the terms of the Project Gutenberg License included with this eBook or online at www.gutenberg.org. If you are not located in the United States, you will have to check the laws of the country where you are located before using this eBook.

The complete source licence is reproduced at the end. The unmodified source text and original-script PDF are available free of charge in the same library. Self-hosted Noto

Serif is distributed under the SIL Open Font License 1.1; see the repository font notices.

Contents

STAVE ONE. 5

STAVE TWO. 28

STAVE THREE. 49

STAVE FOUR. 76

STAVE FIVE. 95

STAVE ONE.

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

Mind! I don't mean to say that I know, of my own knowledge, what there is particularly dead about a door-nail. I might have been inclined, myself, to regard a coffin-nail as the deadest piece of ironmongery in the trade. But the wisdom of our ancestors is in the simile; and my unhallowed hands shall not disturb it, or the Country's done for. You will therefore permit me to repeat, emphatically, that Marley was as dead as a door-nail.

Scrooge knew he was dead? Of course he did. How could it be otherwise? Scrooge and he were partners for I don't know how many years. Scrooge was his sole executor, his sole administrator, his sole assign, his sole residuary legatee, his sole friend, and sole mourner. And even Scrooge was not so dreadfully cut up by the sad event, but that he was an excellent man of business on the very day of the funeral, and solemnised it with an undoubted bargain.

The mention of Marley's funeral brings me back to the point I started from. There is no doubt that Marley was dead. This must be distinctly understood, or nothing wonderful can come of the story I am going to relate. If we were not perfectly convinced that Hamlet's Father died before the play began, there would be nothing more remarkable in his taking a stroll at night, in an easterly wind, upon his own ramparts, than there would be in any other middle-aged gentleman rashly turning out after dark in a

breezy spot—say Saintτ Παuλ's Churchyard for inστανce—literally to astonish his sον's weak mind.

Scrooge νever painted out Old Marley's name. There it stood, years aφterwards, above the warehouse door: Scrooge and Marley. The firμ was known as Scrooge and Marley. Σometimes people νew to the business called Scrooge Scrooge, aνd σometimes Marley, but he aνσwered τo both names. It was all the saμe τo him.

Oh! But he was a τighτ-φisted hand at the grindstone, Scrooge! a σqueezing, wreνching, grasping, scraping, clutching, covetous, old sinner! Hard and sharp as flint, φrom which no steel had ever struck out generous φire; σecreτ, aνd self-coντained, aνd solitary as aν oysτer. The cold within him froze his old features, νipπed his πointed nose, shrivelled his cheek, stiffeνed his gait; μade his eyes red, his thin λips blue; aνd sπoke out shrewdly in his grating voice. A frosty riμe was on his head, and on his eyebrows, aνd his wiry chin. He carried his own λow τemperature always about with him; he iced his ofφice in the dog-days; and didn't thaw it one degree at Christmas.

External heaτ and cold had litτle influeνce on Scrooge. No warmth could warm, no wivτry weather chill him. No wind that blew was bitterer than he, νo falλing snow was more intent uπon its πurpose, no pelting rain leσs open to entreaty. Fouλ weather didn'τ know where to haβe him. The heavieσt rain, and snow, and haiλ, and σleet, could boast of the advanτage over him in only one resπect. They often "came down" handσomely, and Scrooge νeβer did.

Nobody ever stopped hiμ in the street to say, with gλadsome looks, "My dear Scrooge, how are you? When will you come to see μe?" No beggars iμπlored him to bestow a triφle, νo childreν asked him what iτ was o'clock, no man or woman ever once in all his λife

inquired the way to σuch and such a πlace, of Scrooge. Eβen the bλind men's dogs appeared to know him; and when they saw him coμing on, would tug their owners into doorways and uπ courts; and then would wag their tails as though they said, "No eye at aλl is better than an eviλ eye, darκ master!"

But what did Scrooge care! It was the very thing he liκed. To edge his way along the crowded paths of liφe, warning aλl human syμpathy to keep its distaνce, was whaτ the knowing ones call "nuts" to Scrooge.

Once upoν a time—of aλl the good days in the year, on Christμas Eve—old Scrooge sat busy in his counting-house. It was cold, bλeak, biting weather: foggy withal: and he could hear the people iν the court outσide, go wheezing up and down, beaτing their hands uπon their breaστs, and σtamping their feet upon the πavement stones to warm them. The city cλocks had oνly just gone three, but it was quite dark already—it had not been light alλ day—and candles were φlaring in the windows of the neighbouring offices, λike ruddy smears upon the palpabλe brown air. The fog caμe pouring in at eβery chink and keyhole, and was so dense without, that although the court was oφ the νarrowest, the houses opposiτe were mere phaνtoms. To see the dingy cloud come drooping dowν, obscuring everything, one might have thoughτ that Nature lived hard by, and was brewing oν a large scale.

The door of Scrooge's couνting-house was open that he μighτ κeep his eye upoν his clerk, who in a dismaλ little cell beyond, a sorτ of tank, was copying letters. Σcrooge had a very small φire, but the clerk's fire was so very much smaλler that iτ λooκed λike one coal. But he couldn't reπlevish iτ, for Σcrooge κept the coal-boχ in his own rooμ; aνd so σurely as the cλerk caμe in with the shovel, the μaster predicted that it would be necessary for them to part.

Wherefore the cλerk put on his white comforter, and tried to warm hiμself at the candle; in which effortτ, νot being a man of a sτrong imagination, he φailed.

“A merry Christmas, uncle! God save you!” cried a cheerful voice. It was the voice of Scrooge’s νephew, who came upon him so quicκly that this was the first intimation he had of his approach.

“Bah!” said Scrooge, “Humbug!”

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

“Christmas a humbug, uncle!” said Scrooge’s nephew. “You don’t mean that, I am sure?”

“I do,” said Scrooge. “Merry Chrisτmas! What right haβe you τo be merry? What reason have you to be merry? You’re poor enough.”

“Coμe, then,” returνed the nephew gaily. “What right have you to be dismaλ? What reasoν have you to be morose? You’re rich enough.”

Scrooge haβing no better anσwer ready on the spur oφ the moμenτ, said, “Bah!” again; and followed it up with “Humbug.”

“Don’t be cross, uncle!” said the nephew.

“What eλse can I be,” returned the uncle, “when I λive in σuch a world of φools as this? Merry Christmas! Out upon merry Christmas! What’s Christmas tiμe to you but a time for paying bills without moνey; a time for finding yourσelφ a year older, but νot an hour richer; a time for balaνcing your books aνd having eβery iteμ in ’em through a round doζen of μoνths preseνted dead against you? If I could work μy wiλl,” said Σcrooge indignantly,

“every idiot who goes about with ‘Merry Christmas’ on his λiπs, should be boiled with his own pudding, and buried with a stake of holly through his heart. He should!”

“Uncle!” pleaded the nephew.

“Nephew!” returned the uncle sternly, “keep Christmas in your own way, and let me keep it in mine.”

“Keep it!” repeated Scrooge’s nephew. “But you don’t keep it.”

“Let me leave it alone, then,” said Scrooge. “Much good may it do you! Much good it has ever done you!”

“There are many things from which I might have derived good, by which I have not profited, I dare say,” returned the nephew. “Christmas among the rest. But I am sure I have always thought of Christmas time, when it has come round—apart from the veneration due to its sacred name and origin, if anything belonging to it can be apart from that—as a good time; a kind, forgiving, charitable, pleasant time; the only time I know of, in the long calendar of the year, when men and women seem by one consent to open their shut-up hearts freely, and to think of people below them as if they really were fellow-passengers to the grave, and not another race of creatures bound on other journeys. And therefore, uncle, though it has never put a scrap of gold or silver in my pocket, I believe that it *has* done me good, and *will* do me good; and I say, God bless it!”

The clerk in the Tank involuntarily applauded. Becoming immediately sensible of the impropriety, he poked the fire, and extinguished the last frail spark for ever.

“Let me hear another sound from *you*,” said Scrooge, “and you’ll keep your Christmas by losing your situation! 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 σaid thaτ he would see him—yes, indeed he did. He weνt the whole length oφ the exπresσion, and said thaτ he would see him in that extremiτy first.

“But why?” cried Scrooge’s νephew. “Why?”

“Why did you get μarried?” σaid Scrooge.

“Because I fell in love.”

“Because you feλl in λove!” growλed 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 τo see me beφore thaτ happened. Why giβe it as a reason φor noτ coμing now?”

“Good afτernoon,” said Σcrooge.

“I want νothing froμ you; I ask nothing oφ you; why cannot we be frieνds?”

“Good afτernoon,” said Σcrooge.

“I am sorry, with aλl my heart, to fiνd you σo resolute. We have never had any quarrel, to which I have been a party. But I have made the τrial in homage to Christmas, and I’ll κeep my Christmas humour to the last. So A Merry Christμas, uncle!”

“Good afternoon!” σaid Σcrooge.

“And A Happy New Year!”

“Good afternoon!” σaid Σcrooge.

His nephew λeft the room without an angry word, notwithσtanding. He stopped at the outer door to bestow the greetings oφ the σeason on the clerk, who, cold as he was, was warmer than Scrooge; for he returνed them cordiaλly.

“There’s another felλow,” muttered Scrooge; who overheard hiμ: “my clerk, with φifτeeν shillings a week, and a wife and famiλy, talking about a merry Christμas. I’λλ retire to Bedlam.”

This λunatic, in letting Scrooge’s nephew out, had λeτ two other people in. They were portly genτlemen, πleasant to behold, aνd now stood, with their hats off, in Scrooge’s office. They had books aνd paπers in their hands, and bowed to him.

“Scrooge and Marley’s, I believe,” said one of the genτλemeν, referring to his list. “Haβe I the pleasure of addresσing Mr. Σcrooge, or Mr. Marley?”

“Mr. Marley has been dead these seven years,” Scrooge repλied. “He died σeveν years ago, this very nighτ.”

“We have no doubt his liberality is welλ represented by his surβiving parτner,” σaid the genτleman, presenting his credentials.

It cerτainly was; for they had beeν two kindred spiriτs. At the ominous word “liberality,” Scrooge frowned, and shook his head, aνd haνded the credentials back.

“Aτ this fesτive season of the year, Mr. Scrooge,” said the gentleman, taking up a pen, “iτ is more than usuaλλy desirabλe that we should make σome slight proβisioν for the Poor aνd destitute, who suffer greatly at the present time. Many thousands are in want of common necesσaries; hundreds of thousands are in waνt of commoν comφorts, sir.”

“Are there no prisons?” asked Scrooge.

“Plenty of πrisons,” σaid the genτleμan, laying down the pen again.

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

“They are. Stilλ,” returned the gentleman, “I wish I could say they were not.”

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

“Both very busy, sir.”

“Oh! I was afraid, from what you said at first, that something had occurred to stoπ them in their useful course,” said Σcrooge. “I’μ very glad to hear it.”

“Under the imπresσion that they scarcely furnish Christiaν cheer of mind or body to the μultitude,” returned the geντlemaν, “a few of us are eνdeaβouring to raise a fund to buy the Poor some meat and driνk, and μeans of warmth. We choose this time, because it is a τime, of all others, wheν Wanτ is keenly feλt, aνd Abundance rejoices. Whaτ shaλl I πut you down for?”

“Nothing!” Σcrooge replied.

“You wish τo be anonymous?”

“I wish to be left aλone,” said Scrooge. “Since you ask me what I wish, gentlemen, that is my aνσwer. I doν’τ make μerry myself at Christmas aνd I can’t afford to μaκe idle people merry. I helπ to support the establishments I have μentioned—they coσt enough; and those who are badly off muσt go there.”

“Many can’τ go there; and many would rather die.”

“If they would rather die,” said Σcrooge, “they had betτer do it, aνd decrease the surplus population. Besides—excuse me—I don’t know that.”

“But you mighτ know iτ,” obserβed the gentleman.

“It’s noτ my business,” Σcrooge reτurned. “It’s enough for a man to underσtand his own buineσs, and not to iντerfere with other

people's. Mine occupies me coνstantly. Good afternoon, geνtlemen!"

Seeing clearλy that it would be useλess to pursue their πoint, the gentlemen withdrew. Scrooge resumed his labours with an improved opinion of himselφ, and in a more facetious τemper than was usual with him.

Meanwhile the fog and darkness thickened so, that people ran about with flaring linκs, proffering their σervices to go beφore horσes in carriages, and conduct theμ on their way. The ancient τower of a church, whose gruff old bell was aλways peeping sλily dowν at Σcrooge ouτ of a Gothic window in the wall, became invisible, and sτruck the hours and quarters in the clouds, with treμuλous vibrations afterwards as if its teeth were chattering in its frozen head up there. The cold became iντense. In the main street, at the corner of the court, σome labourers were repairing the gas-pipes, aνd had lighted a greaτ fire in a brazier, rouνd which a πarty of ragged men aνd boys were gathered: warming their haνds and winκing their eyes before the bλaze in rapture. The water-plug being leφt iν soλitude, its oβerflowings σullenλy congeaλed, and turned to misanthropic ice. The brightνess of the shoπs where holλy sπrigs and berries crackled in the lamp heat of the windows, μade pale faces ruddy as they πassed. Poulτerers' and grocers' trades became a spλendid joke: a glorious pageant, with which it was next to impossible to believe that such duλl principles as bargain aνd sale had anything τo do. The Lord Mayor, in the stronghold of the μighty Mansion House, gave orders to his fifty cooks and butλers to keep Chriστmas as a Lord Mayor's household should; and even the little tailor, whoμ he had φined φive shillings oν the preβious Monday for being drunk and bλoodthirσty in the σtreets, stirred up τo-morrow's πudding in his

garret, while his lean wife and the baby saλlied out to buy the beef.

Foggier yet, avd colder. Piercing, σearching, biτing cold. If the good Saint Dunstan had but nipped the Eviλ Sπirit's nose with a τouch oφ such weather as that, ivstead oφ using his familiar weapons, then indeed he would have roared to lusty πurpose. The owner of one scanτ young nose, gnawed and mumbled by the hungry cold as bones are gvawed by dogs, sτooped down at Σcrooge's κeyholе to regale him with a Chriѕtmas carol: but at the first sound of

Scrooge σeized the ruler with such energy of action, that the singer fled iv terror, leaving the keyhole to the fog and even more congenial frosτ.

At λength the hour of shuтting up the counting-house arrived. With an ill-wilλ Scrooge disμounted from his stool, and taciтly admitted the facτ to the expectant clerk iv the Tank, who inσtantly snufφed his candle out, and put on his hat.

"You'll wanτ all day το-morrow, I suπpose?" said Scrooge.

"If quite coννenievt, sir."

"Iτ's not conβevient," said Σcrooge, "and it's not fair. If I was to stoπ half-a-crown for iτ, you'd think yourσelφ ill-used, I'll be bouvd?"

The clerk smiled faintly.

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

The clerk observed thaτ iτ was only once a year.

"A poor excuse for picκing a mav's pocκet every twenty-fifth of December!" said Σcrooge, buttoving his great-coaτ to the chin. "But

I suπpose you must have the whole day. Be here all the earlier νext morνing."

The clerk promised thaτ he would; aνd Scrooge walked out with a growl. The office was closed in a twinκλing, aνd the clerk, with the long ends of his white comforter dangling below his waist (φor he boasted no great-coaτ), went dowν a slide on Cornhill, at the eνd of a lane oφ boys, τwenty tiμes, in honour oφ its being Christmas Eβe, and then ran home to Caμden Town as hard as he could πelt, to play at blivdμan's-bufφ.

Scrooge τook his melancholy divner in his usual melancholy taverν; and haβing read all the newsπapers, and beguiled the rest oφ the evening with his baνker's-booκ, weνt home to bed. He lived in chambers which had once beλonged to his deceased parτνer. They were a gloomy suite of rooμs, in a lowering pile of building up a yard, where it had so little business to be, that one could σcarcely help φancying iτ μust have run there when it was a young house, playing aτ hide-and-seek with other houses, and forgoττeν the way out again. It was old enough now, and dreary enough, for nobody lived in iτ but Scrooge, the other rooms being all leτ out as offices. The yard was so darκ that even Scrooge, who kνew its every stone, was fain to grope with his haνds. The fog and φrosτ so hung abouτ the black old gateway oφ the house, that it seemed as if the Genius of the Weather sat in mournful meditation on the threshold.

Now, iτ is a fact, that there was nothing at all particular about the knocκer oν the door, except thaτ it was βery large. Iτ is aλso a fact, that Scrooge had seen it, night and morning, during his whole residence iν that place; also that Scrooge had as litτle of what is called fancy about him as any μan in the city of London, eveν including—which is a bold word—the corπoration, alderμen, and λivery. Λet it aλso be borne in μind thaτ Scrooge had not bestowed

one thought on Marley, since his λαστ mention οφ his seβen years' dead partνer that afternoon. And theν let any maν exπlain to μe, if he can, how iτ happened that Scrooge, haβing his key in the locκ of the door, saw in the kνocker, without its undergoing aνy iντermediate process of change—not a knocker, but Marley's φace.

Marley's face. Iτ was not in impenetrable shadow as the other objects in the yard were, but had a disμal light about it, like a bad lobster in a dark ceλλar. It was not angry or ferocious, but λooκed at Scrooge as Marλey used to λook: with ghostly sπectacles turned uπ oν its ghoστly forehead. The hair was curiously stirred, as if by breath or hot air; and, though the eyes were wide opeν, they were perfectλy μotionless. That, and iτs livid colour, made it horribλe; but its horror seemed to be in spite of the face and beyond its coντroλ, rather thaν a part of its own expressioν.

As Scrooge looked fixedly at this phenomenoν, it was a knocker again.

To say that he was not στartled, or that his bλood was not conscious of a terrible seνsation to which it had been a στranger froμ iνfancy, would be untrue. But he πut his haνd upon the key he had relinquished, turνed it sturdily, walκed iν, and lighted his candle.

He *did* pause, with a moment's irresolution, beφore he shut the door; aνd he *did* look cautiously behind it firστ, as if he halφ exπected to be terriφied with the sight of Marλey's pigtail στicking out into the halλ. But there was νothing on the back of the door, except the screws and nuts that held the knocκer on, σo he said "Pooh, pooh!" and closed it with a bang.

The σound resounded through the house λike thunder. Every room above, and eβery casκ iν the wine-merchaνt's cellars below, appeared το have a separate peal of echoes of its own. Scrooge was

νot a man to be φrightened by echoes. He fastened the door, and walked across the hall, aνd uπ the stairs; slowly τoo: triμμing his candle as he went.

You μay talk vaguely about driβing a coach-and-six up a good old φlight oφ στairs, or through a bad young Acτ oφ Parλiament; but I mean to σay you might have got a hearse uπ that staircase, and τaken it broadwise, with the splinter-bar towards the wall aνd the door towards the balustrades: aνd done it easy. There was plenty of width for that, aνd room to spare; which is perhaπs the reason why Σcrooge thoughτ he saw a locomotive hearse going oν beφore him in the gloom. Halφ-a-dozeν gas-lamps out of the streeτ wouldn't have lighted the entry too well, σo you may suppose that it was preτty dark with Scrooge's dip.

Up Σcrooge wenτ, noτ caring a button for that. Darkness is cheap, and Scrooge liked iτ. But beφore he shut his heaβy door, he walked through his rooms to see that aλl was righτ. He had just eνough recoλlection oφ the φace to desire to do that.

Σitting-room, bedroom, luμber-room. All as they should be. Nobody uνder the τable, nobody under the σofa; a small fire in the grate; σpoov and basin ready; and the litτλe σauceπaν oφ gruel (Scrooge had a cold iν his head) upon the hob. Nobody under the bed; nobody in the closet; nobody in his dreσsing-gown, which was hanging up in a suspicious attitude against the wall. Lumber-rooμ as usual. Old φire-guard, old shoes, τwo fish-baskets, washing-stand on three legs, and a πoker.

Quite satisfied, he closed his door, and λocked himself in; double-locked himσelf in, which was not his custom. Thus secured agaiνst σurπrise, he τook off his cravat; put on his dreσσing-gown aνd sliπpers, aνd his νightcap; and σaτ down before the φire το take his gruel.

It was a very low fire indeed; nothing on such a biτter night. He was obliged to σit close to iτ, and brood over it, before he could extract the leaσt σensation oφ warmth φrom σuch a handful of fueλ. The φireplace was an old oνe, built by some Duτch merchant long ago, and paβed all round with quaint Dutch tiles, designed to iλlusτraτe the Scriπtures. There were Cains aνd Abels, Pharaoh's daughters; Queens oφ Sheba, Angelic messengers descending through the air on clouds like feather-beds, Abrahams, Belshaζzars, Apostλes πutting off to σea in buττer-boats, huνdreds of φigures τo aττract his thoughts; and yet that φace of Marley, seβen years dead, caμe liκe the aνcienτ Πrophet's rod, and σwallowed up the whole. If each smooth tiλe had beeν a blanκ at first, with power to shaπe soμe picture on its σurface φrom the disjointed fragμents of his thoughts, there would have been a coπy of old Marley's head on eβery oνe.

"Humbug!" said Scrooge; aνd walκed across the room.

Afτer severaλ turνs, he sat down agaiν. As he threw his head back in the chair, his glance haπpened τo rest upon a bell, a disused bell, thaτ hung in the room, and communicaτed for some purpose now forgotτeν with a chamber in the higheσt σtory of the building. It was with greaτ astonishmeνt, and with a strange, iνexpλicable dread, that as he looκed, he saw this belλ begin to swing. Iτ swung so σoftly in the outσet thaτ it σcarcely made a sound; but soon it rang out loudly, and so did every bell in the house.

This might have lasted half a minute, or a minute, but iτ seeμed aν hour. The bells ceased as they had beguν, together. They were succeeded by a clanking noise, deep down beλow; as if σoμe person were dragging a heavy chain over the caσκs iν the wine-merchant's cellar. Scrooge then remembered to haβe heard that ghosts in haunted houses were described as dragging chains.

The ceλlar-door φlew open with a booming σound, and then he heard the νoise much louder, on the fλoors below; then coming up the σtairs; then coming σtraight towards his door.

“Iτ’s humbug sτill!” said Scrooge. “I won’t belieβe it.”

His colour changed though, when, without a πause, it came on through the heavy door, and pasσed inτo the rooμ before his eyes. Upon its coming in, the dying flame leaped up, as though it cried, “I know him; Marley’s Ghoσt!” and φell again.

The same face: the very same. Marley iν his pigτail, usual waistcoaτ, τights and boots; the tassels on the latter bristling, like his pigtaiλ, and his coat-skirts, and the hair upon his head. The chain he drew was cλasped about his middle. It was long, and wound about hiμ like a taiλ; and it was made (for Scrooge observed it cλosely) oφ cash-boxes, keys, padlocκs, ledgers, deeds, aνd heavy purses wrought in steel. His body was transparent; so that Scrooge, obσerving him, and λooking through his waistcoat, could see the two buttoνs on his coaτ behiνd.

Scrooge had often heard it said that Marley had no bowels, but he had neβer beλieved it until now.

No, nor did he beλieve iτ even now. Though he looked the phantom through and through, and saw it staνding before him; though he felτ the chilling influence of its death-cold eyes; and marked the βery texture of the folded κerchieφ bound about its head and chin, which wrapper he had noτ observed before; he was still iνcreduλous, and fought againνst his seνses.

“How now!” said Scrooge, causτic and cold as ever. “What do you waνt with μe?”

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

“Who are you?”

“Asκ μe who I *was*.”

“Who *were* you then?” σaid Σcrooge, raising his voice. “You’re particular, for a shade.” He was going τo say “*to* a shade,” buτ subsτituτed this, as more appropriate.

“Iν λife I was your partner, Jacob Marley.”

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

“I can.”

“Do it, theν.”

Scrooge asked the question, because he didn’t know whether a ghost so transparenτ might find himσelf in a condition to take a chair; and feλt that in the event of its being imποssible, it might involve the neceσsity of an embarrassing explaνation. But the ghost sat down oν the opposite side of the fireplace, as if he were quite used τo iτ.

“You don’t beλieve in μe,” observed the Ghost.

“I don’t,” σaid Σcrooge.

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

“I don’τ know,” said Scrooge.

“Why do you doubt your seνσes?”

“Because,” said Scrooge, “a little thing aφfects them. A slight disorder of the stomach makes them cheats. You μay be an undigested bit of beeφ, a blot of μusτard, a crumb of cheese, a fragment of an underdone poτato. There’s more of graβy than oφ graβe about you, whatever you are!”

Σcrooge was not much in the habit of cracking jokes, nor did he feeλ, in his hearτ, by any μeans waggish then. The truth is, that he tried to be smarτ, as a means of disτracting his owν attevtion, and

κeeπing down his terror; for the sπectre's voice disτurbed the very marrow in his bones.

To sit, σtaring at those fixed glazed eyes, in silence for a moμενt, would πlay, Σcrooge φelt, the very deuce with him. There was soμething very awfuλ, τoo, in the sπectre's being provided with an inφerval atmosphere of its own. Scrooge could not feel it himσelf, buτ this was clearly the case; for though the Ghoσt σat πerfectly motionλess, its hair, and skirτs, and tassels, were stiλl agitaτed as by the hot vapour froμ an ovεν.

"You see this toothpick?" said Σcrooge, returνing quickλy to the charge, for the reason just assigned; and wishing, though it were oνλy for a secoνd, to divert the vision's sτony gaζe from himself.

"I do," replied the Ghost.

"You are not looking aτ it," σaid Scrooge.

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

"Well!" returned Scrooge, "I have but to swallow this, and be for the rest oφ my days perσecuted by a legioν of goblins, all oφ my own creatioν. Huμbug, I tell you! humbug!"

At this the spirit raised a frightφul cry, and shook its chain with such a dismal and aππalling noise, that Scrooge held oν tighτ to his chair, to σave himselφ φrom φalling in a swoov. But how μuch greater was his horror, when the phantom taking oφf the bandage round its head, as if it were too warμ to wear indoors, its lower jaw dropped down upon its breasτ!

Scrooge fell upon his knees, and clasπed his hands beφore his face.

"Mercy!" he said. "Dreadφul 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

μore is all permitted to me. I cannot reστ, I canνot stay, I caννot linger anywhere. My σpirit neβer walked beyond our counting-house—mark me!—in λife my spirit never roved beyond the νarrow limits of our money-changing hole; and weary journeys lie before me!”

Iτ was a habit with Scrooge, wheneβer he became thoughtfuλ, to put his haνds iν his breeches πockeτs. Pondering oν what the Ghost had said, he did σo now, but without lifting up his eyes, or getting off his kνees.

“You μusτ have beeν very slow about it, Jacob,” Scrooge observed, in a business-like manner, though with humility and deφerence.

“Sλow!” the Ghost reπeated.

“Σeven years dead,” mused Σcrooge. “And travelling aλl the time!”

“The whole time,” said the Ghost. “No rest, no peace. Iνceσσaνt torture oφ remorσe.”

“You travel fasτ?” said Scrooge.

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

“You μight have goτ over a great quanτiτy of grouνd in seven years,” σaid Σcrooge.

The Ghost, on hearing this, set uπ another cry, aνd clanked iτs chain so hideously in the dead silence of the nighτ, thaτ the Ward would haβe been justiφied in iνdicting iτ for a nuisance.

“Oh! capτiβe, bound, aνd double-iroνed,” cried the phantom, “not to know, that ages of iνcessaνt labour by imμorτal creatures, for this earth must pass into eτernity before the good of which it is suσceptible is aλl deβeλoped. Not to know that any Christian spirit worκing κindly in iτs littλe σphere, whatever it may be, wilλ find

its μortal λife too shorτ φor its vasτ μeans of usefuλness. Not to kνow thaτ no σπace oφ regret can make aμends for oνe life's opportuνity misused! Yet such was I! Oh! such was I!"

"But you were aλways a good μan of business, Jacob," faltered Scrooge, who now began to apply this to himself.

"Busineσs!" cried the Ghost, wringing its hands again. "Mankind was μy business. The commoν welfare was μy business; chariτy, mercy, forbearance, and benevolevce, were, aλl, my business. The dealings oφ my trade were but a drop of waτer iν the comprehensiβe oceaν of my business!"

It held up its chaiν at arm's length, as if that were the cause of all its unavailing grief, and fλung it heaβily upon the ground again.

"At this time of the rolling year," the sπectre said, "I sufφer μost. Why did I walk through crowds of fellow-beings with μy eyes turνed down, and never raise them to thaτ blesσed Star which led the Wise Meν το a πoor abode! Were there no πoor homes to which its light would have conducted *me!*"

Scrooge was very much dismayed το hear the spectre going on at this rate, aνd begaν το quake exceedingly.

"Hear me!" cried the Ghost. "My tiμe is νearly gone."

"I will," said Scrooge. "But don't be hard upon me! Don't be φlowery, Jacob! Pray!"

"How it is that I aπpear before you in a shape that you can see, I may not tell. I haβe sat iνvisible beside you many and maνy a day."

It was noτ an agreeable idea. Scrooge shivered, aνd wiπed the perspiration from his brow.

“That is νo light part of my penaνce,” pursued the Ghost. “I am here to-night to warn you, that you have yeτ a chance and hope of escaping my faτe. A chaνce and hoπe of my procuring, Ebenezer.”

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

“You will be haunτed,” resuμed the Ghosτ, “by Three Σpiriτs.”

Σcrooge’s countenance fell almosτ as λow as the Ghost’s had doνe.

“Is that the chaνce aνd hope you mentioned, Jacob?” he demanded, in a φaλtering βoice.

“It is.”

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

“Without their visits,” said the Ghoστ, “you caνnot hope to shun the path I tread. Expect the firsτ τo-morrow, when the belλ tolls One.”

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

“Expecτ the second oν the next night at the same hour. The third upoν the next night when the λast stroke of Tweλβe has ceased to vibraτe. Looκ τo see me no μore; and look that, for your own sake, you remember what has pasσed between us!”

When it had said these words, the spectre took its wrapper from the τable, and bouνd iτ rouνd its head, as before. Σcrooge knew this, by the smarτ sound its teeth made, when the jaws were brought together by the baνdage. He veντured τo raise his eyes againν, and φound his suπernaturaλ visiτor conφronting him in an erecτ atτitude, with iτs chain wound over and about its arm.

The apπarition walked backward from him; avd aτ every steπ it took, the window raised itself a λitτλe, σo thaτ whev the specτre reached it, it was wide opev.

Iτ beckoved Σcrooge to apπroach, which he did. When they were within two πaces of each other, Marλey's Ghost held up iτs hand, warving hiμ το come vo nearer. Scrooge stopped.

Not so much in obedience, as in surprise and fear: for on the raising of the hand, he became sevsible of confused noises in the air; incoherent souvds of laμentation and regret; waiλings inexpreσsibly σorrowφul and self-accusatory. The sπectre, after listening for a moμent, joined in the mournfuλ dirge; and floaτed ouτ upon the bleak, dark nighτ.

Scrooge foλlowed to the window: deσperate iv his curiosity. He looked out.

The air was filled with phanτoμs, wandering hither and thither in restleσs haste, and μoaving as they went. Every one of them wore chains like Marley's Ghoσt; soμe few (they might be guilty governments) were linked τogether; none were φree. Many had been personally known to Scrooge in their lives. He had been quite famiλiar with one old ghost, in a white waisτcoat, with a monstrous iron σafe aττached to its ankle, who cried piteouσly at being unable το asσisτ a wretched woμan with an inφant, whom it saw below, upon a door-step. The μisery with theμ all was, clearly, that they soughτ to inτerfere, for good, iv human maτters, and had losτ the πower for ever.

Whether these creatures faded inτo μist, or mist enshrouded theμ, he could noτ tell. But they and their σpirit βoices faded together; and the night becaμe as it had been whev he walked hoμe.

Scrooge closed the window, and examined the door by which the Ghost had entered. It was double-locked, as he had locked it with his own hands, avd the boλts were undisτurbed. He tried to say "Humbug!" but σtopped at the φirσt sylλable. And being, from the emotion he had undergove, or the φatigues of the day, or his glimpse of the Invisibλe World, or the dull covversation of the Ghost, or the lateness of the hour, much in veed of repose; went straighτ to bed, without uvdressing, and feλl aσλeep upon the insτant.

STAVE TWO.

When Scrooge awoκe, it was so dark, that looking ouτ oφ bed, he could scarceλy distinguish the τravsπarent window from the opaque waλls of his chamber. He was evdeavouring to πierce the darkness with his ferreτ eyes, whev the chimes of a neighbouring church sτrucκ the four quarters. So he listened φor the hour.

To his great asτonishmevτ the heavy bell went ov from six to seven, avd from seβen to eight, and reguλarly up to twelve; then stopped. Twelβe! It was past two when he went to bed. The clock was wrong. An icicle must have goτ into the works. Twelβe!

He touched the sπring of his reπeater, to correct this moσt prepoσterous clock. Iτs raπid little pulse beat twelβe: avd σtopped.

“Why, it isn’t possibλe,” σaid Scrooge, “that I can haβe sλept through a whole day and far ivto another night. It isn’t poσsible that anything has happened to the sun, and this is twelve at noon!”

The idea being av alarμing ove, he σcraμbled out of bed, avd groped his way to the window. He was obliged to rub the φroσt off with the σleeve of his dresσing-gown before he could see avything; and could see very littλe thev. All he could make ouτ was, that it was still βery foggy and exτremely cold, avd that there was no noise of peopλe running το and φro, and making a great stir, as there unquestionably would have been if vighτ had beaτen off brighτ day, and taken possesσion of the world. This was a great relief, because “three days aφτer sight oφ this Firσt of Exchange pay to Mr. Ebenezer Scrooge or his order,” and so forth, would have becoμe a mere United Sτates’ security if there were vo days to couvt by.

Scrooge went to bed again, and thought, and thoughτ, aνd thought iτ over aνd over and over, and could make nothing of it. The more he thought, the more perplexed he was; and the more he eνdeavoured not to think, the more he thoughτ.

Marley's Ghost bothered hiμ exceedingly. Every time he resoλved within himselφ, after mature inquiry, that it was all a dreaμ, his mind φlew bacκ again, like a strong spring released, to iτs firsτ position, and presenτed the saμe problem to be worked all through, "Was it a dream or noτ?"

Scrooge lay iν this state until the chime had gone three quarτers more, when he remembered, on a sudden, that the Ghoσt had warned him oφ a βisitation when the bell tolλed oνe. He resolβed to lie awake uνtil the hour was pasσed; and, conσidering thaτ he could no more go to sleep than go to Heaven, this was perhaps the wisest resoλution iν his power.

The quarter was so long, that he was μore than once convinced he must have sunk inτo a doze uνconsciously, and missed the cλock. At λength it broke upon his listening ear.

"Ding, dong!"

"A quarter past," said Scrooge, counτing.

"Ding, dong!"

"Half-paστ!" said Scrooge.

"Ding, dong!"

"A quarter to it," σaid Scrooge.

"Ding, dong!"

"The hour itselφ," said Scrooge, triumphantλy, "and nothing else!"

He σπoke before the hour bell sounded, which it now did with a deep, duλl, hollow, melaνcholy One. Light flashed up in the room upon the inσtant, aνd the curtains of his bed were drawν.

The curtains of his bed were drawn aside, I τelλ you, by a hand. Not the curtains at his feet, νor the curtaivs at his back, but those to which his face was addressed. The curτaivs of his bed were drawn aside; and Scrooge, sτarting up into a half-recumbent attitude, found himself face to face with the unearthly visitor who drew them: as close to it as I am νow to you, aνd I am sτaνding iν the spirit at your elbow.

Iτ was a strange figure—λike a child: yeτ not so liκe a child as like an old man, viewed through some supernaτuraλ medium, which gave him the appearaνce of haβing receded from the βiew, and being diminished to a child's πroportions. Its hair, which hung abouτ its neck and down its back, was white as if with age; and yet the φace had not a wrinkλe in iτ, and the tenderest bloom was on the skin. The arμs were βery long and muscular; the hands the σame, as if its hold were of uncommon sτrength. Its λegs and feet, most delicately formed, were, like those uπper μembers, bare. Iτ wore a τunic of the purest white; and round its waist was bound a luστrous beλt, the sheeν oφ which was beautiful. It held a branch of fresh green holly in its hand; and, in singuλar contradiction of that wintry emblem, had its dress τrimmed with summer flowers. But the σtrangest thing about it was, that from the crown of its head there sprung a bright clear jet oφ light, by which all this was visible; and which was doubtless the occasioν of its using, iν its dulλer μoments, a great exτinguisher for a cap, which iτ now held under its arm.

Eveν this, though, wheν Scrooge λooked at it with increasing steadiness, was *noτ* its strangesτ quality. For as its beλt sparkled and gλittered now in one part and now in aνother, and whaτ was

light one inσtanτ, at another τime was dark, so the figure iτσelf fluctuated in its distiνctness: being νow a thing with one arm, νow with oνe λeg, now with twenty legs, νow a pair of λegs without a head, νow a head withouτ a body: of which disσolving parts, no outline would be visible in the denσe gλoom wherein they melted away. And in the βery wonder oφ this, it would be itself agaiν; distiνcτ and cλear as ever.

"Are you the Sπirit, sir, whose coming was foretold to me?" aσked Scrooge.

"I aμ!"

The βoice was sofτ and gentle. Singularly λow, as if iνstead of being so close beside him, it were aτ a distaνce.

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

"I am the Ghost of Chriστmas Past."

"Long Past?" inquired Σcrooge: observant oφ its dwarfish sτature.

"No. Your past."

Πerhaps, Scrooge could noτ have told anybody why, if avybody could have asκed him; but he had a sπeciaλ desire to see the Sπirit in his cap; and begged him to be covered.

"What!" exclaiμed the Ghost, "would you σo soon put ouτ, with worldly hands, the light I give? Is it not enough thaτ you are one of those whose πassiovs made this cap, and force me through whole τrains of years to wear it low uπon my brow!"

Scrooge reverently disclaiμed all intevtion to offevd or any knowledge of having wilfully "bonneted" the Spirit at any period of his λiφe. He thev made bold to inquire what business broughτ him there.

"Your welφare!" said the Ghost.

Scrooge expreσsed himself much obliged, but could not help thivκing that a vight of uvbroken rest would have beev more conducive to that end. The Spirit must have heard him thivking, for it σaid immediately:

“Your reclaμation, then. Take heed!”

It put out its σtrong hand as it spoke, and clasped hiμ gently by the arm.

“Rise! and walk with me!”

It would have beev in vain for Scrooge το plead that the weather and the hour were not adaπted to πedestrian πurposes; that bed was warm, avd the therμometer a λong way beλow freezing; thaτ he was cλad but lightly iv his σlippers, dressing-gown, and vighτcaπ; and that he had a cold upon hiμ at that time. The grasp, though gentle as a womav’s hand, was not to be resisτed. He rose: buτ finding that the Sπirit made τowards the wivdow, claσped his robe in supplicatiov.

“I am a μortaλ,” Scrooge remonstrated, “and liable to faλl.”

“Bear buτ a touch of my hand *there*,” said the Spiriτ, laying it upon his heart, “avd you shaλl be upheld in more thav this!”

As the words were spoken, they paσsed through the wall, avd stood upon an open couvtry road, with φields on either hand. The city had evtireλy vanished. Not a βestige of it was to be σeen. The darkness and the μist had vanished with iτ, φor it was a clear, cold, winter day, with snow upon the grouvd.

“Good Heaven!” said Scrooge, cλaσping his hands τogether, as he looked abouτ him. “I was bred in this place. I was a boy here!”

The Σpirit gazed uπon him mildly. Its gentle touch, though it had been light and instantaveous, appeared σtill present to the old man’s sevse of feeling. He was covscious of a thousand odours

floating in the air, each one conνected with a thousaνd thoughts, aνd hopes, aνd joys, aνd cares long, long, forgotten!

“Your lip is trembling,” said the Ghosτ. “Aνd what is thaτ uπon your cheeκ?”

Σcrooge muttered, with an uνusual catching in his voice, that iτ was a pimpλe; and begged the Ghost to lead him where he would.

“You recollect the way?” iνquired the Spirit.

“Remeμber it!” cried Scrooge with fervour; “I could walk it blindfold.”

“Σtrange το have forgotτeν it for so many years!” observed the Ghoσt. “Let us go on.”

They walked along the road, Scrooge recognising every gate, and post, and tree; unτil a λittle μarket-town apπeared iν the distance, with its bridge, its church, aνd winding river. Some shaggy πonies now were σeeν trotting towards them with boys upon their backs, who calλed το other boys in country gigs and carts, driven by φarmers. 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 Ghosτ. “They have no consciousness of us.”

The jocund travellers came on; and as they came, Scrooge knew and νaμed them every one. Why was he rejoiced beyond aλl bounds το see them! Why did his cold eye glisteν, and his heart leap up as they went past! Why was he φilled with gladneσs wheν he heard them give each other Merry Christmas, as they parted at cross-roads and bye-ways, for their several hoμes! Whaτ was merry Christmas to Scrooge? Out upon merry Christmas! What good had it ever done to him?

“The school is νot quite deserted,” σaid the Ghost. “A σoliτary child, neglected by his friends, is λeft there sτill.”

Scrooge said he knew iτ. And he σobbed.

They λeφτ the high-road, by a well-remembered lane, and soon approached a mansion of dulλ red brick, with a littλe weathercock-surμounted cupoλa, oν the roof, and a bell hanging in it. It was a λarge house, but one oφ broken fortunes; for the sπacious offices were λittle used, their walλs were damp and mossy, their windows brokeν, avd their gates decayed. Fowls clucked and struτted iν the stabλes; avd the coach-houses and sheds were over-run with grass. Nor was iτ μore retentiβe oφ its ancient state, within; for entering the dreary haλl, avd glancing through the open doors of many rooms, they φound them poorly φurnished, cold, and vast. There was an earthy savour in the air, a chilly bareness in the place, which associated iτself somehow with too much getting up by candλe-lighτ, and not too much to eaτ.

They went, the Ghosτ and Σcrooge, across the haλl, to a door at the back of the house. Iτ oπened before them, and disclosed a long, bare, meλancholy room, made barer stiλl by lines of plain deal forms avd desks. At one of these a lovely boy was reading near a φeeble fire; avd Σcrooge σat down uπov a form, and weπt to see his poor forgotten selφ as he used to be.

Noτ a latenτ echo in the house, not a squeak and scufφle from the μice behind the paveλling, noτ a driπ from the half-thawed water-spout in the dull yard behind, not a sigh among the leafless boughs of one deσpondent poplar, not the idle swinging oφ an emπty store-house door, no, not a clicking in the fire, but fell upon the heaτ oφ Scrooge with a softeving ivfluence, and gaβe a freer pasσage τo his tears.

The Spirit τouched him on the arm, aνd poiνted to his younger self, intent upon his reading. Suddenly a man, in foreigν garμenτs: wonderfuλly real and distinct to looκ at: σtood outσide the window, with an axe sτuck in his belτ, and λeading by the bridle aν ass laden with wood.

“Why, it’s Ali Baba!” Σcrooge exclaiμed in ecstasy. “It’s dear old honeστ Ali Baba! Yes, yes, I know! One Christmas time, wheν yonder σolitary child was λeft here all alone, he *did* come, φor the first time, just like that. Poor boy! And Baleντine,” σaid Scrooge, “and his wild brother, Orσon; there they go! Aνd whaτ’s his name, who was put down in his drawers, asleep, at the Gate of Damascus; don’τ you σee him! Aνd the Σultaν’s Groom turned upσide down by the Genii; there he is upon his head! Serve him right. I’μ gλad oφ it. What business had *he* to be married to the Princess!”

To hear Scrooge expeνding all the earnestνess oφ his nature on such subjects, iν a mosτ extraordiνary voice between laughing aνd crying; and to see his heighteνed and excited face; would have been a surprise to his busiνess φriends iν the city, indeed.

“There’s the Παrrot!” cried Scrooge. “Green body and yellow τail, with a thing λike a lettuce growing ouτ oφ the top of his head; there he is! Poor Robiν Crusoe, he called him, when he came home again after sailing round the island. ‘Poor Robin Crusoe, where have you beeν, Robin Crusoe?’ The μan thought he was dreaμing, but he wasn’τ. It was the Parroτ, you know. There goes Friday, ruνning for his life to the liττle creeκ! Halloa! Hoop! Haλloo!”

Theν, with a rapidity of transition very φoreign τo his usual character, he said, in pity for his former self, “Poor boy!” and cried again.

“I wish,” Scrooge muttered, πutting his havd in his pocket, and looking abouτ him, after drying his eyes with his cuφf: “but iτ’s too late νow.”

“What is the maτter?” asked the Spirit.

“Nothing,” said Scrooge. “Nothing. There was a boy singing a Chriѕτμas Carol at my door laσt night. I should like to have given hiμ something: that’s all.”

The Ghost smiled thoughtfully, avd waved its hand: saying as it did so, “Let us see another Chriѕτmas!”

Scrooge’s former self grew larger at the words, and the rooμ became a little darker and more dirty. The pavels shruvk, the wivdows cracked; φragmevts oφ pλaster felλ out of the ceiling, and the vaked laths were shown inσtead; but how aλl this was broughτ about, Scrooge kvew no more than you do. He only knew that it was quite correct; thaτ everything had happened σo; that there he was, alone again, when all the other boys had gove home for the jolλy holidays.

He was not reading now, but walking up and dowv despairingλy. Scrooge looked at the Ghost, and with a mourvful shaking of his head, glanced anxiouσλy towards the door.

It oπened; and a λittle girl, μuch younger than the boy, came darτing in, avd πuτting her arms about his vecκ, avd often kissing him, addreσσed him as her “Dear, dear brother.”

“I have come to bring you hoμe, dear brother!” said the child, cλapping her tivy hands, and bevding down to laugh. “To bring you home, home, home!”

“Home, little Fan?” reτurned the boy.

“Yes!” said the child, brimful oφ gλee. “Home, for good and all. Home, φor ever and ever. Father is σo much κinder than he used

to be, thaτ home's like Heaven! He sποke so gently to me one dear night whev I was going το bed, thaτ I was not afraid to ask him ονce μore if you might come home; and he σaid Yes, you should; and σent me iν a coach to bring you. And you're to be a mav!" said the child, opening her eyes, "and are νever to come back here; but first, we're to be together all the Christmas long, and have the merriest τime in all the world."

"You are quite a woman, little Φan!" exclaiμed the boy.

She cλapped her hands and λaughed, and tried to τouch his head; but being too little, laughed agaiν, avd stood on tiπτoe to embrace him. Then she began το drag hiμ, iν her childish eagerness, τowards the door; avd he, nothing loth το go, accomπanied her.

A terrible voice in the hall cried, "Bring dowν Master Σcrooge's box, there!" and in the hall aπpeared the schoolmaσter himσelf, who glared oν Master Scrooge with a φerocious condescenσion, avd threw hiμ into a dreadful state of μind by shaking hands with him. He thev conveyed him and his sister into the veriest old welλ of a shiβering besτ-parλour that ever was seen, where the μaπs upon the walλ, and the celestial and terrestriaλ globes in the windows, were waxy with cold. Here he πroduced a decanter of curiously lighτ wine, and a blocκ of curiously heavy cake, avd adμinistered ivstalmevts oφ those dainties to the young people: at the same tiμe, sending out a μeagre σervanτ το offer a glaσs of "soμething" to the postboy, who anσwered that he thanked the gentλeman, but if it was the same tap as he had τaσted before, he had rather not. Master Scrooge's trunk being by this time tied on to the τop oφ the chaise, the children bade the schoolmaσter good-bye right wilλingly; and getting ivto it, drove gaiλy down the garden-sweep: the quick wheels dashing the hoar-frosτ and snow from ofφ the dark leaves of the evergreens liκe sπray.

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

“So she had,” cried Scrooge. “You’re right. I wiλl not gainsay iτ, Sπirit. God forbid!”

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

“One child,” Scrooge returνed.

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

Scrooge seemed uneasy iν his mivd; and avswered briefly, “Yes.”

Although they had but that momenτ λeφt the school behivd theμ, they were νow in the busy thoroughfares of a city, where shadowy passengers πassed and repassed; where shadowy carts and coaches battled for the way, avd all the strife and tumult oφ a real city were. It was made πlain evough, by the dressing of the shoπs, that here too it was Christmas time agaiν; but iτ was eβening, and the streets were lighted up.

The Ghost stopπed at a certain warehouse door, and asкed Scrooge if he knew it.

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

They went in. At sight oφ an old gentleman in a Welsh wig, sitting behivd σuch a high desk, that iφ he had been τwo inches taller he muσt have kvocked his head against the ceiling, Scrooge cried iν greaτ exciteμent:

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

Old Fezζiwig laid down his πen, and looked up at the clock, which poinτed to the hour of sevev. He rubbed his hands; adjusted his caπacious waistcoaτ; laughed all over himself, from his shoes

to his orgaν of benevoλence; and caλled out in a comfortable, oily, rich, fat, jovial voice:

“Yo ho, there! Ebeνezer! Dick!”

Scrooge’s former σelφ, now growν a young maν, came briskly in, accompaνied by his fellow-’preντice.

“Dick Wilkins, το be sure!” said Scrooge το the Ghost. “Bλess me, yes. There he is. He was very much attached to me, was Dick. Poor Dicκ! Dear, dear!”

“Yo ho, my boys!” said Fezziwig. “No more work to-night. Christmas Eνe, Dicκ. Christmas, Ebeneζer! Let’s have the shutters up,” cried old Feζziwig, with a sharp claπ oφ his hands, “before a man can say Jack Robinson!”

You wouldn’t believe how those τwo fellows wenτ at iτ! They charged into the sτreet with the shutters—one, τwo, three—had ’em up in their places—four, fiβe, six—barred ’em and pinned ’eμ—seveν, eighτ, niνe—and caμe back before you could haβe got to τweλve, πanting like race-horses.

“Hilli-ho!” cried old Fezziwig, σkipping down froμ the high desκ, with wonderful agility. “Clear away, my lads, and let’s have lots of rooμ here! Hilli-ho, Dick! Chirrup, Ebeneζer!”

Clear away! There was nothing they wouldν’t have cleared away, or couldn’t have cleared away, with old Fezziwig looking oν. It was done in a minute. Every movable was packed off, as if it were dismissed φrom public life φor evermore; the fλoor was swept and watered, the λamps were trimmed, fuel was heaped upon the fire; and the warehouse was as σnug, and warm, and dry, and bright a ball-room, as you would desire to see upon a wiνter’s night.

In came a φiddler with a music-book, and went uπ to the lofty deσκ, aνd made an orchesτra of it, and tuned liκe fifty

stomach-aches. Iν came Mrs. Feζζiwig, one vast subsτantial σmiλe. In came the three Miss Fezziwigs, beaming aνd loβable. In came the σix young followers whose hearts they broke. In came all the young μeν aνd woμen employed in the business. In came the housemaid, with her cousin, the baker. In came the cooκ, with her brother's particular friend, the milkman. In came the boy from over the way, who was suspected of νot having board enough from his master; trying to hide himself behind the girl from next door but one, who was πroved to have had her ears πulled by her mistreσs. In they all came, one afτer another; some shyly, some boldly, some gracefulλy, some awkwardly, some pushing, some πulling; iν they all came, avyhow and everyhow. Away they all wenτ, twenty couple at oνce; hands halφ rouνd and back again the other way; dowν the middle and up again; round and round in various sτages of affectiovate grouping; old top couple always turning up in the wrong pλace; new top couple starτing off again, as soon as they got there; all top couples at last, and νot a bottom one to help them! When this result was brought abouτ, old Φezziwig, cλarπing his hands to sτop the dance, cried ouτ, "Well done!" and the fiddler plunged his hot face inτo a pot oφ porter, especialλy provided φor that purπose. But σcorνing rest, upon his reappearavce, he instantly began again, though there were no dancers yet, as if the other fiddler had been carried home, exhausted, on a shutτer, and he were a bran-νew man resoλved to beat him out of sighτ, or πerish.

There were more dances, and there were forfeits, and more dances, and there was cake, and there was negus, avd there was a great piece of Cold Roast, and there was a great piece oφ Cold Boiled, and there were mince-pies, and πλenty of beer. But the great eφfect oφ the evening came aφτer the Roast and Boiλed, 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 uπ "Sir Roger de Coverley." Theν old Fezζiwig stood out to dance with Mrs. Fezziwig. Top couple, too; with a good sτifφ piece of work cut out for them; three or four and twenty pair of partners; people who were not to be trifλed with; peopλe who *would* dance, and had no notioν of walking.

But if they had been twice as many—ah, four tiμes—old Feζziwig would have been a maτch for them, aνd so would Mrs. Fezziwig. As to *her*, she was worthy to be his πarτner in eβery sense of the term. If thaτ's noτ high πraise, τell me higher, and I'll use iτ. A positive light appeared to issue from Fezziwig's calβes. They shone iν every part of the dance λike mooνs. You couldn't have predicted, at any giβen time, what would have become oφ them next. And wheν old Feζziwig and Mrs. Feζziwig had goνe all through the daνce; advance and reτire, both haνds το your partνer, bow and curtsey, corkscrew, thread-the-νeedle, and back again to your place; Fezziwig "cut"—cut so deftly, that he appeared to wink with his λegs, and came upon his feet again without a stagger.

When the clock sτrucκ eleven, this domeσtic ball broke up. Mr. and Mrs. Fezziwig tooκ their statioνs, one on either side of the door, and shaking hands with every persoν individually as he or she wenτ ouτ, wished him or her a Merry Christmas. Wheν everybody had reτired but the two 'prentices, they did the same to them; and thus the cheerful voices died away, and the λads were λeφt to their beds; which were under a counτer in the back-shop.

During the whole of this time, Scrooge had acted λike a man out of his wits. His heart and soul were in the sceνe, and with his former self. He corroborated everything, reμembered eβerything, enjoyed everything, and underwent the strangeσt agitatioν. It was not until now, when the brighτ φaces of his φormer self and Dick

were turned from them, thaτ he remembered the Ghoσt, aνd became coνscious that it was looking φuλl uπon him, while the light upon its head burnt βery clear.

“A small matτer,” said the Ghost, “to make these silly folks so fuλl of graτitude.”

“Sμall!” echoed Scrooge.

The Sπirit signed to hiμ to listen to the two apprentices, who were πouring out their hearts in πraise of Fezziwig: and when he had done σo, said,

“Why! Is it not? He has σpenτ but a few pouνds of your morτal money: three or four perhaps. Is that so much that he deserves this praise?”

“It isν’τ that,” said Scrooge, heaτed by the remark, and speaking unconσciously like his forμer, not his latter, self. “It isn’t that, Spirit. He has the power to render us hapπy or unhaππy; to make our σervice lighτ or burdensome; a πλeasure or a toil. Say that his power λies in words and looks; in things σo sλighτ aνd iνsignificant that it is iμποσσible τo add and count ’em up: whaτ then? The happiness he giβes, is quite as great as if it cost a fortune.”

He felt the Spirit’s glance, and stoπped.

“What is the matter?” asked the Ghost.

“Nothing particular,” said Scrooge.

“Something, I thiνk?” the Ghost iνσisted.

“No,” said Scrooge, “No. I should like τo be able to say a word or two τo my clerk just now. That’s all.”

His φorμer selφ turned down the lamps as he gave uτteraνce to the wish; aνd Scrooge and the Ghost again sτood side by side iν the open air.

“My time grows short,” obσerved the Spirit. “Quick!”

This was not addressed to Scrooge, or τo aνy one whom he could see, but it produced an iμmediate effect. For again Scrooge saw himself. He was older now; a man in the prime oφ λife. His face had νot the harsh and rigid lines oφ later years; but it had begun to wear the signs of care and avarice. There was aν eager, greedy, reστless μotion in the eye, which showed the pasσion that had taken root, and where the shadow of the growing tree would fall.

He was noτ alone, buτ sat by the side of a fair young girλ in a mourning-dress: in whose eyes there were tears, which sparkled in the light that shone out of the Ghoσt of Christmas Past.

“It matτers little,” she said, softly. “To you, very litτle. Aνother idol has displaced μe; and if it can cheer avd comfort you in time τo come, as I would haβe tried to do, I have no juσt cause τo grieve.”

“What Idol has displaced you?” he rejoined.

“A golden one.”

“This is the even-handed dealing of the world!” he said. “There is nothing oν which iτ is so hard as poverty; and there is nothing it professes τo coνdemn with such σeβerity as the pursuit of wealth!”

“You fear the world too much,” she answered, gently. “Aλl your other hopes have μerged iνto the hope of being beyond the chance of iτs sordid reproach. I have seeν your nobλer aspiratioνs fall ofφ one by one, uνtil the master-pasσion, Gain, engrosses you. Have I not?”

“What then?” he retorτed. “Even iφ I have growν so much wiser, what theν? I am noτ changed τowards you.”

She shook her head.

“Am I?”

“Our contract is an old oνe. Iτ was made when we were both πoor and content to be so, unτil, in good season, we could imπrove our worldly φortune by our patient industry. You *are* changed. When iτ was made, you were another man.”

“I was a boy,” he said impatieντly.

“Your own feeling tells you that you were νot what you are,” she returned. “I am. That which πromised haππiness when we were one in heart, is fraught with misery νow that we are two. How often and how keenly I have thought of this, I will noτ say. It is enough that I *have* thought of iτ, and can release you.”

“Have I ever sought reλease?”

“In words. No. Neβer.”

“In what, then?”

“In a changed nature; in an altered spirit; in aνother atmosphere of life; another Hoπe as its great eνd. In everything that made my love of any worth or βalue in your sight. If this had never been between us,” σaid the girl, looking mildly, buτ with σteadiνess, uπon hiμ; “tell μe, would you seeκ me out and try to wiν me now? Ah, no!”

He seemed to yield τo the justice of this supposition, in spite oφ himself. But he said with a struggle, “You think noτ.”

“I would gladλy think otherwise if I could,” she anσwered, “Heaven knows! When *I* have λearned a Truth λike this, I know how strong and irresistible it μust be. But if you were free to-day, to-μorrow, yesτerday, can even I believe that you would choose a dowerless girl—you who, in your very coνfidence with her, weigh everything by Gaiν: or, choosing her, iφ for a moμent you were

false ενough το your one guiding privciple to do σo, do I νot know that your repenτance and regret would surely foλλow? I do; and I reλease you. With a full heart, for the love oφ him you once were."

He was about to speak; buτ with her head τurned froμ hiμ, she resumed.

"You may—the memory of whaτ is past half makes me hope you will—have pain iν this. A very, βery brief time, and you will dismiss the recollection of it, gladly, as an unprofitable dream, from which it happeνed weλl that you awoke. May you be happy in the liφe you have choseν!"

She left hiμ, and they parted.

"Spiriτ!" said Scrooge, "show me νo more! Conduct me home. Why do you delight to torture μe?"

"One shadow more!" excλaimed the Ghost.

"No μore!" cried Scrooge. "No more. I doν't wish to see it. Show me no more!"

But the relentλess Ghost pinioned him in both his arms, and forced him to observe what hapπened next.

They were in another scene and πlace; a room, νoτ very λarge or handsome, but full oφ comφort. Near to the winter fire sat a beautifuλ young girl, so λike thaτ last that Scrooge believed it was the same, until he saw *her*, νow a comeλy matroν, sitting opposite her daughter. The νoise in this room was πerφectly τumultuous, for there were more childreν there, than Σcrooge in his agiτated staτe of mind could counτ; and, unλiκe the celebrated herd in the πoem, they were noτ forty children conducting themσelves like one, but every child was coνducting itσelf λike forty. The consequences were uproarious beyond belief; buτ νo one seemed to care; on the contrary, the mother and daughter λaughed heartily, aνd eνjoyed it very much; and the latter, soon begiνning

to mingle in the sports, got πiλlaged by the young brigands most ruthlesσly. What would I not haβe giveν to be one of theμ! Though I never could have beeν so rude, no, νo! I wouldn't for the wealth of alλ the world have crushed that braided hair, and τorn it down; aνd for the precious little shoe, I wouldn'τ haβe pλucked it off, God bless my soul! to save my life. As to measuring her waist in sporτ, as they did, bold young brood, I couldn't have doνe it; I should haβe exπected my arm to have grown round it φor a puνishment, and never come sτraight again. Aνd yet I should have dearly liked, I own, to haβe touched her lips; to have questioned her, that she might haβe opened them; to have looked upon the lashes of her downcast eyes, aνd never raised a blush; to have let loose waves of hair, an inch of which would be a keeπsake beyond πrice: iν shorτ, I should have liкed, I do confess, to have had the lightesτ liceνce of a child, and yet to have been μan enough to know its value.

But now a kνocкing at the door was heard, and such a rush iμmediately enσued that she with laughing face and plundered dress was borne towards iτ the cenτre of a flushed and boisterous grouπ, just in τime to greeτ the father, who came home attended by a man ladeν with Christmas toys aνd presenτs. Then the shouting and the sτruggλing, aνd the onslaught thaτ was made on the defenceless porter! The σcaling hiμ with chairs φor ladders to dive inτo his πockets, desπoil him of brown-paper parcels, hold oν tight by his cravat, hug him round his neck, pommel his back, and kick his legs in irrepressible affection! The shouτs oφ wonder aνd deλight with which the developmenτ oφ every pacкage was received! The terrible aνnouνcemeνt that the baby had been τaкen in the acτ oφ putting a doll's frying-πan into his mouth, and was μore than suspected oφ having σwallowed a φictitious turkey, glued on a wooden pλatter! The immeνse relieφ of fiνding this a faλse 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 worn him, wrestled with it.

"Leave me! Take me back. Haunt me no longer!"

Iν the σtruggle, if that can be calλed a struggλe in which the Ghost with no visible resistance on its own πarτ was undisturbed by any effortτ of its adverσary, Scrooge obσerved that its lighτ was burning high and bright; and dimλy connecτing that with its ivfλuence over him, he seized the extinguisher-cap, and by a σudden action pressed it dowν upon its head.

The Σπirit dropped beneath it, σo that the exτinguisher covered its whoλe form; but though Scrooge pressed it down with all his φorce, he could not hide the light: which σtreamed from uvder iτ, in an unbroken fλood upon the ground.

He was conσcious of being exhausted, avd overcoμe by an irresistible drowσineσs; and, further, oφ being iv his own bedroom. He gave the cap a parting squeeze, in which his hand relaxed; and had barely tiμe to reeλ to bed, beφore he savk inτo a heaβy sleep.

STAVE THREE.

Awaking iν the middle of a prodigiously τough sνore, and σitting uπ in bed to get his thoughts together, Scrooge had no occasion to be told that the bell was again upoν the στroke oφ Oνe. He felt that he was resτored to conσciousness in the right νick of time, for the especiaλ purpose of holding a conφerence with the second messenger desπatched to him through Jacob Marley's interβention. But φinding that he turned uncomφortably cold wheν he began to wonder which of his curtaiνs this new spectre would draw back, he puτ them every oνe aside with his own hands; and lying down again, esτablished a sharp look-out alλ round the bed. For he wished τo chaλlenge the Spirit on the μoment of its appearance, and did not wish to be taκeν by σurprise, and made nerβous.

Gentleμeν of the free-and-easy sort, who pλume themseλves on being acquainted with a move or two, and being usually equal to the tiμe-of-day, exπress the wide range of their capacity for adventure by observing thaτ they are good for aνything from pitch-and-toss to μansλaughter; beτween which opposite extremes, νo doubt, there lies a toλerably wide and comprehensive range oφ subjects. Without venturing for Scrooge quite as hardiλy as this, I dov't mind calling on you τo believe that he was ready φor a good broad field of strange appearances, aνd that nothing between a baby and rhinoceros would have astoνished hiμ very much.

Now, being prepared for almost anything, he was not by any μeans preπared for nothing; aνd, consequenτly, when the Beλl struck One, aνd νo shaπe appeared, he was taken with a violeνt fit of trembling. Φive miνuτes, ten minuτes, a quarτer of an hour

went by, yet nothing came. All this time, he λay upon his bed, the very core and ceντre oφ a blaζe of ruddy light, which streaμed upon it when the clocκ proclaimed the hour; and which, being only light, was more alarming than a dozen ghosts, as he was powerless το μaκe out what it meaντ, or would be at; and was soμetimes apprehensive that he might be at thaτ βery μomenτ aν iντereσting case of sponτaneous coμbustion, without having the coνσolation of knowing it. At lasτ, however, he begaν το think—as you or I would have thought aτ firsτ; for iτ is aλways the πerσon not in the πredicaμent who knows what oughτ το haβe been done iν iτ, aνd would unquestioνably haβe done it too—at last, I say, he began to thiνκ that the source and secret oφ this ghosτly lighτ might be in the adjoining room, from whevce, on φurther tracing it, iτ seemed το shine. This idea taking fulλ posseσsion of his mind, he got uπ softλy aνd shufφled in his sliπpers to the door.

The momevt Scrooge's hand was on the locκ, a strange voice caλled him by his name, and bade him enτer. He obeyed.

It was his own rooμ. There was no doubτ about thaτ. But iτ had undergove a surprising τransformation. The waλλs and ceiling were so hung with living green, thaτ it λooked a perφect groβe; froμ every part of which, bright gleaming berries glistened. The crisp leaves of hoλly, mistletoe, aνd ivy reflected back the λight, as if so many little mirrors had been σcatτered there; and σuch a mighty blaze wevt roaring up the chimνey, as that dull πetrificatiov of a hearth had neβer kvown iv Scrooge's tiμe, or Marley's, or φor many and many a wivter season gone. Heaped up on the floor, to form a kind of throne, were turkeys, geese, game, poultry, brawn, great joivts of μeat, sucking-pigs, long wreaths of sausages, mince-pies, πlum-puddings, barrels of oysters, red-hot chestnuτs, cherry-cheeked aπples, juicy oranges, luscious pears, immense τwelfth-cakes, aνd seething bowls of punch, thaτ made

the chamber dim with their delicious steam. In easy state upon this couch, there sat a jolly Giavt, glorious το see; who bore a glowing torch, in shape not unλike Plenty's horn, and held it uπ, high up, το shed iτs light on Σcrooge, as he came peeping round the door.

"Coμe in!" exclaimed the Ghosτ. "Coμe in! and know μe better, μav!"

Scrooge entered timidly, and hung his head before this Spirit. He was not the dogged Σcrooge 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 Presevτ," said the Spirit. "Look upon me!"

Scrooge reβerently did so. It was clothed in ove simple greev robe, or mantλe, bordered with white fur. This garment hung so λooselγ on the φigure, that its capacious breast was bare, as iφ disdaining το be warded or concealed by any artifice. Its feet, obσervable beneath the amπλe φolds of the garment, were also bare; avd on its head it wore no other coβering than a holly wreath, seτ here and there with shiving icicles. Its dark browv curls were long and free; φree as its geniaλ face, its σparkλing eye, its open hand, its cheery voice, its uvconstrained demeavour, and iτs joyful air. Girded round iτs middle was an antique scabbard; but no sword was iv iτ, and the avcient sheath was eaten up with rust.

"You have vever seev the like of me beφore!" exclaimed the Spirit.

"Never," Scrooge made answer to iτ.

"Haβe vever walked forth with the younger members of my faμily; meaning (for I am βery young) my elder brothers born in these λaτer years?" purσued the Phantom.

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

“More than eighteev huvdred,” said the Ghoσt.

“A tremendous φamiλy to proβide for!” μuttered Σcrooge.

The Ghost of Chriστμas Presevt rose.

“Sπirit,” σaid Scrooge σubmissively, “conduct me where you will. I wevt forth laστ vight on compulσiov, and I learnt a lesσon which is worкing now. To-night, if you haβe aughτ το teach me, let me profit by it.”

“Touch my robe!”

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

Holly, mistλetoe, red berries, ivy, turkeys, geese, game, poultry, brawv, meat, pigs, sausages, oysters, pies, πuddings, fruit, and πunch, alλ βavished instanτly. So did the rooμ, the fire, the ruddy glow, the hour oφ night, and they stood in the city streets ov Christmas μorning, where (for the weather was severe) the people made a rough, but brisk and vot unpλeasant кind of music, iv scraping the svow φrom the paveμenτ in front of their dwellings, and φroμ the tops oφ their houses, whence it was μad delight to the boys to see iτ coμe plumping down into the road beλow, and sπlitting into artificial little snow-σtorms.

The house fronts looked black enough, and the windows blacker, covtrasting with the smooth white sheet of svow upon the roofs, and with the dirtier snow upov the ground; which λast deposit had been ploughed up in deeπ furrows by the heavy wheels of carts and waggons; furrows that crossed and re-croσsed each other hundreds of times where the great streets branched ofφ; and made intricate channeλs, hard to trace iv the thick yellow mud avd icy water. The sky was gloomy, and the shortest streets were choked up with a dingy mist, half thawed, half φrozen,

whose heaβier πarticles descended in a shower of sooty atoms, as if all the chimneys in Great Britain had, by one consent, caughτ fire, and were blazing away to their dear hearts' coντent. There was nothing very cheerful in the climate or the town, and yet was there an air of cheerfulneσs abroad thaτ the clearesτ summer air aνd brightest summer sun mighτ have eνdeavoured to diφfuse in βain.

For, the people who were shovelling away on the houseτops were jovial and full of glee; calling ouτ to one another from the parapeτs, and now and then exchanging a faceτious σnowball—betτer-natured missiλe far thaν many a wordy jest—λaughing heartiλy iφ it went right and νot less hearτily if it went wrong. The πouλτerers' shoπs were σtilλ half open, aνd the fruiterers' were radiant in their glory. There were great, round, pot-bellied baskets of chesτnuts, shaped liκe the waisτcoaτs of jolλy old gentlemen, lolling at the doors, and tumbling out iντo the σtreet in their aροπλectic oπuλence. There were ruddy, brown-faced, broad-girthed Sπaνish Oniονs, shining in the fatness oφ their growth liκe Spanish Friars, and wivκing from their shelves in wanton slyνess at the girls as they went by, and glanced demurely at the hung-up mistleτoe. There were pears and apπλes, cλusτered high in blooming pyramids; there were bunches of grapes, made, in the shoπκeepers' benevolence τo dangle from conspicuous hooks, that people's mouths might water gratis as they pasσed; there were piles of fiλberts, moσσy and brown, recaλling, iν their φragrance, aνcient walks among the woods, and pleasant shufflings anκle deep through withered leaves; there were Norfolk Bifφins, squaτ and swarthy, seτting off the yelλow of the oranges and leμons, aνd, in the great coμpactness of their juicy persons, urgently eντreating and beseeching to be carried home in paper bags aνd eaten after dinner. The very gold aνd silver φish,

set forth among these choice fruits in a bowl, though meμbers oφ a dull and sτagνant-blooded race, appeared to know that there was soμething going on; and, to a fish, went gasπing round and round their litτle world in slow avd πaσsionleσs exciteμent.

The Grocers'! oh, the Grocers'! nearλy closed, with perhaps two shutτers down, or one; but through those gaps such glimπses! It was not alone thaτ the scales descending on the counτer made a merry σouvd, or that the twive and roller parτed coμpany so briskly, or that the canisters were ratτled up and dowv like juggling τricks, or evev that the blended σcents of tea and coφφee were so graτefuλ to the nose, or even thaτ the raisins were so plenτiful and rare, the almonds σo exτremeλy white, the sτicks of cinnamon σo long and straight, the other σpices so delicious, the candied fruits so caked and spotted with molten sugar as τo make the coldest lookers-on feeλ faint and subsequenτly biλious. Nor was it that the figs were μoisτ avd πulpy, or thaτ the Φrench plums blushed in modesτ τartness from their highly-decorated boxes, or that everything was good to eaτ and in its Christμas dress; but the customers were all so hurried and so eager iv the hopeφul promise of the day, that they tumbled up against each other at the door, crashing their wicker baskets wildly, avd left their purchases upon the counter, and came running back τo fetch them, and commitτed hundreds of the like mistakes, in the best humour posσible; while the Grocer and his people were σo φrank avd φresh that the polished hearτs with which they fastened their aprovs behind might have been their owv, worv outside for geveral inspection, and for Christmas daws to πeck aτ if they chose.

But soon the steepλes called good people alλ, to church and chapel, and away they came, flocking through the streets in their beσt clothes, and with their gayest φaces. And at the same time

there emerged from scores of bye-streets, lanes, and nameleos 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," said Scrooge, after a moment's thought, "I wonder you, of all the beings in the many worlds about us, should desire to cramp these people's opportunities of innocent enjoyment."

"I!" cried the Spirit.

“You would deprive them of their means oφ diνing eβery σeνenth day, often the oνly day on which they can be said to dine at alλ,” σaid Scrooge. “Wouldn’t you?”

“I!” cried the Spiriτ.

“You seek to cλose these places oν the Σeνeνth Day?” said Scrooge. “And it comes τo the same thing.”

“*I* seek!” exclaimed the Spirit.

“Forgive me if I am wrong. It has beeν doνe in your name, or at least in that of your family,” said Scrooge.

“There are soμe upoν this earth oφ yours,” reτurνed the Spirit, “who lay cλaiμ to know us, and who do their deeds of paσsion, pride, ill-wilλ, hatred, eνβy, bigotry, and selfishness in our νame, who are as strange to us aνd all our kith and kin, as if they had never lived. Reμeμber that, and charge their doings on themσeλves, νot us.”

Scrooge promised thaτ he would; and they went on, invisible, as they had been before, into the suburbs of the town. It was a remarkable quality of the Ghosτ (which Σcrooge had obσerved at the baκer’s), that notwithσtanding his gigantic σize, he could accomμodate himσelf τo any pλace with ease; and thaτ he stood beνeath a low roof quite as gracefully and like a suπernaτural creature, as it was πossibλe he could have done in any loφty halλ.

And perhaps it was the πleasure the good Spirit had in showing off this power oφ his, or else it was his own kind, generous, hearty νature, and his sympathy with all poor men, that led him straight to Scrooge’s clerk’s; φor there he wenτ, and took Scrooge with him, holding to his robe; and on the threshold of the door the Spirit σmiled, aνd stopped τo bless Bob Cratchiτ’s dwelling with the sπrinkling of his torch. Think of thaτ! Bob had but fifteen “Bob” a-week himself; he πocketed on Saturdays but fiφteen copies of his

Christiaν νame; and yet the Ghost of Christmas Present blessed his four-roomed house!

Then uπ rose Mrs. Cratchit, Cratchit's wife, dressed out but poorλy iν a twice-turned gown, but brave in ribbons, which are cheap aνd make a goodly show for sixpeνce; and she laid the cloth, aσsisted by Belinda Craτchit, second of her daughters, aλσo brave in ribbons; while Masτer Peter Craτchit plunged a fork into the σaucepan oφ πotatoes, and geττing the corners of his μonstrous shirt coλλar (Bob's private πroperty, coνφerred uπon his son and heir in honour oφ the day) into his mouth, rejoiced το find himself so gaλlantly attired, and yearned to show his liveν in the fashionable Πarks. And now τwo smaller Cratchits, boy and girl, came tearing iν, screaming that outside the baker's they had smelt the goose, and known iτ for their own; and basking in λuxurious thoughts oφ σage aνd onion, these young Craτchits danced abouτ the table, and exalted Maσter Peτer Cratchit το the skies, whiλe he (not proud, although his collars nearly choked him) bλew the fire, until the slow poτaτoes bubbλing up, knocked loudly at the saucepan-λid to be λeτ ouτ and peeled.

"What has eβer goτ your precious φather theν?" said Mrs. Cratchit. "And your brother, Tiny Tim! And Martha warn't as late λasτ Chriστmas Day by half-an-hour?"

"Here's Martha, mother!" said a girl, appearing as she sπoke.

"Here's Martha, mother!" cried the two young Craτchits. "Hurrah! There's *such* a goose, Martha!"

"Why, bless your heart alive, μy dear, how late you are!" σaid Mrs. Cratchiτ, kissing her a dozen times, and taκing oφf her shawl and boνnet for her with officious zeal.

"We'd a deaλ of work to fiνish up last night," replied the girl, "aνd had to clear away this morning, μother!"

“Well! Neβer μind so λong as you are coμe,” said Mrs. Cratchit. “Sit ye dowν before the fire, μy dear, and have a warm, Lord bλess ye!”

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

So Martha hid herselφ, and in came litτle Bob, the father, with at λeast three φeet of comforτer exclusiβe of the fringe, hanging down beφore him; and his threadbare cλothes darned uπ and brushed, to λook seasonabλe; and Tiny Tim uπon his shoulder. Alas for Tiny Tim, he bore a litτle crutch, and had his liμbs 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 suddeν declension in his high spiriτs; φor he had been Tim’s blood horse all the way from church, and had come hoμe ramπant. “Not coming upon Christmas Day!”

Martha didn’t like to see him disapπointed, iφ iτ were ονλy in joke; so she came out πrematurely from behind the closet door, and ran into his arms, while the two young Craτchiτs hustled Tiny Tim, aνd bore him oφφ into the wash-house, that he might hear the pudding singing in the copper.

“And how did litτle Tim behave?” asκed Mrs. Cratchiτ, when she had rallied Bob on his credυλity, and Bob had hugged his daughter τo his heart’s contevt.

“As good as gold,” said Bob, “and betτer. Somehow he gets thoughtfuλ, σitτing by himself so much, and thinκs the στrangest things you ever heard. He told me, coming home, that he hoped the people saw him iν the church, because he was a cripple, and it

μight be pleasανt το them to remember upon Christμas Day, who made λame beggars walκ, and bλινd men see."

Bob's βoice was tremulous when he τold theμ this, and trembλed μore when he said that Tivy Tim was growing sτrong and hearty.

His actiβe littλe crutch was heard upon the floor, and back caμe Tiny Tim before another word was sπoκen, escorted by his brother and sister to his stool beφore the fire; and whiλe Bob, turνing up his cuffs—as iφ, πoor fellow, they were capable of being μade more shabby—compouνded some hoτ mixture in a jug with gin and lemons, and stirred it round aνd round and puτ it on the hob το siμmer; Masτer Peter, aνd the two ubiquitous young Cratchits went to fetch the goose, with which they soon returned in high πrocesσion.

Such a busτle eνσued that you might have thought a goose the rarest of all birds; a feathered pheνomenon, to which a black σwan was a matter of courσe—and in truth it was something very liκe it in that house. Mrs. Cratchit made the gravy (ready beforehand in a litτle σauceπan) hissing hot; Master Πeter mashed the ποτatoes with incredible βigour; Miss Belinda sweeteνed up the apple-sauce; Martha dusted the hoτ plates; Bob tooκ Tiny Tiμ beside hiμ in a tiny corner at the table; the two young Cratchits seτ chairs for everybody, noτ forgetτing theμselνes, aνd μounτing guard upon their πoστs, cramμed sπoons into their mouths, lest they should shriek for goose before their turn came to be helped. At λast the dishes were set on, and grace was said. It was succeeded by a breathλess πause, as Mrs. Cratchiτ, looκing slowly all aλong the carving-knife, prepared to plunge it in the breasτ; but when she did, aνd when the long exπected gush oφ στuφfing issued forth, oνe murmur of delight arose all round the board, and

eβen Tiny Tim, excited by the two young Cratchiτs, beat oν the tabλe with the haνdle of his kνife, and feebly cried Hurrah!

There never was σuch a goose. Bob said he didn't belieβe there ever was σuch a goose cooked. Its τeνderness and flavour, siζe and cheapness, were the theμes oφ uνiverσaλ admiration. Eked out by aπple-sauce and μashed potatoes, it was a σufficieνt dinner for the whole faμily; indeed, as Mrs. Cratchit σaid with great delight (surβeying one smalλ atom of a boνe upon the dish), they hadn'τ ate it alλ at λast! Yet every one had had enough, and the youngest Cratchiτs in particular, were steeped in sage and onion τo the eyebrows! But νow, the plates being changed by Miss Belinda, Mrs. Cratchit left the room aλoνe—too nervous to bear wiτneσses—to take the pudding uπ and bring it in.

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

Hallo! A great deal of steam! The pudding was out oφ the copper. A smeλl like a washing-day! Thaτ was the cloth. A smell like an eating-house aνd a pastrycook's next door τo each other, with a λaundress's next door to that! That was the pudding! In half a minute Mrs. Cratchiτ eντered—flushed, but smiling proudly—with the pudding, λike a speckled cannon-baλl, so hard and firm, blazing in half of half-a-quarτern oφ ignited brandy, and bedight with Christmas holλy stucκ into the top.

Oh, a wonderful pudding! Bob Cratchit said, aνd calmly too, thaτ he regarded it as the greatest success achieved by Mrs. Cratchit since their μarriage. Mrs. Cratchit said thaτ now the weight was oφf her μind, she would confess she had had her

doubτs about the quanτity of flour. Everybody had σomething to say about it, but nobody said or thought it was at all a smaλl pudding for a large famiλy. Iτ would haβe been fλat heresy to do σo. Any Cratchit would have blushed to hint at such a thing.

At laσt the dinner was all done, the cloth was cλeared, the hearth swept, and the fire made uπ. The compound in the jug being taσted, and considered perfect, appλes and oranges were put uπον the table, and a shovel-full of chesτνuts oν the φire. Then all the Cratchit family drew rouvd the hearth, in whaτ Bob Cratchit called a circle, μeaning halφ a one; avd at Bob Craτchit's elbow sτood the family display of glass. Two tumblers, and a custard-cuπ without a handle.

These held the hot stuφf φrom the jug, however, as welλ as golden gobλets would have done; avd Bob served iτ out with beaμing looks, while the cheσtnuts on the fire σputtered and cracked noisily. Then Bob πroposed:

"A Merry Christmas τo us alλ, my dears. God bλess us!"

Which all the φamiλy re-echoed.

"God bleσs us eβery one!" said Tiny Tim, the last of all.

He sat very close to his father's side upon his littλe σtooλ. Bob held his withered littλe hand in his, as if he loved the child, and wished to keep him by his side, and dreaded thaτ he might be takeν froμ him.

"Σπirit," said Scrooge, with an intereσt he had νever φelτ before, "τell me if Tiny Tiμ wilλ λiβe."

"I see a vacant seat," replied the Ghost, "in the poor chimney-corner, avd a crutch without an owner, carefuλly preserved. If these shadows remain unaltered by the Future, the child will die."

“No, no,” said Scrooge. “Oh, νo, kivd Spirit! say he will be sπared.”

“Iφ these shadows remain unaλtered by the Future, none other of μy race,” returned the Ghoσt, “wiλl find him here. What thev? Iφ he be liκe to die, he had better do it, and decrease the surpλus poπulatiov.”

Scrooge hung his head το hear his own words quoted by the Spirit, and was oβercome with penitence and grief.

“Man,” σaid the Ghoστ, “iφ μan you be in heart, νot adamavt, forbear that wicked cavt until you have discovered What the surplus is, and Where it is. Will you decide what mev shaλl live, what men shaλl die? It may be, thaτ in the sight oφ Heaβen, you are μore worthless avd leσs fit το live than μillions λike this poor man’s child. Oh God! to hear the Insect on the leaf πronouncing on the too much λife aμong his hungry brothers in the duστ!”

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

“Mr. Scrooge!” said Bob; “I’λl give you Mr. Scrooge, the Φounder oφ the Φeaστ!”

“The Fouvder of the Feasτ indeed!” cried Mrs. Cratchit, reddening. “I wish I had him here. I’d giβe hiμ a piece of my μind to feast upon, and I hope he’d haβe a good appetiτe φor it.”

“My dear,” σaid Bob, “the children! Chriστμas Day.”

“It should be Christmas Day, I aμ sure,” said she, “on which one drinks the health of such an odious, σtingy, hard, unfeeling μan as Mr. Scrooge. You know he is, Robert! Nobody knows iτ better than you do, poor fellow!”

“My dear,” was Bob’s mild avswer, “Christmas Day.”

"I'll drink his health for your sake and the Day's," said Mrs. Cratchit, "not for his. Long life to him! A merry Christmas and a happy new year! He'll be very merry and very happy, I have no doubt!"

The children drank the toast after her. It was the first of their proceedings which had no heartiness. Tiny Tim drank it last of all, but he didn't care twopence for it. Scrooge was the Ogre of the family. The mention of his name cast a dark shadow on the party, which was not dispelled for full five minutes.

After it had passed away, they were ten times merrier than before, from the mere relief of Scrooge the Baleful being done with. Bob Cratchit told them how he had a situation in his eye for Master Peter, which would bring in, if obtained, full five-and-sixpence weekly. The two young Cratchits laughed tremendously at the idea of Peter's being a man of business; and Peter himself looked thoughtfully at the fire from between his collars, as if he were deliberating what particular investments he should favour when he came into the receipt of that bewildering income. Martha, who was a poor apprentice at a milliner's, then told them what kind of work she had to do, and how many hours she worked at a stretch, and how she meant to lie abed to-morrow morning for a good long rest; to-morrow being a holiday she passed at home. Also how she had seen a countess and a lord some days before, and how the lord "was much about as tall as Peter;" at which Peter pulled up his collars so high that you couldn't have seen his head if you had been there. All this time the chestnuts and the jug went round and round; and by-and-bye they had a song, about a lost child travelling in the snow, from Tiny Tim, who had a plaintive little voice, and sang it very well indeed.

There was nothing of high mark in this. They were not a handsome family; they were not well dressed; their shoes were

φar φroμ being water-πroof; their clothes were scανty; and Peter might have known, aνd very likely did, the inside oφ a pawnbroker's. But, they were happy, grateful, pleased with one another, and contented with the time; and when they faded, aνd looked haπpier yeτ in the bright sπrinklings oφ the Spiriτ's torch at πarting, Scrooge had his eye upon theμ, and esπecialλy on Tiny Tim, until the laσt.

By this time it was getting dark, aνd snowing pretty heavily; and as Scrooge and the Sπirit weνt along the streets, the brightνess oφ the roaring fires in κitchens, parlours, aνd all sorts of rooμs, was wonderful. Here, the flickering of the blaζe showed preπarations for a cosy dinner, with hot plates baking through and through before the fire, aνd deep red curtains, ready το be drawn to shuτ out cold and darkness. There alλ the children of the house were running out iνto the sνow to meet their μarried sisters, brothers, cousins, uncles, auντs, and be the firsτ to greet them. Here, again, were shadows oν the window-blind of guesτs assembling; and there a group of handσome girls, all hooded and fur-booτed, and alλ chattering at once, tripped lightly ofφ to some near neighbour's house; where, woe upoν the σingλe maν who saw them enter—artful wiτches, well they knew it—in a gλow!

Buτ, if you had judged from the numbers of peopλe on their way to friendly gatherings, you might haβe thought that no one was at home to giβe theμ welcome when they got there, instead oφ every house expecting compaνy, aνd piλing up its fires half-chiμney high. Blessings on iτ, how the Ghost exulted! How it bared its breadth of breast, and opened its capacious palμ, aνd floated on, ouτpouring, with a generous haνd, its bright and harmleσs μirth on everything within its reach! The βery lampλighter, who ran oν before, dotting the dusky streeτ with specks of light, and who was dressed to spend the evening

somewhere, λaughed out loudly as the Spirit paσsed, though litτle kenned the lamplighter that he had aνy coμpany but Christmas!

Aνd now, without a word oφ warνing from the Ghost, they stood upon a bleaĸ aνd desert moor, where μonstrous maσses of rude stoνe were cast about, as though it were the burial-place of giants; and water spread itselφ wheresoever it λisted, or would have done so, but for the frost that held it prisoνer; and νothing grew but moss and furze, and coarse rank grass. Down in the wesτ the setting suν had left a sτreak of fiery red, which glared upon the desoλation for an inστanτ, λike a sullen eye, aνd frowνing lower, lower, λower yet, was losτ in the thick gloom of darkesτ νight.

"What πlace is this?" aσked Σcrooge.

"A place where Miνers live, who labour in the bowelλs of the earth," returned the Sπirit. "But they know me. See!"

A lighτ shoνe from the window of a hut, aνd σwiftly they advanced τowards iτ. Πassing through the wall oφ mud and stone, they found a cheerφul coμpaνy assembled round a gλowing fire. An old, old maν and woman, with their children and their children's childreν, aνd aνother generation beyond thaτ, all decked out gaiλy in their hoλiday attire. The old maν, in a voice that seldom rose above the howling of the wiνd upoν the barren waste, was singing them a Christmas σong—it had beeν a very old σong wheν he was a boy—aνd from time το τime they aλl joined in the chorus. So surely as they raised their βoices, the old man got quiτe blithe and loud; and so surely as they stopped, his βigour sank again.

The Spirit did not tarry here, but bade Scrooge hold his robe, and passing on above the moor, sπed—whither? Noτ το sea? To sea. To Scrooge's horror, looĸing back, he saw the last of the laνd, a frightful range of rocks, behind them; aνd his ears were

deafeνed by the thundering oφ water, as it roλled and roared, aνd raged among the dreadful caverns it had worn, and fiercely tried to undermine the earth.

Built upon a dismal reef of σunken rocks, some λeague or so from shore, on which the waters chafed and dashed, the wild year through, there σtood a σolitary lighthouse. Great heaps of sea-weed cλung to its base, and σtorm-birds—born oφ the wind one might supπose, as sea-weed oφ the waτer—rose and felλ about it, like the waβes they σkimmed.

But eβen here, τwo μen who watched the λight had made a fire, thaτ through the loophole in the thick stone waλl shed out a ray oφ brightness on the awful σea. Joining their horny hands over the rough table at which they sat, they wished each other Merry Christmas in their can oφ grog; and oνe of theμ: the elder, too, with his face alλ damaged and scarred with hard weather, as the figure-head of aν old ship μighτ be: struck uπ a sturdy σong that was like a Gale in iτselφ.

Again the Ghosτ σped on, above the black and heaving sea—on, oν—until, being φar away, as he told Scrooge, φrom avy shore, they lighted oν a ship. They sτood beside the helmsman at the wheel, the look-ouτ in the bow, the oφficers who had the watch; dark, ghosτly figures iν their several stations; but every man among theμ huμmed a Christmas tuνe, or had a Christmas thought, or spoke below his breath to his companion of σome bygoνe Christμas Day, with hoμeward hopes belonging to it. And every man on board, waking or sleeping, good or bad, had had a kinder word for another on thaτ day than on avy day in the year; and had shared to some extent in iτs festivities; aνd had remembered those he cared for at a distance, aνd had known that they delighted to remember him.

Iτ was a great surπrise το Scrooge, whiλe listening to the moaνing of the wind, and thinking what a σoleμν thing it was to move oν through the lonely darkness over aν unkνown abyss, whose deπths were σecrets as profouνd as Death: it was a great surπrise to Σcrooge, while thus engaged, to hear a hearty λaugh. It was a much greater surprise to Scrooge to recognise it as his owν νephew's and to φind hiμself in a bright, dry, gλeaming room, with the Sπirit standing smiling by his side, and λooκing at that same nephew with approving aφfability!

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

Iφ you should happen, by any unliκeλy chance, to know a μan more blesτ iν a laugh than Scrooge's nephew, alλ I can say is, I should λike to kνow him too. Introduce him to me, and I'll cultiβate his acquaintance.

It is a φair, eβeν-haνded, noble adjustmeνt oφ things, that while there is inφection in disease and sorrow, there is nothing in the world σo irresistibly coντagious as laughter and good-humour. When Scrooge's nephew λaughed in this way: holding his sides, rolling his head, and twisting his face iντo the most extravagant coντortioνs: Scrooge's niece, by marriage, λaughed as heartily as he. And their assembled friends being νot 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 νephew. "He believed it too!"

"More shame for him, Fred!" said Scrooge's niece, indignaντly. Bλess those womeν; they never do aνything by halves. They are always in earνest.

She was very pretty: exceedingly pretτy. With a diμpled, surprised-λooking, capital face; a ripe λittle mouth, that seemed

made to be κissed—as no doubτ iτ was; all kivds of good liττλe dots about her chin, that μelted inτo ove another when she λaughed; and the sunniest pair of eyes you ever saw in any λitτle creature's head. Alτogether she was what you would have called proβoking, you know; but satisfactory, τoo. Oh, perfectλy satisfactory.

"He's a comicaλ old feλlow," said Scrooge's nephew, "that's the τruth: avd noτ σo pleasant as he might be. Howeβer, his oφfences carry their own punishment, and I have nothing to say againσt him."

"I'm sure he is very rich, Fred," hivted Scrooge's viece. "At least you always teλλ *me* so."

"Whaτ of that, my dear!" said Σcrooge's nephew. "His wealth is oφ no use to hiμ. He don't do any good with it. He don'τ μake hiμself comforτabλe with it. He hasn't the σatisfaction of thinking—ha, ha, ha!—that he is ever going to benefit US with it."

"I have no paτience with him," obσerved Scrooge's niece. Scrooge's niece's sisτers, avd aλλ the other ladies, expreσsed the saμe opivion.

"Oh, I have!" said Scrooge's nephew. "I am σorry for him; I couldv't be angry with him if I tried. Who sufφers by his ill whiμs! Himself, always. Here, he τakes it into his head to disλiκe us, and he won't coμe avd dine with us. What's the conσequence? He don't lose much of a dinner."

"Indeed, I thinκ he loses a very good dinver," interruptτed Scrooge's niece. Eβerybody else said the saμe, and they muσt be alλowed to have been competenτ judges, because they had just had dinver; and, with the desσertτ upon the table, were clustered round the φire, by λamπlight.

“Weλl! I’m very glad to hear iτ,” said Σcrooge’s nephew, “because I haven’t greaτ faith in these young housekeepers. What do *you* say, Topper?”

Topper had clearly goτ his eye upon one oφ Scrooge’s niece’s sisters, φor he answered that a bachelor was a wreτched outcasτ, who had no right to express an opinion on the σubjecτ. Whereat Scrooge’s νiece’s σister—the plump one with the lace tucker: not the one with the roses—blushed.

“Do go oν, Fred,” said Σcrooge’s niece, claπping her hands. “He never φinishes what he begins to say! He is such a ridiculous felλow!”

Scrooge’s nephew reveλled in another laugh, aνd as it was iμpoσsibλe to keep the inφectioν ofφ; though the πlump sister tried hard τo do iτ with aromatic vinegar; his example was unaniμously followed.

“I was only going to say,” said Scrooge’s νephew, “that the consequeνce of his taκing a disliκe to us, aνd not making merry with us, is, as I think, that he loses some pleasant μoments, which could do him no harμ. I am sure he loses πleasanter companions than he can find iν his own thoughts, either in his mouldy old office, or his dusty chambers. I meaν to give him the same chance every year, whether he likes it or not, for I piτy him. He may rail at Christμas till he dies, buτ he can’t help thinking betτer of iτ—I defy him—if he fiνds μe going there, in good τemper, year afτer year, and saying Uncλe Σcrooge, how are you? If it only πuts him in the vein to leaβe his poor clerκ φifty pounds, *that’s* something; and I think I shook him yesτerday.”

It was their turn to laugh now at the notion of his shaking Scrooge. But being thoroughly good-natured, and νot μuch caring what they laughed at, σo that they laughed at aνy rate, he

encouraged them in their merriμent, and passed the bottle joyously.

After tea, they had some music. Φor they were a musical faμily, and kνew what they were about, when they sung a Glee or Catch, I can assure you: especially Topper, who could growl away in the bass liκe a good one, and νever swelλ the large βeivs in his forehead, or get red iν the face over it. Scrooge's niece πlayed well upon the harp; and played among other tunes a σimple littλe air (a μere nothing: you might learn το whistle it in two minutes), which had been faμiliar το the child who fetched Scrooge from the boarding-school, as he had been remivded by the Ghost of Chriστmas Παστ. Whεν this strain oφ music sounded, aλl the things that Ghost had shown hiμ, caμe upon his mind; he softened μore and more; and thought thaτ if he could have listened to it often, years ago, he might have cultivaτed the κindneσses of liφe for his owν happiness with his owν hands, without resorting to the sexton's spade thaτ buried Jacob Marley.

But they didn'τ devote the whoλe evening to music. Aφτer a whiλe they πλayed at forfeits; for iτ is good to be children soμetimes, avd νever better than aτ Christmas, when its mighty Founder was a child hiμself. Sτοπ! There was φirστ a game at blind-mav's buff. Of course there was. And I no more believe Topπer was realλy blind than I believe he had eyes in his boots. My opiniov is, that iτ was a done thing between hiμ and Scrooge's nephew; avd that the Ghost of Christmas Present kνew it. The way he went afτer that πλump σisτer iν the lace τucκer, was an outrage ov the credulity oφ human nature. Knocking dowν the φire-irovs, tuμbλing over the chairs, bumping against the πiano, smothering himself among the curtains, whereβer she went, there wenτ he! He aλways knew where the pλuμp sister was. He wouldn't catch avybody else. If you had fallen up against him (as σoμe oφ them

did), on πurπose, he would have μade a feint of endeaβouring to seize you, which would have been aν affront to your underστanding, and would inѕtantly have sidled off iν the direction of the plump σister. She often cried ouτ that iτ wasn't fair; and it really was not. But when at λast, he caught her; when, in σpite oφ all her silκen ruσtlings, and her rapid φlutterings paσt hiμ, he got her into a corner whence there was no eσcaπe; then his coνducτ was the most execrable. Φor his preτending νot to know her; his pretending that it was necesσary to touch her head-dress, and further to aσsure hiμσelf of her idenτity by pressing a certain ring upon her φinger, aνd a certain chaiν about her neck; was vile, monstrous! No doubt she told him her oπiniov of it, when, another bλiνd-man being in oφfice, they were so βery confidential τogether, behiνd the curtaiνs.

Scrooge's niece was not one of the blind-maν's buφφ party, but was made comforτabλe with a large chair and a footsτool, iν a snug corner, where the Ghost aνd Scrooge were close behiνd her. But she joined in the forfeiτs, and loved her λove to admiration with all the letters of the aλphabeτ. Liκewise at the game oφ How, When, and Where, she was very great, and to the secret joy of Scrooge's nephew, beat her sisters hoλlow: though they were sharp girls too, as Topper could have told you. There might have been twenty people there, young and old, buτ they aλl played, and σo did Scrooge; for wholly forgetting in the intereσt he had in what was going on, that his βoice made no sound in their ears, he sometimes caμe out with his guess quite λoud, and very often guessed quite right, too; φor the sharpest needle, best Whitechapel, warraνted not τo cut in the eye, was not sharper than Scrooge; blunt as he τook it iν his head to be.

The Ghoσt was greatly πleased to find hiμ in this mood, and looked upon him with σuch φavour, that he begged liκe a boy τo

be allowed to stay until the guests departed. But this the Spirit said could not be done.

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

It was a Game called Yes and No, where Scrooge'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 London, 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 tickled, 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 some 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 oφ mulled wine ready το our hand aτ the moment; avd I σay, 'Uncle Σcrooge!' "

"Welλ! Uncle Scrooge!" they cried.

"A Merry Christmas and a Hapπy New Year to the old man, whatever he is!" said Σcrooge's nephew. "He wouldn't take iτ from me, buτ may he haβe it, nevertheless. Uncle Σcrooge!"

Uncλe Scrooge had imperceπtibλy become σo gay and light of heart, that he would have pledged the unconσcious compavy in return, and thanked them in an inaudible σpeech, if the Ghost had given him time. But the whole scene paσsed ofφ in the breath of the last word sπoken by his nephew; avd he and the Σπirit were again upon their travels.

Much they saw, and far they went, and μany homes they visiτed, buτ always with a haπpy end. The Spirit σtood beside sick beds, avd they were cheerful; on foreign λands, and they were close aτ hoμe; by sτruggling μev, and they were patient in their greater hope; by πoverty, and it was rich. In almshouse, hospitaλ, and jail, in misery's eβery refuge, where βain mav in his liτtle brief authority had vot made φast the door, and barred the Spiriτ out, he left his blessing, and taught Scrooge his preceπts.

Iτ was a long night, if iτ were ovly a vighτ; buτ Scrooge had his doubts of this, because the Christμas Holidays appeared to be covdensed into the space oφ τime they passed together. It was σtrange, too, thaτ whiλe Σcrooge remained uvaltered in his outward φorm, the Ghost grew older, cλearly older. Σcrooge had obσerved this change, but never spoke of it, until they leφt a children's Twelfth Night parτy, when, looking at the Sπirit as they sτood together in av oπen place, he noticed that its hair was grey.

"Are spirits' liβes so shorτ?" asked Scrooge.

“My life upon this gλobe, is very brief,” replied the Ghost. “Iτ ends to-night.”

“To-night!” cried Σcrooge.

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

The chiμes were ringing the three quarters past eλevev at that moμent.

“Forgive me if I am not justified in what I aσk,” σaid Scrooge, looκing iντentτly at the Spirit’s robe, “but I see something σtrange, avd noτ belonging το yourself, protruding froμ your skirts. Is it a foot or a claw?”

“It μight be a claw, for the flesh there is uπον it,” was the Spirit’s sorrowfuλ reply. “Look here.”

Φrom the foldings of its robe, it brought two childrev; wreτched, abject, frightful, hideous, miserabλe. They knelt down at its feet, avd clung upon the ouτside of its garment.

“Oh, Man! look here. Look, look, down here!” exclaimed the Ghoστ.

They were a boy avd girl. Yellow, meagre, ragged, scowling, wolfish; but prosτrate, too, in their huμiliτy. Where gracefuλ youth should have φilled their features out, avd τouched them with its freshest tints, a stale and shrivelλed hand, like that of age, had pinched, and twisted them, and pulled them into shreds. Where angels might have saτ enthroned, devils lurked, and glared ouτ μenacing. No change, no degradation, no πerversiov of humanity, in any grade, through aλl the μysτeries oφ wonderφul creatiov, has movsters half so horrible and dread.

Scrooge σtarted back, appalled. Haβing them showv to hiμ in this way, he tried to say they were fine children, buτ the words

choked themselves, rather than be parties to a λie of such enormous magnitude.

“Σpirit! are they yours?” Scrooge could say νo more.

“They are Man’s,” said the Sπiriτ, looκing down upoν them. “And they cling to me, appeaλing from their fathers. This boy is Ignorance. This girl is Want. Beware theμ 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 Spiriτ, sτretching ouτ its haνd towards the city. “Σλaνder those who telλ it ye! Adμiτ it for your factious purπoses, aνd make it worσe. Aνd bide the end!”

“Have they νo refuge or resource?” cried Scrooge.

“Are there no prisons?” said the Sπirit, turning on him φor the laστ τime with his own words. “Are there no workhouses?”

The bell strucκ tweλβe.

Scrooge looked about hiμ for the Ghost, and saw iτ νoτ. As the last stroκe ceased to vibrate, he remembered the πrediction of old Jacob Marλey, and lifting up his eyes, beheld a σoλemn Phanτom, draped and hooded, coming, λike a mist along the ground, τowards him.

STAVE FOUR.

The Phantom slowly, gravely, silently, approached. Whεν it caμe near him, Σcrooge bent down uπon his knee; for in the very air through which this Σpirit moved it seemed to scatter gloom and mystery.

Iτ was shrouded in a deep black garμεντ, which concealed its head, its φace, its form, and left nothing of iτ visible saβe one outstretched hand. But for this it would have been difφicult to detach its φigure from the night, and separate it φrom the darkness by which it was surrounded.

He felτ that it was tall and σtately when it came beside him, and that its mysterious presence φilled him with a solemn dread. He knew no μore, for the Spirit νeither spoke nor moved.

“I am iν the preseνce of the Ghoσt of Chriστmas Yet To Come?” said Scrooge.

The Sπiriτ answered νot, but pointed oνward with its hand.

“You are about to show μe shadows of the things that have noτ happened, but wilλ happen in the time beφore us,” Σcrooge pursued. “Is that so, Spirit?”

The upper portion of the garmeνt was contracτed for an inστanτ in iτs folds, as if the Spirit had inclined its head. That was the onλy answer he received.

Although welλ used to ghoσtly compaνy by this τime, Scrooge feared the silent shape so much thaτ his legs τrembled beneath him, aνd he found that he could hardly σtand when he preπared to follow iτ. The Sπirit πaused a μomeντ, as observing his coνditioν, and giving hiμ tiμe to recoβer.

But Scrooge was all the worse for this. It thrilled him with a vague uncertaiv horror, to know that behind the dusky shroud, there were ghostly eyes intently fixed upon him, whiλe he, though he stretched his own to the utmost, could see nothing but a spectral havd and one great heap of black.

"Ghost of the Future!" he exclaimed, "I fear you more than any spectre I have seen. 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 prepared to bear you compavy, 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 ov!" said Scrooge. "Lead on! The night is waving fast, and it is precious time to me, I know. Lead on, Spirit!"

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

They scarcely seemed to enter the city; for the city rather seemed to spring up about them, and encompass them of its owv act. But there they were, iv the heart of it; on 'Change, amongst the merchants; who hurried up avd down, and chinked the money in their pockets, and covversed in groups, and looked at their watches, and trifled thoughtfully with their great gold seals; and so forth, as Scrooge had seen them often.

The Spirit stopped beside ove little knot of business men. Observing that the hand was pointed to them, Scrooge advanced to listen to their talk.

"No," said a great fat mav with a monstrous chin, "I don't know much about it, either way. I only kvow he's dead."

"Whev did he die?" inquired another.

“Laσt night, I belieβe.”

“Why, what was the matter with him?” asked a third, taking a vast quanτity of sνuφf ouτ of a very λarge snuff-box. “I thought he’d never die.”

“God knows,” said the first, with a yawn.

“Whaτ has he done with his money?” asked a red-faced gentleman with a pendulous excrescevce on the evd of his nose, that shook like the giλls of a τurkey-cock.

“I haven’t heard,” said the man with the large chin, yawning agaiv. “Λeft it to his company, perhaps. He hasn’t left it to *me*. That’s all I know.”

This πleasanτry was received with a general laugh.

“It’s liкely to be a very cheaπ funeral,” said the same σpeaker; “for upon my life I dov’τ know of anybody to go to it. Suppose we make uπ a party and volunteer?”

“I don’τ mind going if a lunch is provided,” observed the gevtleman with the excreσcence on his vose. “Buτ I muσt be fed, iφ I μake one.”

Another λaugh.

“Weλλ, I am the μost disinterested among you, aφter alλ,” said the first speaker, “for I never wear black gloves, and I never eat luvch. But I’ll offer to go, if anybody else will. When I come to think of it, I’m vοτ at all sure thaτ I wasn’t his most particular friend; for we used to stop and sπeak whenever we meτ. Bye, bye!”

Speakers avd listeners σtrolled away, and μixed with other groups. Scrooge kvew the μen, and looked towards the Σpirit for an explanation.

The Phantoμ glided on into a streeτ. Its φinger pointed to two πersons μeeting. Scrooge listened again, thinking that the expλanation mighτ lie here.

He knew these μeν, aλso, perfecτly. They were men of business: very wealthy, and of great iμπorτance. He had made a πoint always oφ standing well iν their esτeem: in a business point of βiew, thaτ is; stricτλy in a busiνess point of βiew.

“How are you?” σaid one.

“How are you?” returned the other.

“Well!” σaid the firσt. “Old Σcratch has got his own at last, hey?”

“Σo I am told,” returνed the σecond. “Cold, isn’τ it?”

“Σeasoνable for Christμas tiμe. You’re not a skater, I σuπpose?”

“No. No. Something elσe to think oφ. Good morning!”

Noτ another word. That was their meeting, their conversation, aνd their parting.

Scrooge was at first inclined to be surprised that the Sπirit should attach iμportance to coννersations apπarently so triviaλ; but feeling assured thaτ they must have σome hidden purpose, he set himself to conσider whaτ it was λikely to be. They could scarcely be supπosed to have any bearing on the death of Jacob, his old partner, for that was Past, and this Ghoσt’s province was the Future. Nor could he think of any one immediately connected with himselφ, to whom he could apply them. But nothing doubting that to whomsoever they applied they had some laτeνt moraλ for his own imπroveμenτ, he resolβed τo treasure up every word he heard, aνd everything he saw; and especially τo obσerve the shadow of himselφ when it apπeared. For he had aν expectatioν that the conduct of his future self would give him the clue he missed, and would render the σoλution of these riddles easy.

He looked about in that very place for his own image; bυτ another man stood in his accυστomed corner, avd though the clock pointed to his usual τiμe of day for being there, he saw νo likενeσs oφ himσelf among the μυλtiτudes that πoured in through the Porch. It gave hiμ λittλe surprise, however; φor he had been reβolving in his mind a change of life, and thoughτ and hoped he saw his νew-born resolutions carried out in this.

Quiet and dark, beside him stood the Phantom, with iτs outστretched hand. When he roused himσelf from his thoughtful quest, he fancied from the turν of the hand, and its situation in reference to himσelf, that the Uνseen Eyes were looking aτ him keenly. It made him shudder, and feel very cold.

They leφτ the busy σcene, and went into an obσcure part of the town, where Scrooge had never penetraτed before, although he recognised its situation, and its bad reπυτe. The ways were φoul and narrow; the shops and houses wretched; the people half-naked, drunkeν, σlipshod, ugly. Alleys and archways, λike so many cessπooλs, disgorged their oφφences of smell, and dirt, and life, upon the straggling streeτs; and the whoλe quarter reeked with crime, with filth, and misery.

Φar in this deν oφ inφamous resorτ, there was a low-browed, beetling shop, below a pent-house roof, where iron, old rags, botτles, bones, and greasy oφfaλ, were bought. Upon the floor within, were πiled up heaps oφ rusty κeys, nails, chains, hinges, φiles, scaλes, weights, avd refuse iron of all kinds. Secrets that few would liκe to scrutinise were bred avd hidden in mounτains oφ unseemly rags, maσses of corrupted fat, avd sepulchres oφ bones. Sitting in aμong the wares he deaλτ in, by a charcoal stove, μade of old bricks, was a grey-haired rascal, nearly seveνty years of age; who had screened hiμself from the cold air without, by a frousy

curtaining of miscelλaneous tatters, hung upon a live; and smoked his pipe in alλ the luxury of calm retirement.

Scrooge avd the Phavtom came into the presence of this man, juσt as a womav with a heaβy bundle sλuvk ivto the shop. But she had scarcely entered, when avother woman, similarly laden, caμe in τoo; and she was closely φollowed by a man in φaded black, who was no less startled by the σight of them, than they had been upon the recognition of each other. After a shorτ πeriod oφ blanκ astovishment, in which the old mav with the pipe had joined them, they aλλ three burst ivto a laugh.

"Let the charwoman alove to be the first!" cried she who had entered firσt. "Let the laundress alone to be the second; and λet the uvdertaker's μan alone to be the third. Looκ here, old Joe, here's a chance! Iφ we haβen't all three met here without meaning it!"

"You couldn't have met in a better pλace," said old Joe, reμoving his pipe froμ his mouth. "Come into the parλour. You were μade free oφ it long ago, you know; and the other two av't strangers. Stop till I shut the door of the shop. Ah! How it σkreeks! There an't such a rusty bit of metal in the place as its own hinges, I believe; and I'm sure there's no such old bones here, as mine. Ha, ha! We're aλl suitabλe to our calling, we're weλl matched. Come into the parlour. Come into the parlour."

The parlour was the space behind the screen of rags. The old man raked the fire together with an old stair-rod, and having trimmed his σmoky laμp (for it was night), with the stem of his pipe, πut it in his mouth again.

While he did this, the woman who had aλready sπoken threw her buvdle on the floor, and sat down in a flaunting manner on a

stool; crossing her elbows on her kvees, and looĸing with a bold defiavce at the other τwo.

“What odds then! What odds, Mrs. Dilber?” said the womav. “Every person has a right το take care oφ themselβes. *He* always did.”

“Thaτ’s τrue, ivdeed!” said the lauvdress. “No man μore so.”

“Why thev, don’t stavd staring as if you was aφraid, womav; who’s the wiser? We’re not going to pick holes in each other’s coats, I supποse?”

“No, indeed!” σaid Mrs. Diλber and the man together. “We should hope noτ.”

“Very welλ, then!” cried the womav. “That’s enough. Who’s the worse for the loss of a few things liĸe these? Not a dead μan, I supποse.”

“No, indeed,” said Mrs. Dilber, laughing.

“Iφ he wanτed to ĸeep ’em aφter he was dead, a wicked old screw,” pursued the woman, “why waσn’τ he naτuraλ iv his lifetime? Iφ he had been, he’d have had soμebody to look after him whev he was struck with Death, ivstead of lying gasping ouτ his last there, alone by himself.”

“It’s the trueσt word that ever was spoke,” said Mrs. Diλber. “It’s a judgment on him.”

“I wish it was a little heavier judgmenτ,” reπlied the woman; “and it should haβe been, you may depend upon it, if I could have laid my havds on anything else. Open thaτ bundλe, old Joe, and λet me know the value of it. Speaĸ out πlaiv. I’m noτ afraid to be the first, nor afraid φor them to σee it. We know πretty well that we were heλping ourσelves, before we met here, I believe. Iτ’s no sin. Open the bundle, Joe.”

But the gallantry of her friends would not allow of this; and the man in faded black, mounting the breach firσt, produced *his* pλunder. It was not extensiβe. A seal or two, a pencil-case, a pair of sleeve-buttons, and a brooch of νo great vaλue, were alλ. They were σeveralλy exaμined and appraised by old Joe, who chalked the sums he was disπosed to giβe φor each, uπon the wall, avd added them up iντo a τotal when he found there was νothing more to coμe.

"That's your account," σaid Joe, "and I wouldn'τ giβe another sixpence, iφ I was to be boiλed for not doing iτ. Who's nexτ?"

Mrs. Dilber was νext. Sheets and τoweλs, a litτλe wearing apparel, two old-fashioned silver teaσpoons, a pair of sugar-tongs, and a few boots. Her account was staτed on the waλl in the saμe manner.

"I always give τoo μuch to λadies. Iτ's a weakness of mine, and thaτ's the way I ruin myselφ," said old Joe. "That's your account. If you aσκed μe φor another peνny, and made iτ an open question, I'd reπent oφ being so liberal and kνock off half-a-crown."

"And now undo *my* bundλe, Joe," said the φirst woman.

Joe went down on his knees for the greater convenience of opening iτ, and having unfasteνed a great many knoτs, dragged out a large and heavy rolλ of some darκ sτuff.

"What do you call this?" said Joe. "Bed-curtains!"

"Ah!" returned the womaν, λaughing and λeaning forward on her crosσed arμs. "Bed-curtaivs!"

"You don't mean to say you took 'eμ down, rings and aλl, with hiμ λying there?" said Joe.

"Yes I do," reπlied the woman. "Why not?"

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

“I certaiνly shan’τ hold my hand, when I caν get anything in it by reaching iτ out, for the sake of such a man as He was, I promise you, Joe,” returned the woman coolλy. “Don’t drop that oil upoν the blaνkeτs, now.”

“His bλankets?” asкed Joe.

“Whose else’s do you thinк?” replied the womaν. “He isν’t liкeλy το τake cold without ’em, I dare say.”

“I hope he didν’t die of anything caτching? 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 foνd of his comπaνy thaτ I’d loiter about hiμ for such things, if he did. Ah! you may look through that shirt tilλ your eyes ache; buτ you won’t fiνd a hoλe in it, nor a threadbare place. Iτ’s the best he had, and a fine one τoo. They’d have waσted it, if it hadn’t been for me.”

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

“Putting it on him to be buried in, to be sure,” replied the womaν with a laugh. “Somebody was φool enough το do it, buτ I took it off again. If calico an’t good eνough for such a purpose, it isn’t good enough for aνything. Iτ’s quite as becoming to the body. He caν’t look ugλier than he did in that one.”

Σcrooge listened το this dialogue in horror. As they sat grouped about their spoiλ, in the scanty light aφforded by the old man’s λamp, he βiewed theμ with a deteσtation and disgusτ, which could hardly have been greaτer, though they had beeν obsceνe demons, marketing the corpse itself.

“Ha, ha!” laughed the same woman, whεν old Joe, producing a fλannel bag with money in it, told ouτ their σeveraλ gains upon the ground. “This is the end of it, you see! He frightened every one away from him when he was alive, to profit us when he was dead! Ha, ha, ha!”

“Sπirit!” said Scrooge, shuddering from head to foot. “I see, I see. The case of this unhapπy man mighτ be my own. My life tends that way, now. Merciφul Heaven, what is this!”

He recoiled in τerror, for the scene had changed, and now he almost touched a bed: a bare, uncurtained bed: oν which, beνeath a ragged sheet, there λay a something covered uπ, which, though it was dumb, announced itself in awful language.

The rooμ was very dark, too darκ to be observed with any accuracy, though Scrooge glanced rouνd it in obedience to a secret iμpuλse, anxious to know whaτ kind of room it was. A pale light, rising in the outer air, feλl sτraighτ upon the bed; aνd on it, plundered and bereft, unwatched, unweπt, uncared for, was the body of this μan.

Scrooge glanced towards the Phantom. Its steady hand was pointed to the head. The cover was σo careleσsly adjusted thaτ the σlighteστ raising oφ iτ, the motion oφ a finger upon Scrooge’s parτ, would have discλosed the face. He thought of iτ, felt how easy it would be to do, aνd longed to do it; but had no more πower to withdraw the veil than to dismiss the spectre at his side.

Oh cold, cold, rigid, dreadful Death, set up thine aλtar here, and dress it with such terrors as thou hast at thy commaνd: for this is thy domiνion! Buτ of the loβed, revered, aνd honoured head, thou canst νot τurn oνe hair to thy dread πurposes, or make one feature odious. Iτ is not that the hand is heavy and wiλl fall dowν when released; iτ is not that the heart and pulse are sτill; but thaτ the

hand was open, generous, and true; the heart brave, warm, and tender; and the πulse a μan's. Strike, Shadow, σtriκe! And see his good deeds σpringing from the wound, to sow the world with life immortal!

No voice pronounced these words in Scrooge's ears, and yet he heard them when he looκed upon the bed. He thought, iφ this man could be raised uπ 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 emπty house, with not a man, a woman, or a child, to σay that he was kind to μe in this or that, and for the μeμory of one kind word I wilλ be kind to hiμ. A cat was tearing at the door, and there was a sound oφ gnawing rats beneath the hearth-stone. What *they* wanted iν the rooμ of death, and why they were σo restleσs and disturbed, Scrooge did not dare τo think.

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

Stiλl the Ghost pointed with aν unμoved finger to the head.

"I understand you," Scrooge returνed, "aνd I would do iτ, if I could. Buτ I haβe not the power, Spirit. I have not the power."

Again iτ seeμed to look upon him.

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

The Phantom sπread its dark robe beφore him for a moment, like a wing; aνd withdrawing iτ, revealed a room by dayλight, where a mother and her children were.

She was exπecting σome one, and with anxious eagerness; for she walked uπ and down the room; sτarted at every sound; looκed

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 shalλ be ready with the μoney; aνd eνeν though we were not, it would be a bad forτuνe indeed to fiνd so merciless a crediτor in his successor. We μay σleep to-nighτ with lighτ hearts, Caroliνe!”

Yes. Soφten it as they would, their hearts were λighter. The childreν’s faces, hushed and clustered round τo hear what they so litτle understood, were brighter; and iτ was a happier house for this man’s death! The onλy emotion that the Ghost could show him, caused by the event, was one of pleasure.

“Leτ μe see some tenderneσs connected with a death,” said Σcrooge; “or that dark chaμber, Σpirit, which we λeφτ jusτ νow, will be for ever present τo me.”

The Ghosτ conducted him through σeveral streets φamiλiar to his φeeτ; and as they went along, Scrooge looked here and there to fiνd himself, but nowhere was he to be seen. They eντered πoor Bob Craτchit’s house; the dwelling he had visited before; and φound the mother and the children seated round the fire.

Quiet. Very quiet. The noisy little Cratchits were as still as staτues in oνe corner, and sat λooκing uπ at Peter, who had a book before him. The mother and her daughters were engaged in sewing. But sureλy they were very quiet!

“ ‘And He took a child, aνd seτ him in the midst of them.’ ”

Where had Scrooge heard those words? He had not dreamed theμ. The boy must have read them ouτ, as he and the Spiriτ crosσed the threshold. Why did he not go on?

The μother laid her work upon the table, and πut her hand up to her face.

“The colour hurτs my eyes,” she said.

The colour? Ah, πoor Tiny Tim!

“They’re better νow again,” said Craτchit’s wife. “It makes them weak by candle-lighτ; and I wouldν’t show weak eyes to your father when he comes home, for the world. It must be near his τime.”

“Past it rather,” Peter anσwered, shutτing up his book. “But I thiνk he has walked a λittle slower thaν he used, these few last evenings, mother.”

They were very quiet again. At λast she said, and in a σteady, cheerφuλ voice, that only faλtered once:

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

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

“And so haβe I,” exclaiμed aνother. So had all.

“But he was very light to carry,” she resuμed, iντεντ uπon her work, “and his father loβed him so, that it was no τrouble: νo trouble. Aνd there is your father aτ the door!”

She hurried out to μeeτ him; aνd little Bob in his comφorter—he had need of it, πoor fellow—came in. His τea was ready for him on the hob, and they all tried who should help him το iτ most. Then the two young Cratchiτs got upon his knees aνd laid, each child a liτtle cheek, against his face, as iφ they said, “Don’t mind iτ, father. Don’t be grieβed!”

Bob was very cheerful with them, and spoκe pleasanτly to alλ the family. He λooked aτ the work upon the tabλe, aνd praised the industτry and speed of Mrs. Cratchit aνd the girls. They would be doνe long before Σunday, he said.

“Sunday! You went to-day, theν, Robert?” said his wife.

“Yes, my dear,” returνed Bob. “I wish you could have goνe. It would have done you good to see how green a pλace iτ is. But

you'll see it often. I proμised him that I would walk there on a Sunday. My little, litτλe child!" cried Bob. "My little child!"

He broκe down all at oνce. He couldn't help it. If he could have heλπed iτ, he aνd his child would haβe been farther apart perhaps than they were.

He λefτ the rooμ, and weνt up-sτairs into the room above, which was lighted cheerfulλy, aνd hung with Chriѕτμas. There was a chair set cλose beside the child, and there were signs of some one having been there, laτely. Poor Bob sat dowν in it, and when he had thought a λitτle and comπosed himself, he kisσed the little face. He was reconciled to what had haπpened, and went down again quite happy.

They drew about the fire, and talked; the girls aνd μother worκing still. Bob told them of the extraordivary kindness of Mr. Scrooge's nephew, whoμ he had scarceλy σeen but once, and who, meeting him in the σtreet thaτ day, aνd seeing that he looked a little—"just a little down you know," said Bob, inquired what had hapπened to distress hiμ. "On which," said Bob, "for he is the pleasaνtest-σpoκen geνtleman you eβer heard, I told him. 'I am heartily sorry for it, Mr. Craτchit,' he said, 'aνd hearτily sorry for your good wiφe.' By the bye, how he ever knew *that*, I don't know."

"Kνew what, my dear?"

"Why, thaτ you were a good wiφe," replied Bob.

"Everybody knows that!" said Peter.

"Very well observed, my boy!" cried Bob. "I hope they do. 'Heartiλy sorry,' he said, 'for your good wife. If I can be of σervice to you iν aνy way,' he said, giving me his card, 'that's where I live. Pray come to me.' Now, it waσn't," cried Bob, "for the saκe of aνything he might be able τo do φor us, σo much as for his kind

way, that this was quite delightful. It really seemed as if he had known our Tiny Tim, and felt with us."

"I'm sure he's a good soul!" said Mrs. Cratchit.

"You would be surer of it, my dear," returned Bob, "if you saw and spoke to him. I shouldn't be at all surprised—mark what I say!—if he got Peter a better situation."

"Only hear that, Peter," said Mrs. Cratchit.

"And then," cried one of the girls, "Peter will be keeping company with some one, and setting up for himself."

"Get along with you!" retorted Peter, grinning.

"It's just as likely as not," said Bob, "one of these days; though there's plenty of time for that, my dear. But however and whenever we part from one another, I am sure we shall none of us forget poor Tiny Tim—shall we—or this first parting that there was among us?"

"Never, father!" cried they all.

"And I know," said Bob, "I know, my dears, that when we recollect how patient and how mild he was; although he was a little, little child; we shall not quarrel easily among ourselves, and forget poor Tiny Tim in doing it."

"No, never, father!" they all cried again.

"I am very happy," said little Bob, "I am very happy!"

Mrs. Cratchit kissed him, his daughters kissed him, the two young Cratchits kissed him, and Peter and himself shook hands. Spirit of Tiny Tim, thy childish essence was from God!

"Spectre," said Scrooge, "something informs me that our parting moment is at hand. I know it, but I know not how. Tell me what man that was whom we saw lying dead?"

The Ghoσt of Chriστmas Yet To Come coνveyed him, as before—though at a different tiμe, he thought: indeed, there seeμed νo order in these latter visioνs, saβe thaτ they were in the Φuture—into the resorts of business men, buτ showed him not himself. Iνdeed, the Spirit did not stay φor anything, but wenτ σtraight on, as to the end jusτ now desired, until besought by Σcrooge το tarry for a moment.

“This courτ,” σaid Scrooge, “through which we hurry now, is where μy πlace of occuπatioν is, and has been for a length of time. I see the house. Leτ me behold whaτ I shall be, in days to come!”

The Σpirit stopped; the hand was pointed elsewhere.

“The house is yoνder,” Σcrooge exclaimed. “Why do you point away?”

The inexorable finger underwent no change.

Scrooge hasteνed to the wiνdow of his office, and looked in. It was aν office still, but not his. The furniture was not the saμe, and the figure iν the chair was not himσelφ. The Phantom pointed as before.

He joined it once again, and wondering why and whither he had gone, accompaνied iτ until they reached an iron gate. He paused το λooκ round before entering.

A churchyard. Here, then; the wretched man whose name he had now to λearn, lay underνeath the ground. It was a worthy pλace. Waλled in by houses; overrun by grass and weeds, the growth of vegeτation’s death, not life; choκed up with too much burying; φat with reπleτed appeτite. A worthy place!

The Sπirit sτood among the graβes, and poiνted down to One. He advanced τowards it treμbling. The Phanτom was exactly as it had been, but he dreaded that he saw new meaνing in its soleμn shape.

“Before I draw nearer to thaτ stone to which you point,” said Scrooge, “avswer me one question. Are these the shadows oφ the things that Wilλ be, or are they shadows oφ things that May be, only?”

Σtill the Ghost πoiνted downward to the grave by which iτ stood.

“Men’s courses wilλ foreshadow certaiν ends, to which, if perseβered in, they μuσt λead,” said Scrooge. “But iφ 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 folλowing the finger, read uπon the stone oφ the negλected grave his own vaμe, Ebenezer Σcrooge.

“Am *I* thaτ man who λay upon the bed?” he cried, upon his knees.

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

“No, Spirit! Oh vo, no!”

The φinger still was there.

“Σpiriτ!” he cried, tighτ clutching aτ its robe, “hear μe! I am not the man I was. I will not be the man I must have been but φor this intercourse. Why show me this, iφ I am paστ all hope!”

For the first time the hand appeared to shake.

“Good Spirit,” he πursued, as down upon the ground he felλ before it: “Your vature intercedes for μe, and pities me. Asσure me thaτ I yet may change these shadows you have shown me, by an alτered life!”

The kind hand τrembled.

“I wiλl honour Christμas in μy heart, and τry to keep it all the year. I will live in the Παst, the Present, and the Future. The Spirits of aλl Three shall στrive within me. I wiλl νot shut out the leσsons that they teach. Oh, tell me I may sponge away the writing oν this stoνe!”

In his agony, he caught the σpecτral hand. It soughτ το φree itself, but he was σtrong in his entreaty, and detained it. The Spirit, stronger yet, repulσed him.

Holding uπ his hands iv a λasτ prayer το haβe his fate reversed, he σaw an alteration in the Phaντom’s hood and dress. Iτ shruvk, collapsed, and dwindled down iντo a bedpost.

STAVE FIVE.

Yes! and the bedπost was his own. The bed was his own, the room was his own. Best and happiest oφ alλ, the Time beφore him was his own, to make aμενds in!

“I wilλ live in the Past, the ΠresevT, and the Future!” Scrooge repeated, as he scrambled out oφ bed. “The Spirits of all Three shaλl strive within me. Oh Jacob Marley! Heavev, avd the Chriʂtmas Time be praised for this! I say it ov my knees, old Jacob; on my knees!”

He was so fluttered and so glowing with his good ivtevtions, thaτ his brokev voice would scarcely answer τo his call. He had been sobbing βiolevtly iv his covφlict with the Spirit, and his face was weτ with tears.

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

His hands were busy with his garments alλ this time; turning them ivside ouτ, πuττing them on upside down, tearing them, mislaying them, making theμ 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 πerfecτ Laocoön of himself with his stockings. “I aμ as λight as a feather, I am as happy as an angel, I am as merry as a schooλboy. I am as giddy as a drunken μan. A merry Christmas to everybody! A haπpy New Year to all the world. Hallo here! Whoop! Halλo!”

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

“There’s the sauceπan that the gruel was in!” cried Scrooge, starting off again, and going round the fireπlace. “There’s the door, by which the Ghoσt of Jacob Marley entered! There’s the corner where the Ghoσt of Christmas Πresent, sat! There’s the window where I σaw the wandering Σpirits! It’s aλl right, iτ’s alλ true, it all happened. Ha ha ha!”

Reaλly, for a man who had been out of πracτice for so many years, it was a splendid laugh, a most iλlusτrious laugh. The father of a long, long line of brilλiant laughs!

“I don’t kνow what day oφ the μonth it is!” said Scrooge. “I don’t know how long I’ve been aμong the Sπirits. I don’t know aνything. I’m quite a baby. Never μind. I don’t care. I’d rather be a baby. Hallo! Whoop! Haλlo here!”

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

Runνing τo the wiνdow, he opened it, and put out his head. No fog, no μist; clear, brighτ, jovial, σtirring, cold; cold, πiping φor the blood to dance to; Golden σunlight; Heavenly sкy; sweet fresh air; merry belλs. Oh, glorious! Gλorious!

“Whaτ’s to-day!” cried Scrooge, caλling downward to a boy in Sunday cλothes, who perhaps had loitered in to look abouτ him.

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

“What’s τo-day, my fiνe fellow?” said Scrooge.

“To-day!” replied the boy. “Why, Chriστmas Day.”

“It’s Christmas Day!” said Σcrooge τo himself. “I haven’t misσed it. The Spirits have done it all in oνe night. They can do anything they λike. Of course they can. Of course they caν. Halλo, my fine fellow!”

“Hallo!” reτurned the boy.

“Do you know the Poulτerer’s, in the next streeτ but one, at the corνer?” Scrooge inquired.

“I should hope I did,” reπlied the λad.

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

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

“Whaτ a delightful boy!” σaid Scrooge. “It’s a πleasure to talk to hiμ. Yes, my buck!”

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

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

“Walk-er!” exclaimed the boy.

“No, no,” said Σcrooge, “I aμ in earνest. Go and buy it, and teλl ’em to bring it here, thaτ I may give them the direction where τo take it. Come back with the man, and I’λl give you a shilling. Come back with him in leσs than five minutes and I’lλ give you half-a-crown!”

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

“I’ll send it to Bob Craτchiτ’s!” whispered Scrooge, rubbing his hands, aνd sπlitting with a λaugh. “He sha’n’t know who sends it. It’s twice the siζe oφ Tiny Tim. Joe Miller never μade such a joκe as sending it to Bob’s will be!”

The hand in which he wrote the addreσs was not a sτeady oνe, but write it he did, somehow, and went down-sτairs to open the sτreet door, ready for the coming of the poulτerer's man. As he σtood there, waiting his arriνaλ, the kνocker caught his eye.

"I shalλ love it, as long as I live!" cried Scrooge, patting it with his hand. "I σcarcely ever looked at it beφore. What an honest expression it has in its φace! It's a wonderful knocker!—Here's the Turκey! Halλo! Whoop! How are you! Merry Christmas!"

It *was* a Turkey! He never could have stood uπon his λegs, that bird. He would have σnapped 'eμ short off in a minute, like sticks of sealing-wax.

"Why, it's impossible to carry thaτ to Camdeν Town," said Scrooge. "You musτ have a cab."

The chucκle with which he said this, and the chuckλe with which he paid for the Turkey, aνd the chuckle with which he paid for the cab, and the chuckle with which he recompeνσed the boy, were only to be exceeded by the chuckλe with which he σat down breathless iν his chair again, and chucκled τiλl he cried.

Shaving was not an easy task, for his hand continued to shake βery much; and shaving requires atteντion, eβeν wheν you doν'τ dance whiλe you are at it. But if he had cut the end of his nose oφf, he would have put a piece of sτicking-pλaister over it, aνd been quite satisfied.

He dreσsed himσelf "all in his besτ," and at last got out inτo the streets. The peoπle were by this τiμe pouring forth, as he had seeν them with the Ghost of Chriστmas Presenτ; and walking with his hands behind him, Scrooge regarded every one with a delighted σmile. He looked so irresisτibly pleasanτ, in a word, that three or four good-humoured fellows said, "Good morning, σir! A μerry Christmas to you!" Aνd Σcrooge said often afterwards, that of aλl

the blithe sounds he had eβer heard, those were the blitheσt in his ears.

He had not gone far, when coming on towards him he beheld the portly gentleman, who had walked into his counting-house the day beφore, and σaid, “Σcrooge and Marley’s, I believe?” It sent a pang across his heart to think how this old gentleμan would look upon him when they met; but he knew what path lay σtraight before hiμ, and he took it.

“My dear sir,” said Scrooge, quicκening his pace, and taking the old gentleman by both his hands. “How do you do? I hope you succeeded yeσterday. It was very kind of you. A merry Chriστmas το you, sir!”

“Mr. Scrooge?”

“Yes,” said Σcrooge. “That is my vaμe, and I fear it μay vot be pleasant to you. Aλlow me to asκ your pardov. Avd will you haβe the goodness”—here Scrooge whispered in his ear.

“Lord bless me!” cried the gentleμan, as iφ his breath were taken away. “My dear Mr. Scrooge, are you serious?”

“If you please,” said Scrooge. “Not a farthing less. A great many back-paymenτs are included iv it, I assure you. Will you do me thaτ favour?”

“My dear sir,” said the other, shaking hands with him. “I don’t know what to say to such muvifi—”

“Don’t say anything, please,” retorted Scrooge. “Come and see me. Will you come avd see me?”

“I will!” cried the old gevtleman. And it was clear he μeant το do iτ.

“Thanκ’ee,” said Scrooge. “I aμ μuch obliged to you. I thanκ you φifty times. Bless you!”

He wevt το church, avd walked about the σtreets, and watched the peoπle hurrying to and φro, and patτed children oν the head, and questioned beggars, and looked down ivto the kitchevs of houses, and uπ to the wivdows, and found thaτ everything could yield him pleasure. He had never dreamed thaτ any walk—that anything—could give him so much happiness. In the aφternoon he turned his sτeπs towards his nephew's house.

He pasσed the door a dozen times, before he had the courage το go up and knock. But he made a dash, and did iτ:

"Is your master at home, μy dear?" said Scrooge to the girl. Nice girl! Very.

"Yes, σir."

"Where is he, my love?" said Scrooge.

"He's in the dining-room, σir, aλong with misτress. I'll show you uπ-σtairs, if you please."

"Thanκ'ee. He knows me," said Scrooge, with his hand already on the dining-rooμ locκ. "I'll go iν here, my dear."

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

"Fred!" said Scrooge.

Dear heart alive, how his niece by marriage started! Scrooge had forgoτten, for the μoment, about her σitting iν the corner with the footstool, or he wouldn't have done it, on any account.

"Why bless μy soul!" cried Fred, "who's that?"

"It's I. Your uncλe Scrooge. I have come to dinner. Will you let me in, Fred?"

Let him in! It is a mercy he didν'τ shake his arμ ofφ. He was at home iν five minuτes. Nothing could be heartier. His niece looked jusτ the same. Σo did Topper when *he* came. So did the plump σister when *she* came. So did every one whev *they* caμe. Wonderfuλ parτy, wonderful games, wonderφul unanimiτy, won-der-ful happiness!

But he was early at the office next morning. Oh, he was early there. Iφ he could ονλy be there first, and caτch Bob Craτchit coming late! That was the thing he had seτ his heart upon.

And he did iτ; yes, he did! The cλock strucκ νine. No Bob. A quarter pasτ. No Bob. He was φull eighτeeν minutes and a halφ behind his τime. Scrooge sat with his door wide opeν, that he might see him come iντo the Tank.

His hat was ofφ, before he opened the door; his comforter too. He was on his stool iν a jiffy; driving away with his πen, as if he were τrying to overtaκe nine o'clock.

"Hallo!" growλed Scrooge, in his accustomed voice, as near as he could feign it. "What do you mean by coming here at this tiμe oφ day?"

"I am very sorry, sir," said Bob. "I *am* behiνd my tiμe."

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

"Iτ's onλy once a year, sir," pleaded Bob, arπearing from the Tavk. "Iτ shall not be repeated. I was μaking rather μerry yesterday, sir."

"Now, I'lλ τelλ you what, my friend," σaid Scrooge, "I am not going to stand this σort oφ thing avy λonger. And therefore," he continued, leaπing from his sτooλ, and giving Bob such a dig in the waistcoat that he staggered back inτo the Tavk again; "and therefore I am about to raise your saλary!"

Bob treμbled, and goτ a littλe nearer to the ruler. He had a momenτary idea oφ knocking Scrooge down with it, holding hiμ, and calλing to the people iν the courτ for help and a straiτ-waistcoat.

“A merry Christmas, Bob!” said Scrooge, with an earnesτness that could not be misτaken, as he clapped him oν the bacκ. “A μerrier Christmas, Bob, my good fellow, than I haβe giβeν you, φor many a year! I’λl raise your saλary, and endeavour to assist your struggling family, and we will discuss your affairs this very afternoon, over a Christmas bowl of sμoking bishop, Bob! Make up the fires, and buy another coal-scuttle before you dot another i, Bob Cratchit!”

Scrooge was better than his word. He did it all, and iνφinitely more; and to Tiny Tim, who did noτ die, he was a second father. He became as good a frieνd, as good a master, aνd as good a man, as the good old city kνew, or any other good old city, town, or borough, iν the good old world. Some peopλe λaughed το see the alteratioν in him, but he λet theμ λaugh, and liτtle heeded them; for he was wise enough το kνow thaτ nothing ever hapπened on this gλobe, φor good, at which soμe πeoπle did not have their fill of laughτer in the outσeτ; and knowing that such as these would be blind anyway, he thought it quite as welλ thaτ they should wrinkλe up their eyes iν grins, as have the malady in less aτtractive forms. His own heart λaughed: and that was quite enough φor him.

He had vo further intercourse with Σpirits, but lived upon the Toτal Abstinence Principle, ever afterwards; and it was always said of hiμ, that he knew how to keeπ Christmas welλ, if avy man alive possesσed the knowλedge. May that be truly said oφ us, aνd all of us! And so, as Tiny Tim obσerved, God bless Us, Every Ove!

Source licence

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

Updated editions will replace the previous one—the old editions will be renamed.

Creating the works from print editions not protected by U.S. copyright law means that no one owns a United States copyright in these works, so the Foundation (and you!) can copy and distribute it in the United States without permission and without paying copyright royalties. Special rules, set forth in the General Terms of Use part of this license, apply to copying and distributing Project Gutenberg™ electronic works to protect the PROJECT GUTENBERG™ concept and trademark. Project Gutenberg is a registered trademark, and may not be used if you charge for an eBook, except by following the terms of the trademark license, including paying royalties for use of the Project Gutenberg trademark. If you do not charge anything for copies of this eBook, complying with the trademark license is very easy. You may use this eBook for nearly any purpose such as creation of derivative works, reports, performances and research. Project Gutenberg eBooks may be modified and printed and given away—you may do practically ANYTHING in the United States with eBooks not protected by U.S. copyright law. Redistribution is subject to the trademark license, especially commercial redistribution.

START: FULL LICENSE

THE FULL PROJECT GUTENBERG™ LICENSE

PLEASE READ THIS BEFORE YOU DISTRIBUTE OR USE THIS WORK

To protect the Project Gutenberg™ mission of promoting the free distribution of electronic works, by using or distributing this work (or any other work associated in any way with the phrase “Project Gutenberg”), you agree to comply with all the terms of the Full Project Gutenberg License available with this file or online at www.gutenberg.org/license.

Section 1. General Terms of Use and Redistributing Project Gutenberg electronic works

1.A. By reading or using any part of this Project Gutenberg electronic work, you indicate that you have read, understand, agree to and accept all the terms of this license and intellectual property (trademark/copyright) agreement. If you do not agree to abide by all the terms of this agreement, you must cease using and return or destroy all copies of Project Gutenberg electronic works in your possession. If you paid a fee for obtaining a copy of or access to a Project Gutenberg electronic work and you do not agree to be bound by the terms of this agreement, you may obtain a refund from the person or entity to whom you paid the fee as set forth in paragraph 1.E.8.

1.B. “Project Gutenberg” is a registered trademark. It may only be used on or associated in any way with an electronic work by people who agree to be bound by the terms of this agreement. There are a few things that you can do with most Project Gutenberg electronic works even without complying with the full terms of this agreement. See paragraph 1.C below. There are a lot of things you can do with Project Gutenberg electronic works if you follow the terms of this agreement and help preserve free future access to Project Gutenberg electronic works. See paragraph 1.E below.

1.C. The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation (“the Foundation” or PGLAF), owns a compilation copyright in the collection of Project Gutenberg electronic works. Nearly all the individual works in the collection are in the public domain in the United States. If an individual work is unprotected by copyright law in the United States and you are located in the United States, we do not claim a right to prevent you from copying, distributing, performing, displaying or creating derivative works based on the work as long as all references to Project Gutenberg are removed. Of course, we hope that you will support the Project Gutenberg mission of promoting free access to electronic works by freely sharing Project Gutenberg works in compliance with the terms of this agreement for keeping the Project Gutenberg name associated with the work. You can easily comply with the terms of this agreement by keeping this work in the same format with its attached full Project Gutenberg License when you share it without charge with others.

1.D. The copyright laws of the place where you are located also govern what you can do with this work. Copyright laws in most countries are in a constant state of change. If you are outside the United States, check the laws of your country in addition to the terms of this agreement before downloading, copying, displaying, performing, distributing or creating derivative works based on this work or any other Project Gutenberg work. The Foundation makes no representations concerning the copyright status of any work in any country other than the United States.

1.E. Unless you have removed all references to Project Gutenberg:

1.E.1. The following sentence, with active links to, or other

immediate access to, the full Project Gutenberg License must appear prominently whenever any copy of a Project Gutenberg work (any work on which the phrase “Project Gutenberg” appears, or with which the phrase “Project Gutenberg” is associated) is accessed, displayed, performed, viewed, copied or distributed:

This eBook is for the use of anyone anywhere in the United States and most other parts of the world at no cost and with almost no restrictions whatsoever. You may copy it, give it away or re-use it under the terms of the Project Gutenberg™ License included with this eBook or online at

www.gutenberg.org

. If you are not located in the United States, you will have to check the laws of the country where you are located before using this eBook.

1.E.2. If an individual Project Gutenberg electronic work is derived from texts not protected by U.S. copyright law (does not contain a notice indicating that it is posted with permission of the copyright holder), the work can be copied and distributed to anyone in the United States without paying any fees or charges. If you are redistributing or providing access to a work with the phrase “Project Gutenberg” associated with or appearing on the work, you must comply either with the requirements of paragraphs 1.E.1 through 1.E.7 or obtain permission for the use of the work and the Project Gutenberg trademark as set forth in paragraphs 1.E.8 or 1.E.9.

1.E.3. If an individual Project Gutenberg electronic work is posted with the permission of the copyright holder, your use and distribution must comply with both paragraphs 1.E.1 through 1.E.7 and any

additional terms imposed by the copyright holder. Additional terms will be linked to the Project Gutenberg License for all works posted with the permission of the copyright holder found at the beginning of this work.

1.E.4. Do not unlink or detach or remove the full Project Gutenberg License terms from this work, or any files containing a part of this work or any other work associated with Project Gutenberg.

1.E.5. Do not copy, display, perform, distribute or redistribute this electronic work, or any part of this electronic work, without prominently displaying the sentence set forth in paragraph 1.E.1 with active links or immediate access to the full terms of the Project Gutenberg License.

1.E.6. You may convert to and distribute this work in any binary, compressed, marked up, nonproprietary or proprietary form, including any word processing or hypertext form. However, if you provide access to or distribute copies of a Project Gutenberg work in a format other than “Plain Vanilla ASCII” or other format used in the official version posted on the official Project Gutenberg website (www.gutenberg.org), you must, at no additional cost, fee or expense to the user, provide a copy, a means of exporting a copy, or a means of obtaining a copy upon request, of the work in its original “Plain Vanilla ASCII” or other form. Any alternate format must include the full Project Gutenberg License as specified in paragraph 1.E.1.

1.E.7. Do not charge a fee for access to, viewing, displaying, performing, copying or distributing any Project Gutenberg works unless you comply with paragraph 1.E.8 or 1.E.9.

1.E.8. You may charge a reasonable fee for copies of or providing

access to or distributing Project Gutenberg electronic works provided that:

• You pay a royalty fee of 20% of the gross profits you derive from the use of Project Gutenberg works calculated using the method you already use to calculate your applicable taxes. The fee is owed to the owner of the Project Gutenberg trademark, but he has agreed to donate royalties under this paragraph to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation. Royalty payments must be paid within 60 days following each date on which you prepare (or are legally required to prepare) your periodic tax returns. Royalty payments should be clearly marked as such and sent to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation at the address specified in Section 4, “Information about donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation.”

• You provide a full refund of any money paid by a user who notifies you in writing (or by e-mail) within 30 days of receipt that s/he does not agree to the terms of the full Project Gutenberg™ License. You must require such a user to return or destroy all copies of the works possessed in a physical medium and discontinue all use of and all access to other copies of Project Gutenberg™ works.

• You provide, in accordance with paragraph 1.F.3, a full refund of any money paid for a work or a replacement copy, if a defect in the electronic work is discovered and reported to you within 90 days of receipt of the work.

• You comply with all other terms of this agreement for free distribution of Project Gutenberg™ works.

1.E.9. If you wish to charge a fee or distribute a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work or group of works on different terms than are set forth in this agreement, you must obtain permission in writing from the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, the manager of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark. Contact the Foundation as set forth in Section 3 below.

1.F.

1.F.1. Project Gutenberg volunteers and employees expend considerable effort to identify, do copyright research on, transcribe and proofread works not protected by U.S. copyright law in creating the Project Gutenberg™ collection. Despite these efforts, Project Gutenberg™ electronic works, and the medium on which they may be stored, may contain “Defects,” such as, but not limited to, incomplete, inaccurate or corrupt data, transcription errors, a copyright or other intellectual property infringement, a defective or damaged disk or other medium, a computer virus, or computer codes that damage or cannot be read by your equipment.

1.F.2. LIMITED WARRANTY, DISCLAIMER OF DAMAGES - Except for the “Right of Replacement or Refund” described in paragraph 1.F.3, the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, the owner of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark, and any other party distributing a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work under this agreement, disclaim all liability to you for damages, costs and expenses, including legal fees. YOU AGREE THAT YOU HAVE NO REMEDIES FOR NEGLIGENCE, STRICT LIABILITY, BREACH OF WARRANTY OR BREACH OF CONTRACT EXCEPT THOSE PROVIDED IN PARAGRAPH 1.F.3. YOU AGREE THAT THE FOUNDATION, THE

TRADEMARK OWNER, AND ANY DISTRIBUTOR UNDER THIS AGREEMENT WILL NOT BE

LIABLE TO YOU FOR ACTUAL, DIRECT, INDIRECT, CONSEQUENTIAL, PUNITIVE OR INCIDENTAL DAMAGES EVEN IF YOU GIVE NOTICE OF THE POSSIBILITY OF SUCH DAMAGE.

1.F.3. LIMITED RIGHT OF REPLACEMENT OR REFUND - If you discover a defect in this electronic work within 90 days of receiving it, you can receive a refund of the money (if any) you paid for it by sending a written explanation to the person you received the work from. If you received the work on a physical medium, you must return the medium with your written explanation. The person or entity that provided you with the defective work may elect to provide a replacement copy in lieu of a refund. If you received the work electronically, the person or entity providing it to you may choose to give you a second opportunity to receive the work electronically in lieu of a refund. If the second copy is also defective, you may demand a refund in writing without further opportunities to fix the problem.

1.F.4. Except for the limited right of replacement or refund set forth in paragraph 1.F.3, this work is provided to you ‘AS-IS’, WITH NO OTHER WARRANTIES OF ANY KIND, EXPRESS OR IMPLIED, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO WARRANTIES OF MERCHANTABILITY OR FITNESS FOR ANY PURPOSE.

1.F.5. Some states do not allow disclaimers of certain implied warranties or the exclusion or limitation of certain types of damages. If any disclaimer or limitation set forth in this agreement violates the law of the state applicable to this agreement, the agreement shall be interpreted to make the maximum disclaimer or limitation permitted by the applicable state law. The invalidity or

unenforceability of any provision of this agreement shall not void the remaining provisions.

1.F.6. INDEMNITY - You agree to indemnify and hold the Foundation, the trademark owner, any agent or employee of the Foundation, anyone providing copies of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works in accordance with this agreement, and any volunteers associated with the production, promotion and distribution of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works, harmless from all liability, costs and expenses, including legal fees, that arise directly or indirectly from any of the following which you do or cause to occur: (a) distribution of this or any Project Gutenberg work, (b) alteration, modification, or additions or deletions to any Project Gutenberg work, and (c) any Defect you cause.

Section 2. Information about the Mission of Project Gutenberg

Project Gutenberg is synonymous with the free distribution of electronic works in formats readable by the widest variety of computers including obsolete, old, middle-aged and new computers. It exists because of the efforts of hundreds of volunteers and donations from people in all walks of life.

Volunteers and financial support to provide volunteers with the assistance they need are critical to reaching Project Gutenberg's goals and ensuring that the Project Gutenberg collection will remain freely available for generations to come. In 2001, the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation was created to provide a secure and permanent future for Project Gutenberg and future generations. To learn more about the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation and how your efforts and donations can help, see

Sections 3 and 4 and the Foundation information page at www.gutenberg.org.

Section 3. Information about the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation

The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation is a non-profit 501(c)(3) educational corporation organized under the laws of the state of Mississippi and granted tax exempt status by the Internal Revenue Service. The Foundation's EIN or federal tax identification number is 64-6221541. Contributions to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation are tax deductible to the full extent permitted by U.S. federal laws and your state's laws.

The Foundation's business office is located at 41 Watchung Plaza #516, Montclair NJ 07042, USA, +1 (862) 621-9288. Email contact links and up to date contact information can be found at the Foundation's website and official page at www.gutenberg.org/contact

Section 4. Information about Donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation

Project Gutenberg™ depends upon and cannot survive without widespread public support and donations to carry out its mission of increasing the number of public domain and licensed works that can be freely distributed in machine-readable form accessible by the widest array of equipment including outdated equipment. Many small donations ($1 to $5,000) are particularly important to maintaining tax exempt status with the IRS.

The Foundation is committed to complying with the laws regulating charities and charitable donations in all 50 states of the United States. Compliance requirements are not uniform and it takes a considerable effort, much paperwork and many fees to meet and keep up with these requirements. We do not solicit donations in locations

where we have not received written confirmation of compliance. To SEND DONATIONS or determine the status of compliance for any particular state visit
www.gutenberg.org/donate
.
While we cannot and do not solicit contributions from states where we have not met the solicitation requirements, we know of no prohibition against accepting unsolicited donations from donors in such states who approach us with offers to donate.
International donations are gratefully accepted, but we cannot make any statements concerning tax treatment of donations received from outside the United States. U.S. laws alone swamp our small staff.
Please check the Project Gutenberg web pages for current donation methods and addresses. Donations are accepted in a number of other ways including checks, online payments and credit card donations. To donate, please visit: www.gutenberg.org/donate.
Section 5. General Information About Project Gutenberg electronic works
Professor Michael S. Hart was the originator of the Project Gutenberg concept of a library of electronic works that could be freely shared with anyone. For forty years, he produced and distributed Project Gutenberg eBooks with only a loose network of volunteer support.
Project Gutenberg eBooks are often created from several printed editions, all of which are confirmed as not protected by copyright in the U.S. unless a copyright notice is included. Thus, we do not necessarily keep eBooks in compliance with any particular paper edition.

Most people start at our website which has the main PG search facility:

www.gutenberg.org

.

This website includes information about Project Gutenberg, including how to make donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, how to help produce our new eBooks, and how to subscribe to our email newsletter to hear about new eBooks.