



A
CHRISTMAS
CAROL
BY
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A Christmas Carol

NARRATOR: Marley was dead: to begin with. There is no doubt 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.

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.

Scrooge never painted out Old Marley's name. There it yet stood, years afterwards, above the warehouse door: Scrooge and Marley. Sometimes people called Scrooge, Scrooge, and sometimes Marley, but he answered to both names. It was all the same to him.

Oh! But Scrooge was a tight-fisted hand at the grindstone,! A squeezing, wrenching, grasping, scraping, clutching, covetous, old sinner! External heat and cold had little influence on Scrooge. No summer warmth could warm him, no wintry weather chill him.

Nobody ever stopped him in the street to say, "My dear Scrooge, how are you? When will you come to see me?" No beggars implored him to bestow a trifle, no children asked him what it was o'clock, no man or woman ever once in all his life inquired the way to such and such a place, of Scrooge. Even the blind men's dogs appeared to know him; and when they saw him coming on, would tug their owners into doorways and up alleys in avoidance of him.

But what did Scrooge care! It was the very thing he liked.

SCENE

NARRATOR: Once upon a time—of all the good days in the year, on Christmas Eve—old Scrooge sat busy in his counting-house. It was cold, bleak, biting weather: outside, people beat their hands upon their breasts, and stamped their feet upon the pavement to warm them. The city clocks had only just gone three, but it was already dark and candles were flaring in the windows of neighbouring offices.

The door of Scrooge's counting-house was open that he might keep his eye upon his clerk, who in a dismal little cell beyond, a sort of tank, was copying letters. Scrooge had a very small fire, but the clerk's fire was so very much smaller. But he couldn't replenish it, for Scrooge kept the coal-box in his own room; and so surely as the clerk came in with the shovel, the master predicted that it would be necessary for them to part. Wherefore the clerk put on his white comforter, and tried to warm himself at the candle; in which effort, he failed.

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FRED A merry Christmas, uncle! God save you!”

NARRATOR: It was the voice of Scrooge’s nephew, who came upon him so quickly that this was the first intimation he had of his approach.

SCROOGE: Bah!Humbug!

FRED: Christmas a humbug, uncle! You don’t mean that, I am sure?

SCROOGE: I do. Out upon merry Christmas I say! What’s Christmas time to you but a time for paying bills without money; a time for finding yourself a year older, but not an hour richer; a time for balancing your books and having every item in ’em through a round dozen of months presented dead against you? If I could work my will, every idiot who goes about with ‘Merry Christmas’ on his lips, should be boiled with his own pudding, and buried with a stake of holly through his heart.

FRED: Uncle!

SCROOGE: Nephew! Keep Christmas in your own way, and let me keep it in mine.

FRED: Keep it! But you don’t keep it.

SCROOGE: Let me leave it alone, then. Much good it has ever done you!

FRED: There are many things from which I might have derived good, by which I have not profited, I dare say, Christmas among the rest. But I am sure I have always thought of Christmas time, as the only time I know of, in the long calendar of the year, when men and women seem to open their hearts to those 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!

NARRATOR: 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.

SCROOGE: Let me hear another sound from you, and you’ll keep your Christmas by losing your situation! You’re quite a powerful speaker, sir. I wonder you don’t go into Parliament.

FRED: Don’t be angry, uncle. Come! Dine with us to-morrow.

SCROOGE: Good afternoon.

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

SCROOGE: Good afternoon.

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FRED: I am sorry, with all my heart, to find you so resolute. We have never had any quarrel and I'll keep my Christmas humour to the last. So A Merry Christmas, uncle!

SCROOGE: Good afternoon!

FRED: And a Happy New Year!

SCROOGE: Good afternoon!

NARRATOR: His nephew left the room without an angry word. He stopped at the outer door to bestow the greetings of the season on the clerk, who, cold as he was, was warmer than Scrooge; for he returned them cordially.

SCROOGE: There's another fellow, my clerk, with fifteen shillings a week, and a wife and family, talking about a merry Christmas. I'll retire to Bedlam.

NARRATOR: This lunatic, in letting Scrooge's nephew out, had let two other people in. They were portly gentlemen, and now stood, with their hats off, in Scrooge's office. They had books and papers in their hands, and bowed to him.

GENT 1: Scrooge and Marley's, I believe. Have I the pleasure of addressing Mr. Scrooge, or Mr. Marley?

SCROOGE: Mr. Marley has been dead these seven years.

GENT 2: At this festive season of the year, Mr. Scrooge, it is more than usually desirable that we should make some slight provision for the Poor and destitute, who suffer greatly at the present time. Many thousands are in want of common necessaries; hundreds of thousands are in want of common comforts, sir.

SCROOGE: Are there no prisons?

GENT 2: Plenty of prisons.

SCROOGE: And the Union workhouses, are they still in operation?

GENT 1: They are. Still, I wish I could say they were not.

SCROOGE: Oh! I was afraid, from what you said at first, that something had occurred to stop them in their useful course. I'm very glad to hear it.

GENT 2: Under the impression that they scarcely furnish Christian cheer of mind or body to the multitude, a few of us are endeavouring to raise a fund to buy the Poor some meat and drink, and means of warmth. We choose this time, because it is a time, of all others, when Want is keenly felt, and Abundance rejoices. What shall I put you down for?

SCROOGE: Nothing!

GENT 1: You wish to be anonymous?

SCROOGE: I wish to be left alone. Since you ask me what I wish, gentlemen that is my answer. I don't make merry myself at Christmas and I can't afford to make idle people merry. I help to support the establishments I have mentioned—they cost enough; and those who are badly off must go there.

GENT 2: Many can't go there; and many would rather die.

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SCROOGE: If they would rather die, they had better do it, and decrease the surplus population.

NARRATOR: Seeing clearly that it would be useless to pursue their point, the gentlemen withdrew.

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

SCROOGE: You'll want all day to-morrow, I suppose?

CRATCHIT: If quite convenient, sir.

SCROOGE: It's not convenient and it's not fair. If I was to stop half-a-crown for it, you'd think yourself ill-used, I'll be bound? *(The clerk smiles faintly.)*

SCROOGE: And yet you don't think me ill-used, when I pay a day's wages for no work.

CRATCHIT: It's only once a year sir

SCROOGE: A poor excuse for picking a man's pocket every twenty-fifth of December! But I suppose you must have the whole day. Be here all the earlier next morning.

NARRATOR: The clerk promised that he would; and Scrooge walked out with a growl. The office was closed in a twinkling, and the clerk, with the long ends of his white comforter dangling below his waist ran home as hard as he could pelt.

NARRATOR: Scrooge took his melancholy dinner in his usual melancholy tavern; and went home to the gloomy suite of rooms in the chambers which had once belonged to his deceased partner. Now, it is a fact, that there was nothing at all particular about the knocker on the door of his chambers, except that it was very large. It is also a fact, that Scrooge had seen it, night and morning, during his whole residence in that place. So then, let any man explain to me, if he can, how it happened that Scrooge, having his key in the lock of the door, saw not a knocker, but Marley's face. It was not angry or ferocious, but looked at Scrooge as Marley used to look: with ghostly spectacles turned up on its ghostly forehead. As Scrooge looked fixedly at this phenomenon, it was a knocker again.

SCROOGE: Pooh, pooh!

NARRATOR: Up Scrooge went, not caring a button it being very dark. Darkness is cheap, and Scrooge liked it. But before he shut his heavy door, he walked through his rooms to see that all was right. Sitting-room, bedroom, lumber-room. All as they should be. Nobody under the table, nobody under the sofa; a small fire in the grate; spoon and basin ready; and the little saucepan of gruel (Scrooge had a cold in his head) upon the hob. Nobody under the bed; nobody in the closet; nobody in his dressing-gown, which was hanging up in a suspicious attitude against the wall. Quite satisfied, he closed his door, and double-locked himself in, which was not his custom and sat down before the fire to take his gruel.

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SCENE

NARRATOR: As he threw his head back in the chair, his glance happened to rest upon a disused bell that hung in the room. It was with great astonishment, and with a strange, inexplicable dread, that as he looked, he saw this bell begin to swing. It swung so softly in the outset that it scarcely made a sound; but soon it rang out loudly, and so did every bell in the house. This was succeeded by a clanking noise, deep down below; as if some person were dragging a heavy chain over the casks in the wine-merchant's cellar. Scrooge then remembered to have heard that ghosts in haunted houses were described as dragging chains.

SCROOGE: (*loudly*) It's Humbug

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

SCROOGE: It's humbug still, I won't believe it.

NARRATOR: His colour changed though, when, without a pause, it came on through the heavy door, and passed into the room before his eyes. Upon its coming in, the dying flame leaped up, as though it cried,

SCROOGE: I know him; Marley's Ghost!

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

SCROOGE: How now! What do you want with me?

MARLEY: Much!, no doubt about it.

SCROOGE: Who are you?

MARLEY: Ask me who I was.

SCROOGE: Who were you then?

MARLEY: In life I was your partner, Jacob Marley.

SCROOGE: Can you—can you sit down?

MARLEY: I can.

SCROOGE: Do it, then.

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

MARLEY: You don't believe in me.

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SCROOGE: I don't.

MARLEY: What evidence would you have of my reality beyond that of your senses?

SCROOGE: I don't know.

MARLEY: Why do you doubt your senses?

SCROOGE: Because, a little thing affects them. You may be an undigested bit of beef, a blot of mustard, a crumb of cheese, a fragment of an underdone potato. There's more of gravy than of grave about you, whatever you are!

NARRATOR: Then, the phantom taking off the bandage round its head, as if it were too warm to wear indoors, its lower jaw dropped down upon its breast! Scrooge fell upon his knees, and clasped his hands before his face.

SCROOGE: Mercy! Dreadful apparition, why do you trouble me?

MARLEY: Man of the worldly mind! Do you believe in me or not?

SCROOGE: I do, I must. But why do spirits walk the earth, and why do they come to me?

MARLEY: It is required of every man, 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. My spirit never walked beyond our counting-house—mark me!—in life my spirit never roved beyond the narrow limits of our money-changing hole; and weary journeys lie before me!

SCROOGE: Seven years dead, and travelling all the time!

MARLEY: The whole time. No rest, no peace. Incessant torture of remorse.

SCROOGE: You travel fast?

MARLEY: On the wings of the wind.

SCROOGE: You might have got over a great quantity of ground in seven years.

MARLEY: O blind man, blind man! Not to know that no space of regret can make amends for one life's opportunity misused! Yet I was like this man; I once was like this man!

SCROOGE: But you were always a good man of business, Jacob.

MARLEY: Business! (*Wringing his hands*) Mankind was my business. The common welfare was my business; charity, mercy, forbearance, and benevolence, were all my business. The dealings of my trade were but a drop of water in the comprehensive ocean of my business.

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

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

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MARLEY: Hear me! My time is nearly gone.

SCROOGE: I will, but don't be hard upon me, Jacob! Pray!

MARLEY: I am here to-night to warn you, that you have yet a chance and hope of escaping my fate. You will be haunted by Three Spirits.

SCROOGE: Is that the chance and hope you mentioned, Jacob? I—I think I'd rather not,

MARLEY: Without their visits, you cannot hope to shun the path I tread. Expect the first to-morrow, when the bell tolls One. Expect the second on the next night at the same hour. The third upon the next night when the last stroke of Twelve has ceased to vibrate. Look to see me no more; and look that, for your own sake, you remember what has passed between us!

NARRATOR: When it had said these words, the apparition walked backward from him; and at every step it took, the window raised itself a little, so that when the spectre reached it, it was wide open. It beckoned Scrooge to approach, which he did. When they were within two paces of each other, Marley's Ghost held up its hand, warning him to come no nearer. Scrooge stopped. The spectre floated out upon the bleak, dark night. Scrooge closed the window, and examined the door by which the Ghost had entered. It was double-locked, and the bolts were undisturbed. He tried to say "Humbug!" but stopped at the first syllable. And being, from the emotion he had undergone, or the fatigues of the day, or his glimpse of the Invisible World, or the dull conversation of the Ghost, much in need of repose; went straight to bed, without undressing, and fell asleep upon the instant.

NARRATOR: When Scrooge awoke, it was so dark, that looking out of bed, he could scarcely distinguish the transparent window from the opaque walls of his chamber, until suddenly the church clock tolled a deep, dull, hollow, melancholy ONE.

Light flashed up in the room upon the instant, and the curtains of his bed were drawn. The curtains of his bed were drawn aside by a strange figure—like a child: yet not so like a child as like an old man. Its hair, which hung about its neck and down its back, was white as if with age; and yet the face had not a wrinkle in it, and the tenderest bloom was on the skin. It held a branch of fresh green holly in its hand; and, in singular contradiction of that wintry emblem, had its dress trimmed with summer flowers. But the strangest thing about it was, that from the crown of its head there sprung a bright clear jet of light, by which all this was visible; and which was doubtless the occasion of its using, in its duller moments, a great extinguisher for a cap, which it now held under its arm.

SCROOGE: Are you the Spirit, sir, whose coming was foretold to me?

SPIRIT1: (*soft and gentle*) I am!

SCROOGE: Who, and what are you?

SPIRIT1: I am the Ghost of Christmas Past.

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SCROOGE: Long Past?

SPIRIT!: No. Your past.

SCROOGE: The things that you will see with me are shadows of the things that have been: they will have no consciousness of us.

SPIRIT1: What! Would you so soon put out, with worldly hands, the light I give? Is it not enough that you are one of those whose passions made this cap, and force me through whole trains of years to wear it low upon my brow!

SCROOGE: What business has brought you here?

SPIRIT1: Your welfare! Rise and walk with me!"

NARRATOR: Scrooge rose: but finding that the Spirit made towards the window, clasped his robe in supplication.

SCROOGE: I am a mortal and liable to fall.

SPIRIT1: Bear but a touch of my hand there, (*The Spirit, lays his hand upon Scrooge's heart*) And you shall be upheld in more than this!

SCENE

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

SCROOGE: Good Heaven! I was bred in this place. I was a boy here!

SPIRIT1: Your lip is trembling and what is that upon your cheek?

SCROOGE: (*with a catch in his voice*) It's a pimple. Take me where you will.

SPIRIT1: You recollect the way?

SCROOGE: Remember it! I could walk it blindfold.

SPIRIT1: Strange to have forgotten it for so many years! Let us go on.

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

SPIRIT1: These are but shadows of the things that have been. They have no consciousness of us.

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

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merry Christmas to Scrooge? Out upon merry Christmas! What good had it ever done to him?

SPIRIT1: The school is not quite deserted. A solitary child, neglected by his friends, is left there still.

SCROOGE: *(Sobbing)* I know.

NARRATOR: They left the high-road, by a well-remembered lane, and soon approached a mansion of dull red brick. It was a large house, but one of broken fortunes; for the spacious offices were little used, their walls were damp and mossy, their windows broken, and their gates decayed. Nor was it more retentive of its ancient state, within; for entering the dreary hall, and glancing through the open doors of many rooms, they found them poorly furnished, cold, and vast.

They went across the hall, to a door at the back of the house. It opened before them, and disclosed a long, bare, melancholy room, made barer still by lines of plain deal forms and desks. At one of these a lonely boy was reading near a feeble fire; and Scrooge sat down upon a form, and wept to see his poor forgotten self as he used to be.

Not a squeak and scuffle from the mice behind the panelling, not a drip from the half-thawed water-spout in the dull yard behind, no, not a clicking in the fire, but fell upon the heart of Scrooge with a softening influence, and gave a freer passage to his tears.

SCENE

The Spirit touches Scrooge on the arm and pointed to his younger self, intent upon his reading.

SCROOGE: Each Christmas time, when yonder solitary child was left here all alone, reading was his only solace. The stories came alive! Ali Baba, Valentine and his wild brother, Orson; there they go! Sultan's Groom turned upside down by the Genii; there he is upon his head! Serve him right. I'm glad of it. What business had he to be married to the Princess!

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

SCROOGE: And poor Robin Crusoe, when he came home again after sailing round the island. 'Poor Robin Crusoe, where have you been, Robin Crusoe?' The man thought he was dreaming, but he wasn't. There goes Friday, running for his life to the little creek! Halloo! Hoop! Halloo!

Poor boy! *(he sobs)*

SCROOGE: I wish *(he puts his hand in his pocket, and looking about him, after drying his eyes with his cuff, muttering)*, but it's too late now.

SPIRIT1: What is the matter?

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SCROOGE: Nothing, nothing. There was a boy singing a Christmas Carol at my door last night. I should like to have given him something: that's all.

SPIRIT1: *(with a wave of its hand)* Let us see another Christmas!

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

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

(enter young girl who hugs and kisses young Scrooge)

GIRL: Dear, dear brother. I have come to bring you home, dear brother! *(clapping her hands,)* To bring you home, home, home!"

YOUNG S: Home, little Fan?

GIRL: Yes! Home, for good and all. Home, for ever and ever. Father is so much kinder than he used to be, that home's like Heaven! He spoke so gently to me one dear night when I was going to bed, that I was not afraid to ask him once more if you might come home; and he said Yes, you should; and sent me in a coach to bring you. And you're to be a man! and are never to come back here; but first, we're to be together all the Christmas long, and have the merriest time in all the world.

SCROOGE: You are quite a woman, little Fan!

She clap her hands and laughs, and hugs him. Then she began to drag him, in her childish eagerness, towards the door; and he, nothing loth to go, accompanies her.

VOICE OFF: Bring down Master Scrooge's box, there!

The school master appears and scowling at Master Scrooge and confounds him by shaking his hand with a ferocious condescension and the children say good-bye to the schoolmaster right willingly and leave. We hear the coach leaving.

SPIRIT1: Always a delicate creature, whom a breath might have withered. But she had a large heart!

SCROOGE: So she had. You're right. I will not gainsay it, Spirit. God forbid!

SPIRIT1: She died a woman and had, as I think, children.

SCROOGE: One child.

SPIRIT1: True, your nephew!

SCROOGE: *(uneasily)* Yes.

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SCENE

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

SPIRIT1: Do you know this place?

SCROOGE: Know it! Was I apprenticed here!

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

SCROOGE: (*in great excitement:*) Why, it's old Fezziwig! Bless his heart; it's Fezziwig alive again!"

SCENE

NARRATOR: Old Fezziwig laid down his pen, and looked up at the clock, which pointed to the hour of seven. He rubbed his hands; adjusted his capacious waistcoat; laughed all over himself, from his shoes to his organ of benevolence; and called out in a comfortable, oily, rich, fat, jovial voice:

FEZZIWIG: Yo ho, there! Ebenezer! Dick!

NARRATOR: Scrooge's former self, now grown a young man, came briskly in, accompanied by his fellow-'prentice.

SCROOGE: Dick Wilkins, to be sure! My old fellow prentice, bless me, yes. There he is. He was very much attached to me, was Dick. Poor Dick! Dear, dear!

FEZZIWIG: Yo ho, my boys! No more work to-night. Christmas Eve, Dick. Christmas, Ebenezer! Let's have the shutters up, (*Fezziwig claps his hands*) before a man can say Jack Robinson! Clear away, my lads, and let's have lots of room here! Clear away!

NARRATOR: It was done in a minute. The floor was swept and watered, the lamps were trimmed, fuel was heaped upon the fire; and the warehouse was as snug, and warm, and dry, and bright a ball-room, as you would desire to see upon a winter's night. In came a fiddler with a music-book, and went up to the lofty desk, and made an orchestra of it, and tuned like fifty stomach-aches. In came Mrs. Fezziwig, one vast substantial smile. In came the three Miss Fezziwigs, beaming and lovable. In came the six young followers whose hearts they broke. In came all the young men and women employed in the business. In came the housemaid, with her cousin, the baker. In came the cook, with her

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brother's particular friend, the milkman. In they all came, one after another; some shyly, some boldly, some gracefully, some awkwardly, some pushing, some pulling; in they all came, anyhow and every how. Away they all went, twenty couples at once; There were more dances, and there were forfeits, and more dances, and there was cake, and there was a great piece of Cold Roast and there were mince-pies, and plenty of beer. Then the fiddler struck up "Sir Roger de Coverley" and old Fezziwig stood out to dance with Mrs. Fezziwig. She was worthy to be his partner in every sense of the term. If that's not high praise, tell me higher, and I'll use it. A positive light appeared to issue from Fezziwig's calves. They shone in every part of the dance like moons. You couldn't have predicted, at any given time, what would have become of them next. And when old Fezziwig and Mrs. Fezziwig had gone all through the dance; advance and retire, turn to your partner, bow and curtsy, corkscrew, thread-the-needle, and back again to your place; Fezziwig "cut"—cut so deftly, that he appeared to wink with his legs.

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

SPIRIT1: A small matter to make these silly folks so full of gratitude.

SCROOGE: Small!

SPIRIT1: He has spent but a few pounds of your mortal money: three or four perhaps. Is that so much that he deserves this praise?

SCROOGE: (*Heatedly*) It isn't that. It isn't that, Spirit. He has the power to render us happy or unhappy; to make our service light or burdensome; a pleasure or a toil. Say that his power lies in words and looks; in things so slight and insignificant that it is impossible to add and count 'em up: what then? The happiness he gives, is quite as great as if it cost a fortune . . .

SPIRIT1: What is the matter?

SCROOGE: Nothing particular.

SPIRIT1: Something, I think?

SCROOGE: No, no. I should like to be able to say a word or two to my clerk just now. That's all.

SPIRIT1: My time grows short, quick!

NARRATOR: This was not addressed to Scrooge, or to any one whom he could see, but it produced an immediate effect. For again Scrooge saw himself. He was older now; a man in the prime of life. He was not alone, but sat by the side of a fair young girl, in whose eyes there were tears.

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GIRL: It matters little, to you, very little. Another idol has displaced me; and if it can cheer and comfort you in time to come, as I would have tried to do, I have no just cause to grieve.

YOUNG SCROOGE: What Idol has displaced you?

GIRL: A golden one.

SCROOGE: You fear the world too much.

GIRL: (*Gently*) I have seen your nobler aspirations fall off one by one, until the master-passion, Money and Gain, engrosses you. Have I not?

SCROOGE: What then? I am not changed towards you? Have I ever sought release from our contract.

GIRL: (*She shakes her head*) In words. No. Never.

SCROOGE: In what, then?

GIRL: In a changed nature; in an altered spirit; in another atmosphere of life; If you were free to-day, to-morrow, yesterday, can even I believe that you would choose a dowerless girl, or choosing her, do I not know that your repentance and regret would surely follow? I do; and I release you. With a full heart, for the love of him you once were.

SCROOGE: Spirit! Remove me from this place.

SPIRIT1: I told you these were shadows of the things that have been. That they are what they are, do not blame me!

SCROOGE: Remove me! I cannot bear it! Leave me! Take me back. Haunt me no longer!

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

SCENE

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

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and seething bowls of punch. In easy state upon this couch, there sat a jolly Giant, glorious to see; who bore a glowing torch, in shape not unlike Plenty's horn, and held it up, high up, to shed its light on Scrooge, as he came peeping round the door.

SPIRIT2: Come in! Come in! And know me better, man! I am the Ghost of Christmas Present. Look upon me! You have never seen the like of me before!

SCROOGE: Never.

SPIRIT2: Have never walked forth with the younger members of my family; meaning (for I am very young) my elder brothers born in these later years?

SCROOGE: I don't think I have. I am afraid I have not. Have you had many brothers, Spirit?

SPIRIT2: More than eighteen hundred.

SCROOGE: A tremendous family to provide for!"

The Ghost rises

SCROOGE: Spirit, conduct me where you will. I went forth last night on compulsion, and I learnt a lesson which is working now. To-night, if you have aught to teach me, let me profit by it.

SPIRIT2: Touch my robe!

NARRATOR: Scrooge did as he was told, and held it fast. The room and all its contents vanished instantly and they stood in the city streets upon a snowy Christmas morning.

Scrooge and the Ghost passed on, invisible to all passers-by and headed straight to Scrooge's clerk's home. On the threshold of the door the Spirit smiled, and blessed Bob Cratchit's dwelling with the sprinkling of his torch. Think of that! Bob had but fifteen shillings a week for himself, and yet the Ghost of Christmas Present blessed his little house!

SCENE

NARRATOR: Then up rose Mrs. Cratchit, Cratchit's wife, dressed out but poorly in a twiceturned gown, but brave in ribbons, and she laid the cloth, assisted by Belinda Cratchit, second of her daughters, also brave in ribbons; while Master Peter Cratchit plunged a fork into a saucepan of potatoes. And now two smaller Cratchits, boy and girl, came tearing in, screaming that outside the baker's they had smelt the goose, and known it for their own; and basking in luxurious thoughts of sage and onion, these young Cratchits danced about the table, and exalted Master Peter Cratchit to the skies, while he blew the fire, until the slow potatoes bubbling up, knocked loudly at the saucepan-lid to be let out and peeled.

MRS CRATCHIT: What has ever got your precious father then? And your brother, Tiny Tim! And Martha warn't as late last Christmas Day by half-an-hour?

A Christmas Carol

MARTHA: (*entering*) Here's Martha, mother!

YOUNG CR1: Here's Martha, mother!

YOUNG CR2: Hurrah! There's such a goose, Martha!

MRS CRATCHIT: Why, bless your heart alive, my dear, how late you are!

She kisses Martha and helps her off with her shawl

MARTHA: We'd a deal of work to finish up last night and had to clear away this morning, mother!

MRS CRATCHIT: Well! Never mind so long as you are come. Sit ye down before the fire, my dear, and have a warm, Lord bless ye!

YOUNG CR1: No, no! There's father coming.

YOUNG CR2: Hide, Martha, hide!

NARRATOR: So Martha hid herself, and in came Bob, the father, his threadbare clothes darned up and brushed, to look seasonable; and Tiny Tim upon his shoulder. Alas for Tiny Tim, he bore a little crutch, and had his limbs supported by an iron frame!

CRATCHIT: Why, where's our Martha?

MRS CRATCHIT: Not coming.

CRATCHIT: Not coming! Not coming upon Christmas Day!

(Martha come out from her hiding place in the closet and runs to his arms. The two young Cratchits hustlr Tiny Tim out)

MRS CRATCHIT: And how did little Tim behave?

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

NARRATOR: Bob's voice was tremulous when he told them this, and trembled more when he said that Tiny Tim was growing strong and hearty. His active little crutch was soon heard upon the floor, and back came Tiny Tim before another word was spoken, escorted by his brother and sister to his stool before the fire. Master Peter, and the two ubiquitous young Cratchits went to fetch the goose, with which they soon returned in high procession. Mrs. Cratchit made the gravy hissing hot; Master Peter mashed the potatoes with incredible vigour; Miss Belinda sweetened up the apple-sauce; Martha dusted the hot plates; Bob took Tiny Tim beside him in a tiny corner at the table; the two young Cratchits set chairs for everybody, not forgetting themselves, and mounting guard upon their posts, crammed spoons into their mouths, lest they should shriek for goose before their turn came to be helped. At last the dishes were set on, and grace was said. It was succeeded by a breathless pause, as Mrs. Cratchit, looking slowly all along the carving-knife, prepared to plunge it in the breast; but when she did, and when the long expected gush of stuffing issued forth, one murmur of

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delight arose all-round the board, and even Tiny Tim, excited by the two young Cratchits, feebly cried Hurrah!

NARRATOR: There never was such a goose. Its tenderness and flavour, size and cheapness, were the themes of universal admiration. Eked out by apple-sauce and mashed potatoes, it was a sufficient dinner for the whole family.

But now, the plates being changed by Miss Belinda, Mrs. Cratchit left the room alone to bring the pudding in. In half a minute Mrs. Cratchit entered—flushed, but smiling proudly—with the pudding, like a speckled cannon-ball, so hard and firm, blazing in half of half-a-quartern of ignited brandy, with Christmas holly stuck into the top. Oh, a wonderful pudding! Bob Cratchit said, and calmly too, that he regarded it as the greatest success achieved by Mrs. Cratchit since their marriage. At last the dinner was all done, cleared away, and the fire made up. The compound in the jug being tasted, and considered perfect, apples and oranges were put upon the table, and a shovel-full of chestnuts on the fire. Then all the Cratchit family drew round the hearth, and at Bob Cratchit's elbow stood the family display of glass. Two tumblers, and a custard-cup without a handle. These held the hot stuff from the jug and Bob served it out with beaming looks, while the chestnuts on the fire sputtered and cracked noisily.

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

ALL: Merry Christmas. God bless us.

TINY TIM: (*Sitting by Bob who is holding his hand*) God bless us every one!

SCROOGE: Spirit, tell me if Tiny Tim will live.

SPIRIT2: I see a vacant seat. If these shadows remain unaltered by the Future, the child will die.

SCROOGE: No, no. Oh, no, kind Spirit! Say he will be spared.

SPIRIT2: If these shadows remain unaltered by the Future, none other of my race will find him here. What then? If he be like to die, he had better do it, and decrease the surplus population.

Scrooge hangs his head to hear his own words quoted by the Spirit overcome with penitence and grief.

CRATCHIT: Mr. Scrooge! I'll give you Mr. Scrooge, the Founder of the Feast!

MRS CRATCHIT: The Founder of the Feast indeed I wish I had him here. I'd give him a piece of my mind to feast upon, and I hope he'd have a good appetite for it.

CRATCHIT: My dear, the children! Christmas Day.

MRS CRATCHIT: It should be Christmas Day, I am sure on which one drinks the health of such an odious, stingy, hard, unfeeling man as Mr. Scrooge. You know he is, Robert! Nobody knows it better than you do, poor fellow!

CRATCHIT: My dear. Christmas Day.

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MRS CRATCHIT: I'll drink his health for your sake and the Day's, 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!

NARRATOR: The mention of Scrooge's name cast a dark shadow on the party, which was not dispelled for full five minutes. After it had passed away, 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. 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. They were not a handsome family; they were not well dressed; their shoes were far from being water-proof; their clothes were scanty; and Peter might have known, and very likely did, the inside of a pawnbroker's. But, they were happy, grateful, pleased with one another, and contented with the time; and when they faded, and looked happier yet in the bright sprinklings of the Spirit's torch at parting, Scrooge had his eye upon them, and especially on Tiny Tim. It was a great surprise to Scrooge that as this scene vanished, he heard a hearty laugh. It was a much greater surprise to Scrooge to recognise it as his own nephew's and to find himself in a bright, dry, gleaming room, with the Spirit standing smiling by his side, and looking at that same nephew.

SCENE

FRED: He said that Christmas was a humbug, as I live! He believed it too!
MRS FRED: More shame for him, Fred!

FRED: He's a comical old fellow, that's the truth: and not so pleasant as he might be. However, his offences carry their own punishment, and I have nothing to say against him. Who suffers by his ill whims! Himself, always. Here, he takes it into his head to dislike us, and he won't come and dine with us. What's the consequence? He don't lose much of a dinner.

MRS FRED: Indeed, I think he loses a very good dinner.

NARRATOR: Everybody else said the same, and they must be allowed to have been competent judges, because they had just had dinner; and, with the dessert upon the table, were clustered round the fire, by lamplight. After tea, they had some music. For they were a musical family, who much enjoyed a merry song. But they didn't devote the whole evening to music. After a while they played at forfeits; for it is good to be children sometimes, and never better than at Christmas.

SCROOGE: Here is a new game. One half hour, Spirit, only one!

FRED: Let's play yes or no!

GUEST: How do you play it?

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FRED: I have to think of something, and the rest of you must find out what; but I can only answer your questions yes or no, as the case maybe.

NARRATOR: The brisk fire of questioning to which he was exposed, elicited from him that he was thinking of a live animal, rather a disagreeable animal that growled and grunted sometimes, and talked sometimes, and lived in London, and walked about the streets, and wasn't led by anybody, and was not a horse, or an ass, or a cow, or a bull, or a tiger. At every fresh question that was put to him, Scrooge's nephew burst into a fresh roar of laughter.

GUEST: I have found it out! I know what it is, Fred! I know what it is!

FRED: What is it?

GUEST: It's your Uncle Scro-o-o-o-oge!

NARRATOR: In a twinkling he and the Spirit were again upon their travels. Much they saw, and far they went, and many homes they visited, but always with a happy end. The Spirit stood beside sick beds, and they were cheerful; on foreign lands, and they were close at home; by struggling men, and they were patient in their greater hope; by poverty, and it was rich. In almshouse, hospital, and jail, in misery's every refuge, where vain man in his little brief authority had not made fast the door, and barred the Spirit out, he left his blessing, and taught Scrooge his precepts. Suddenly, as they stood together in an open space, the bell struck twelve. Scrooge looked about him for the Ghost, and saw it no more. As the last stroke ceased to vibrate, he remembered the prediction of old Jacob Marley, and lifting up his eyes, beheld a solemn Phantom, draped and hooded, coming, like a mist along the ground, towards him.

SCENE

NARRATOR: The phantom slowly, gravely, silently, approached. When it came near him, Scrooge bent down upon his knee; for in the very air through which this Spirit moved it seemed to scatter gloom and mystery. It was shrouded in a deep black garment, which concealed its head, its face, its form, and left nothing of it visible save one outstretched hand. He knew no more, for the Spirit neither spoke nor moved.

SCROOGE: I am in the presence of the Ghost of Christmas Yet To Come?

The Spirit points onward with its hand.

SCROOGE: 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 company, and do it with a thankful heart. Will you not speak to me?

Lead on! Lead on! The night is waning fast, and it is precious time to me, I know. Lead on, Spirit!

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NARRATOR: The Phantom moved away as it had come towards him. Scrooge followed in 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. But there they were, in the heart of it; on the Exchange, amongst the merchants. The Spirit stopped beside one little knot of business men. Observing that the hand was pointed to them, Scrooge advanced to listen to their talk.

SCENE

MAN ONE: No, I don't know much about it, either way. I only know he's dead.

MAN TWO: When did he die?

MAN ONE: Last night, I believe.

MAN THREE: Why, what was the matter with him? I thought he'd never die.

MAN ONE: *(yawning)* God knows.

MAN FOUR: What has he done with his money?

MAN ONE: I haven't heard. *(Yawns again)* Left it to his company, perhaps. He hasn't left it to me. That's all I know.

General laugh

MAN TWO: It's likely to be a very cheap funeral for upon my life I don't know of anybody to go to it. Suppose we make up a party and volunteer?

MAN THREE: I don't mind going if a lunch is provided. But I must be fed, if I make one." *Another laugh.*

SCENE

NARRATOR: They left this busy scene, and went into an obscure part of the town to a lowbrowed, beetling shop, where a grey-haired rascal of nearly seventy years of age, named Joe, who bought and sold all manner of goods from all sources sat at the counter, smoking his pipe. Scrooge and the Phantom came into the presence of this man, just as a woman with a heavy bundle slunk into the shop. But she had scarcely entered, when another woman, similarly laden, came in too; and she was closely followed by a man in faded black.

WOMAN 1: Let the charwoman alone to be the first!

WOMAN 2: Let the laundress alone to be the second; and let the undertaker's man alone to be the third. Look here, old Joe, here's a chance! If we haven't all three met here without meaning it!

JOE: You couldn't have met in a better place. *(removing his pipe)* Come into the parlour. You were made free of it long ago, you know; and the other two an't strangers. What have you got to sell? What have you got to sell?

WOMAN 1: Half a minute's patience Joe and you shall see.

WOMAN2: What odds then! What odds, Mrs. Dilber? Every person has a right to take care of themselves. He always did.

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WOMAN1: That's true, indeed! No man more so.

WOMAN2: Why then, don't stand staring as if you was afraid, woman; who's the wiser? We're not going to pick holes in each other's coats, I suppose?

WOMAN1: No, indeed!

FUN MAN: We should hope not

WOMAN2: Very well, then! That's enough. Who's the worse for the loss of a few things like these? Not a dead man, I suppose.

WOMAN1: No, indeed.

WOMAN 2: If he wanted to keep 'em after he was dead, a wicked old screw, why wasn't he natural in his lifetime? If he had been, he'd have had somebody to look after him when he was struck with Death, instead of lying gasping out his last there, alone by himself.

WOMAN1: It's the truest word that ever was spoke. It's a judgment on him.

WOMAN2: I wish it was a little heavier judgment. Open that bundle, old Joe, and let me know the value of it. Speak out plain. I'm not afraid to be the first, nor afraid for them to see it.

Joe goes on his knees and unwraps the bundle

JOE: What do you call this? Bed-curtains!

WOMAN2: Ah! *(laughing and leaning forward on her crossed arms)* Bed-curtains! Don't drop that oil upon the blankets, now.

JOE: His blankets?

WOMAN2: Whose else's do you think? He isn't likely to take cold without 'em, I dare say.

JOE:*(looking up)* I hope he didn't die of anything catching? Eh?

WOMAN2: Don't you be afraid of that. I an't so fond of his company that I'd loiter about him for such things, if he did. And you may look through that shirt till your eyes ache; but you won't find a hole in it. It's a fine one too. They'd have wasted it, by burying him in it if it hadn't been for me.

Scrooge listens to this dialogue in horror.

WOMAN2: Ha, ha!

Joe hands out money from a flannel purse.

WOMAN2: This is the end of it, you see! He frightened every one away from him when he was alive, so that we could profit from him when he was dead! Ha, ha, ha!

SCROOGE: Spirit! I see, I see. The case of this unhappy man might be my own. My life tends that way, now. Merciful Heaven, what is this!"

SCENE

NARRATOR: The scene had changed, and now he almost touched a bed: a bare, uncurtained bed: A pale light, rising in the outer air, fell straight upon the bed;

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and on it, unwatched, unwept, uncared for, was the body of this plundered unknown man.

SCROOGE: Spirit, let me see some tenderness connected with a death, or that dark chamber, Spirit, which we left just now, will be for ever present to me.

SCENE

NARRATOR: The Ghost conducted him to poor Bob Cratchit's house; the dwelling he had visited before; and found the mother and the children seated round the fire. Quiet. Very quiet. The noisy little Cratchits were as still as statues in one corner, and sat looking up at Peter, who had a Bible before him. The mother and her daughters were engaged in sewing. But surely they were very quiet!

PETER: (*Reading*) And He took a child, and set him in the midst of them.

Mrs Cratchit lays down her sewing and puts her hand up to her face.

MRS CRATCHIT: The colour hurts my eyes.

NARRATOR: The colour? Ah, poor Tiny Tim!

MRS CRATCHIT: They're better now again. It makes them weak by candlelight; and I wouldn't show weak eyes to your father when he comes home, for the world. It must be near his time.

PETER: (*Shutting his book*) Past it rather. But I think he has walked a little slower than he used, these few last evenings, mother.

(Pause)

MRS CRATCHIT: (*trying to be cheerful*) I have known him walk with—I have known him walk with Tiny Tim upon his shoulder, very fast indeed.

PETER: And so have I, Often.

THE OTHERS: And so have I.

MRS CRATCHIT: But he was very light to carry, and his father loved him so, that it was no trouble: no trouble. And there is your father at the door!"

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

NARRATOR: Bob was very cheerful with them, and spoke pleasantly to all the family. He looked at the work upon the table, and praised the industry and speed of Mrs. Cratchit and the girls. They would be done long before Sunday,

MRS CRATCHIT: Sunday! You went to-day, then, Robert?"

CRATCHIT: Yes, my dear. I wish you could have gone. It would have done

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you good to see how green a place it is. But you'll see it often. I promised him that I would walk there on a Sunday. My little, little child! My little child!

(He breaks down crying)

SCROOGE: Spectre, 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?"

NARRATOR: The Ghost of Christmas Yet To Come conveyed him to a dismal, wretched, ruinous churchyard. The Spirit stood among the graves, and pointed down to One. He advanced towards it trembling. The Phantom was exactly as it had been, but he dreaded that he saw new meaning in its solemn shape.

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

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

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

NARRATOR: The Spirit was immovable as ever. Scrooge crept towards it, trembling as he went; and following the finger, read upon the stone of the neglected grave his own name, EBENEZER SCROOGE.

SCROOGE: *(Falling to his knees)* Am I that man who lay upon the bed?

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

SCROOGE: No, Spirit! Oh no, no!"

The finger is still there.

SCROOGE: Spirit! *(clutching at the ghost's robe)* Hear me! I am not the man I was. I will not be the man I must have been but for this intercourse. Why show me this, if I am past all hope! Assure me that I yet may change these shadows you have shown me, by an altered life!

The hand falters

SCROOGE: I will honour Christmas in my heart, and try to keep it all the year. I will live in the Past, the Present, and the Future. The Spirits of all Three shall strive within me. I will not shut out the lessons that they teach. Oh, tell me I may sponge away the writing on this stone!

NARRATOR: Holding up his hands in a last prayer to have his fate reversed, he saw an alteration in the Phantom's hood and dress. It shrunk, collapsed, and dwindled down into a bedpost.

SCENE

NARRATOR: YES! And the bedpost was his own. The bed was his own, the room was his own.

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Best and happiest of all, the Time before him was his own, to make amends in!

SCROOGE: (*Scrambling out of bed*) I will live in the Past, the Present, and the Future! The Spirits of all Three shall strive within me. Oh Jacob Marley! Heaven, and the Christmas Time be praised for this!

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

SCROOGE: (*Folding one of his bedcurtains in his arms*) They are not torn down. They are not torn down, rings and all. They are here—I am here—the shadows of the things that would have been, may be dispelled. They will be. I know they will!”

Church Bells start to peal

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

Running to the window, he opened it, and put out his head. No fog, no mist; clear, bright, golden sunlight; Heavenly sky; sweet fresh air; merry bells. Oh, glorious! Glorious!

SCROOGE: What’s to-day!

BOY: EH?

SCROOGE: What’s to-day, my fine fellow?

BOY: To-day! Why, CHRISTMAS DAY.

SCROOGE: (*To himself*) It’s Christmas Day! I haven’t missed it. The Spirits hve done it all in one night. They can do anything they like. Of course they can. Of course they can. Hallo, my fine fellow. Do you know the Poulterer’s, in the next street but one?

BOY: I should hope I did.

SCROOGE: Do you know whether they’ve sold the prize Turkey that was hanging up there? Not the little prize Turkey: the big one?

BOY: What, the one as big as me?

SCROOGE: Yes, that’s the bird!

BOY: It’s hanging there now.

SCROOGE: Is it? Go and buy it. Go and buy it, and tell the man to bring it here. Come back with him in less than five minutes and I’ll give you half-a-crown!

NARRATOR: The boy was off like a shot to the poulterers, for this was the easier half-crown he was ever to earn.

SCENE

Scrooge dressed himself “all in his best,” and at last got out into the streets. The people were by this time pouring forth, as he had seen them with the Ghost of

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Christmas Present; and walking with his hands behind him, Scrooge regarded every one with a delighted smile. He looked so irresistibly pleasant, in a word that three or four good-humoured fellows said, "Good morning, sir! A merry Christmas to you!"

He had not gone far, when coming on towards him he beheld the portly gentleman, who had walked into his counting-house the day before, and said, "Scrooge and Marley's, I believe?"

SCROOGE: My dear sir. (*Taking the man by both his hands*) How do you do? I hope you succeeded yesterday. It was very kind of you. A merry Christmas to you, sir!

GENT1: Mr. Scrooge?

SCROOGE: Yes, that is my name, and I fear it may not be pleasant to you. Allow me to ask your pardon. And will you have the goodness— (*Scrooge whispers in his ear.*)

GENT1: Lord bless me! My dear Mr. Scrooge, are you serious?

SCROOGE: If you please. Not a farthing less. A great many back-payments are included in it, I assure you. Will you do me that favour?

GENT1: My dear sir. (*Shaking Scrooge by the hand*) I don't know what to say to such munifi—

SCROOGE: Don't say anything, please. Come and see me. Will you come and see me?

GENT1: I will!

SCENE

NARRATOR: In the afternoon he turned his steps towards his nephew's house. He passed the door a dozen times, before he had the courage to go up and knock. But he made a dash, and did it:

SCROOGE: Fred!

FRED: Why bless my soul! Who's that?

SCROOGE: It's I. Your uncle Scrooge. I have come to dinner. Will you let me in, Fred?

NARRATOR: Let him in! It is a mercy he didn't shake his arm off. He was at home in five minutes. Nothing could be heartier. His niece looked just the same. So did every one when they came. Wonderful party, wonderful games, wonderful unanimity, wonderful happiness!

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

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

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

SCROOGE: (*Growling*) Hallo! What do you mean by coming here at this time of day?"

CRATCHIT: I am very sorry, sir. I am behind my time.

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

CRATCHIT: It's only once a year, sir, It shall not be repeated. I was making rather merry yesterday, sir.

SCROOGE: Now, I'll tell you what, my friend. I am not going to stand this sort of thing any longer. And therefore... (*he leaps from his stool, and gives Bob such a dig in the waistcoat that he staggered back into the Tank again*) and therefore I am about to raise your salary!

NARRATOR: Bob trembled, and got a little nearer to the ruler. Convinced Scrooge had gone mad he had the momentary idea of knocking Scrooge down with it, holding him, and calling for help and a strait-jacket.

SCROOGE: A merry Christmas, Bob! (*Clapping him on the back.*) A merrier Christmas, Bob, my good fellow, than I have given you, for many a year! I'll raise your salary, and endeavour to assist your struggling family, and we will discuss your affairs this very afternoon, over a Christmas bowl of smoking bishop, Bob! Make up the fires, and buy another coal-scuttle before you dot another i, Bob Cratchit!

1. Scrooge was better than his word.
2. He did it all, and infinitely more; and to Tiny Tim, who did NOT die, he was a second father.
3. He became as good a friend, as good a master, and as good a man, as the good old city knew.
4. Some people laughed to see the alteration in him, but he let them laugh, and little heeded them; for he was wise enough to know that nothing ever happened on this globe, for good, at which some people did not have their fill of laughter in the outset;
5. and knowing that such as these would be blind anyway, he thought it quite as well that they should wrinkle up their eyes in grins, as have the malady in less attractive forms.
6. His own heart laughed: and that was quite enough for him.
7. He had no further intercourse with Spirits, but lived upon the Total

A Christmas Carol

Abstinence Principle, ever afterwards; and it was always said of him, that he knew how to keep Christmas well, if any man alive possessed the knowledge. May that be truly said of us, and all of us!

8. And so, as Tiny Tim observed,

All Readers

(Standing up) God bless Us, Every One!