

A Christmas Carol

by Charles Dickens



Christmas Eve

One Christmas Eve old Scrooge sat busy in his **counting house**. It was cold, bleak, biting weather: and he could hear the people in the court outside go wheezing up and down, stamping their feet upon the pavement stones to warm them.

The city clocks had only just gone three, but it was quite dark already. The door of Scrooge's

counting-house was open that he might keep his eye upon Bob Cratchit, his clerk. Cratchit was in a **dismal** little **cell** beyond, copying letters.

Scrooge had a very small fire, but the clerk's fire was very much smaller. Scrooge kept the coal-box in his own room.

"A merry Christmas, uncle! God save you!" cried a cheerful voice. It was the voice of Scrooge's nephew, Fred.

"Bah!" said Scrooge, "**Humbug!**"

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

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

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

"Bah!" said Scrooge, "Humbug!"

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

"What else can I be," said the uncle, "when I live in such a world of fools as this?"

"Merry Christmas! Out upon merry

Stave 1: Marley's Ghost

Marley was dead. There is no doubt whatever about that. Old Marley was as dead as a door-nail.

Did Scrooge know he was dead? Of course he did. Scrooge and he were partners for many years. Scrooge was his only friend and only **mourner**. And even Scrooge did not mourn much when he died.

Scrooge never painted out Old Marley's name. There it stood, years afterwards, above the door: Scrooge and Marley.

Sometimes people new to the business called Scrooge, Scrooge, and sometimes Marley, but he answered to both names: it was all the same to him.

Oh! But he was tight-fisted!

The cold within him froze his old features. He carried his own low temperature always about with him; and didn't thaw it one degree at Christmas.

Nobody ever stopped him in the street to say, "My dear Scrooge, how are you? When will you come to see me?"

But what did Scrooge care?

Christmas! What's Christmas time to you but a time for paying bills without money; a time for finding yourself a year older, but not an hour richer?

Every idiot who goes about with 'Merry Christmas' on his lips, should be boiled with his own pudding!"

"Uncle!" pleaded the nephew.

"Nephew!" replied 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!"

A Charitable Time

"I have always thought of Christmas time as a good time: a kind, forgiving, charitable time.

"I believe that it has done me good, and will do me good. I say, God bless it!"

The clerk **involuntarily** applauded

"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 tomorrow."

'No!'

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

"Why did you get married?" said Scrooge.

"Because I fell in love."

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

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

"Good afternoon," said Scrooge.

"I am sorry, with all my heart Merry Christmas, uncle!"

"Good afternoon," said Scrooge.

"And A Happy New Year!"

"Good afternoon!" said Scrooge.

His nephew left the room without an angry word.

Charity

Two other people came in. They stood with their hats off in Scrooge's office. They had books and papers in their hands, and bowed to him.

"Scrooge and Marley's, I believe," said one of the gentlemen, referring to his list. "Have I the pleasure of **addressing** Mr. Scrooge, or Mr. Marley?"

"Mr. Marley has been dead seven years," Scrooge replied. "He died seven years ago, this very night."

"At this festive season of the year, Mr. Scrooge," said the gentleman, taking up a pen, "We should give a little to the the

Poor and Destitute, who suffer greatly at the present time.”

“Are there no prisons?” asked Scrooge.

“Plenty of prisons,” said the gentleman, laying down the pen again.

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

“They are,” said the gentleman, “I wish I could say they were not. A few of us are trying to raise a fund to buy the Poor some meat and drink and means of warmth. What shall I put you down for?”

“Nothing!” Scrooge replied.

“You wish to be **anonymous**?”

“I wish to be left alone,” said Scrooge. “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 pay for the workhouses and they cost enough. Those who are badly enough of must go there.”

“Many can’t go there and many would rather die.”

“If they die,” said Scrooge, “that will decrease the **surplus** population.

“Besides, it’s not by business. It’s enough for a man to understand his own business and not interfere with other people’s. Good afternoon, gentlemen!”

Only Once a Year

At last it was time for the clerk to go home.

“You’ll want all day to-morrow, I suppose?” said Scrooge.

“If quite convenient, sir.”

“It’s not convenient,” said Scrooge, “and it’s not fair. I pay a day’s wages for no

work.”

“It’s was only once a year, sir.”

“A poor excuse for picking a man’s pocket every twenty-fifth of December!” said Scrooge, buttoning his great-coat to the chin.

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



address - speak to

anonymous - unnamed, private

cell - office without light, like a prison cell

counting house - accounts office

Dismal - sad, without hope

morose - gloomy, miserable, pessimistic

destitute - without money to live

clerk - office worker

humbug - rubbish, nonsense

involuntary - without meaning to

mourner - friend or family of dead person

situation - job

surplus - more than needed

workhouse - prison-like places for the poor

Characters

Scrooge - owns a London counting-house.

Bob Cratchit - Scrooge’s clerk, a kind, very poor man with a large family.

Jacob Marley - Scrooge’s dead partner.

Fred - Scrooge’s nephew