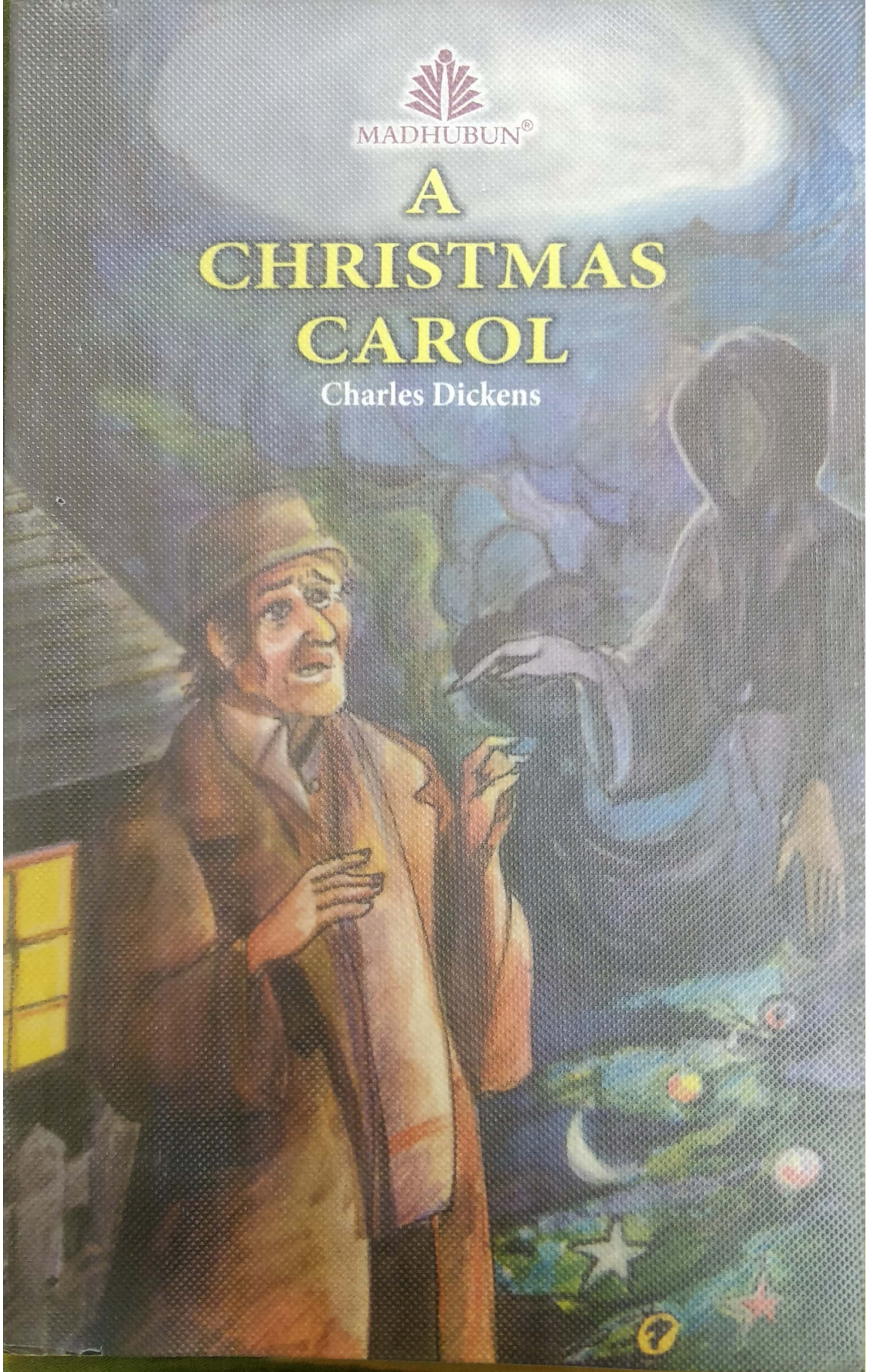




MADHUBUN®

A CHRISTMAS CAROL

Charles Dickens




MADHUBUN®

A CHRISTMAS CAROL



Charles Dickens

MADHUBUN® EDUCATIONAL BOOKS
A DIV. OF VIKAS® PUBLISHING HOUSE PRIVATE LIMITED



MADHUBUN®

A DIV. OF VIKAS® PUBLISHING HOUSE PRIVATE LIMITED

E-28, Sector-8, Noida-201 301 (UP)

Phone: 0120-4078900 • Fax: 0120-4078999

Toll-free: 1800-8439050

(Dec. to Mar. 24 hrs. (Monday to Saturday) & April to Nov. (Monday to Friday) 9:30 am to 6:00 pm)

Regd. Office: 7361, Ravindra Mansion, Ram Nagar, New Delhi-110 055

E-mail: info@madhubunbooks.com • Website: www.madhubunbooks.com

Branches:

Ahmedabad Bengaluru Chennai Guwahati Hyderabad Kolkata Mumbai Patna

A CHRISTMAS CAROL

First Edition 1993, Reprinted between 2003 – 2018

Reprint 2019

ISBN: 978-07-069-9472-8

PRODUCT CODE: MDS2STR008ENGAA00MLN

© Vikas® Publishing House Pvt. Ltd., 1993 • All rights reserved.

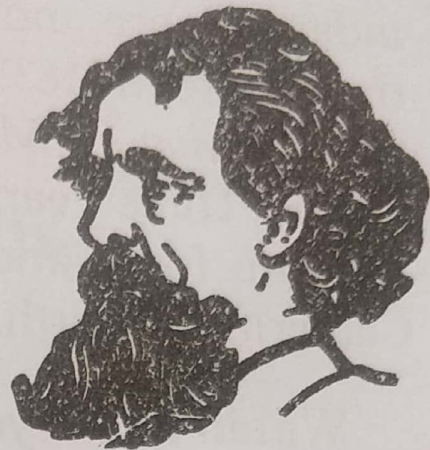
'Vikas' and 'Madhubun' are the registered trademarks of Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd.

Publisher's Warranty: The Publisher warrants the customer for a period of 1 year from the date of purchase of the book against any manufacturing defect, damage or loss of this book. For further details, please visit our website (www.madhubunbooks.com) or call our Customer Care (1800-8439050).

No part of this publication which is material protected by this copyright notice may be reproduced or transmitted or utilised or stored in any form or by any means now known or hereinafter invented, electronic, digital or mechanical, including photocopying, scanning, recording or by any information storage or retrieval system, without prior written permission from the publisher.

Information contained in this book has been published by Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd. and has been obtained by its authors from sources believed to be reliable and are correct to the best of their knowledge. However, the publisher and its authors shall in no event be liable for any errors, omissions or damages arising out of use of this information and specifically disclaim any implied warranties or merchantability or fitness for any particular use.

Charles Dickens



Charles John Huffam Dickens was born at Portsea on February 7, 1812, the second child of John Dickens and his wife Elizabeth. His father, a clerk in the Navy Pay Office, was always getting into debt, and so young Charles grew up as a poor, insecure boy. After the family moved to London, John Dickens was arrested and put into prison. Elizabeth went with four of her children to stay with her husband in jail, as was allowed in those days, and Charles stayed back and worked in a blacking factory. Here, for six shillings a week, he pasted labels on blacking bottles. Those few months were the worst for Dickens, and he was never to forget them for the rest of his life.

However, a relative left some money for the family and John Dickens was able to get his release from prison, after paying his debts, and send his son to school, where he remained for two or three years. At the age of fifteen, Charles entered a solicitor's office as a junior clerk. Though it was not so well paid, it enabled him to get a certain

independence and to meet new people and go to the theatre. In 1833 he wrote his first "sketch" for the *Old Monthly Magazine* and followed it up with others. Three years later they were published in volume form and the same year he married Catherine Hogarth.

Within a few years Dickens became the most popular writer of the country. More than that he had become a public institution. Book followed book and he kept writing till his death. *Oliver Twist* came in 1838, *Nicholas Nickleby* a year later. In 1843 he wrote *A Christmas Carol*, the first of Dickens' Christmas books, which was followed by *The Chimes*, *The Cricket on the Hearth*, etc. His other leading works included *David Copperfield* — in which he drew his father's portrait as Mr Micawber — *Bleak House*, *Little Dorrit*, *A Tale of Two Cities*, *The Uncommercial Traveller*, and *Great Expectations*. His works always showed the dark side of Victorian life. His social criticisms helped to improve school and jail conditions, while his lively characters and moving stories touched the hearts of readers all over the world.

He had ten children and stayed a great deal abroad, starting public reading of his books. These were a great success but told on his health. He died of a cerebral stroke in 1870, leaving behind an unfinished work, *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*. He was buried in Westminster Abbey.

Contents

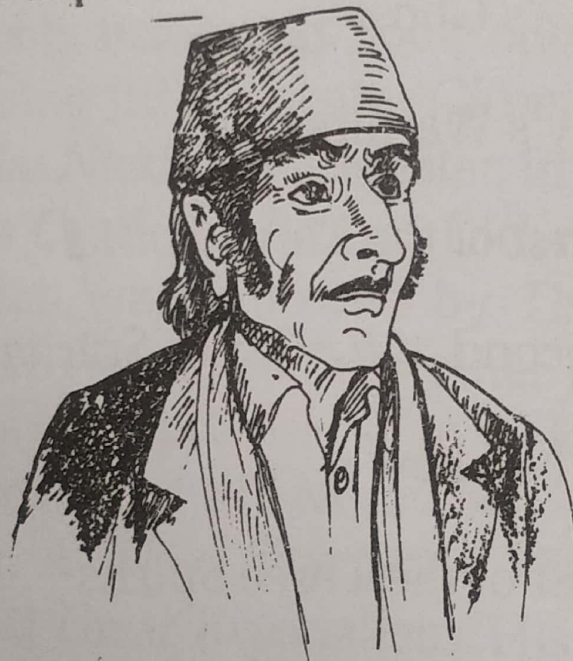
| | |
|------------------------------------|----|
| 1. Marley's Ghost | 9 |
| 2. Marley's Warning | 20 |
| 3. The First of the Three Spirits | 29 |
| 4. The Second of the Three Spirits | 41 |
| 5. At the Nephew's | 51 |
| 6. The Last of the Three Spirits | 57 |
| 7. The Dead Man | 65 |
| 8. The End of it All | 71 |
| <i>Comprehension Exercises</i> | 78 |



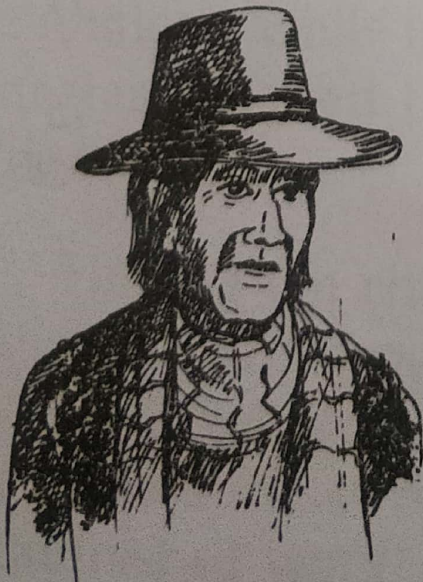
Scrooge's nephew



Tiny Tim



Scrooge



Clerk



Marley

1

Marley's Ghost

Marley was dead, to begin with. There is no doubt whatsoever about that. The register which showed that he had been buried had been signed by the clergyman, the undertaker and the chief mourner, Ebenezer Scrooge. And Scrooge's name was very well known in the business world so no one could doubt the fact. Old Marley was dead as a doornail.

Did Scrooge know he was dead? Of course he did. How could it be any other way? Scrooge and he were partners for God knows how many years. Scrooge was Marley's only heir, his only partner in business, his only friend and his only mourner. And even then, Scrooge was not so unhappy by the event. His only thought on the day of the funeral was that he had made a good bargain and managed to have a burial that was not too expensive.

Talking of Marley's funeral brings me back to the point I started from. There is no doubt that Marley was dead. You must believe this or else nothing wonderful will come of the rest of the story.

Scrooge never painted out Marley's name from the sign outside their office. There it stood, years afterwards, above the warehouse door: **Scrooge and Marley**. The firm was known as Scrooge and Marley. Sometimes people new to business called Scrooge, and sometimes they called him Marley, but he answered to both names. It was all the same to him.

Oh, but he was a tight-fisted man, a greedy old sinner! Hard and sharp as a stone, he was as secret as an oyster. The cold in his insides had frozen his face, nipped his pointed nose, shrivelled his cheeks, stiffened his walk, made his eyes red and his thin lips blue. A frosty crust was on his eyebrows, his head and thin chin. He carried his own low temperature always with himself. He iced the office in the summers and didn't warm it one bit during Christmas.

Heat and cold had little effect on him. No warmth could warm him, no wintry wind could chill him. He was harsher than falling snow, colder than the most bitter wind and as hard as pelting rain.

Nobody stopped him in the streets to ask him, "How do you do?" No beggar came to him for alms, no children asked him what the time was, no man or woman asked him how to go anywhere. Even the blind men's dogs knew when he was coming and would drag their owners into alleys and dark doorways to avoid him, as if to say: "No eye is better than an evil eye!"

But what did Scrooge care? It was the very thing he wanted. He wanted to have nothing to do with anyone and was happy to stay on the sidelines of crowds and life itself. But then Christmas came one year, and Scrooge's life changed.

One Christmas Eve, old Scrooge sat busy working in his accounts room. It was very cold outside and he could hear people rushing along their way, beating their hands together and stamping their feet to keep warm. It was just 3 o'clock in the afternoon, but it was already dark and you could see the lights on in the offices. The fog came pouring in through every crack and keyhole and was so thick that although the road outside was very narrow, one could not see the houses on the other side clearly, and they seemed like ghosts in the mist.

The door of Scrooge's office was open so that he could keep an eye on his assistant, whose office, if you could call it that, was so small, it looked like a water tank. He was writing out business letters. Scrooge had a small fire, but the clerk's fire was so much smaller that it looked like a piece of coal. But he could not take any more coal to make a bigger fire because the scuttle was in Scrooge's office and he knew from the past that as soon as he went for more coal, Scrooge would threaten to sack him from his job. And so the poor clerk wore a long white muffler and tried to warm himself by the flame of the candle.

"A merry Christmas, Uncle! God save you!" cried a cheery voice. It was Scrooge's nephew who had startled Scrooge by his sudden appearance.

"Bah! Humbug!" said Scrooge.

This nephew of Scrooge's had got so warm after his walk in the cold that his face was pink and glowing, his eyes sparkled and it was so cold inside the office that his breath came out in clouds as he spoke.

"Christmas a humbug, Uncle? You don't mean that, I am sure!"

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

"Come on, Uncle," said the nephew gaily, "what right have you to be dismal and gloomy? YOU'RE rich enough!"

Scrooge, having no better answer to that, said "Bah!" and followed it with another "Humbug!"

"Don't be cross, Uncle," said the nephew.

"What else can I be when I live in a world that is full of fools? Merry Christmas! What's Christmas' time to you but a time for paying bills without having any money, a time for balancing the account books, a time for finding that you are a year older and not an hour richer. If I had my way," said Scrooge angrily, "every idiot who goes around saying Merry Christmas would be boiled in his own

Christmas pudding and buried with a stake of holly in his heart!"

"Uncle! You can't mean that!"

"Nephew! You let me celebrate Christmas my way and I'll let you celebrate it your way."

"Celebrate! But you don't celebrate it!"

"Then let me leave it alone. Much good it has done you."

"There are many things that may have done me good but from which I have not made any money. Christmas is one of them. But I have always thought of Christmas time as a time of good, a kind, forgiving, charitable time. The only time I know in the year, when people open their shut-up hearts and think of others who might not be as rich as them. And so, Uncle, even if it has not put gold in my pocket, I can freely say that it has done me good and will continue to do me good. And I say, God bless it!"

The clerk in the tank had been listening to the nephew and he started clapping heartily. However, as soon as he realised what he was doing, he bent to hide his face and started poking the fire, which immediately put out whatever spark there was.

"And let me hear another sound from YOU," said Scrooge, "and you'll celebrate Christmas by losing your job!" Turning to his nephew he said, "You, sir, are a powerful speaker. How come you didn't become a politician?"

"Don't be angry, Uncle, come to our house for dinner tomorrow."

Scrooge cursed him and told him to get out of his office.

"But why? Why are you like this?"

"Why did you get married?" asked Scrooge.

"Because I fell in love."

"Because you fell in love!" growled Scrooge as if that, were the only thing as silly as Christmas. "Good afternoon!"

"But Uncle, even before I got married you never came to see me. So why do you make that your reason for not coming?"

"Good afternoon," said Scrooge.

"I want nothing from you. I want no money, I just want us to be friends. Why can't we be friends?"

"GOOD AFTERNOON!"

"I don't understand this, Uncle. I have never fought with you and I don't know why you feel this way. But anyway, I have done my duty at Christmas and I'll not fight with you. So, Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year."

The nephew left smiling despite Scrooge's bad temper. He stopped to wish Merry Christmas to the clerk, who had a warm greeting for him, despite feeling so cold.

"There's another fellow," muttered Scrooge darkly under his breath. "My clerk, who earns only

fifteen shillings a week and has a wife and family to support, talks about a Merry Christmas. I'll have to be taken to an asylum at this rate."

As he was letting the nephew out, the clerk let two people in. They were plump gentlemen with pleasant faces and now they stood in front of Scrooge with their hats in their hands. They had some books and papers in their hands, too.

"Scrooge and Marley's, I believe," said one of the gentlemen, looking at a list in his hands. "Am I addressing Mr Scrooge or Mr Marley?"

"Mr Marley has been dead for the past seven years. He died seven years ago, this very night."

"Well, we are sure his living partner will be as generous, as he was." He handed him a calling card.

Scrooge certainly was as generous as Marley had been, but not in the way the two gentlemen thought. At the word generous, however, Scrooge frowned. He handed the calling card back.

"At this festive time of the year," said the gentleman, "it is a good thing to give something to people who have nothing, poor people who are the ones who suffer the most at this time of the year. They are the ones who need all the comfort they can get and the necessary things for living. There are hundreds like this, sir."

"Are there no prisons?" asked Scrooge.

"Plenty of prisons," said the man, puzzled.

"And the union workhouses, are they still in operation?"

"They are, sir. I wish I could say they were not."

"Oh! I was afraid, from the way you were talking, that these places had closed down. I'm very glad to hear that they have not."

"Well, as we don't think that these places, are good for the people living in them, we have started a fund for the poor so that we can buy some food and clothes and other things for them. We chose this time of the year because we know that no one will refuse to give something. Now, how much should I put down in your name?"

"Nothing," said Scrooge.

"You wish to be anonymous?"

"I wish to be left alone. Since you ask me what I want I'm telling you. I don't celebrate Christmas, gentlemen, and I cannot afford to give money to people who don't work so that they can enjoy themselves. I give money to the places I mentioned, the workhouses, the orphanages, the prisons. And they are very expensive. And those who are poor should go to these places."

"Many can't go there. Many would rather die."

"Then they should die and solve the population problem. Besides, I mind my own business and I would like others to mind their own. Good afternoon, gentlemen!"

Seeing that it was useless to argue with Scrooge, the two men left.

Outside, the fog and darkness had thickened and people ran about with lights in their hands, offering to show others the way. The cold became worse as the evening drew on. Some labourers at work on the road had lit a fire around which ragged boys and men had gathered, and were warming their hands. The brightness of the shops threw a red light on the people as they hurried past. Everyone was in a good mood, the butchers and traders were doing a roaring trade with bargains and sales. Everyone from the Mayor to the little tailor was in a good mood and merry, because, after all, the next day was Christmas!

A little boy, with his nose red from the cold, came to Scrooge's door to sing him a carol. But at the first note of:

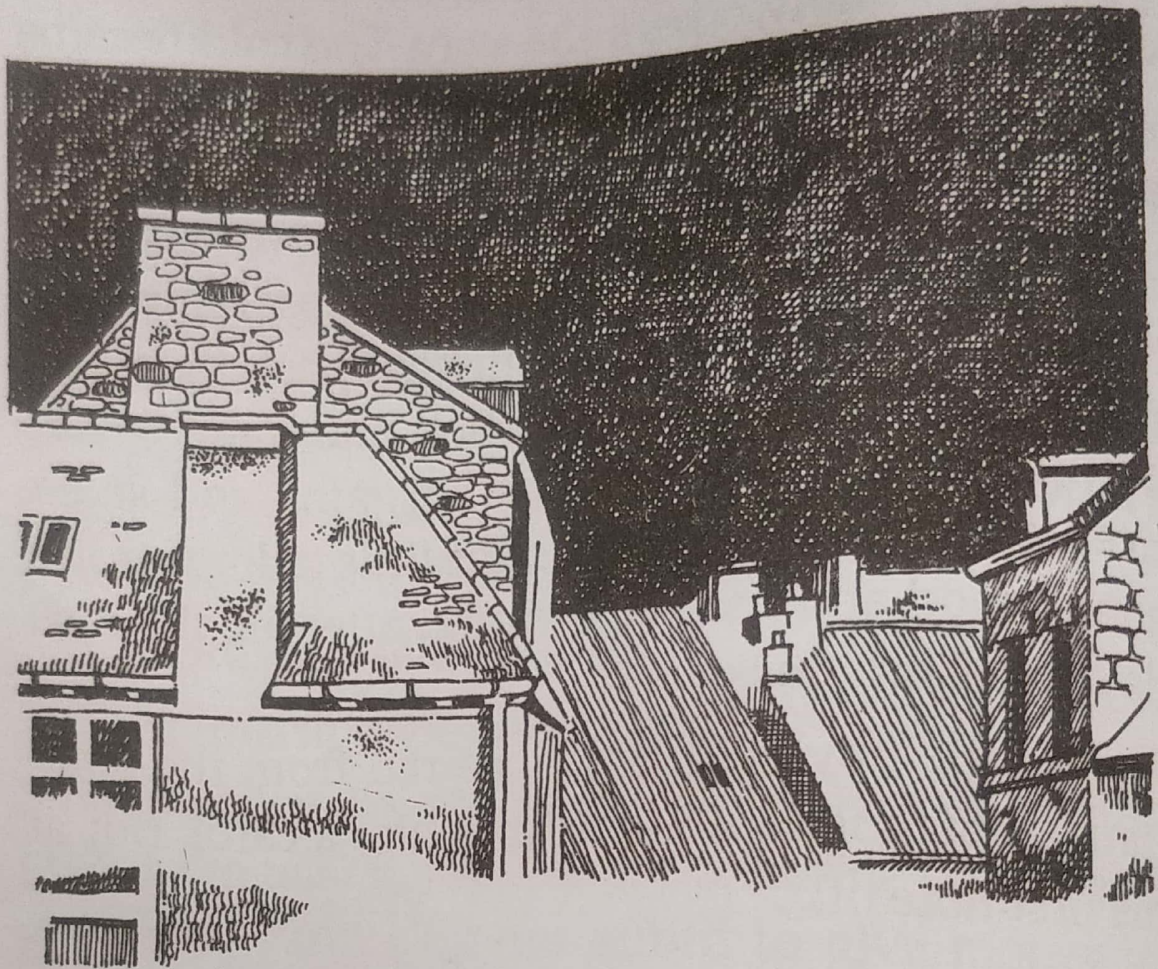
God rest you merry gentlemen,
May nothing you dismay,

Scrooge picked up a ruler, as if to throw it, and the boy fled.

At last it was time to go home and grumpily Scrooge got off his stool and told the clerk in the tank that he could go. The poor man immediately snuffed out his candle and put on his hat.

"You'll want all day off tomorrow, I guess?"

"If it is alright by you," he replied.



...and the clerk, with the long ends of his muffler dangling, went home...

"It's not, and it's not fair. If I didn't pay you, you'd not like it. But when I lose money you don't feel bad about it."

The clerk smiled and said it happened only once a year.

"Anyway, be here the next morning!"

Scrooge left, growling, and the office was closed in a twinkling and the clerk, with the long ends of his muffler dangling, went home whistling a merry tune.

Marley's Warning

Scrooge had dinner in his usual gloomy tavern and went home. He lived in the house his partner had stayed in till his death. It was an old building and only Scrooge lived in it. The yard in front of the building was so dark that Christmas Eve, that even Scrooge, who knew its every corner, had to feel his way to the door. The fog was so thick that it seemed as if the foul weather had started from his place.

As Scrooge reached the door, he noticed that the knocker was looking a bit odd. The knocker in the normal course, was a bit larger than those found on other doors. Also, Scrooge had seen it every morning and evening while he lived there. He also had no imagination, so we cannot say that what he saw that night was a dream. And let us make it clear that Scrooge had not thought of his dead partner since that person had died seven years ago. And so, with these facts in mind, it is therefore surprising that when Scrooge put his key in the door he saw, instead of the knocker, Marley's face.



...when Scrooge put his key in the door he saw, instead of the knocker, Marley's face.

Marley's face. It was not a shadow, but had a light about it, a dull red glow. It was not angry or grim, but looked at Scrooge as Marley used to look, with ghostly spectacles on its forehead. Its hair was moving as if there was a wind blowing, and though the eyes were open, there was no expression in them.

As Scrooge stared at this, the face slowly disappeared and became a knocker again.

Scrooge was shaken, but he turned the key in the lock and entered the room. He lit a candle and went back to the door to make sure it was a knocker before he shut it. He looked at the back of the door as if to see whether Marley's hair could be seen at the other side. But there was nothing there, and Scrooge said "pooh, pooh!" and closed it with a bang.

The sound echoed throughout the house, from the cellar, where the wine was kept, to the roof above. But Scrooge was not a man to be scared by echoes and he walked slowly up the stairs.

The house was so big that even half-a-dozen gas lamps would not have been able to give out enough light for anyone to see anything. But Scrooge did not mind. The darker it was, the more money he could save. So the dark did not bother him even that evening. But before he went to bed, he went through the house to make sure everything was alright. Sitting-room, bedroom, storeroom.

Everything as it should be. Nobody under the table, nobody under the sofa; a small fire was ready as always, and his bowl of soup was over the fire. Nobody was under the bed or in the cupboard and nobody was in his dressing-gown.

Quite satisfied, he closed the door and locked himself in, and then double-locked himself in, which was not usual. And so, thinking he was ready for any thief, he took off his shoes and put on his slippers and took off his tie and put on his dressing-gown. He then put on his night-cap and sat down to drink his soup.

It was very cold, so he drew closer to the fireplace. This fireplace had been built long ago and was paved all over by tiles with drawings from the *Bible*. Yet, this evening, instead of seeing the tiles, he seemed to be seeing Marley's face all over.

"Humbug!" said Scrooge and walked across the room. After a while he sat down again. As he leaned back in his chair, his eyes fell on a bell hanging in the room. Now this bell had been long forgotten and was never used. And so it was with great surprise that Scrooge saw the bell swing. It swung so softly in the beginning that there was hardly any sound but soon it was clanging loudly, and so were the other bells in the house.

This loud clanging must have lasted about a minute, but it seemed an hour. Suddenly the clanging stopped and the sound was replaced by that of a dragging sound down below, as if someone

was dragging chains and a heavy weight downstairs. Scrooge remembered someone saying that ghosts in haunted houses dragged chains.

The cellar door flew open with a booming sound and he heard the sound come closer to his room, as if it were climbing the stairs. It then came straight to his door. "Humbug!" said Scrooge. "I won't believe it."

He became white, however, when it came through the door and into the room to stand in front of him. It was Marley's ghost!

The same face, the usual waistcoat, tights and boots. The chain he was pulling behind him was wound around him like a tail. It was made of cash-boxes, keys, locks, ledgers, deeds and heavy purses made of steel. His body was transparent, so that Scrooge could see his waistcoat and the two buttons on the back of his coat.

This sight did not move Scrooge much. He still did not believe this was a ghost. Even though he could see through him, even though the thing looked at him with dead eyes and even though he could feel the death-like cold coming from it.

"What do you want of me?" he asked in his usual cold manner.

"Much," said Marley's voice.

"Who are you?"

"Ask me who I was."

"Who WERE you, then?"

"When I was alive I was your partner, Jacob Marley."

"Can — can you sit down?"

"I can."

The ghost sat down on the other side of the fireplace as if he were used to doing so. "You don't believe in me," it said.

"I don't," said Scrooge.

"Why do you doubt what your eyes see?"

"Because," said Scrooge, "a little thing like a stomach upset makes people see things. I must have eaten something wrong and this is the effect."

However brave Scrooge sounded, he was sure that he was a bit scared. After all, he had this thing sitting in front of him, which he could see through, and this thing was looking at him with cold eyes. And though it was sitting very still and just staring at him, he seemed to be surrounded by hot vapours.

"You see this toothpick?" Scrooge asked the ghost.

It nodded.

"Well, I just have to swallow it and I have created a whole world of ghosts and hobgoblins. Humbug! I tell you, humbug."

At this the ghost let out a fearful cry and shook his chain with a rattling and clanging noise. Scrooge was so frightened that he held on to the edge of his chair to save himself from falling off. But this was

nothing to what came next. The spirit took off a bandage he had tied around his head and under his neck, as if it were "too hot to wear it inside. And as he did that, his lower jaw dropped down to his chest!

Scrooge fell upon his knees and clasped his hands in front of him.

"Mercy!" he cried, "Oh, dreadful Spirit. Why have you come to me?"

"It is every person's duty to mix with his fellow men and share what he has with them. If he does not do it in his lifetime, then he must do it in death. His spirit is then doomed to wander throughout the world and see what it might have had."

"But why are you chained?"

"This is the chain that I made during my life. Doesn't it look familiar to you? You will also have the same kind of chain when you die. Only your's will be longer and heavier because you have lived longer than I."

"Jacob, my good friend, Jacob!" cried Scrooge, "tell me some good things!"

"I have nothing good to tell you. I have just a little more time left here. I have to go on in my wanderings. While I was alive I never left my counting house, but see, now, in my death, I have to keep wandering all over. I am so tired!"

"You were a good man of business, Jacob."

"Business! My business should have been charity, mercy, kindness. People should have been

my business. Trade was just a drop in the ocean of being good to mankind!"

He held his chain up and rattled it again and gave out a long moan.

"And at this time of the year I feel the worst. Why did I ignore my fellow beings and walk with my eyes turned down and never looked at the blessed star that led the Wise Men to Bethlehem? Hear me, my time is nearly over. I have sat with you many times before. I don't know how you can see me tonight. But I have come to warn you, Ebenezer. I don't want you to end up like me."

"You have always been a good friend to me, Jacob. Thank you!"

"You will be haunted by Three Spirits. That is your only chance of escaping the punishment I have got. Expect the first visit tomorrow at 1 o'clock in the night."

"Couldn't I take them all at once and finish it off in one go?"

"The second will come on the next night at the same time. The third will come the night after, when the clock strikes 12. Remember what I have said. You shall never see me again."

As he was talking he picked up his scarf and tied it round his head and under his neck, as it had been before. He wrapped his chain around himself and started walking backwards towards the window. At every step he took, the window raised

itself slowly so that by the time he had reached it, it was wide open. He called Scrooge to the window.

Scrooge could hear noises coming from outside and he walked over to the window and looked out. There were ghosts floating around in the night, wailing and moaning. Every one of these ghosts wore a chain as Marley's ghost had, and many were friends of Scrooge, who were now dead. One old ghost, whom he could recognise by his flowered waistcoat, was crying because he could not help a poor woman and her child sitting on the pavement. The cause of their sadness was that they could help no one now, however hard they tried.

Slowly Marley's ghost also wafted out through the window and he and the other spirits faded away. And soon the night was as it had been before. Scrooge closed the window and examined the door through which the ghost had entered. It was still double-locked. He tried to say "Humbug!" but stopped at the first alphabet. Being very tired after the visit of the ghost, he went straight to bed, without even undressing, and was asleep as soon as his head touched the pillow.

3

The First of the Three Spirits

When Scrooge awoke, it was so dark that he couldn't even see the walls of his room. He was trying to figure out what the time was when he heard the church clock strike the hour. To his great surprise he heard the bell go from 6 to 7, from 7 to 8 and so on till 12, when it stopped—12! It was 2 o'clock when he had gone to bed! The clock must be wrong.

He picked up his watch, but that also said 12.

"Is it possible that I have slept through a whole day and night? I'm sure it is noon!"

He jumped out of bed and ran to the window and looked out. It was pitch dark and too quiet to be daytime.

Scrooge went back to bed and thought. The more he thought about the queer event, Marley's ghost visiting him, the more puzzled he became. He decided he must have been dreaming when he heard the clock chime again. Suddenly he

remembered Marley's ghost had told him that he would be visited by a spirit at 1 o'clock. He decided to stay awake till that hour was past. Finally, after what seemed like ages, the clock struck.

Ding dong!

"A quarter past," said Scrooge.

Ding dong!

"Half past," said Scrooge.

Ding dong!

"A quarter to 1," said Scrooge.

Ding dong!

"It is 1 o'clock itself," said Scrooge happily, "and nothing else!"

As he spoke the last chime died away and suddenly the lights came on in his room. At the same time, a hand drew back the curtains of his bed.

Starting up in horror, Scrooge found himself face to face with the creature who had drawn back the curtains. It was a strange figure. It looked like an old man and yet was so small that it looked at the same time like a child. Its hair which hung down its back, was white, yet its cheeks had the bloom of a young girl. The arms were very long and strong, yet the feet and hands were delicate. It wore a white tunic and round its waist a shining belt. It held a branch of holly in its hand but its dress was trimmed with summer flowers. The strangest thing was a glow of light at the top of its head, with the help of which Scrooge could see this wonderful sight.

But even though there was this light, the figure itself was not very clear, and kept seeming to change, and sometimes there was no head and sometimes there were no hands or feet or legs. So at any one time the entire body was not visible.

"Are you the Spirit, sir, whom I was told to await?" asked Scrooge, trembling.

"I am!"

The voice was soft and gentle and seemed to come from far away.

"Who and what are you?"

"I am the Ghost of Christmas Past."

"Long past?"

"No, your past."

"And why have you come here?"

"It is for your own good that I have come. Get up, and come with me."

The hand on Scrooge, though gentle as a woman's, was very strong and had to be obeyed. Scrooge rose, but on finding that the Spirit was moving towards the window, held a corner of its robe and said, "I am only a human being, and will fall if you go out that way."

"Just touch me here," the Spirit said, pointing to its heart, "and you will be alright."

As it said this, they found themselves on a country road with fields on either side. The city had entirely disappeared, as had the fog and mist. It was a clear winter day with snow on the ground.

"Good heavens!" said Scrooge, "I grew up in this place! I was a boy here!" Scrooge remembered a thousand thoughts and hopes and dreams and joys, now all forgotten.

"Your lip is trembling," said the Spirit. "What is that on your cheek?"

"Oh, it's nothing," said Scrooge, "it must be raining."

They went down the road and Scrooge remembered every gate, every lamp-post and tree. There were shaggy ponies being ridden by young boys who were calling to each other and to other passers by, in such merry spirits that their noise sounded like bells chiming from the church tower.

"These are just shadows from the past," said the Spirit. "They cannot see us."

As they walked Scrooge named every person they passed. Why was he so glad to see all these people? Why did his heart leap with happiness as he heard them wish each other Merry Christmas? What did Scrooge care about Christmas, anyway? What good had it ever done him?

"There is a boy alone in the school," said the Spirit. "Look, he has been left alone by his friends and is still in school."

Scrooge knew it. And he sobbed.

And they left the main road and soon came to a huge red brick mansion, with a bell perched on top of the roof. Glancing within, they found the rooms

with very poor furniture, cold and huge. There was a feeling in the rooms as if the people living in them did not get enough food or warmth.

They came upon another room, and on entering, Scrooge saw a little boy reading by the fire. And Scrooge wept to see himself as he used to be. He remembered how, in his loneliness, he used to imagine being visited by characters from *Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves*, and reading all those stories as if he had taken part in them, and reliving Robinson Crusoe's adventures with Man Friday. His friends in the city would never have believed that Scrooge could ever have done things like this.

"Poor boy," he said. "I wish," he muttered after looking for a handkerchief to dry his eyes. "But it's too late now."

"What do you wish" asked the Spirit.

"A little boy came singing a carol at my door last night but I turned him away. I should have liked to have given him something now."

The Spirit smiled thoughtfully and said, "Let us see another Christmas now."

The little Scrooge grew slightly bigger now and the room grew darker and dirtier. How this happened Scrooge did not know, but he knew that some years had passed and it was another holiday season and he was once more alone in school while everybody had gone home.

He was not reading this time but was walking

up and down the room. Suddenly the door opened and a little girl, much younger than him, came into the room and ran towards him. She put her arms round his neck and kissed him and said, "Dear brother, I've come to take you home."

"Home, little Fan?" asked the boy.

"Yes, home. Home for ever. Father has been so much kinder lately that I asked him one day if you could come away from this horrible place and he agreed. So, I've come to take you home." She clapped her hands in glee.

"Always a delicate creature, but she had a large heart," said the Spirit.

"So she had," said Scrooge.

"She died after being married a few years. She had some children, I believe."

"Yes, one child."

"Your nephew!"

Scrooge became silent.

Again the scene changed and they found themselves in a busy street with coaches and carriages going to and fro. It was plain to see that here, too, people were getting ready for Christmas.

They stopped at a certain warehouse door and went in. The Spirit asked if he recognised the place.

"Of course, I was trained here."

At the sight of an old man sitting at a desk, Scrooge got very excited and said, "Why, it's old Fezziwig! Bless his heart, it's old Fezziwig alive again!" Old Fezziwig put down his pen and looked at the clock, which pointed to the hour seven. He rubbed his hands with glee and called out in a jolly voice, "Yo ho, there, Ebenezer, Dick."

Scrooge, now a young man, entered the room with his fellow trainee.

"Dick Wilkins, my friend!" cried Scrooge, much excited.

"Yo ho, my boys, there will be no more work for the day. It's Christmas Eve! Close down the shutters as fast as you can! And then clear the room and let's have a lot of room here!"

Before you could say Jack Robinson, these young men had pulled the shutters and cleared the room of all its furniture. The floor was then swept and fuel heaped upon the fire. It was as bright as a ballroom should be.

Then came a man with a fiddle and music book and he stood at one end of the room. In came Mrs Fezziwig beaming, with her three daughters, smiling and lovable. In came the six young men who were in love with them. In came the baker, the housemaid with her cousin, and the cook with her brother's friend, the milkman. In came the boy who worked next door, because his boss was a mean old man and would never give him a party like this,

and the maid from the next house, whose mistress was always pulling her ear. In they came, some shyly, some bravely, but all merrily. There were twenty couples in all and they started dancing, going up the room and then down the room. Holding hands, dancing well and dancing badly, everyone was laughing and smiling and enjoying themselves.

Even Scrooge and the Spirit, standing at the side, were smiling at seeing them all enjoy themselves.

When the clock struck 11, the fiddler struck up one last tune and then they all wished each other a Merry Christmas and left the hall. All, except the two trainees, who went to their beds under a counter in the shop. Before they went to sleep they praised their master to the skies.

“A small matter and these fellows are so full of praise,” said the Spirit.

“Small!”

“Yes, he’s just spent two or three pounds on his entertainment. Is it so much that these fellows should feel like this?”

“That’s not the point!” cried Scrooge. “The main thing is that he has given these people so much happiness, it is much more than money can buy.” He felt the Spirit looking at him and fell silent.

“What’s the matter?” asked the Spirit.

“Oh, nothing. It’s just that I wish I could have a word or two with my clerk. That’s all.”

"My time grows short," said the Spirit suddenly.
"Come!"

They were now in front of two people. Scrooge recognised himself as an older man now. His face did not have the harsh lines of the present Scrooge, but it had begun to show signs of greed. There was an eager and restless look in the eye which reflected his growing greed for money.

By his side sat a young girl dressed in black. In her eyes were tears, which shone in the light coming from the Ghost of Christmas Past.

"It does not matter," she said. "To you, very little. Another love has taken my place in your heart. But if it can make you as happy as I have tried to make you, I don't mind."

"What love has replaced you?" he asked.

"A golden one."

"I find this very funny. There is nothing worse than being poor, but the very people who are poor are the ones who say money is not good."

"Why are you so afraid of the world? I have seen your better qualities fall beneath your growing love for money. Haven't I?"

"So what? Even if I have grown wiser, I have not changed towards you. Have I?"

"My dear, I have known you for so long. We made our decision when we were both poor and that was our bond. We were happy to make money slowly and steadily. But you have changed. I have

thought of this much and I tell you now that I free you from your promise to marry me."

"I have never asked to be freed."

"No, you haven't. But if you marry me, one day you might regret this step and wish you had been able to marry someone with a dowry, which I don't have. So, I release you. With a full heart and for the love of the person you once were. May you be happy in the life you have chosen!"

She left him and they parted.

"Spirit," said Scrooge, "show me no more! Take me home. Why do you enjoy torturing me?"

"I have to show you only one more shadow."

"No more, no more," cried Scrooge, but he found they had reached another room. It was not very large or beautiful, but it was very comfortable. Near the fire sat a beautiful young girl, so like the girl he had just seen that he thought it was her, till he saw HER, now much older and plump, sitting across her daughter. There was a lot of noise in the room and Scrooge, looking around, saw so many children that he could not count them. Their antics made their mother and sister laugh happily. And soon the daughter was also pulled into the games, in which she joined gaily even though her brothers and sisters were pulling her hair and messing up her dress.

Soon, there was a knock on the door and in came the father. The crowd of children ran shouting and

squealing to the man and jumped on top of him and hugged and kissed him. Laughing, he gave them all a present each, which kept them busy for a while. Then they had dinner and were put to bed.

And now Scrooge looked more attentively at the scene. The master of the house was sitting on his favourite armchair and his daughter was on the floor, leaning her head on his knee. His wife was at his side. Scrooge's heart wept to think he might have had a daughter like this young girl to keep him happy in his old age.

"Belle," said the husband, "I saw an old friend of yours today."

"Who was it?"

"Guess!"

"How can I?" she laughed. "Oh, I know It must be Mr Scrooge."

"Mr Scrooge it was. I passed his office window and as it was not shut I could see him by the light of the candle. His partner lies on his deathbed and there he sat at his desk, all alone. He has nobody, I believe."

"Spirit!" cried Scrooge. "Let us leave. I've had enough. I cannot bear it any longer!"

"I told you these were spirits of the Past. They are what they are, do not put the blame on me."

"Take me away," shouted Scrooge. Then, to his horror, he saw on the face of the Spirit, the faces of

everyone he had known and in his fear, he started struggling with the Spirit. He tried to put out the light of the Spirit, which was now burning very bright and maddening Scrooge. He seized his cap and tried to put it on the Spirit's head. But the light kept coming from under the cap. He could not put it out, however much he tried.

He realised suddenly that he was very tired and also that he was in his own room. He gave the cap a last squeeze and collapsed into bed and into a deep sleep.

4

The Second of the Three Spirits

Scrooge woke up in the middle of a particularly loud snore. He did not look at his watch to see the time because he was sure he was up at the right time to welcome the second Spirit. This time he did not want to be surprised by a strange face peeping in through his bed curtains, so he drew them all and lay in bed, waiting. This time he did not know what the Spirit would look like, but he was ready for anything, from a baby to a rhinoceros.

And so, when the clock struck 1, and nothing happened, he started shaking with fear as the minutes slowly ticked by. As he sat up in his bed, shivering with the cold and fright, he suddenly became aware of a dull light coming from somewhere, and when he could think clearly, he realised that the light was coming from the room next to his. So he got out of bed, put on his slippers and shuffled to the door. As he put his hand on the door, he heard a voice telling him to enter, and he obeyed.

As he entered he found that it was the very room he had just left, but how it had changed! The walls and ceiling were covered with leaves and trees and it looked like a forest. There were all the plants of Christmas: holly, ivy, mistletoe and red berries covering the branches all over. And the fireplace! It was so changed! That poor fireplace had never felt such a fire as it did now. And on the floor were heaped all sorts of food: turkey, geese, chicken, pies, puddings, apples, peaches, pears and steaming bowls of punch, which made the room misty with their steam. And on a sofa, in the middle of the room, sat a jolly giant with a glowing flame torch in his hand. This he held up as Scrooge entered the room.

"Come in!" said the jolly giant — "Come in!" Scrooge entered the room and stood shyly in front of the Spirit. Though the Spirit had kind eyes; he could not look up into them.

"I am the Ghost of Christmas Present! Come! Look at me!"

The Spirit was wearing a simple deep green robe with fur lining the edges. It was so loose that it hung open in the front. Its feet were uncovered and on its head it wore a holly wreath. Its dark brown, curly hair was long and loose and its cheery smile and happy face was as joyful as the rest of its body. Round its waist was an ancient and rusty scabbard without a sword. "You have never seen anything like me before, eh?"

"No, never," trembled Scrooge.

"You have also never met any of my brothers?"
"I don't think I have. Do you have many?"

"More than eighteen hundred."

"That's a large family," said Scrooge. He looked at the Spirit, "Spirit, take me where you have to. I went last night with another and I have learnt a lesson. So, if you have a lesson to teach me, please take me now!"

"Touch my robe!" commanded the Spirit.

Everything disappeared. No more could he see the holly, the mistletoe, the glorious greenery. No longer were they in the room. Now they stood in the cold outside, in a street where everybody was passing by in a hurry. The street was covered with muddy snow and slush and thick yellow water was trickling down the drainpipes. The sky was gloomy and a mist covered the alleys between the buildings which loomed above menacingly. Heavy particles of soot flew from the chimneys. Yet, despite the bitter cold, it seemed as if there was cheerfulness in the air. And this cheerfulness did not come from the blazing fires but from the hearts of these people who were making merry during the happy season of Christmas.

For the people were shovelling away the snow from the rooftops and singing gaily to each other and now and then throwing a snowball at their friends. Some of the shops were still open and one could see the rich, wares displayed. And the hustling

and bustling that went on! People running into each other as they rushed to Christmas dinners, people leaving their purchases at the shops only to run back again for their parcels. Even the shopkeepers were in a good mood and smiled and laughed with everyone and cracked jokes with giggling girls.

But soon the steeples called everyone to church and chapel and away went the people, dressed in their Sunday best, and jostling each other. But it was the poorest people who interested the Spirit very much and he sprinkled blessings from his torch as they passed him. It was natural to turn and shout at whoever was pushing, but everyone was in a good mood again, saying it was a shame to quarrel on Christmas Day. And so it was!

"Is there a particular flavour in your torch?" asked Scrooge.

"Yes, my own. And I give it especially to poor people. They are the ones who need it the most." The Spirit had a quality, that however large he was, he could squeeze himself through any doorway in any building. And despite his size, he seemed to Scrooge, to be always floating.

Scrooge found that they were now in a smallish neighbourhood and they suddenly entered a house, which he found to be that of his clerk, Bob Cratchit! He was amazed to see the Ghost of Christmas Present sprinkle blessings from his torch, on Bob Cratchit's small house, who earned just fifteen bob!

Mrs Cratchit was setting plates on the table with the help of her second daughter, Belinda. They were both wearing gowns that had already been worn for two Christmases before, but the colourful ribbons they had worn this time made them look as bright as new dresses! And there was young Master Cratchit, wearing his father's shirt on the occasion, peering into a saucepan of potatoes and getting his grand clothes messy. And now entered the two smaller Cratchits running into the room with squeals of delight.

"And where must your father be?" asked Mrs Cratchit. "And your brother Tiny Tim?"

As she was speaking, another girl entered the room. This was the eldest daughter, Martha, who worked in the factory down the road.

"Here's Martha!" cried the children, surrounding the woman. "Here's! Martha! you have never seen such a lovely goose as we are going to have!"

Mrs Cratchit rushed toward Martha and kissed her and took her bonnet.

"You're so late today!" she cried, but happily. "But that doesn't matter now that you are here. Listen! I think that's your father now!"

"Hide, Martha, hide!" shrieked the young Cratchits and dragged Martha behind the door.

In came Bob Cratchit, with at least three feet of muffler dangling from his neck, and his everyday

clothes brushed to make them look fresh for the festivities, with Tiny Tim on his shoulders. And poor Tiny Tim, he held in his hands a little crutch and his legs were in iron braces.

"Where's Martha?" said Bob Cratchit, looking all around the room.

"Not coming," said Mrs Cratchit.

"Not coming!" said Bob Cratchit, his spirits dropping. "Not coming on Christmas Day!" But Martha loved her father and did not like to see him disappointed and ran out of her hiding place and hugged him tight. The young Cratchits took Tiny Tim to the fireplace so that he could see the pudding cooking.

"And how did Tiny Tim behave?" asked Mrs Cratchit.

"He was as good as gold. And I think he enjoyed the service. Sometimes he gets very quiet and starts thinking of all sorts of things. You know, he told me on the way back that he hoped people saw him in church and remembered, on Christmas Day, who made lame beggars walk and blind men see."

Bob's voice was shaking with tears but he became happy again when he saw Tiny Tim walking back to his place by the fireplace with the help of the crutch and his brothers and sisters. He turned to the table and started making his special punch, which he made every Christmas,

At last all the hustle and bustle was over and the meal was set on the table. Grace was said and the family started eating. One would have thought they were eating the best turkey in town and not merely a goose bought from the shop next door. And the praise Mrs Cratchit got for her delicious gravy and the apple sauce and mashed potatoes that accompanied it! All ate heartily and every bit of the bird. And now the plates were being changed by Belinda and Mrs Cratchit left the room to bring in the pudding.

Everyone was nervous now. Suppose it was overdone? Suppose it was underdone? Suppose someone had **STOLEN** it! All sorts of horrors were imagined by the younger Cratchits.

But no, there was the smell of the pastry and then the steam from the pudding entered the room with its delicious smell! In half a minute Mrs Cratchit appeared in the doorway, beaming with pride and holding aloft the pudding —like a cannon ball, so hard and firm it was, and blazing with a fire that had been made with the help of a drop of brandy, and a twig of holly stuck in the top.

Oh, how the pudding was praised! Bob said that it was the best pudding she had made since they had got married. And everyone ate it happily and with gusto. And no one even thought of saying that it was a small pudding for such a large family. Any Cratchit would have blushed to even hint at such a thing.

And then dinner was over and the table was cleared by the girls and the punch was being tasted and fruit and nuts were put on the table. Then the whole family drew round the fire and Bob poured some punch into glasses for everyone.

Then he raised his glass and said, "A Merry Christmas to you, dear. God bless us."

Which all the family echoed.

"God bless us, everyone," said Tiny Tim. He sat close to his father, with his withered hand in his. Bob held him tight to himself, as if afraid someone was going to take him away from him.

"Spirit," said Scrooge suddenly, "tell me if Tiny Tim will live."

"I see an empty chair in the corner," said the Spirit "and an unused crutch without an owner. If these shadows remain unchanged by the future, the child will die."

"Oh, no, no! Tell me he won't die!"

"But what's it to you? And so what? Won't that solve the population problem?"

Scrooge hung his head in shame to hear the good Spirit repeat what he had said to the two gentlemen who had come for contributions.

"Man," said the Spirit, "if you be man enough, then think twice before you say things like that. Who are you to sit in judgement of others and to decide who should live or die? How can you, having so much more than others, condemn those who have

nothing? In the sight of God you may have less value than the millions of people who have less than you!

Scrooge lowered his eyes as the Ghost scolded him but raised them again as he heard his name. It was Bob Cratchit, proposing a toast in his name.

"Mr Scrooge! I give you Mr Scrooge, the Founder of the Feast!"

"The Founder of the Feast, indeed!" snorted Mrs Cratchit. "I wish I had him here. I'd give him a piece of my mind to feast on!"

"My dear, what will the children think? And you must remember, it is Christmas Day!"

"Well, if you insist, I'll drink a toast to him, but only because you are telling me to and because it is Christmas. Otherwise, he doesn't deserve even our thoughts!"

And so they all drank, but it was a full ten minutes before everyone was merry again. And then they sat and talked of the day and Bob Cratchit told them that he might be able to get young Peter a job, which would bring in more money for the family. And how the girls teased him that he would now be grown up like their father and earn money! And how proud they were of him! And then they passed nuts around and Tiny Tim sang a song about a lost child travelling in the snow. And Tiny Tim, who had a very sad voice, sang it very well, indeed.

They were not a well-to-do family. If anything, they had hardly any money to get by. Their clothes

were not very good and they themselves were not very handsome. But they were happy, content, grateful and pleased with one another. And when they faded and looked happier as the Spirit sprinkled his blessings on them, Scrooge's eyes were on Tiny Tim.

5

At the Nephew's

It was snowing very heavily by this time and the darkness outside made the fires in the houses look very cheerful, indeed. The Spirit took Scrooge everywhere, and he saw people merrily taking part in festivities wherever he went.

They went to a dismal mining camp, where the miners, in their tatters, were singing carols and drinking their rum and laughing and enjoying themselves. The Spirit took Scrooge to a lighthouse where only two people lived and even they were making merry because it was Christmas! It took Scrooge deeper over the seas and they came to a ship. They stood among the helmsman, the captain of the ship and the lookout men who were perched on their watches in the cold wind, and heard them singing and humming songs. And every man had a kind word for his fellow man that day!

This was something that Scrooge could not understand. How could people who were poor, who were away from their families and in the roughest of weather, enjoy Christmas?

And suddenly he was surprised further, because, in the middle of the dark seas, he could hear a hearty laugh! And, looking towards the sound he saw it was his nephew with a beaming smile on his face!

They were in the brightly lit room in his nephew's house. There is nothing more infectious than laughter, and soon the nephew had his pretty wife and their friends all laughing.

"And he said that Christmas was a humbug!"

"More shame on him too, Fred," said the wife.

"He's a comical fellow, and not as pleasant as he could be," said the nephew. "And I think that that is his own punishment, so I have nothing to say against him."

"He's very rich, isn't he?"

"And what use is that wealth to him? He doesn't use it to make himself comfortable.

Scrooge's niece said she didn't like him, and her sisters echoed her feelings.

"Oh, I am sorry for him," said the nephew. "And anyway, he's the only one who suffers by his bad mood. And if he won't come here, what difference does it make?"

"Well, he loses a very good dinner," said Scrooge's niece.

At which everyone agreed, because they had all just finished dinner and dessert and were now sitting around the fire.

Well, I'm glad you think so," said Scrooge's nephew, her husband. "I don't have much faith in housewives now, do you, Topper?"

Now, Topper was a friend of Fred's and he had an eye on one of the pretty sisters of Scrooge's niece. He answered that it was terrible to be a bachelor, at which the sister blushed like a rose.

"Do go on, Fred," said the niece, "what were you saying about your uncle?"

"Well, I'll say just this. I don't think he can enjoy himself by being alone and I'm sure he has no friends to keep him company and no pleasant outings. So I am going to give him every chance to come to my house for Christmas because I pity him. And if he keeps shouting about Christmas, that's not my problem. But you never know it might make him think better of his poor clerk and he might leave him fifty pounds!"

At this all of them laughed to think of Scrooge leaving anything to anybody. And then they got down to enjoying the evening. They cleared the room and sang songs. It was not very grand music, though Topper sang in a powerful voice, and the niece played on her little piano, but the song was one Scrooge remembered from the days when he was a little boy and his heart softened more and more. He thought that if he had listened to it more often he might have learned to be a better person.

But they didn't sing songs all evening. They started playing games, for it is good to be like

children sometimes. They played a game of Blindman's Buff. And Topper could not have really tied his eyes tightly because he always ran after the niece's sister, much to everyone's merriment. Wherever she went, he ran after her! It was such a sight to see, and I'm sure the nephew and the Ghost of Christmas Present also knew of this plot!

And then they all settled down to catch their breath and started a game of forfeits. One person would give clues and everyone else would guess what the person meant. All the people joined in the game, and the Spirit smiled to see even Scrooge shouting his guesses, even though the company could not hear him. And Scrooge was very proud to see that his niece was very good at the game and often got the right answers! Scrooge begged to stay till the guests had left but the Spirit said they would have to be leaving soon.

"Only half-an-hour more!" begged Scrooge.

Now they were playing a new game, called 'Yes or No', where Scrooge's nephew had to think of something and the rest had to find out by asking questions to which he could answer only Yes or No. And the way they asked their questions! It came to be that he was thinking of an animal, a live animal, a grumpy animal, an animal that grunted and growled sometimes, and talked sometimes, and lived in London, and walked around the streets, and did not live in the zoo, and was never killed in the market, and was not a horse, or a cow, or a dog, or a

pig, or a cat or a bear. At every question the nephew would roar with laughter and was so tickled that he had to stand up and stamp his feet and hold his sides while laughing.

At last the pretty sister shouted, "I know who it is. It is your Uncle Scrooge!"

Which it certainly was! Everyone said that the answer to "Is it a bear?" should have been "Yes," and everyone laughed and joined in the merriment.

Wiping his eyes after a fresh bout of laughing, Fred said, "I think we should drink a toast to him for having let us enjoy ourselves so much, I say, here's to you, Uncle Scrooge! And a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to the old man, wherever he is!"

Scrooge would have thanked him with a speech, he was so happy to be there, but the Spirit tugged at him and they were on their travels once again. They went all over the world, and Scrooge stood beside sick-beds and they were cheerful, in foreign lands and they were close to home, by struggling men and they were full of hope, by poverty and they were rich. In charity houses, hospitals, and jails, and where there was misery, and where vain man had not closed his heart, the Spirit left his blessings, and the people were happy and content. It was a long night, and as the night went on, Scrooge noticed that though he remained the same, the Spirit seemed to be growing older and older, till its hair was suddenly white.

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

"My life ends tonight," said the Spirit. "When the clock strikes 12. Can you hear that sound? The clock has started chiming. At the last chime I will die."

"Forgive me for saying this, but do I see a claw under your robe?"

"It might be a claw, because the flesh is still there. Look here." He opened the folds of his robe. Scrooge saw two children hiding there. They were horrible to look at, a boy and a girl, yellow, thin, ragged and scowling. Where they should have been young and blooming, they were withered like old people. They were ugly and mean and Scrooge was shocked at these two monsters.

"Spirit! Are they yours?"

"They are Man's. And they cling to me. This boy is Ignorance. And this girl is Want. Beware of them both, but beware of this boy because I see written on his forehead DOOM, and unless you stay far away from him, you are also doomed!"

The bell struck 12.

Scrooge looked around for the ghost but could not find it. And as the last stroke of 12 finished vibrating, he remembered Jacob Marley's warning, and, looking up, saw walking towards him a Phantom draped in a long robe with a hood, coming like a mist over the ground.

6

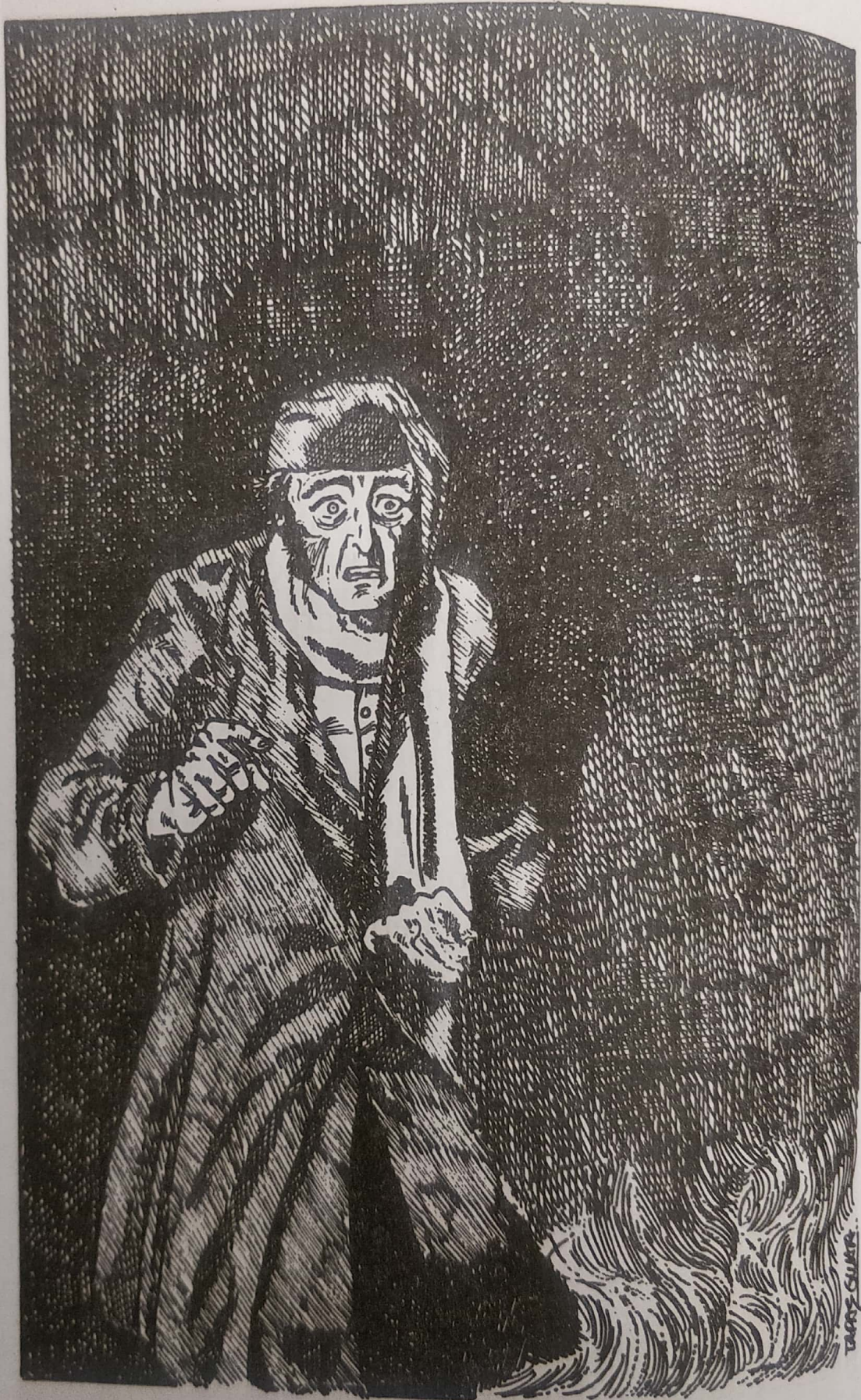
The Last of the Three Spirits

The Phantom slowly and silently floated towards him. When it came near him, Scrooge knelt on the ground, because he was very scared of this gloomy spirit.

The Spirit was covered in a black robe which hid its head, its face, its form, and left nothing visible, except for its hand, which was stretched out with its finger pointing in front of it. But for the hand Scrooge would not have been able to tell where the night ended and where the Spirit began. Scrooge was filled with fear and dread. Especially since the Spirit did not utter a word but just stood there, pointing with its bony finger.

"Am I in the presence of the Spirit of Christmas Yet to Come?" The Spirit did not answer but pointed ahead.

"You are going to show me the shadows of what has not happened but will happen in time to come,



The Spirit was covered in a black robe...

isn't it?" There was a movement at the top of the robe as if the Spirit had nodded. And that was the only answer it gave.

Although well used to ghostly company by now, this Spirit filled Scrooge with fear and he followed him slowly.

"Spirit! I am very scared of you, but as I know that what you will show me will do me good, I am willing to come with you. Take me wherever you have to."

The Phantom glided away in front of him. Scrooge followed in the shadow of its robe and they floated upwards. Suddenly they were in the heart of the city, among the merchants, who hurried up and down, rolling their money in their pockets. They walked towards each other and were talking in groups. Scrooge went closer to them to hear what they were saying.

"No," said a fat man with a huge chin, "I do not know much about it either. All I know is that he is dead."

"When did he die?"

"Last night, I think."

"Why, what was the matter with him? I thought he would never die."

"God knows," said the other, yawning.

"What has he done with his money?"

"Left it to his company, I guess. I haven't heard anything about it. He hasn't left it to ME, that's for sure!"

They all laughed.

"It will be a cheap funeral, I guess. Should we make a group and go?"

"I won't go unless I get lunch there."

Another laugh.

"Well," said the first speaker, "I think I will have to go because I must have been his best friend. After all, he used to stop and talk to me when we met on the street." They all laughed and went back to their offices. Scrooge knew the man and looked towards the Phantom for explanation.

The Phantom glided away towards two men who were talking to each other. He knew these men very well, because they were very rich and he had always tried to be friendly with them. "How are you?" asked one.

"How are you?" said the other.

"Well. So, the old geezer finally got it, eh?"

"So I am told. Isn't it cold?"

"Well, what else do you expect at Christmas time?"

"Yes. Alright, be seeing you."

Not another word. That was all they said and Scrooge was surprised that the Phantom wanted him to hear their conversation. Anyway, he thought, he must have his reasons. They could not be talking

about his friend Marley, because he was already dead and that was in the past. Nor could he think of anyone else he knew that they could have been talking about. But he was sure it was part of the lesson, so he said nothing.

He looked all over for himself, but saw someone else sitting in his usual chair, and saw himself nowhere. It was surprising, because he had been thinking of changing his life and had hoped he would see his new image with the Spirit of the Future.

The Phantom stood next to him, with its outstretched hand. He felt it looking at him with its unseen eyes, and shivered.

They left the business area and entered the other side of town, a place of foul alleys and dirty, dark buildings, where people wore tattered clothes and were drunken and sloppy most of the time. The whole place stank of crime and Scrooge realised that he had come to the den of criminals.

They entered a small hovel, a room, if you could call it that, which was below a roof on the top of a ramshackle building. Upon the floor were old rags, bottles and bones. This was the place where stolen goods were sold. There were all kinds of nails, chains, hinges, and junk iron. Sitting by a coal stove made of bricks was an old rascal, nearly seventy years old, who protected himself from the biting wind by hanging tattered cloth from a line. This person answered to the name of Old Joe.

Scrooge entered the hovel just as a man dressed in black and two women also entered. The three persons were surprised to see each other, and burst out laughing after a second.

"Well, well, you all couldn't have met in a better place," said Old Joe. "Come into the parlour, come into the parlour."

They all entered and the first woman threw her bundle on to the floor.

"Every person has a right to take care of himself doesn't he?" she said, "And we all know HE did! And there's no need to stare at me like that! After all, we're not picking each others' pockets."

"No, indeed," said the other two.

"Well, then, who's going to care if a few things are stolen? Surely not a dead man!"

"No, indeed," said the other woman, laughing.

"If he wanted them when he was dead, he should have been more natural while he was alive. Then he would have had someone taking care of him, instead of lying there, gasping for breath, all alone!"

"That's the truest word you have said," said the other woman, "it's a judgement on him."

I wish there were a harsher judgement," the first woman said, "Open that bundle, Joe, and tell me how much you'll give me for it. I don't care if these two see what I have stolen. It's not a sin taking things from HIM.

But her friends, who were the laundress and the undertaker's assistant, said they would show their wares first, and the man in black opened his bundle. He had not taken much. There was a pencil-case, a pair of cufflinks, and a brooch of no value at all. They were examined by old Joe, who wrote the account on the wall.

"And not a sixpence more," he said after he had given his verdict. "There's no value in these things. Who's next?"

The laundress displayed sheets, two old-fashioned spoons, a pair of sugar-tongs and a few boots. Her account was also chalked on the wall.

"I always give the ladies too much," he grinned. "And now my bundle," said the charwoman.

Joe went down on his knees and untied the knot. Rolls of cloth fell out.

"What's this? Bed curtains?"

"Yes," smiled the charwoman.

"You mean to say you took the curtains with him lying in bed?"

"Yes, I did. What's wrong? And don't drop oil on the blankets, now!"

"You mean you've got his BLANKETS, too?"

"Whose else do you think I have got? He isn't going to catch a cold now," she laughed.

"I hope he didn't die of infection?"

“Don’t be afraid of that. He was never in anybody’s company. You can examine that shirt as much as you want, you won’t find a hole, in it. They wanted to bury him in it, can you believe it? What a waste it would have been!” she cried, and shrieked, with laughter.

Scrooge was listening to this with growing horror. He looked at them with disgust as if they were demons on this earth.

“Spirit! I see, I see. The case of this unhappy man could very well be my own. If I don’t watch out I may end up this way! But — God! Where have we come?”

7

The Dead Man

He drew back in horror, because the scene had changed and he almost touched a bed. A bare, uncurtained bed on which beneath a ragged sheet lay a dead body.

The room was in darkness but a pale light came from somewhere to fall upon the body. The sheet was covering the face, and if Scrooge had just lifted a finger he would have been able to see who it was. But he did not have the power to do so.

Scrooge thought if this man could get up now, what would his first thoughts be? Of greed, money and more greed! Poor unhappy man! How his greed and way of life had brought him to this end. No one to mourn him, or to say he was kind to me and so I will remember him. The only creatures that wanted to be near the body were a cat mewing at the door and rats scratching beneath the fireplace. They wanted to be in this room of death.

"Spirit! This is a dreadful place. Let us leave!"
But the Phantom pointed its finger at the bed.

"I understand what you want me to do. But I cannot see the face of this man. Let us go!"

Again it seemed to look at him.

"If there is any person who has some feeling at this person's death, please show him to me. Spirit! I beg you!"

The Spirit spread its robe in front of itself and Scrooge saw a woman waiting in her house with an anxious look on her face. She was walking up and down the room, as if something was worrying her.

At last her husband came home and she ran to him.

"What happened, is the news good or bad?"

"Bad, but there is hope, Caroline."

"If he has a little mercy, then only there is hope. Otherwise we are ruined."

"I think he is past being merciful. He's dead."

She was a gentle and kind woman, but her first thought was thanks to God, and her second one was that He forgive her.

"To whom will our debt be transferred?"

"I don't know, but at least we will have some more time to repay our debt and I'll be able to get the money by then. Anyway, there can be no one as mean as him!"

Yes, their hearts were lighter, and it was a happier home that night. The only emotion the Spirit could show by that man's death was that of happiness.

"Let me see some tenderness connected with the death, Spirit, or that body will haunt me forever."

The Ghost took him through several streets till they found themselves near Bob Cratchit's house. They entered the house to find Mrs Cratchit sitting by the fire, surrounded by their children. But this time they were all very quiet. Very, very quiet. The noisy little Cratchits were sitting still as statues and Peter was in one corner, reading. The mother and her daughters were stitching quietly.

"And he took a child, and set him in the midst of them!"

Where had Scrooge heard these words? He had not dreamed them. The young boy must have read them out of the book.

"Your father is a little late today," said Mrs Cratchit. "He has been walking slowly these days."

They were all quiet again. Then she spoke in a very brave voice, "Well, I have known him walk very fast — with Tiny Tim on his shoulder."

"And so have I!" they all agreed.

"But then, Tiny Tim was very light and your father loved him so. And there is your father come home at last."

She hurried out to meet him, and in came Bob, with his muffler. Tea was ready for him and the young Cratchits both climbed onto his knees and they laid their cheek on his and said, "Don't be sad, Father! Don't be sad!"

Then Bob was very cheerful with them and told the girls that their stitching was so fast that he was sure they would be finished by Sunday.

"Did you go today, Bob?"

"Yes, my dear," said Bob. "I wish you could have seen it. It was so green and lovely. But you'll see it often. I promised him that I would walk there every Sunday. My little child! My little, little child!"

He started crying all of a sudden, he couldn't help it. And he went upstairs to a room which had been decorated for Christmas and sat next to the bed. He thought a bit and then leaned over and kissed the little face and went downstairs again.

He drew near the fire and told them how he had met Mr Scrooge's nephew, who had asked him why he was looking so sad. "And so I told him my dear, and he told me that if I ever needed any help I should meet him. And he was so kind I felt it was as if he had known Tiny Tim, and felt as sad as we did,"

"I'm sure he's a good man."

"I would be sure of that. Maybe he can help Peter get a good job."

"And then Peter could set up his own company!" teased the girls.

"I'm sure he could. But however we part company, I am sure that none of us will forget the first parting we have had in the family and we will never forget Tiny Tim, will we?"

"No, never. Father!" they all cried.

"I am very happy," said Bob.

Mrs Cratchit kissed him, and the girls kissed him, and the young Cratchits kissed him and Peter shook his hand. Spirit of Tiny Tim, your childish essence was from God!

"Oh, Spirit, I know it is nearly time for us to part company. But you must tell me who that person was who was lying in that bed."

They came to a churchyard. The Phantom pointed through the iron gate into the churchyard. So here was the poor fellow buried. It was a small, cramped yard, and not tended by anyone. There were weeds all over the tiny graves. The Spirit stood there, among the many graves and pointed to one of them. Scrooge approached it, trembling.

"Before I look at the name on the stone, will you tell me something? Are these all shadows of what WILL be or what MAY be?" The Spirit silently pointed to the grave.

"I know that if man acts in a certain way, then there will be a certain end for him. But if he changes his ways, will the end be the same? Tell me that this is not so!" The Spirit did not move.

Scrooge crept toward the grave, shaking as he went. He followed the finger and read upon the stone of the uncared for grave his own name: EBENEZER SCROOGE.

“Am I that man who lay upon the bed?”

The finger pointed to the grave,

“No, Spirit! No, no, NO!”

The finger was still there.

“Spirit! I am not the same person I was before. I have changed, I promise you! Why do you show me all this if there is no hope for me?” The hand started to shake.

“Good Spirit, I know you pity me. Tell me there is hope for me.”

In his agony he clung to the hand of the Spirit, which tried to free itself.

And then, he noticed a great change in the Spirit. It seemed to be shrinking, and becoming smaller and smaller each second. And then it collapsed and became a bedpost.

8

The End of it All

And the bedpost was his own. The bed was his own, the room was his own. And the best of all, the Time before him was his own. And he could make a better man of himself in it!

"I will live in the Past, Present and the Future," said Scrooge as he jumped out of bed. "The spirits of all three will live in me! Oh, Jacob Marley! Thank God for Heaven and Christmas-time!"

He was so shaken and glowing that his voice was trembling and his face was full of tears. He looked around and saw his belongings in the right places.

"They are not torn down, the curtains are still there! They are here and I am here! The shadow of what might be can be erased. I am sure of that! There's the fireplace, there's the bowl of soup, there's the door that Jacob came in by, there's the window. It's all right, it's all true! I saw it all!"

For a man who had been out of practice laughing, Scrooge gave splendid laugh, loud and long...

"I'm like a baby! Why, I don't even know what day it is!" He ran to the window and flung it open.

"Hallo, there," he called out to a little boy in the street, "What day is it?"

The boy looked surprised. "What day is it? Why, it's CHRISTMAS DAY!"

"It's Christmas Day! I haven't missed it then. The Spirits have done it all in one night, then. Hello, my lad, do you know where the butcher's shop is?"

"Of course, I do!"

"What an intelligent boy! Well, do you know if they have managed to sell that big turkey that was hung over there?"

"You mean the one as big as me? No, they haven't."

"Well, I want you to go and buy it. And then I want you to take it somewhere. I shall give you a shilling for that, and if you're double-quick, I'll give you half a crown." The boy was off like a shot.

Scrooge rubbed his hands in glee. "I'll send it to Bob Cratchit's place! He won't know who sent it! Ha, ha! What fun I'm having!"

He went downstairs to wait for the boy to come back and his eye fell on the knocker.

"I shall love it as long as I live! What an honest expression it has! Ah, there you are, my lad. Why, this turkey is too big for you to carry. You must take a cab. Now go to this address, and here's the money and keep the change! "



He ran to the window and flung it open.

He was chuckling as he said this and chuckling as he paid the boy, and chuckling so much that he had to sit down to catch his breath. Finally he got dressed in his best clothes and went out. The people were by this time filling the streets and rejoicing in the holiday and calling greetings to each other, just as he had seen with the Ghost of Christmas Present. He himself looked so happy that at least four people wished him Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

And, as Scrooge said later, they were the sweetest sounds that he had heard for a long time.

He had not gone very far when he saw one of the gentlemen who had come to his office the previous day asking for contributions. He was now ashamed of his behaviour and knew the gentleman would not even look at him and that it was up to him to take the first step. So he walked up to the gentleman.

"My dear sir," he said, taking hold of the old gentleman's hand, "how do you do? A very Merry Christmas to you. I hope you were able to get some money yesterday?"

"Is it Mr Scrooge?"

"Yes, the very same. And I want you to" He leaned over and whispered in this, old man's ear.

"Goodness me!" said the gentleman. "My dear Mr Scrooge, are you sure?"

"Please, not a penny less. You must do this for me." "But, Sir, this is too much,..."

"Don't say anything, please. Come and see me tomorrow and we will discuss it. Good day!"

He then went to church and walked about the streets and watched the people walking to and fro and spoke to beggars and looked into people's houses and generally enjoyed himself. In the afternoon, he went to his nephew's house.

And now he was nervous and walked up and down the street on which his nephew lived before he could muster up the courage to knock on the door. It was opened by a pretty little maid who showed him to the sitting-room. He turned the door-knob and quietly entered the room. It was all exactly as he had seen it with the Spirit. They were all there, examining the table before the guests arrived.

"Fred!" called Scrooge, startling the niece, who nearly fell off the stool she was sitting on.

"Bless my soul, who's that?" said Fred.

"It is I, your Uncle Scrooge. Will you let me in? I have come for dinner."

Let him in!

In a few seconds he was at home with the nephew and niece, as if it was his normal routine to come there for Christmas dinner. His niece looked just as she had when he had come with the Spirit, and so did her sisters, and so did Topper, when he came in. And the games were the same and what a wonderful time everyone had and what a wonderful time Scrooge had!

But he was early at office the next day. He wanted to be there before Bob Cratchit came in. And sure enough, Bob was a full eighteen minutes late! Scrooge had his office door open, so when Bob rushed in and hurriedly sat at his desk, he saw him.

"Hallo," growled Scrooge in his usual voice, or at least tried to growl, because he was slowly forgetting how to. "What do you mean by coming in at this time of the day?"

"I am very sorry. I am late. But, it's only once a year sir."

"Step this way, if you please, sir!" said Scrooge. Poor Bob came towards him.

"I am not going to allow this kind of behaviour any more. And so," he said, giving Bob a dig in the ribs, "I am going to raise your salary!" Bob moved towards the ruler on the desk. He thought the old man had gone mad, and for a minute thought of using it as a weapon.

"A Merry Christmas, Bob!" said Scrooge in a jolly tone that could not be mistaken. "A merrier Christmas than I have ever given you, my boy. I'll raise your salary and help you with your family. We will discuss your problems sometime. But before you do anything go and buy another scuttle of coal before you dot another i!"

Scrooge was as good as his word and did all he promised. And to Tiny Tim, who did NOT die, he was like a second father and became a good friend, master and as good a man as the city ever knew.

Some people laughed to see the change in him, but he let them laugh and laughed along with them.

He was not visited by any more spirits, but he was a good man, and it was always said that he knew how to celebrate Christmas if anyone did. And may that be said of all of us. And so, like Tiny Tim said, God bless us everyone!

Comprehension Exercises

Chapter 1

Questions

1. What were Scrooge's thoughts on the death of his partner, Marley?
2. What did Scrooge's nephew feel about Christmas time?
3. What did Scrooge reply to the two men who came asking for money for the poor?
4. How was Christmas being celebrated in the city outside?

Vocabulary

undertaker — one who manages, funerals; assistant helper; *holly* — a green shrub used for Christmas decorations; *charitable* — kind; *politician* — one of those responsible for running the country; *asylum* — a place which gives protection to the mentally aged; *calling card* — a small card with one's name and address, used when visiting people; *grumpily* — in a grumbling manner

Grammar

1. Make sentences with the following.
dead as a doornail; sharp as a stone; secret as an oyster, as hard as pelting ram.
2. Complete the following phrases with words from the chapter: as white as _____; as bright as _____; as merry as _____; as black as _____.
3. Make sentences with the above phrases after completing them.

Chapter 2

Questions

1. What kind of face did Scrooge see on the door?
2. What sounds did Scrooge hear before Marely's ghost appeared?
3. What did Marley's ghost tell Scrooge about the Three Spirits?
4. Why were the ghosts outside Scrooge's window moaning and wailing?

Vocabulary

knocker — a metal ring on a door, for knocking;
clanging — making a sharp sound; *ledger* — a book of accounts; *vapours* — mists, rising in the air;
hobgoblin — fairy; *wafted* — floated

Grammar

1. Make sentences with the following words from the chapter, ending each sentence with an exclamation mark (!)
flew, believe, wrong, dropped, strike.
2. Insert exclamation marks at the right places in the following sentences:
 - a. "Humbug" said Scrooge. "Humbug I tell you"
 - b. Yours will be longer and heavier because you have lived longer than I
 - c. "You have always been a good friend, Jacob Thank you"
3. What is the meaning of the following sentence?
"Trade was just a drop in the ocean of being good to mankind."

Chapter 3

Questions

1. Whom did Scrooge see when the clock struck 1?
2. Where did the Spirit take Scrooge? Who were the people he saw?
3. Describe the Christmas party that was taking place at the house of Mr Fezziwig.
4. Why did Belle leave Scrooge many years ago?

Vocabulary

chime — strike; *warehouse* — a shop or storehouse; *trainees* — those being taught or trained; *antics* — actions

Grammar

1. What do the following sentences, taken from the chapter, mean?
 - a. She had a large heart.
 - b. Before you could say Jack Robinson, the young men had cleared the room.
 - c. Another love has taken my place in your heart.

2. Make sentences with the following phrases:
after what seemed like ages; more than money can buy; with a full heart; praise to the skies; heart leapt with happiness; gentle as a woman.

Now locate these phrases in the chapter and write down the complete sentences within which they appear.

Chapter 4

Questions

1. Describe the Spirit of Christmas Present.
2. On whom did the Spirit shine his torch and why?

3. What sort of Christmas did the Cratchits have?
4. What did Scrooge feel about Tiny Tim?
5. Why did Mrs Cratchit disapprove of the Founder of the Feast?

Vocabulary

punch — a sweet drink of fruit juices mixed with wine; *scabbard* — the covering of a sword; *wreath* — a crown of leaves or flowers; *menacingly* — frighteningly; *wares* — goods to be bought; *grace* — a short prayer of blessing or thanks for a meal; *steeple* — church tower; *bonnet* — soft ladies' cap

Grammar

1. Which of the words from the following phrases are describing words?

blazing fires; kind eyes; glorious greenery; cheery smile; dark blown, curly hair.

Make sentences of your own with them.

2. What parts of speech are the words described above? Make sentences with them, using different describing words.
3. Look at the following nouns: *light*, *room*, *slippers*, *door*. Make a paragraph of four sentences, using these nouns.

Chapter 5

Questions

1. What did Scrooge see with the Spirit over the seas, which he could not understand?
2. What did Scrooge's nephew think of his uncle?
3. What other places did Scrooge and the Spirit visit, and what did they see?
4. What did the Spirit warn Scrooge against the two ugly children hidden in its robe?

Vocabulary

tatters — torn clothes; *helmsman* — the man who directs a ship; *bachelor* — unmarried man; *clues* — hints; *grumpy* — unhappy and complaining; *bout* — outburst; *doom* — bad end; *phantom* — ghost; *vibrating* — shaking

Grammar

1. Identify the verbs in the following sentences:
 - a. The miners were singing carols and drinking their rum and laughing and enjoying themselves.
 - b. The nephew had his pretty wife and their friends all laughing.
 - c. Scrooge remembered the song from the days when he was a little boy.

2. Make sentences with the following phrases:
hear a hearty laugh; as pleasant as could be; hold his sides laughing; full of hope; young and blooming
3. Change the following sentences into past tense:
- They are all sitting around the fire.
 - It is terrible to be a bachelor.
 - I am sure my nephew knows of this plot.

Chapter 6

Questions

- Why was Scrooge scared of the Spirit of Christmas Yet To Come?
- Why were the people unkind about the dead man?
- What were the things stolen from Scrooge at the time of his death?
- What did Scrooge feel after all that the last Spirit showed him?

Vocabulary

dread — fear; *geezer* — idiot; *stank* — smelt very bad; *ramshackle* — likely to fall to pieces; *laundress* — woman, who washes clothes; *verdict* — judgement; *charwoman* — a woman who does the rough cleaning of a house

Grammar

1. Find two words in the chapter which mean the same as: a. ghost b. fear
2. Find two words in the chapter which are the opposite of:
 - a. everywhere
 - b. seen
3. What do the following mean?
 - a. But for the hand Scrooge would not have been able to tell where the night ended and where the Spirit began.
 - b. After all we are not picking each others' pockets.

Chapter 7

Questions

1. What did Caroline and her husband feel at the death of Scrooge?
2. Why were the Cratchits quiet that evening?
3. What do these sentences mean?
 - a. "And he took a child, and set him in the midst of them!"
 - b. Spirit of Tiny Tim, your essence was from God!
4. What did Scrooge realise when he came across his own grave with the Spirit of the Future?

Vocabulary

transferred — sent from one person or place to another; *mercy* — kindness and pity; *emotion* — feeling; *essence* — inner nature; *cramped* — crowded; *agony* — extreme suffering; *bedpost* — corner support of a bed

Grammar

1. Make a list of words from the chapter which are connected with death.
2. Rewrite the following sentences without quotation marks.
 - a. "Don't be sad, Father! Don't be sad!"
 - b. "And then Peter could set up his own company!" teased the girls.
 - c. "Spirit! I am not the same person I was before!"
3. Complete the following sentences with the words *were* or *was*:
 - a. There _____ weeds all over the tiny graves.
 - b. You must tell me who that person _____ who _____ lying in that bed.
 - c. The finger _____ still there.

Chapter 8

Questions

1. With what feelings did Scrooge wake up the next morning?
2. What was the first thing Scrooge did on Christmas morning?
3. What did Scrooge intend to do about the gentleman who had come to him for contributions?
4. How did Scrooge spend Christmas Day with his nephew and niece?
5. What happened the day after Christmas?

Vocabulary

erased — rubbed or forgotten; *chuckling* — laughing quietly; *muster* — gather; *scuttle* — rush about

Grammar

1. Make sentences with the following phrases:
If you're double-quick; off like a shot; catch his breath
2. Divide the following sentences into subject and predicate.
 - a. I will live in the past, present and future.
 - b. He ran to the windows and flung it open.
 - c. I shall give you a shilling for that.

3. Complete the following sentences using *a*, *an* or *the*.

- a. He went to his nephew's house in _____ afternoon.
- b. He walked up to _____ gentleman.
- c. It was opened by _____ pretty little maid.
- d. In _____ instant he was at home with the nephew.



MADHUBUN SUPPLEMENTARY READER

A CHRISTMAS CAROL

Ebenezer Scrooge was a lonely miser of a man, the meanest there ever was. He only loved money, and even when his best friend died, all he could think of was how to save on the funeral.

One Christmas eve, Scrooge was visited by three spirits. The experiences that he underwent with them shook his conscience – and his world, but did Scrooge change for the better?

Charles Dickens in his inimitable style blends in emotions with high drama and conveys a powerful social message.

The book is

- Adapted and designed to suit young readers
- Structured supplementary reading – simple language, graded vocabulary and comprehension exercises
- Ideal for classrooms, libraries and personal collection.

MADHUBUN® EDUCATIONAL BOOKS
A DIV. OF VISION PUBLISHING HOUSE PRIVATE LIMITED
Register's Office. For book returns with Company Replacement Warranty.
For further details, please refer to the cover page of the book.



V18J22WJD0P5

Level I

Level II

Level III

Level IV