

A CHRISTMAS CAROL [Illustration: _ "How now?" said Scrooge, caustic and cold as ever.
"What do you want with me?"_] A CHRISTMAS CAROL [Illustration] BY CHARLES DICKENS
[Illustration] ILLUSTRATED BY ARTHUR RACKHAM [Illustration] J. B. LIPPINCOTT COMPANY
PHILADELPHIA AND NEW YORK FIRST PUBLISHED 1915 REPRINTED 1923, 1927, 1932,
1933, 1934, 1935, 1947, 1948, 1952, 1958, 1962, 1964, 1966, 1967, 1969, 1971, 1972, 1973
ISBN: 0-397-00033-2 PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN PREFACE I have endeavoured in this
Ghostly little book to raise the Ghost of an Idea which shall not put my {{{{{{readers}}}}} out of
humour with themselves, with each other, with the season, or with me. May it {{{{haunt}}}} their
house pleasantly, and no one wish to lay it. Their {{{{{{{{{faithful}}}}}} Friend and
Servant, C. D. _December, 1843._

CHARACTERS Bob Cratchit, clerk to Ebenezer Scrooge.
Peter Cratchit, a son of the preceding. Tim Cratchit ("Tiny Tim"), a cripple, youngest son of Bob
Cratchit. Mr. Fezziwig, a kind-{{{{{{{{{{hearted}}}}}}, jovial old merchant. Fred,
Scrooge's nephew. Ghost of Christmas Past, a phantom showing things past. Ghost of
Christmas Present, a spirit of a kind, generous, and hearty nature. Ghost of Christmas Yet to
Come, an apparition showing the shadows of things which yet may happen. Ghost of Jacob
Marley, a spectre of Scrooge's former partner in business. Joe, a marine}}}-
{{{{{{store}}}} {{{{{{dealer}}}}} and {{receiver}} of stolen
{{goods}}}. Ebenezer Scrooge, a grasping, covetous old man, the surviving partner of the
firm of Scrooge and Marley. Mr. Topper, a bachelor. Dick Wilkins, a fellow apprentice of
Scrooge's. Belle, a comely matron, an old {sweetheart}} of Scrooge's. Caroline,
wife of one of Scrooge's {{{{{debtors}}}}. Mrs. Cratchit, wife of Bob Cratchit. Belinda and
Martha Cratchit, daughters of the preceding. Mrs. Dilber, a laundress. Fan, the sister of
Scrooge. Mrs. Fezziwig, the worthy partner of Mr. Fezziwig.

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Stave Five 137 Tailpiece to Stave Five 147 [Illustration] STAVE ONE [Illustration] MARLEY'S
GHOST Marley was dead, to begin with. There is no doubt whatever about that. The
{{{{{{{{register}}}} of his burial was signed by the {{{clergyman}}}, the clerk,
the undertaker, and the {{{chief}} mourner. Scrooge signed it. And Scrooge's name was
good upon 'Change for anything he chose to put his hand to. Old Marley was as dead as a door-
nail. Mind! I don't mean to say that I know of my own knowledge, what there is
{{particularly}} dead about a door-nail. I might have been inclined, myself, to
{{regard}} a {{{coffin}}}-nail as the
{{deadest}} piece of {{{ironmongery}} in the trade. But the
{{wisdom}} of our {{{ancestors}} is in the {{{simile}}};

and my unhallowed}}}}} hands shall not {{disturb}}}}} it, or the country's done for. You will, therefore, {{{{{{permit}}}}}} me to {{{{{repeat}}}}}, {{{{{{emphatically}}}}}}, that Marley was as dead as a door-nail. Scrooge knew he was dead? Of course he did. How could it be otherwise? Scrooge and he were partners for I don't know how many years. Scrooge was his sole {{{{executor}}}}, his sole {{{{{{administrator}}}}}}, his sole {assign}}}, his sole {{{{{residuary}}}} {{{{legatee}}}, his sole friend, and sole mourner. And even Scrooge was not so {{{dreadfully}}}} cut up by the sad event but that he was an {{{{{{excellent}}}}} man of business on the very day of the funeral, and {{{{{{solemnised}}}}} it with an {{{{{{undoubted}}}}} bargain. The mention of Marley's funeral {{{{{{brings}}}}} me back to the point I started from. There is no doubt that Marley was dead. This must be {{{distinctly}}}} understood, or nothing wonderful can come of the {{{{{{story}}}}} I am going to {{{{relate}}}}}. If we were not perfectly convinced that Hamlet's father died before the play began, there would be nothing more remarkable in his taking a {{{{{{stroll}}}}} at night, in an {{{{{{easterly}}}}} wind, upon his own {{{ramparts}}}}, than there would be in any other middle- {{{{{{aged}}}}} gentleman {{{rashly}}}} turning out after dark in a {{{{{{breezy}}}}} {{{{{{spot}}}}}--say St. Paul's Churchyard, for {{{instance}}}-{{{literally}}}} to astonish}}}} his son's weak mind. Scrooge never {{{{{{painted}}}}} out Old Marley's name. There it stood, years afterwards, above the warehouse door: Scrooge and Marley. The firm was known as Scrooge and Marley. 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 a tight- {{{fisted}}}} hand at the {{{{{{grindstone}}}}}}, Scrooge! a {{{{{{squeezing}}}}}, {{{wrenching}}}, grasping, scraping, clutching, covetous old {{{sinner}}}! Hard and sharp as {{{flint}}}}, from which no steel had ever struck out generous fire; secret, and self-{{{contained}}}}, and solitary as an {oyster}}}. The cold within him {{{froze}}}} his old features, nipped his pointed nose, shrivelled his cheek, {{{stiffened}}}} his {{{gait}}}}; made his eyes red, his {{{thin}}}} lips {{{blue}}}; and spoke out {{{shrewdly}}}} in his {{{grating}}}} voice. A {{{frosty}}}} {rime}} was on his head, and on his eyebrows, and his {{{wiry}}}} chin. He carried his own low {{{temperature always about with him; he {{{iced}}}} his office in the dog-days, and didn't {thaw it one degree at Christmas. External heat and cold had little influence on Scrooge. No warmth could warm, no wintry weather {{{chill}}}} him. No wind that blew was {{{bitterer}}}} than he, no falling snow was more intent upon its purpose, no {{{pelting}}}} rain less open to entreaty. Foul weather didn't know where to have him. The {{{heaviest}}}} rain, and snow, and {{{hail}}}}, and {{{sleet}}}} could {{{boast}}}} of the {{{advantage over him in only one {{{respect}}}}}. They often 'came down' {{{handsomely}}}}, and Scrooge never did. Nobody ever stopped him in the street to say, with {{{gladsome}}}} looks, 'My dear Scrooge, how are you? When will you come to see me?' No beggars {{{implored}}}} him to bestow a {{{trifle}}}}, no children asked him what it was o'clock, no man or woman ever once in all his life inquired the way to such and such a place, of Scrooge. Even the blind men's dogs appeared to know him; and, when they saw him coming on, would tug their {{{owners}}}} into {{{doorways}}}} and up {{{courts}}}}; and then would wag their {{{tails}}}} as though they said, 'No eye at all is better than an {{{evil}}}} eye, dark master!' But what did Scrooge care? It was the very thing he liked. To {{{edge his way along the {{{crowded}}}}} {{{paths}}}} of life, warning all human sympathy to keep its distance, was what the knowing {{{ones}}}} call 'nuts' to Scrooge. Once upon a time--of all the good days in the year, on Christmas Eve--old Scrooge sat busy in his counting-house. It was cold, bleak, biting weather; foggy {{{withal}}}}; and he could hear the people in the court outside go {{{wheezing}}}} up and down, {{{beating}}}} their hands upon their {{{breasts}}}}, and {{{stamping}}}} their feet upon the pavement stones to warm them. The City {{{clocks}}}} had only just gone three, but it was quite dark already--it had not been light all day--and {{{candles}}}} were flaring in the windows of the neighbouring offices,

like ruddy {{{{{{{{{smears}}}}}} upon the {{{palpable}}}} brown air. The fog came pouring in at every {{{chink}}}} and keyhole, and was so dense without, that, although the court was of the {{{narrowest}}}, the houses opposite were mere phantoms. To see the dingy {{{cloud}}}} come {{{drooping}}}} down, {{{obscuring}}}} everything, one might have thought that nature lived hard by, and was {{{brewing}}}} on a large {{{scale}}}}. The door of Scrooge's counting-house was open, that he might keep his eye upon his clerk, who in a dismal little {{{cell}}}} beyond, a sort of tank, was {{{copying}}}} letters. Scrooge had a very small fire, but the clerk's fire was so very much smaller that it looked like one coal. But he couldn't {{{replenish}}}} it, for Scrooge {{{kept}}}} the coal-box in his own room; and so surely as the clerk came in with the shovel, the master predicted that it would be necessary for them to part. Wherefore the clerk put on his white comforter, and tried to warm himself at the candle; in which effort, not being a man of strong {{{imagination, he {{{failed}}}}. 'A merry Christmas, uncle! God save you!' cried a cheerful voice. It was the voice of Scrooge's nephew, who came upon him so quickly that this was the first intimation {{{he had of his approach. 'Bah!' said Scrooge. 'Humbug!' He had so heated himself with rapid walking in the fog and frost, this nephew of Scrooge's, that he was all in a glow; his face was ruddy and handsome; his eyes sparkled, and his breath smoked again. 'Christmas a humbug, uncle!' said Scrooge's nephew. 'You don't mean that, I am sure?' 'I do,' said Scrooge. 'Merry Christmas! What right have you to be merry? What reason have you to be merry? You're poor enough.' 'Come, then,' returned the nephew gaily. 'What right have you to be dismal? What reason have you to be {{{morose}}}}? You're rich enough.' Scrooge, having no better answer ready on the {{{spur}}}} of the moment, said, 'Bah!' again; and followed it up with 'Humbug!' 'Don't be cross, uncle!' said the nephew. 'What else can I be,' returned the uncle, 'when I live in such a world of {{{fools}}}} as this? Merry Christmas! Out upon merry Christmas! What's Christmas-time to you but a time for {{{paying}}}} {{{bills}}}} without money; a time for finding yourself a year older, and not an hour {{{richer}}}}; a time for {{{balancing}}}} your books, and having every {{{item}}}} in 'em through a round dozen of {{{months}}}} presented dead against you? If I could work my will,' said Scrooge indignantly, 'every {{{idiot}}}} who goes about with "Merry Christmas" on his lips should be boiled with his own pudding, and buried with a {{{stake}}}} of holly through his heart. He should!' 'Uncle!' pleaded the nephew. 'Nephew!' returned the uncle {{{sternly}}}, 'keep Christmas in your own way, and let me keep it in mine.' 'Keep it!' repeated Scrooge's nephew. 'But you don't keep it.' 'Let me leave it alone, then,' said Scrooge. 'Much good may it do you! Much good it has ever done you!' 'There are many things from which I might have {{{derived}}}} good, by which I have not {{{profited}}}}, I dare say,' returned the nephew; 'Christmas among the rest. But I am sure I have always thought of Christmas-time, when it has come round--apart from the {{{veneration}}}} due to its {{{sacred}}}} name and {{{origin}}}}, if anything belonging to it can be apart from that--as a good time; a kind, {{{forgiving}}, {{{charitable}}}}, pleasant time; the only time I know of, in the long {{{calendar}}}} of the year, when men and women {{{seem}}}} by one consent to open their shut-up hearts {{{freely}}}}, and to think of people below them as if they really were fellow-passengers to the grave, and not another race of creatures bound on other journeys. And therefore, uncle, though it has never put a {{{scrap}}}} of gold or silver in my pocket, I believe that it _has_ done me good and _will_ do me good; and I say, God bless it!' The clerk in the tank {{{involuntarily}}}} {{{applauded}}}}. Becoming immediately sensible of the impropriety {{{he poked}}}} the fire, and {{{extinguished}}}} the last {{{frail}}}} {{{spark}}}} for ever. 'Let me hear another sound from _you_,' said Scrooge, 'and you'll keep your Christmas by {{{losing}}}} your situation! You're quite a {{{powerful}}}} speaker, sir,' he added, turning to his nephew. 'I wonder you don't go into Parliament.' 'Don't be angry, uncle. Come! Dine with us to-morrow.' Scrooge said that he would see him----Yes, indeed he did. He went the whole length of the expression, and said that he would see him in that {{{extremity}}}} first. 'But why?' cried Scrooge's nephew. 'Why?' 'Why did you get married?' said Scrooge. 'Because I fell in love.' 'Because you fell in love!' growled Scrooge, as if

[illegible]

of a church, whose old bell was always peeping slyly down at Scrooge out of a Gothic window in the wall, became invisible, and struck the hours and quarters in the clouds, with tremulous vibrations afterwards, as if its teeth were chattering in its frozen head up there. The cold became intense. In the main street, at the corner of the court, some labourers were repairing the gas-pipes, and had lighted a great fire in a brazier, round which a party of ragged men and boys were gathered: warming their hands and winking their eyes before the blaze in rapture. The water-plug being left in solitude, its overflowings suddenly congealed, and turned to misanthropic ice. The brightness of the shops, where holly sprigs and berries crackled in the lamp heat of the windows, made pale faces ruddy as they passed. Poulterers' and grocers' trades became a splendid joke: a glorious pageant, with which it was next to impossible to believe that such dull principles as bargain and sale had anything to do. The Lord Mayor, in the stronghold of the mighty Mansion House, gave orders to his fifty cooks and butlers to keep Christmas as a Lord Mayor's household should; and even the little tailor, whom he had fined five shillings on the previous Monday for being drunk and bloodthirsty in the streets, stirred up to-morrow's pudding in his garret, while his lean wife and the baby sallied out to buy the beef. Foggier yet, and colder! Piercing, searching, biting cold. If the good St. Dunstan had but nipped the Evil Spirit's nose with a touch of such weather as that, instead of using his familiar weapons, then indeed he would have roared to lusty purpose. The owner of one young nose, gnawed and mumbled by the hungry cold as bones are gnawed by dogs, stooped down at Scrooge's keyhole to regale him with a Christmas carol; but, at the first sound of 'God bless you, merry gentleman, May nothing you dismay!' Scrooge seized the ruler with such energy of action that the singer fled in terror, leaving the keyhole to the fog, and even more congenial frost. At length the hour of shutting up the counting-house arrived. With an ill-will Scrooge dismounted from his stool, and tacitly admitted the fact to the expectant clerk in the tank, who instantly snuffed his candle out, and put on his hat. '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. If I was to stop half-a-crown for it, you'd think yourself ill used, I'll be bound?' The clerk smiled faintly. 'And yet,' said Scrooge, 'you don't think me ill used when I pay a day's wages for no work.' [Illustration: _Bob Cratchit went down a slide on Cornhill, at the end of a lane of boys, twenty times, in honour of its being Christmas Eve_] The clerk observed that it was only once a year. 'A poor excuse for picking a man's pocket every twenty-fifth of December!' said Scrooge, buttoning his greatcoat to the chin. 'But I suppose you must have the whole day. Be here all the earlier next morning.' The clerk promised that he would; and Scrooge walked out with a growl. The office was closed in a twinkling, and the clerk, with the long ends of his white comforter dangling below his waist (for he boasted no greatcoat), went down a slide on Cornhill, at the end of a lane of boys, twenty times, in honour of its being Christmas Eve, and then ran home to Camden Town as hard as he could pelt, to play at blind man's-buff. Scrooge took his melancholy dinner in his usual melancholy tavern; and having read all the newspapers, and beguiled the rest of the evening with his banker's book, went home to bed. He lived in chambers which had once belonged to his deceased partner. They were a gloomy suite of rooms, in a lowering pile of building up a yard, where it had so little business to be, that one could scarcely help fancying it must have run there when it was a young house, playing at hide-and-seek with other houses, and have forgotten the way out again. It was old enough now, and dreary enough: for nobody lived in it but Scrooge, the other rooms being all let out as offices. The yard

was so dark that even Scrooge, who knew its every stone, was {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{{{fain}}}}}}}}}} to {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{{{grope}}}}}}}}}} with his hands. The fog and frost so hung about the black old {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{{{gateway}}}}}}}}}} of the house, that it seemed as if the Genius of the Weather sat in mournful {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{{{meditation}}}}}}}}}} on the threshold. Now, it is a fact that there was nothing at all particular about the knocker on the door, except that it was very large. It is also a fact that Scrooge had seen it, night and morning, {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{{{during}}}}}}}}}} his whole {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{{{residence}}}}}}}}}} in that place; also that Scrooge had as little of what is called {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{{{fancy}}}}}}}}}} about him as any man in the City of London, even {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{{{including}}}}}}}}}}--which is a bold word--the {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{{{corporation}}}}}}}}}}, {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{{{aldermen}}}}}}}}}}, and {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{{{livery}}}}}}}}}}. Let it also be borne in mind that Scrooge had not {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{{{bestowed}}}}}}}}}} one thought on Marley since his last mention of his seven-years'-dead partner that afternoon. And then let any man {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{{{explain}}}}}}}}}} to me, if he can, how it happened that Scrooge, having his key in the lock of the door, saw in the knocker, without its {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{{{undergoing}}}}}}}}}} any {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{{{intermediate}}}}}}}}}} {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{{{process}}}}}}}}}} of change--not a knocker, but Marley's face. Marley's face. It was not in {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{{{impenetrable}}}}}}}}}} shadow, as the other {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{{{objects}}}}}}}}}} in the yard were, but had a dismal light about it, like a bad {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{{{lobster}}}}}}}}}} in a dark cellar. It was not angry or ferocious, but looked at Scrooge as Marley used to look; with ghostly {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{{{spectacles}}}}}}}}}} turned up on its ghostly forehead. The hair was curiously stirred, as if by breath or hot air; and, though the eyes were wide open, they were perfectly motionless. That, and its livid colour, made it horrible; but its horror seemed to be in spite of the face, and beyond its {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{{{control}}}}}}}}}}}, rather than a part of its own expression. As Scrooge looked fixedly {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{{{at}}}}}}}}}} at this phenomenon, it was a knocker again. To say that he was not startled, or that his blood was not conscious of a terrible sensation to which it had been a {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{{{stranger}}}}}}}}}} from {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{{{infancy}}}}}}}}}}}, would be {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{{{untrue}}}}}}}}}}. But he put his hand upon the key he had {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{{{relinquished}}}}}}}}}}, turned it {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{{{sturdily}}}}}}}}}}}, walked in, and lighted his candle. He did pause, with a moment's {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{{{irresolution}}}}}}}}}}, before he shut the door; and he did look {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{{{cautiously}}}}}}}}}} behind it first, as if he half expected to be terrified {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{{{with}}}}}}}}}} the sight of Marley's pigtail sticking out into the hall. But there was nothing on the back of the door, except the {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{{{screws}}}}}}}}}} and nuts that held the knocker on, so he said, 'Pooh, {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{{{pooh}}}}}}}}}}!' and closed it with a {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{{{bang}}}}}}}}}}. The sound {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{{{resounded}}}}}}}}}} through the house like {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{{{thunder}}}}}}}}}}. Every room above, and every {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{{{cask}}}}}}}}}} in the wine-merchant's {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{{{cellars}}}}}}}}}} below, appeared to have a separate {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{{{peal}}}}}}}}}} of echoes of its own. Scrooge was not a man to be frightened by echoes. He fastened the door, and walked across the hall, and up the stairs: slowly, too: {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{{{trimming}}}}}}}}}} his candle as he went. You may talk {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{{{vaguely}}}}}}}}}} about driving a coach and six up a good old {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{{{flight}}}}}}}}}} of stairs, or through a bad young Act of Parliament; but I mean to say you might have got a hearse up that staircase {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{{{and}}}}}}}}}} taken it {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{{{broadwise}}}}}}}}}}, with the {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{{{splinter}}}}}}}}}}-bar towards the wall, and the door towards the {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{{{balustrades}}}}}}}}}}: and done it easy. There was plenty of {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{{{width}}}}}}}}}} for that, and room to {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{{{spare}}}}}}}}}}; which is perhaps the reason why Scrooge thought he saw a {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{{{locomotive}}}}}}}}}} hearse going on before him in the gloom. Half-a-dozen gas-lamps out of the street wouldn't have lighted the {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{{{entry}}}}}}}}}} too well, so you may suppose that it was pretty dark with Scrooge's dip. Up Scrooge went, not caring a {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{{{button}}}}}}}}}} for that. Darkness is cheap, and Scrooge liked it. But, before he shut his heavy door, he walked through his rooms to see that all was right. He had just enough recollection of the face to desire to do that. Sitting-room, bedroom, {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{{{lumber}}}}}}}}}}-room. All as they should be. Nobody under the table, nobody under the sofa; a small fire in the grate {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{{{and}}}}}}}}}} {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{{{spoon}}}}}}}}}} and {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{{{basin}}}}}}}}}} ready; and the little saucepan of gruel (Scrooge had a cold in his head) upon the hob. Nobody under the bed; nobody in the closet; nobody in his dressing-gown, which was hanging up in a suspicious attitude against the wall. Lumber-room as usual. Old fire-guard, old shoes, two fish baskets, washing-stand on three legs, and a {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{{{poker}}}}}}}}}}. [Illustration: Nobody under the bed; nobody in the closet; nobody in his dressing-gown, which was hanging up in a suspicious attitude against the wall] Quite satisfied, he closed his door, and locked himself in; double locked himself in, which was not his {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{{{custom}}}}}}}}}}. Thus {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{{{secured}}}}}}}}}} against surprise, he took off his cravat; put on his dressing-

gown and slippers, and his nightcap; and sat down before the fire to take his gruel. It was a very low fire indeed; nothing on such a {bitter} night. He was obliged to sit close to it, and brood over it, before he could {{{extract}}}} the least sensation of warmth from such a {{{{handful}}}} of fuel. The fireplace was an old one, built {{{{by some Dutch merchant long ago, and {{{{paved}}}} all round with quaint {{{{Dutch {{{{tiles}}}}, {{{{designed}}}} to {{{{illustrate the Scriptures. There were Cains and Abels, Pharaoh's daughters, Queens of Sheba, Angelic {messengers}}}} descending through the air on clouds like feather-beds, Abrahams, Belshazzars, Apostles putting off to sea in {{{{butter}}}}-{{{boats}}}}, hundreds of figures to {{attract}}}} his thoughts; and yet that face of Marley, seven years dead, came like the ancient Prophet's rod, and swallowed up the whole. If each smooth {{tile}} had been a blank at first, with power to shape some {{{{picture}}}} on its {{{{surface}}}} from the {{{{disjointed}}}} fragments of his thoughts, there would have been a {{{{copy}}}} of old Marley's head on every one. 'Humbug!' said Scrooge; and walked across the room. After several turns he sat down again. As he threw his head back in the chair, his glance happened to rest upon a bell, a {{{{disused}}}} bell, that hung in the room, and communicated {{{{for some purpose now forgotten, with a chamber in the {{{{highest}}}} {{storey}} of the building. It was with great astonishment, and with a strange, {{{{inexplicable}}}} dread, that, as he looked, he saw this bell begin to {{{{swing}}}}. It {{{{swung}}}} so softly in the outset that it scarcely made a sound; but soon it {{{{rang}}}} out loudly, and so did every bell in the house. This might have {{{{lasted}}}} half a minute, or a minute, but it seemed an hour. The bells ceased, as they had begun, together. They were succeeded by a {{{{clanking}}}} noise deep down below as if some person were dragging a heavy chain over the {{{{casks}}}} in the wine-merchant's cellar. Scrooge then remembered to have heard that ghosts in haunted houses were {{described}} as dragging chains. The cellar door flew open with a {{{{booming}}}} sound, and then he heard the noise much {{{{louder}}}} on the {{{{floors below; then coming up the stairs; then coming straight towards his door. 'It's humbug still!' said Scrooge. 'I won't believe it.' His colour changed, though, when, without a pause, it came on through the heavy door and passed into the room before his eyes. Upon its coming in, the dying {{{{flame}}}} {{{{leaped}}}} up, as though it cried, 'I know him! Marley's Ghost!' and fell again. The same face: the very same. Marley in his pigtail, usual waistcoat, {{{{tights}}}}, and boots; the tassels on the latter {{{{bristling}}}}, like his pigtail, and his coat-skirts, and the hair upon his head. The chain he drew was clasped about his middle. It was long, and wound about him like a tail; and it was made (for Scrooge observed it closely) of {{{{cash}}}}-boxes, keys, padlocks, {{{{ledgers}}}}, deeds, and heavy {{{{purses}}}} {{{{wrought}}}} in steel. His body was transparent: so that Scrooge, observing him, and looking through his waistcoat, could see the two buttons on his coat behind. Scrooge had often heard it said that Marley had no bowels, but he had never believed it until now. No, nor did he believe it even now. Though he looked the phantom through and through, and saw it standing before him; though he felt the {{{{chilling}}}} influence of its death-cold eyes, and {{{{marked}}}} the very {{{{texture}}}} of the {{folded}} {{{{kerchief}}}} bound about its head and chin, which wrapper he had not observed before, he was still {{{{incredulous}}, and {{fought}}}} against his senses. 'How now!' said Scrooge, caustic and cold as ever. 'What do you want with me?' 'Much!'--Marley's voice; no doubt about it. 'Who are you?' 'Ask me who I _was_.' 'Who _were_ you, then?' said Scrooge, raising his voice. 'You're particular, for a shade.' He was going to say '_to_ a shade,' but {{{{substituted}}}} this, as more {{{{appropriate}}}}. 'In life I was your partner, Jacob Marley.' 'Can you--can you sit down?' asked Scrooge, looking {{doubtfully}} at him. 'I can.' 'Do it, then.' Scrooge asked the question, because he didn't know whether a ghost so transparent might find himself in a condition to take a chair; and felt that in the event of its being impossible, it might {{{{involve}}}} the {{{{necessity}}}} of an {{{{embarrassing}}}} explanation. But the Ghost sat down on the opposite side of the fireplace, as if he were quite used to it. 'You don't believe in me,' observed the Ghost. 'I don't,' said Scrooge. 'What {{{{evidence would you have of my {{{{reality}}}}}} beyond that of your own

senses?' 'I don't know,' said Scrooge. 'Why do you doubt your senses?' 'Because,' said Scrooge, 'a little thing {{affects}} them. A slight {{{{{disorder}}}}}} of the stomach makes them {{{{{cheats}}}}}}. You may be an {{{{{undigested}}}}}} bit of beef, a {{{{{blot}}}}}} of {{{{{mustard}}}}}}, a {{{{{crumb}}}}}} of {{{{{cheese}}}}}}, a fragment}} of an {{{{{underdone}}}}}} {{potato}}}}}}. There's more of gravy than of grave about you, whatever you are!' Scrooge was not much in the habit of {{cracking}}}} {{{{{jokes}}}}}}, nor did he feel in his heart by any means {{{{{waggish}}}}}} then. The truth is, that he tried to be smart, as a means of {{{{{distracting}}}}}} his own attention, and keeping down his terror; for the spectre's voice disturbed the very {{{{{marrow in his bones. To sit staring at those fixed, {{{{{glazed eyes in silence, for a moment, would play, Scrooge felt, the very {{{{{deuce}}}}}}}} with him. There was something very awful, too, in the spectre's being provided with an {{{{{infernal}}}}}} atmosphere of his own. Scrooge could not feel it himself, but this was clearly the case; for though the Ghost sat perfectly motionless, its hair, and skirts, and tassels were still agitated as by the hot {{{{{vapour}}}}}} from an oven. 'You see this {{{{{toothpick}}}}}}?' said Scrooge, {{{{{returning}}}}}} quickly to the charge, for the reason just {{{{{assigned}}}}}}; and {{{{{wishing}}}}}}, though it were only for a second, to divert}}}} the {{{{{vision}}}}}}'s {{{{{stony}}}}}} {{{{{gaze}}}}}} from himself. 'I do,' replied the Ghost. 'You are not looking at it,' said Scrooge. 'But I see it,' said the Ghost, 'notwithstanding.' 'Well!' returned Scrooge, 'I have but to {{swallow}}}} this, and be for the rest of my days {{{{{persecuted}}}}}} by a {{{{{legion}}}}}} of {{goblins}}}}, all of my own creation. Humbug, I tell you: humbug!' At this the spirit raised a frightful cry, and shook its chain with such a dismal and {{{{{appalling}}}}}} noise, that Scrooge held on tight to his chair, to save himself from falling in a {{{{{swoon. But how much greater was his horror when the phantom, taking off the bandage round his head, as if it were too warm to wear {{{{{indoors}}}}}}, its lower jaw dropped down upon its breast! Scrooge fell upon his knees, and clasped his hands before his face. 'Mercy!' he said. 'Dreadful apparition, why do you trouble me?' 'Man of the worldly mind!' replied the Ghost, 'do you believe in me or not?' 'I do,' said Scrooge; 'I must. But why do spirits walk the earth, and why do they come to me?' 'It is {{{{{required}}}}}} of every man,' the Ghost returned, 'that the spirit within him should walk abroad among his fellow-men, and travel far and wide; and, if that spirit goes not forth in life, it is {{condemned}}}} to do so after death. It is {{{{{doomed}}}}}} to {{{{{wander through the world--oh, woe is me!--and {{{{{witness}}}}}}}} what it cannot {{{{{share, but might have shared on earth, and turned to happiness!' Again the spectre raised a cry, and shook its chain and {{{{{wrung}}}}}} its shadowy hands. 'You are {{{{{fettered}}}}}},' said Scrooge, trembling. 'Tell me why?' 'I wear the chain I {{{{{forged}}}}}} in life,' replied the Ghost. 'I made it link by link, and yard by yard; I {{{{{girded}}}}}} it on of my own free will, and of my own free will I wore it. Is its {{pattern}}} strange to _you_?' Scrooge trembled more and more. 'Or would you know,' pursued the Ghost, 'the weight and length of the strong {{{{{coil}}}}} you bear yourself? It was full as heavy and as long as this seven Christmas Eves ago. You have {{{{{laboured}}}}}} on it since. It is a {{{{{ponderous}}}}}} chain!' Scrooge glanced about him on the floor, in the expectation of finding himself surrounded by some fifty or {{{{{sixty}}}}}} {{{{{fathoms}}}}}} of iron {{{{{cable}}}}}}; but he could see nothing. 'Jacob!' he said {{{{{imploringly}}}}}}. 'Old Jacob Marley, tell me more! Speak comfort to me, Jacob!' 'I have none to give,' the Ghost replied. 'It comes from other {{{{{regions}}}}}}, Ebenezer Scrooge, and is conveyed by other {{{{{ministers}}}}}}, to other kinds of men. Nor can I tell you what I would. A very little more is all {{{{{permitted}}}}}} to me. I cannot rest, I cannot stay, I cannot {{{{{linger}}}}}} anywhere}}. My spirit never walked beyond our counting-house--mark me;--in life my spirit never {{{{{roved}}}}}} beyond the narrow {{{{{limits}}}}}} of our money-{{{{changing}}}}}} hole; and {{{{{weary}}}}}} journeys lie before me!' It was a habit with Scrooge, whenever he became thoughtful, to put his hands in his {{breeches}}}} pockets. Pondering on what the Ghost had said, he did so now, but without lifting up his eyes, or getting off his knees. [Illustration: ON THE WINGS OF THE WIND] 'You must have been very slow about it, Jacob,' Scrooge observed in a business-like manner,

though with humility and {{{{{{{{{{{deference}}}}}}}}}. 'Slow!' the Ghost repeated. 'Seven years dead,' {{{{{{{{{{{mused}}}}}}}} Scrooge. 'And travelling all the time?' 'The whole time,' said the Ghost. 'No rest, no {{{{{{{{{{{peace}}}}}}}}}}'. Incessant torture of {{{{{{{{{{{remorse.' 'You travel fast?' said Scrooge. [Illustration] 'On the wings of the wind,' replied the Ghost. 'You might have got over a great quantity of ground in seven years,' said Scrooge. The Ghost, on hearing this, set up another cry, and {{{{{{{{{{{clanked}}}}}}}} its chain so {{{{{{{{{{{hideously}}}}}}}} in the dead silence of the night, that the Ward would have been justified in {{{{{{{{{{{indicting}}}}}}}} it for a {{{{{{{{{{{nuisance}}}}}}}}}. 'Oh! {{{{{{{{{{{captive}}, bound, and double-{{{ {{{{{{{{ironed}}}}}}}}},' cried the phantom, 'not to know that {{{{{{{{{{{ages}}}}}}}} of {{{{{{{{{{{incessant}}}}}}}} labour, by immortal creatures, for this earth must {pass}}}}}} into {{{{{{{{{{{eternity before the good of which it is {{{{{{{{{{{susceptible}}}}}}}}}} is all {{{{{{{{{{{developed}}}}}}}}! Not to know that any Christian spirit working kindly in its little {{{{{{{{{{{sphere}}}}}}}}, whatever it may be, will find its mortal life too short for its vast means of {{{{{{{{{{{usefulness}}}}}}}}! Not to know that no space of regret can make amends for one life's opportunities {{{{{{{{{{{misused}}}}}}}}! Yet such was I! Oh, such was I! 'But you were always a good man of business, Jacob,' faltered Scrooge, who now began to apply this to himself. 'Business!' cried the Ghost, {{{{{{{{{{{wringing}}}}}}}} its hands again. 'Mankind was my business. The common welfare was my business; {{{{{{{{{{{charity}}}}}}}, mercy, {{{{{{{{{{{forbearance}}}}}}}}}, and benevolence were, all, my business. The {{{{{{{{{{{dealings}}}}}}}} of my trade were but a drop of water in the comprehensive {{{{{{{{{{{ocean}}}}}}}} of my business!' It held up its chain at arm's-length, as if that were the cause of all its {{{{{{{{{{{unavailing}}}}}} grief, and {{{{{{{{{{{flung}}}}}}}} it heavily upon the ground again. 'At this time of the rolling year,' the spectre said, 'I suffer most. Why did I walk through {{{{{{{{{{{crowds}}}}}}}} of fellow-beings with my eyes turned down, and never raise them to that blessed Star which led the Wise Men to a poor {{{{{{{{{{{abode}}}}}}}? Were there no poor homes to which its light would have conducted _me_?' Scrooge was very much {{{{{{{{{{{dismayed}}}}}}}} to hear the spectre going on at this rate, and began to {{{{{{{{{{{quake}}}}}}}} exceedingly. 'Hear me!' cried the Ghost. 'My time is nearly gone.' 'I will,' said Scrooge. 'But don't be hard upon me! Don't be {{{{{{{{{{{flowery}}}}}}}}}, Jacob! Pray!' 'How it is that I {appear}}}}}}}} before you in a shape that you can see, I may not tell. I have sat invisible beside you many and many a day.' It was not an {{{{{{{{{{{agreeable}}}}}}}} idea. Scrooge {{{{{{{{{{{shivered}}}}}}}, and {{{{{{{{{{{wiped}}}}}}}} the {{{{{{{{{{{perspiration}}}}}}}} from his brow. 'That is no light part of my {{{{{{{{{{{penance}}}}}}}},' pursued the Ghost. 'I am here to-night to warn you that you have yet a chance and hope of {{{{{{{{{{{escaping}}}}}}}} my fate. A chance and hope of my {procuring}}}}}}}, Ebenezer.' 'You were always a good friend to me,' said Scrooge. 'Thankee!' 'You will be haunted,' resumed the Ghost, 'by Three Spirits.' Scrooge's {{{{{{{{{{{countenance}}}}}}}} fell almost as low as the Ghost's had done. 'Is that the chance and hope you mentioned, Jacob?' he demanded in a {{{{{{{{{{{faltering voice. 'It is.' 'I--I think I'd rather not,' said Scrooge. 'Without their {{{{{{{{{{{visits}}}}}}}},' said the Ghost, 'you cannot hope to shun}}}}}} the path I {{{{{{{{{{{tread}}}}}}}}. Expect the first to-morrow when the bell {{{{{{{{{{{tolls}}}}}} One.' 'Couldn't I take 'em all at once, and have it over, Jacob?' hinted Scrooge. 'Expect the second on the next night at the same hour. The third, upon the next night when the last stroke of Twelve has ceased to vibrate. Look to see me no more; and look that, for your own sake, you remember what has passed between us!' When it had said these words, the spectre took its wrapper from the table, and bound it round its head as before. Scrooge knew this by the smart sound its teeth made when the {{{{{{{{{{{jaws}}}}}}}} were brought together by the bandage. He {{{{{{{{{{{ventured}}}}}}}} to raise his eyes again, and found his supernatural visitor {{{{{{{{{{{confronting}}}}}}}} him in an erect}}}}}} attitude, with its chain wound over and about its arm. [Illustration: _The air was filled with phantoms, wandering hither and thither in restless haste and moaning as they went_] The apparition walked {{{{{{{{{{{backward}}}}}}}} from him; and, at every {{{{{{{{{{{step}}}}}}}} it took, the window raised itself a little, so that, when the spectre reached it, it was wide open. It {{{{{{{{{{{beckoned}}}}}}}} Scrooge to approach, which he did. When they were within two {{{{{{{{{{{paces}}}}}}}} of each other, Marley's Ghost held up its hand, warning him to come no nearer. Scrooge stopped. Not so much in obedience as in surprise and fear; for, on the raising of the hand, he became sensible of {{{{{{{{{{{confused}}}}}}}} } noises} in the air; {{{{{{{{{{{incoherent}}}}}} sounds of {{{{{{{{{{{lamentation}}}}}} and regret; {{{{{{{{{{{wailings}}}}}} inexpressibly sorrowful and self-{{{ {{{{{{accusatory}}}}}}}}}. The spectre, after listening for a moment, joined in the mournful {{{{{{{{{{{dirge}}}}}}}}}; and floated out

upon the bleak, dark night. Scrooge followed to the window:

in his . He looked out. The air was filled with phantoms, wandering hither and thither in restless haste, and moaning as they went. Every one of them wore chains like Marley's Ghost; some few (they might be guilty) (governments) were linked together; none were free. Many had been personally known to Scrooge in their lives. He had been quite familiar with one old ghost in a white waistcoat, with a monstrous iron safe attached to its ankle, who cried piteously at being unable to assist a wretched woman with an infant, whom it saw below upon a doorstep. The misery with them all was clearly, that they sought to interfere, for good, in human matters, and had lost the power for ever. Whether these creatures faded into mist, or mist enshrouded them, he could not tell. But they and their spirit voices faded together; and the night became as it had been when he walked home. Scrooge closed the window, and examined the door by which the Ghost had entered. It was double locked, as he had locked it with his own hands, and the bolts were undisturbed. He tried to say 'Humbug!' but stopped at the first syllable. And being, from the emotions he had undergone, or the fatigues of the day, or his glimpse of the Invisible World, or the dull conversation of the Ghost, or the lateness of the hour, much in need of repose, went straight to bed without undressing, and fell asleep upon the instant. [Illustration] STAVE TWO [Illustration] THE FIRST OF THE THREE SPIRITS When Scrooge awoke it was so dark, that, looking out of bed, he could scarcely distinguish the transparent window from the opaque walls of his chamber. He was endeavouring to pierce the darkness with his ferret eyes, when the chimes of a neighbouring church struck the four quarters. So he listened for the hour. To his great astonishment, the heavy bell went on from six to seven, and from seven to eight, and regularly up to twelve; then stopped. Twelve! It was past two when he went to bed. The clock was wrong. An icicle must have got into the works. Twelve! He touched the spring of his repeater, to correct this most preposterous clock. Its rapid little pulse beat twelve, and stopped. 'Why, it isn't possible,' said Scrooge, 'that I can have slept through a whole day and far into another night. It isn't possible that anything has happened to the sun, and this is twelve at noon!' The idea being an alarming one, he scrambled out of bed, and groped his way to the window. He was obliged to rub the frost off with the sleeve of his dressing-gown before he could see anything; and could see very little then. All he could make out was, that it was still very foggy and extremely cold, and that there was no noise of people running to and fro, and making a great stir, as there unquestionably would have been if night had beaten off bright day, and taken possession of the world. This was a great relief, because 'Three days after sight of this First of Exchange pay to Mr. Ebenezer Scrooge or his order,' and so forth, would have become a mere United States security if there were no days to count by. Scrooge went to bed again, and thought, and thought, and thought it over and over, and could make nothing of it. The more he thought, the more perplexed he was; and, the more he endeavoured not to think, the more he thought. Marley's Ghost bothered him exceedingly. Every time he resolved within himself, after mature inquiry that it was all a dream, his mind flew back again, like a strong spring released, to its first position, and presented the same problem to be worked all through, 'Was it a dream or not?' Scrooge lay in this state until the chime had gone three-quarters more, when he remembered, on a sudden, that the Ghost had warned him of a visitation when the bell tolled one. He resolved to lie awake until the hour was passed; and, considering that he could no more go to sleep than go to heaven, this was, perhaps, the wisest resolution in his power. The quarter was so long, that he was more than once convinced he must have sunk into a doze unconsciously, and missed the clock. At length it broke upon his listening ear. 'Ding, dong!' 'A quarter past,' said Scrooge, counting. 'Ding, dong!' 'Half past,' said Scrooge. 'Ding, dong!' 'A quarter to it,' said Scrooge. 'Ding, dong!' 'The hour itself,' said Scrooge triumphantly, 'and nothing else!' He spoke before the hour bell sounded, which it now did with a deep, dull, hollow,

melancholy ONE. Light {{{{flashed up in the room upon the instant, and the curtains of his bed were drawn. The curtains of his bed were drawn aside, I tell you, by a hand. Not the curtains at his feet, nor the curtains at his back, but those to which his face was addressed. The curtains of his bed were drawn aside; and Scrooge, starting up into a half-{{{{{{{{{{recumbent}}}}}}}} attitude, found himself face to face with the {{{{{{{{{{{unearthly}}}}}}}} visitor who drew them: as close to it as I am now to you, and I am standing in the spirit at your elbow. It was a strange figure--like a child; yet not so like a child as like an old man, viewed through some supernatural {{{{{{{{{{{medium}}}}}}}}}, which gave him the appearance of having {{{{receded}}}} from the view, and being {{{{{{{{{{{diminished}}}}}}}} to a child's {{{{{{{{{{{proportions}}}}}}}}. Its hair, which hung about its neck and down its back, was white, as if with age; and yet the face had not a wrinkle in it, and the {{{{{{{{{{{tenderest}}}}}}}} {{{{{{{{{{{bloom}}}}}}}} was on the {{{{{{{{{{{skin}}}}}}}}. The arms were very long and {{{{muscular}}}}; the hands the same, as if its hold were of uncommon {{{{{{{{{{{strength}}}}}}}}. Its legs and feet, most {{{{{{{{{{{delicately}}}}}}}} {{{{{{{{{{{formed}}}}}}}}, were, like those upper members, bare. It wore a {{{{{{{{{{{tunic}}}}}}}} of the purest {{{{white}}}}; and round its waist was bound a {{{{{{{{{{{lustrous belt, the {{{{sheen}}}}}} of which was beautiful. It held a {{{{{{{{{{{branch of fresh green holly in its hand; and, in singular}}}} {{{{{{{{{{{contradiction}}}}}}}} of that wintry {{{{{{{{{{{emblem}}}}}}}}}, had its dress trimmed with summer {{{{flowers}}}}. But the strangest thing about it was, that from the crown of its head there {{{{{{{{{{{sprang}}}}}}}} a bright clear jet of light, by which all this was visible; and which was {{{{{{{{{{{doubtless}}}}}}}} the occasion of its using, in its {{{{{{{{{{{duller}}}}}}}} moments, a great extinguisher for a cap, which it now held under its arm. Even this, though, when Scrooge looked at it with {{{{{{{{{{{increasing}}}}}}}} steadiness, was _not_ its strangest quality. For, as its belt sparkled and {{{{{{{{{{{glittered}}}}}}}}, now in one part and now in another, and what was light one instant at another time was dark, so the figure itself {{{{{{{{{{{fluctuated}}}}}}}} in its {{{{{{{{{{{distinctness}}}}}}}}; being now a thing with one arm, now with one leg, now with twenty legs, now a pair of legs without a head, now a head without a body: of which {{{{{{{{{{{dissolving}}}}}}}} {{{{{{{{{{{parts}}}}}}}} no {{{{{{{{{{{outline would be visible in the dense gloom {{{{{{{{{{{wherein}}}}}}}} they melted away. And, in the very wonder of this, it would be itself again; distinct and clear as ever. 'Are you the Spirit, sir, whose coming was {{{{{{{{{{{foretold}}}}}}}} to me?' asked Scrooge. 'I am!' The voice was {{{{{{{{{{{soft}}}}}}}} and gentle. Singularly low, as if, instead of being so close behind him, it were at a distance. 'Who and what are you?' Scrooge demanded. 'I am the Ghost of Christmas Past.' 'Long Past?' inquired Scrooge, {{{{{{{{{{{observant}}}}}}}} of its {{{{{{{{{{{dwarfish}}}}}}}} {{{{{{{{{{{stature}}}}}}}}. 'No. Your past.' Perhaps Scrooge could not have told anybody why, if anybody could have asked him; but he had a {{{{{{{{{{{special}}}}}}}} desire to see the Spirit in his cap, and begged him to be covered. 'What!' exclaimed the Ghost, 'would you so soon put out, with worldly hands, the light I give? Is it not enough that you are one of those whose {{{{{{{{{{{passions}}}}}}}} made this cap, and force me through whole {{{{{{{{{{{trains of years to wear it low upon my brow?' Scrooge reverently {{{{{{{{{{{disclaimed}}}}}}}} all {{{{{{{{{{{intention to {{{{{{{{{{{offend}}}}}}}}}} or any knowledge of having wilfully {{{{{{{{{{{bonneted}}}}}}}} the Spirit at any period of his life. He then made bold to {{{{{{{{{{{inquire}}}}}}}} what business brought him there. 'Your welfare!' said the Ghost. Scrooge expressed himself much obliged, but could not help thinking that a night of unbroken rest would have been more {{{{{{{{{{{conducive}}}}}}}} to that end. The Spirit must have heard him thinking, for it said immediately-- 'Your {{{{reclamation}}}}', then. Take {{{{{{{{{{{heed}}}}}}}}! It put out its strong hand as it spoke, and clasped him gently by the arm. 'Rise! and walk with me!' It would have been in vain for Scrooge to {{{{{{{{{{{plead}}}}}}}} that the weather and the hour were not {{{{{{{{{{{adapted}}}}}}}} to {{{{{{{{{{{pedestrian}}}}}}}} purposes; that bed was warm, and the {{{{{{{{{{{thermometer}}}}}}}} a long way below {{{{freezing}}}}; that he was {{{{clad}}}} but lightly in his slippers, dressing-gown, and nightcap; and that he had a cold upon him at that time. The {{{{grasp}}, though gentle as a woman's hand, was not to be {{{{resisted}}}}. He rose; but, finding that the Spirit made towards the window, clasped its robe in {{{{{{{{{{{supplication}}}}}}}}. 'I am a mortal,' Scrooge {{{{{{{{{{{remonstrated, 'and {{{{{{{{{{{liable}}}}}}}}}} to fall.' 'Bear but a touch of my hand _there_, said the Spirit, laying it upon his heart, 'and you shall be {{{{{{{{{{{upheld}}}}}}}} in more than this!' As the words were spoken, they passed through the wall, and stood upon an

open country road, with fields on either hand. The city had {{{{{{{{{{{{{entirely}}}}} vanished. Not a {{{{{{{{{{{{{vestige}}}}} of it was to be seen. The darkness and the mist had vanished with it, for it was a clear, cold, winter day, with snow upon the ground. 'Good Heaven!' said Scrooge, {{{{{{{{{{{{{clasp}}}}} his hands together, as he looked about him. 'I was bred in this place. I was a boy here!' The Spirit {{{{{{{{{{{{{gazed}}}}}}}}}} upon him mildly. Its gentle touch, though it had been light and {{{{{{{{{{{{{instantaneous}}}}}}}}}}}, appeared still present to the old man's sense of feeling. He was conscious of a thousand {{{{{{{{{{{{{odours}}}}}}}}}} {floating}}}}}}}} in the air, each one connected with a thousand thoughts, and hopes, and {{{{{{{{{{{{{joys}}}}}}}}}}}, and cares long, long forgotten! 'Your lip is trembling,' said the Ghost. 'And what is that upon your cheek?' Scrooge muttered, with an {unusual} catching in his voice, that it was a {{{{{{{{{{{{{pimple}}}}}}}}}}; and begged the Ghost to lead him where he would. 'You recollect the way?' inquired the Spirit. 'Remember it!' cried Scrooge with {{{{{{{{{{{{{fervour}}}}}}}}}}; 'I could walk it {{{{{{{{{{{{{blindfold}}}}}}}}}}.' 'Strange to have forgotten it for so many years!' observed the Ghost. 'Let us go on.' They walked along the road, Scrooge recognising}}}}}}}} every gate, and post}}, and tree, until a little market-town appeared in the distance, with its {{{{{{{{{{{{{bridge}}}}}}}}}}, its church, and {{{{{{{{{{{{{winding}}}}}}}}}}}} {river}}}}}}}}. Some {{{{{{{{{{{{{shaggy}}}}}}}}}} {{{{{{{{{{{{{ponies}}}}}}}}}}}} now were seen {trotting}}}}}}}}}} towards them with boys upon their {{{{{{{{{{{{{backs}}}}}}}}}}}, who called to other boys in country {{gigs}}}}}}}} and carts, {{{{{{{{{{{{{driven}}}}}}}}}}}} by {{{{{{{{{{{{{farmers}}}}}}}}}}. All these boys were in great spirits, and {{{{{{{{{{{{{shouted}}}}}}}}}} to each other, until the broad fields were so full of merry music, that the crisp air laughed to hear it. 'These are but shadows of the things that have been,' said the Ghost. 'They have no consciousness of us.' The {{{{{{{{{{{{{jocund}}}}}}}}}}}} {{{{{{{{{{{{{travellers}}}}}}}}}}}} came on; and as they came, Scrooge knew and {named}}}}}}}}}} them every one. Why was he rejoiced beyond all {{{{{{{{{{{{{bounds}}}}}}}}}}}} to see them? Why did his cold eye {{{{{{{{{{{{{glisten}}}}}}}}}}}, and his heart {{leap}}}}}}}} up as they went past? Why was he filled with {{{{{{{{{{{{{gladness}}}}}}}}}}}} when he heard them give each other Merry Christmas, as they parted at cross-{{{{{{{{{{{{{roads}}}}}}}}}}}} and by-ways for their several homes? What was merry Christmas to Scrooge? Out upon merry Christmas! What good had it ever done to him? 'The school is not quite {{{{{{{{{{{{{deserted}}}}}}}}}},' said the Ghost. 'A solitary child, neglected by his friends, is left there still.' Scrooge said he knew it. And he {{{{{{{{{{{{{sobbed}}}}}}}}}}. They left the high-road by a well-remembered lane and soon approached a {{{{{{{{{{{{{mansion}}}}}}}}}} of dull red {{{{{{{{{{{{{brick}}}}}}}}}}}, with a little weather-cock {{{{{{{{{{{{{surmounted}}}}}}}}}}}} {cupola}}}}}}}}}} on the roof, and a bell hanging in it. It was a large house, but one of broken {{{{{{{{{{{{{fortunes}}}}}}}}}}; for the {{{{{{{{{{{{{spacious}}}}}}}}}}}} offices were little used, their walls were {{{{{{{{{{{{{damp}}}}}}}}}} and mossy, their windows broken, and their {{{{{{{{{{{{{gates}}}}}}}}}} {{{{{{{{{{{{{decayed}}}}}}}}}}. Fowls {{{{{{{{{{{{{clucked}}}}}}}}}} and {{{{{{{{{{{{{strutted}}}}}}}}}} in the {{{{{{{{{{{{{stables}}}}}}}}}}; and the coach-houses and {{{{{{{{{{{{{sheds}}}}}}}}}}}} were overrun with grass. Nor was it more {retentive} of its ancient state within; for, entering the dreary hall, and {{{{{{{{{{{{{glancing}}}}}}}}}}}} through the open doors of many rooms, they found them poorly {{{{{{{{{{{{{furnished}}}}}}}}}}}}}, cold, and vast. There was an {{{{{{{{{{{{{earthy}}}}}}}}}}}} {{{{{{{{{{{{{savour}}}}}}}}}} in the air, a {{{{{{{{{{{{{chilly}}}}}}}}}} {{{{{{{{{{{{{bareness}}}}}}}}}} in the place, which {{{{{{{{{{{{{associated}}}}}}}}}}}} itself somehow with too much getting up by candle light and not too much to eat. They went, the Ghost and Scrooge, across the hall, to a door at the back of the house. It opened before them, and disclosed a long, bare, melancholy room, made {{{{{{{{{{{{{barer}}}}}}}}}} still by lines of plain deal forms and {{{{{{{{{{{{{desks}}}}}}}}}}. At one of these a lonely boy was reading near a {{{{{{{{{{{{{feeble}}}}}}}}}} fire; and Scrooge sat down upon a form, and {{{{{{{{{{{{{wept}}}}}}}}}}}} to see his poor forgotten self as he had used to be. Not a latent {{{{{{{{{{{{{echo}}}}}}}}}}}} in the house, not a {{{{{{{{{{{{{squeak}}}}}}}}}} and {{{{{{{{{{{{{scuffle}}}}}}}}}}}}}}}}}} from the {{{{{{{{{{{{{mice}}}}}}}}}}}} behind the {{{{{{{{{{{{{panelling}}}}}}}}}}}}}, not a {{{{{{{{{{{{{drip}}}}}}}}}}}} from the half-thawed {{{{{{{{{{{{{waterspout}}}}}}}}}}}} in the dull yard behind, not a {{{{{{{{{{{{{sigh}}}}}}}}}}}} among the {{{{{{{{{{{{{leafless}}}}}}}}}} {{boughs}}}}}} of one {despondent}}}}}}}} {{{{{{{{{{{{{poplar}}}}}}}}}}}}}, not the idle {{{{{{{{{{{{{swinging}}}}}}}}}} of an empty {{{{{{{{{{{{{storehouse}}}}}}}}}} door, no, not a {{{{{{{{{{{{{clicking}}}}}}}}}} in the fire, but fell upon the heart of Scrooge with softening} influence, and gave a {{{{{{{{{{{{{freer}}}}}}}}}} {{{{{{{{{{{{{passage}}}}}}}}}} to his tears. The Spirit touched him on the arm, and pointed to his younger self, intent upon his reading. Suddenly a man in foreign garments, {{{{{{{{{{{{{wonderfully}}}}}}}}}}}} real and distinct to look at, stood outside the window, with an axe stuck in his belt, and {leading} by the {{{{{{{{{{{{{bridle}}}}}}}}}}}} an ass

laden with {{{{wood. 'Why, it's Ali Baba! Scrooge exclaimed in ecstasy. 'It's dear old honest Ali Baba! Yes, yes, I know. One Christmas-time, when yonder solitary child was left here all alone, he _did_ come, for the first time, just like that. Poor boy! And Valentine,' said Scrooge, 'and his wild brother, Orson; there they go! And what's his name, who was put down in his {{{{{{drawers}}}}}}}, asleep, at the gate of Damascus; don't you see him? And the Sultan's Groom turned upside down by the Genii; there he is upon his head! Serve him right! I'm glad of it. What business had he to be married to the Princess?' To hear Scrooge {{{{{{expending}}} all the earnestness of his nature on such subjects, in a most extraordinary voice between laughing and crying; and to see his {{{{heightened}}}}}}}}}} and excited face; would have been a surprise to his business friends in the City, indeed. 'There's the Parrot!' cried Scrooge. 'Green body and yellow tail, with a thing like a {{{{{{lettuce}}}}}} growing out of the top of his head; there he is! Poor Robin Crusoe he called him, when he came home again after {{{{{{sailing}}}}}} round the {{{{{{island}}}}}}. "Poor Robin Crusoe, where have you been, Robin Crusoe?" The man thought he was {{{{{{dreaming}}}}, but he wasn't. It was the Parrot, you know. There goes Friday, running for his life to the little {{{{{{creek}}}}}}}}}}! Halloo! Hoop! Halloo! Then, with a {{{{{{rapidity}}}}}}}}}} of {{{{transition}}}}}} very foreign to his usual {{{{{{character}}}}}}}}}}}, he said, in pity for his former self, 'Poor boy!' and cried again. 'I wish,' Scrooge muttered, putting his hand in his pocket, and looking about him, after {drying}}}}}}}}}} his eyes with his {{{{cuff}}}}}}}}}}; 'but it's too late now.' 'What is the matter?' asked the Spirit. 'Nothing,' said Scrooge. 'Nothing. There was a boy singing a Christmas carol at my door last night. I should like to have given him something: that's all.' The Ghost smiled thoughtfully, and {{{{waved}}}}}}}}}} its hand, saying as it did so, 'Let us see another Christmas!' Scrooge's former self grew {{{{larger}}}}}}}} at the words, and the room became a little {{{{{{darker}}}}}}}}}} and more {{{{{{dirty}}}}}}}}}}. The {{{{{{panels}}}}}}}}}} shrunk, the windows cracked; fragments of plaster fell out of the ceiling, and the naked {{{{laths}}} were shown instead; but how all this was brought about Scrooge knew no more than you do. He only knew that it was quite correct; that everything had happened so; that there he was, alone again, when all the other boys had gone home for the jolly holidays. He was not reading now, but walking up and down {{{{{{despairingly}}}}}. Scrooge looked at the Ghost, and, with a mournful shaking of his head, glanced {{{{{{anxiously}}}}}}}}}} towards the door. It opened; and a little girl, much younger than the boy, came {{{{darting}}}}}}}} in, and, putting her arms about his neck, and often kissing him, addressed him as her 'dear, dear brother.' 'I have come to bring you home, dear brother!' said the child, clapping her tiny hands, and {{{{bending}}} down to laugh. 'To bring you home, home, home!' 'Home, little Fan?' returned the boy. 'Yes!' said the child, {{{{{{brimful}}}}}}}}}} of glee. 'Home for good and all. Home for ever and ever. Father is so much kinder than he used to be, that home's like heaven! He spoke so gently to me one dear night when I was going to bed, that I was not afraid to ask him once more if you might come home; and he said Yes, you should; and sent me in a coach to bring you. And you're to be a man!' said the child, opening her eyes; 'and are never to come back here; but first we're to be together all the Christmas long, and have the {{{{{{merriest}}}}}} time in all the world.' 'You are quite a woman, little Fan!' exclaimed the boy. She clapped her hands and laughed, and tried to touch his head; but, being too little laughed again, and stood on {{{{{{tiptoe}}}}}}}}}} to {{{{embrace}}}}}} him. Then she began to {{{{{{drag}}}}}} him, in her childish eagerness, towards the door; and he, nothing {{{{{{loath}}}}}}}}}} to go, accompanied her. A terrible voice in the hall cried, 'Bring down Master Scrooge's box, there!' and in the hall appeared the schoolmaster himself, who glared on Master Scrooge with a ferocious {{{{condescension}}, and threw him into a dreadful state of mind by shaking hands with him. He then conveyed him and his sister into the {{{{{{veriest}}}}}}}} old well of a {{{{{{shivering best parlour that ever was seen, where the {{{{{{maps}}}}}}}}}} upon the wall, and the {{{{{{celestial}}}}}}}}}} and {{{{{{terrestrial}}}} {{{{{{globes}}}}}}}}}} in the windows, were {{{{{{waxy}}}}}}}}}} with cold. Here he produced a decanter of curiously light wine, and a block of curiously heavy cake, and {{{{{{administered}}}}}} {{{{{{instalments}}}}}}}} of those {{{{{{dainties}}}}}}}} to the young people; at the same time sending out a meagre {{{{servant}}}}}}}} to offer a glass of 'something' to the {{{{{{postboy}}}}}}}}}}}, who answered that he thanked the gentleman, but, if it was the same tap as he had tasted before, he had rather not. Master Scrooge's {{{{{{trunk}}}}}}}}}

being by this time {{{{{{{{{tied}}}}}}} on to the top of the {{{{{{{{{chaise}}}}}}}}, the children bade the schoolmaster good-bye right {{{{{{{{{willingly}}}}}}}; and, getting into it, {{{drove}}} gaily down the garden{{{}}}. {{{{{{{{{sweep}}}}}}} the {{{{{{{{{quick}}}}}}} wheels {{{{{{{{{dashing}}}}}}} the {{{{{{{{{hoar}}}}}}}-frost and snow from off the dark leaves of the {{{{{{{{{evergreens}}}}}}} like {{{{{{{{{spray}}}}}}}. [Illustration: HE PRODUCED A DECANTER OF CURIOUSLY LIGHT WINE, AND A BLOCK OF CURIOUSLY HEAVY CAKE] 'Always a {{{{{{{{{delicate creature, whom a breath might have withered,' said the Ghost. 'But she had a large heart!' 'So she had,' cried Scrooge. 'You're right. I will not {{{gainsay} it, Spirit. God {{{forbid}}}' 'She died a woman,' said the Ghost, 'and had, as I think, children.' 'One child,' Scrooge returned. 'True,' said the Ghost. 'Your nephew!' Scrooge seemed {uneasy}}}}}} in his mind, and answered {{{{{{{{{briefly}}}}}}}, 'Yes.' Although they had but that moment left the school behind them, they were now in the busy {{{{{{{{{thoroughfares}}}}}} of a city, where shadowy passengers passed and re-passed; where shadowy carts and {{{{{{{{{coaches}}}}}}} {{{{{{{{{battled}}}}}}} for the way, and all the {{{{{{{{{strife}}}}}}} and {{{tumult}}}} of a real city were. It was made plain enough, by the dressing of the shops, that here, too, it was Christmas-time again; but it was evening, and the streets were lighted up. The Ghost stopped at a certain warehouse door, and asked Scrooge if he knew it. 'Know it!' said Scrooge. 'Was I {{{apprenticed}}} here?' They went in. At sight of an old gentleman in a Welsh wig, sitting behind such a high desk, that if he had been two {{{inches}}}} {{{taller}}}, he must have knocked his head against the ceiling, Scrooge cried in great excitement--'Why, it's old Fezziwig! Bless his heart, it's Fezziwig alive again!' Old Fezziwig laid down his pen, and looked up at the clock, which pointed to the hour of seven. He {{{rubbed}}}} his hands; adjusted his capacious waistcoat; laughed all over himself, from his shoes to his {{{organ}}} of benevolence; and called out, in a comfortable, {{{oily}}}, rich, fat, jovial voice-- 'Yo ho, there! Ebenezer! Dick!' Scrooge's former self, now grown a young man, came briskly in, accompanied by his fellow-{{prentice}}}. 'Dick Wilkins, to be sure!' said Scrooge to the Ghost. 'Bless me, yes. There he is. He was very much attached to me, was Dick. Poor Dick! Dear, dear!' 'Yo ho, my boys!' said Fezziwig. 'No more work to-night. Christmas Eve, Dick. Christmas, Ebenezer! Let's have the shutters up,' cried old Fezziwig, with a sharp {{{clap}}} of his hands, 'before a man can say Jack Robinson!' You wouldn't believe how those two fellows went at it! They {{{charged}}} into the street with the shutters--one, two, three--had 'em up in their places--four, five, six--barred 'em and {pinned}}} 'em--seven, eight, nine--and came back before you could have got to twelve, {{{panting}}} like {{{racehorses}}}. 'Hilli-ho!' cried old Fezziwig, {{{skipping}}} down from the high desk with wonderful {{{agility}}}. 'Clear away, my lads, and let's have {{{lots}}} of room here! Hilli-ho, Dick! Chirrup, Ebenezer!' Clear away! There was nothing they wouldn't have cleared away, or couldn't have cleared away, with old Fezziwig looking on. It was done in a minute. Every {{{movable}}} was {{{packed}}} off, as if it were {{{dismissed}}} from {{{public}}} life for {evermore}}}; the floor was swept and {{{watered}}}, the lamps were trimmed, fuel was {{{heaped}}} upon the fire; and the warehouse was as snug, and warm, and dry, and bright a ball-room as you would desire to see upon a winter's night. In came a fiddler with a music-book, and went up to the lofty desk, and made an {{{orchestra}}} of it, and {{{tuned}}} like fifty stomach-{{aches}}}. In came Mrs. Fezziwig, one vast {{{substantial}}} smile. In came the three Miss Fezziwigs, beaming and {{{lovable}}}. In came the six young {followers}} whose hearts they broke. In came all the young men and women {employed}}} in the business. In came the {{{housemaid}}}, with her {{{cousin}}} the baker. In came the cook with her brother's particular friend the {{{milkman}}}. In came the boy from over the way, who was suspected of not having board enough from his master; trying to hide himself behind the girl from next door but one, who was {{{proved}}} to have had her ears pulled by her mistress. In they all came, one after another; some {{{shyly}}}, some {{{boldly}}}, some gracefully, some {{{awkwardly}}}, some {{{pushing}}}, some {pulling}}; in they all came, any how and every how. Away they all went, twenty couple at once; hands half round and back again the other way: down the middle and up again: round and

round in {{{{{{various}}}}} stages)}}} of {{{{affectionate}}}}}
{{{grouping}}}}}; old top couple always turning up in the wrong place; new top couple
starting off again as soon as they got there; all top {{{couples}}}} at last, and not a
{{{bottom}}} one to help them! When this {result}} was brought about, old Fezziwig, clapping
his hands to stop the dance, cried out, "Well done!" and the fiddler plunged his hot face into a pot
of porter, especially provided for that purpose. But, {scorning}} rest upon his
reappearance}}}, he instantly began again, though there were no {{{dancers}} yet, as if
the other fiddler had been carried home, exhausted, on a {{{shutter}}}}, and he
were a {{{bran}}-new man resolved to beat him out of sight, or
{{{perish}}}. [Illustration: _Then old Fezziwig stood out to dance with Mrs.
Fezziwig_] There were more dances, and there were forfeits, and more dances, and there was
cake, and there was {{{negus}}}, and there was a great piece of Cold Roast, and there was a
great piece of Cold Boiled, and there were mince-pies, and plenty of {{{beer}}}. But
the great effect of the evening came after the Roast and Boiled, when the fiddler (an artful dog,
mind! The sort of man who knew his business better than you or I could have told it him!) struck
up 'Sir Roger de Coverley.' Then old Fezziwig stood out to dance with Mrs. Fezziwig. Top
couple, too; with a good {{{stiff}}}} piece of work cut out for them; three or four
and twenty pair of partners; people who were not to be trifled with; people who would dance,
and had no notion of walking. But if they had been twice as many--ah! four times--old Fezziwig
would have been a {{{match}} for them, and so would Mrs. Fezziwig. As to her_, she
was worthy to be his partner in every sense of the {{{term}}}. If that's not high
praise, tell me higher}}}, and I'll use it. A {{{positive}} light appeared to
{{{issue}} from Fezziwig's {{{calves}}}. They shone in every
part of the dance like {{{moons}}. You couldn't have predicted, at any given time, what would
become of them next. And when old Fezziwig and Mrs. Fezziwig had gone all through the
dance; {{{advance}}}} and retire, both hands to your partner, bow and
{{{curtsy}}}, {{{cork}}}-screw, {{{thread}}-the-needle, and back
again to your place: Fezziwig 'cut'--cut so {{{deftly}}}, that he appeared to {{{wink}}} with
his legs, and came upon his feet again without a {{{stagger}}}. When the clock struck
eleven, this {{{domestic}}} ball broke up. Mr. and Mrs. Fezziwig took their stations, one
on either side the door, and, shaking hands with every person {{{individually}}} as he or she
went out, wished him or her a Merry Christmas. When everybody had
{{{retired}}} but the two '{{\$prentices}}}', they did the same to
them; and thus the cheerful voices died away, and the lads were left to their beds; which were
under a counter in the back-shop. During the whole of this time Scrooge had {{{acted}} like a
man out of his {{{witz}}}. His heart and soul were in the scene, and with his
former self. He {{{corroborated}} everything, remembered everything, enjoyed
everything, and underwent the strangest {{{agitation}}}. It was not until now, when the
bright faces of his former self and Dick were turned from them, that he remembered the Ghost,
and became conscious that it was looking full upon him, while the light upon its head
{{{burnt}}} very clear. 'A small matter,' said the Ghost, 'to make these
{{{silly}}}' {{{folks}}} so full of gratitude.' 'Small!'
echoed Scrooge. The Spirit signed to him to listen to the two {{{apprentices}}},
who were pouring out their hearts in praise of Fezziwig; and when he had done so, said: 'Why!
Is it not? He has {{{spent}}} but a few pounds of your mortal money: three or four,
perhaps. Is that so much that he {{{deserves}} this praise?' 'It isn't that,' said Scrooge,
heated by the {{{remark}}}, and {{{speaking}}} unconsciously like his former,
not his latter self. 'It isn't that, Spirit. He has the power to render us happy or unhappy; to make
our service light or {{{burdensome}}}; a pleasure or a {{{toil}}. Say that his power
lies in words and looks; in things so slight and {{{insignificant}}} that it is
impossible to add and count 'em up: what then? The happiness he {{{gives}}} is
quite as great as if it cost a fortune.' He felt the Spirit's glance, and stopped. 'What is the
matter?' asked the Ghost. 'Nothing particular,' said Scrooge. 'Something, I think?' the Ghost
{{{insisted}}}. 'No,' said Scrooge, 'no. I should like to be able to say a word or two to my
clerk just now. That's all.' His former self turned down the lamps as he gave {{{utterance}} to
the wish; and Scrooge and the Ghost again stood side by side in the open air. 'My time
{{{grows}}} short,' observed the Spirit. 'Quick!' This was not addressed to Scrooge, or

to any one whom he could see, but it produced an {{{{{{{{{{immediate}}}}}}}}} effect. For again Scrooge saw himself. He was older now; a man in the {{{{{{{{{{prime}}}}}}} of life. His face had not the {{{{{{{{{{harsh}}}}}}} and rigid lines of later years; but it had begun to wear the signs of care and {{{{{{{{{{avarice}}}}}}}. There was an eager, greedy}}}, restless motion in the eye, which showed the passion that had taken root}}}, and where the shadow of the growing tree would fall. He was not alone, but sat by the side of a fair young girl in a mourning}} dress: in whose eyes there were tears, which sparkled in the light that shone out of the Ghost of Christmas Past. 'It matters little,' she said softly. 'To you, very little. Another {{idol}} has displaced me; and, if it can cheer and comfort you in time to come as I would have tried to do, I have no just cause to {{{grieve}}}' 'What Idol has displaced you?' he {{{rejoined}}}. 'A golden one.' 'This is the even-handed dealing of the world!' he said. 'There is nothing on which it is so hard as poverty; and there is nothing it {{{professes}} to {{{condemn}} with such {{{severity}} as the {{{pursuit} of wealth! 'You fear the world too much,' she answered gently. 'All your other hopes have {{{merged}} into the hope of being beyond the chance of its {{{sordid} {{{reproach}}}. I have seen your {{{nobler} {{{aspirations}} fall off one by one, until the master passion, Gain, {{{engrosses}} you. Have I not?' 'What then?' he retorted. 'Even if I have grown so much wiser, what then? I am not changed towards you.' She shook her head. 'Am I?' 'Our {{{contract}} is an old one. It was made when we were both poor, and content to be so, until, in good season, we could {{{improve}} our worldly fortune by our patient industry. You _are_ changed. When it was made you were another man.' 'I was a boy,' he said {{{impatently}}. 'Your own feeling {{{tells}} you that you were not what you are,' she returned. 'I am. That which promised happiness when we were one in heart is {{{fraught}} with misery now that we are two. How often and how keenly I have thought of this I will not say. It is enough that I _have_ thought of it, and can release you.' 'Have I ever sought release?' 'In words. No. Never.' 'In what, then?' 'In a changed nature; in an altered spirit; in another atmosphere of life; another Hope as its great end. In everything that made my love of any {{{worth} or value in your sight. If this had never been between us,' said the girl, looking mildly, but with steadiness, upon him; 'tell me, would you seek me out and try to win me now? Ah, no!' He seemed to yield to the {justice}} of this supposition in spite of himself. But he said, with a struggle, 'You think not.' 'I would gladly think otherwise if I could,' she answered. 'Heaven knows! When _I_ have learned a Truth like this, I know how strong and irresistible it must be. But if you were free to-day, to-morrow, yesterday, can even I believe that you would choose a {{{dowerless} girl--you who, in your very {{{confidence}} with her, {{{weigh}}} everything by Gain: or, choosing}} her, if for a moment you were false enough to your one {{{guiding}}} {{{principle to do so, do I not know that your {{{repentance and regret would surely follow? I do; and I release you. With a full heart, for the love of him you once were.' [Illustration: SHE LEFT HIM, AND THEY PARTED] He was about to speak; but, with her head turned from him, she resumed: 'You may--the memory of what is past half makes me hope you will--have {{{pain}}} in this. A very, very brief time, and you will dismiss the recollection of it gladly, as an {{{unprofitable}}} dream, from which it happened well that you awoke. May you be happy in the life you have {{{chosen}}}' She left him, and they parted. 'Spirit!' said Scrooge, 'show me no more! Conduct me home. Why do you delight to torture me?' 'One shadow more!' exclaimed the Ghost. 'No more!' cried Scrooge. 'No more! I don't wish to see it. Show me no more!' But the {{{relentless}}} Ghost {{{pinioned}}} him in both his arms, and {{{forced}}} him to observe what happened next. They were in another scene and place; a room, not very large or handsome, but full of comfort. Near to the winter fire sat a beautiful young girl, so like that last that Scrooge believed it was the same, until he saw _her_, now a comely matron, sitting opposite her daughter. The noise in this room was perfectly {{{tumultuous}}}, for there were more children there than Scrooge in his agitated state of mind could count; and, unlike the {{{celebrated}}} {{{herd}}} in the {{{poem}}}, they were not forty children conducting themselves like one, but every child was conducting itself like forty. The {{{consequences}}} were {{{uproarious}}} beyond {{{belief}}}; but no one seemed to care; on the {{{contrary}}}, the mother and daughter

[The illustration shows a woman standing and talking to a group of children seated around a fireplace.]

laughed heartily, and enjoyed it very much; and the latter, soon
to mingle in the
sports, got pillaged by the young brigands most
ruthlessly. What would I not have given to be one of them! Though I never
could have been so rude, no, no! I wouldn't for the wealth of all the world have
crushed that braided hair, and torn it down; and for the precious
little shoe, I wouldn't have plucked it off, God bless my soul!
to save my life. As to measuring her waist in sport, as
they did, bold young brood, I couldn't have done it; I should have expected my arm to have
grown round it for a punishment, and never come straight again. And yet I should have
dearly liked, I own, to have touched her lips; to have questioned her, that she
might have opened them; to have looked upon the lashes of her
downcast eyes, and never raised a blush; to have let
loose waves of hair, an inch of which would be a
keepsake beyond price: in short, I should have liked, I do confess,
to have had the lightest license of a child, and yet to have been
man enough to know its value. [Illustration: _A flushed and boisterous group_] But now a
knocking at the door was heard, and such a rush immediately ensued that she, with laughing
face and plundered dress, was borne towards it the centre of a flushed and boisterous group,
just in time to greet the father, who came home attended by a man
laden with Christmas toys and presents. Then the shouting and the struggling,
and the onslaught that was made on the defenceless porter! The
scaling him, with chairs for ladders, to dive into his pockets,
despoil him of brown-paper parcels, hold on tight by his
cravat, hug him round his neck, pummel his back, and kick his legs in
irrepressible affection! The shouts of wonder and delight with
which the development of every package was
received! The terrible announcement that the baby had been taken in the act of
putting a doll's frying pan into his mouth, and was more than
suspected of having swallowed a fictitious turkey, glued on a
wooden platter! The immense relief of finding this a false alarm! The joy,
and gratitude, and ecstasy! They are all indescribable alike. It is enough
that, by degrees, the children and their emotions got out of the parlour, and, by
one stair at a time, up to the top of the house, where they went to bed, and so subsided. And
now Scrooge looked on more attentively than ever, when the master of the house,
having his daughter leaning fondly on him, sat down with her and her mother at his
own fireside; and when he thought that such another creature, quite as graceful and
as full of promise, might have called him father, and been a spring-time in the haggard
winter of his life, his sight grew very dim indeed. 'Belle,' said the husband, turning to his wife with
a smile, 'I saw an old friend of yours this afternoon.' 'Who was it?' 'Guess!' 'How can I? Tut, don't
I know?' she added in the same breath, laughing as he laughed. 'Mr. Scrooge.' 'Mr. Scrooge it
was. I passed his office window; and as it was not shut up, and he had a candle inside, I could
scarcely help seeing him. His partner lies upon the point of death, I hear; and there he sat alone.
Quite alone in the world, I do believe.' 'Spirit!' said Scrooge in a broken voice,
'remove me from this place.' 'I told you these were shadows of the things
that have been,' said the Ghost. 'That they are what they are do not blame me!' 'Remove me!'
Scrooge exclaimed, 'I cannot bear it!' He turned upon the Ghost, and seeing that it looked upon
him with a face, in which in some strange way there were fragments of all the faces it had
shown him, wrestled with it. 'Leave me! Take me back. Haunt me no longer!' In the struggle, if
that can be called a struggle in which the Ghost with no visible resistance on its
own part was undisturbed by any effort of its adversary, Scrooge observed that
its light was burning high and bright; and dimly connecting that
with its influence over him, he seized the extinguisher-cap, and by a sudden action pressed
it down upon its head. [Illustration: _Laden with Christmas toys and presents_] The Spirit
dropped beneath it, so that the extinguisher covered its whole form; but though Scrooge
pressed it down with all his force, he could not hide the light, which streamed from under it, in an
unbroken flood upon the ground. He was conscious of being exhausted, and overcome

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

[Illustration] STAVE THREE [Illustration] THE SECOND OF THE THREE SPIRITS Awaking in the middle of a {{{prodigiously {{{tough}}}}} {{{snore, and sitting up in bed to get his thoughts together, Scrooge had no occasion to be told that the bell was again upon the stroke of One. He felt that he was restored to consciousness in the right {{{nick}}}} of time, for the {{{especial}}} purpose of holding a {{{conference}}}} with the second messenger} {{{despatched}}} to him through Jacob Marley's {{{intervention}}}. But finding that he turned {{{uncomfortably}}} cold when he began to wonder which of his curtains this new spectre would draw back, he put them every one aside with his own hands, and, lying down again, {{{established}}} a sharp look-out all round the bed. For he wished to {{{challenge}}} the Spirit on the moment of its appearance, and did not wish to be taken by surprise and made nervous. Gentlemen of the free-and-easy sort, who {{{plume}}} themselves on being {{acquainted with a move or two, and being usually {{{equal}}} to the time of day, express the wide range of their {{{capacity}}} for {{{adventure}}} by observing that they are good for anything from {{{pitch}}} -and-{{{toss}}} to {{{manslaughter}}}; between which opposite extremes}}}, no doubt, there lies a {{{tolerably}}} wide and comprehensive range of subjects. Without {{{venturing}}} for Scrooge quite as hardily} as this, I don't mind calling on you to believe that he was ready for a good broad {{{field}}} of strange appearances}}}, and that nothing between a baby and a {rhinoceros}} would have {{{astonished}}} him very much. Now, being prepared for almost anything, he was not by any means prepared for nothing; and {{{consequently}}}, when the bell struck One, and no shape appeared, he was taken with a {{{violent}}} fit of trembling. Five minutes, ten minutes, a quarter of an hour went by, yet nothing came. All this time he lay upon his bed, the very {{{core}}} and centre of a blaze of ruddy light, which streamed upon it when the clock {{{proclaimed}}} the hour; and which, being only light, was more alarming than a dozen ghosts, as he was {{{powerless}}} to make out what it meant, or would be at; and was sometimes {{{apprehensive}}} that he might be at that very moment an {{interesting case of {{{spontaneous}}} {{{combustion}}}}, without having the {{{consolation}}} of knowing it. At last, however, he began to think--as you or I would have thought at first; for it is always the person not in the {{{predicament}}} who knows what ought to have been done in it, and would unquestionably have done it too--at last, I say, he began to think that the {{{source}}} and secret of this ghostly light might be in the {{{adjoining}}} room, from whence, on further {{{tracing}}} it, it seemed to {{{shine}}}. This idea taking full possession of his mind, he got up softly, and {{{shuffled}}} in his slippers to the door. The moment Scrooge's hand was on the lock a strange voice called him by his name, and bade him enter. He {{{obeyed}}}. It was his own room. There was no doubt about that. But it had undergone a {{{surprising}}} {{{transformation}}}. The walls and ceiling were so hung with {{{living}}} green, that it looked a perfect {{{grove}}}; from every part of which bright gleaming berries {{{glistered}}}. The crisp leaves of holly, mistletoe, and ivy {{{reflected}}} back the light, as if so many little {{{mirrors}}} had been {{{scattered}}} there; and such a mighty blaze went roaring up the chimney as that dull {petrification}} of a hearth had never known in Scrooge's time, or Marley's, or for many and many a winter season gone. Heaped up on the floor, to form a kind of throne}}}, were turkeys, geese, game, poultry, brawn, great {{{joints}}} of meat, {{{sucking}}} pigs, long {{{wreaths}}} of sausages, mince-pies, {plum}}} puddings, barrels} of oysters, red-hot chestnuts, {{{cherry}}} -{{{cheeked}}} apples, juicy oranges, {{{luscious}}} pears, immense {{{twelfth}}} -{{{cakes}}, and {{{seething}}} {{{bowls}}} of punch, that made the chamber dim with their delicious steam. In easy state upon this {{{couch}}} there sat a jolly Giant, glorious to see; who bore a glowing torch, in shape not unlike Plenty's {{{horn}}}, and held it up, high up,

to shed its light on Scrooge as he came peeping round the door. 'Come in!' exclaimed the Ghost. 'Come in! and know me better, man!' Scrooge entered {{{{{{timidly}}}}}}}, and hung his head before this Spirit. He was not the {{{{dogged}}}} Scrooge he had been; and though the Spirit's eyes were clear and kind, he did not like to meet them. 'I am the Ghost of Christmas Present,' said the Spirit. 'Look upon me!' Scrooge reverently did so. It was {{{{clothed}}}} in one simple deep green robe, or {{{{{{mantle}}}}}}, {{{{bordered}}}} with white fur. This garment hung so {{{{{{loosely}}}} on the figure, that its capacious breast was bare, as if {{{{{{disdaining}}}}} to be {{{{warded}}}} or concealed by any {{{{artifice}}}}. Its feet, {{{{{{observable}}}}} beneath the {{{{{{ample}}}}} folds of the garment, were also bare; and on its head it wore no other {{{{{{covering}}}}} than a holly {{{{wreath}}}}, set here and there with shining {{{{icicles}}}. Its dark-brown {{{{curls were long and free; free as its genial face, its sparkling}}}} eye, its open hand, its {{{{cheery}}}} voice, its {{{{unconstrained}}}} {{{{demeanour}}}}, and its {{{{joyful}}}} air. Girded round its middle was an {{{{antique}}}} {{{{scabbard}}}}: but no {{{{sword}}}} was in it, and the ancient {{{{sheath}}}} was eaten up with {{{{rust}}}}. 'You have never seen the like of me before!' exclaimed the Spirit. 'Never,' Scrooge made answer to it. 'Have never walked forth with the younger members of my family; meaning (for I am very young) my elder brothers born in these later years?' pursued the Phantom. 'I don't think I have,' said Scrooge. 'I am afraid I have not. Have you had many brothers, Spirit?' 'More than eighteen {{{{hundred}}},' said the Ghost. 'A {{{{tremendous}}}} family to {{{{provide}}}} for,' muttered Scrooge. The Ghost of Christmas Present rose. 'Spirit,' said Scrooge {{{{submissively}}}, 'conduct me where you will. I went forth last night on {{{{compulsion}}}}, and I learned a lesson which is working now. To-night if you have {{{{taught}}}} to teach me, let me profit by it.' 'Touch my robe!' Scrooge did as he was told, and held it fast. Holly, mistletoe, red berries, ivy, turkeys, geese, game, poultry, brawn, meat, pigs, sausages, oysters, pies, puddings, {{{{fruit}}}}, and punch, all vanished instantly. So did the room, the fire, the ruddy glow, the hour of night, and they stood in the city streets on Christmas morning, where (for the weather was {{{{severe}}}) the people made a rough, but brisk and not {{{{unpleasant}}}} kind of music, in scraping the snow from the pavement in {{{{front}}}} of their {{{{dwellings}}}}, and from the tops of their houses, whence it was mad delight to the boys to see it come {{{{plumping}}}} down into the road below, and splitting into {{{{artificial}}}} little {{{{snowstorms}}}}. The house- {{{{fronts}}}} looked black enough, and the windows {{{{blacker}}}}, {{{{contrasting}}}} with the smooth white sheet of snow upon the {{{{roofs}}}}, and with the {{{{dirtier}}}} snow upon the ground; which last {{{{deposit}}}} had been {{{{ploughed}}}} up in deep furrows by the heavy wheels of carts and {{{{waggons}}}}: furrows that crossed and recrossed {{{{each other hundreds of times where the great streets {{{{branched}}}} off; and made {{{{intricate}}}} {{{{channels}}}}, hard to {{{{trace}}}} in the thick yellow mud and icy water. The sky was gloomy, and the {{{{shortest}}}} streets were choked up with a dingy mist, half thawed, half frozen, whose heavier {{{{particles}}}} descended {{{{in a shower}}}} of {{{{sooty}}}} {{{{atoms}}}}, as if all the {{{{chimneys}}}} in Great Britain had, by one consent, caught fire, and were blazing away to their dear heart's content. There was nothing very cheerful in the climate or the town, and yet was there an air of {{{{cheerfulness}}}} abroad that the {{{{clearest}}}} summer air and {{{{brightest}}}} summer sun might have endeavoured to diffuse {{{{in vain}}}}. [Illustration: THERE WAS NOTHING VERY CHEERFUL IN THE CLIMATE] For the people who were shovelling {{{{away on the house-tops were jovial and full of glee; calling out to one another from the {{{{parapets}}}}, and now and then exchanging {{{{snowball}}}}--better-natured {{{{missile}}}} far than many a {{{{wordy}}}} {{{{jest}}}}--laughing heartily if it went right, and not less heartily if it went wrong. The {{{{poulterers}}}}' shops were still half open, and the {{{{fruiterers}}}}' were {{{{radiant}}}} in their {{{{glory}}}}. There were great, round, pot- {{{{bellied}}}} baskets of chestnuts, {{{{shaped like the waistcoats}}}} of jolly old gentlemen, {{{{lolling}}}} at the doors, and tumbling out

into the street in their {{{{apoplectic}}}} {{{{opulence}}}}: There were ruddy, brown-faced, broad-{{{{{girthed}}}}} Spanish {{{{onions}}}}, shining in the {{{{fatness}}}} of their growth like Spanish {{{{friars}}}}, and winking from their {{{{shelves}}} in {{{{wanton}}}}} {{{{slyness}}}} at the girls as they went by, and glanced {{{{demurely}}} at the hung-up mistletoe. There were pears and apples clustered high in {{{{blooming}}}}} {{{{pyramids}}}; there were {{{{bunches}}}} of {{{{grapes}}}}, made, in the {{{{shopkeepers}}}}' benevolence, to {{{{dangle}}}}} from {{{{conspicuous}}}}} {{{{hooks}}}}} that people's mouths might water {{{{gratis}}}}} as they passed; there were {{{{piles}}}} of {{{{filberts}}}}, mossy and brown, {{{{recalling}}}}, in their {{{{fragrance}}}}, ancient {{{{walks}}}} among the {{{{woods}}}}, and pleasant {{{{shufflings}}}} ankle deep through withered leaves; there were Norfolk Biffins, {{{{squab}}}} and {{{{swarthy}}}}, setting off the yellow of the oranges and lemons, and, in the great {{{{compactness}}}} of their juicy persons, {{{{urgently}}}}} {{{{entreating}}} and {{{{beseeching}}}}} to be carried home in paper {{{{bags}}}}} and eaten after dinner. The very gold and silver fish, set forth among these {{{{choice}}}}} fruits in a bowl, though members of a dull and {{{{stagnant-{{blooded}}}}} race, appeared to know that there was something going on; and, to a fish, went gasping round and round their little world in slow and {{{{passionless}}}}} excitement. The Grocers! oh, the Grocers! nearly closed, with perhaps two shutters down, or one; but through those {{{{gaps}}}}} such {{{{glimpses}}}}! It was not alone that the scales descending on the counter made a merry sound, or that the {{{{twine}}}} and {{{{roller}}}} parted company so briskly, or that the {{{{canisters}}}}} were {{{{rattled}}}}} up and down like {{{{juggling}}}}} {{{{tricks}}}}, or even that the {{{{blended}}}}} {{{{scents}}}}} of tea and {{{{coffee}}}} were so grateful to the nose, or even that the {{{{raisins}}}}} were so plentiful}}}} and {{{{rare}}}}, the {{{{almonds}}}}} so extremely white, the sticks of {{{{cinnamon}}} so long and straight, the other {{{{spices}}}}} so delicious, the {{{{candied}}} fruits so {{{{caked}}}} and {{{{spotted}}}}} with {{{{molten}}}}} sugar as to make the {{{{coldest}}}}} {{{{lookers}}}}-on feel {{{{faint}}}}, and {{{{subsequently}}}}} {{{{bilious}}}}. Nor was it that the {{{{figs}}} were {{{{moist}}}}} and {{{{pulpy}}}}, or that the French {{{{plums}}} blushed in {{{{modest}}}}} {{{{tartness}}}}} from their {{{{highly}}}}-{{{decorated}}} boxes, or that everything was good to eat and in its Christmas dress; but the {{{{customers}}}}} were all so hurried and so eager in the {{{{hopeful}}}}} promise of the day, that they {{{{tumbled}}}}} up against each other at the door, {{{{crashing}}}}} their {{{{wicker}}}}} baskets {{{{wildly}}}}, and left their {{{{purchases}}}}} upon the counter, and came running back to fetch them, and committed}}}} hundreds of the like {{{{mistakes}}}}, in the best humour possible; while the {{{{grocer}}}} and his people were so {{{{frank}}}}} and fresh, that the {{{{polished}}}}} hearts with which they fastened their {{{{aprons}}}}} behind might have been their own, worn outside for general {{{{inspection}}}}, and for Christmas {{{{daws}}}}} to {{{{peck}}} at if they chose. But soon the {{{{steeple}}} called good people all to church and {{{{chapel}}}}, and away they came, {{{{flocking}}} through the streets in their best clothes and with their {{{{gayest}}}}} faces. And at the same time there {{{{emerged}}}}, from {{{{scores}}}}} of by-streets, {{{{lanes}}}}, and nameless}}}} {{{{turnings}}, {{{{innumerable}}}}} people, {{{{carrying}}}}} their dinners to the bakers' shops. The sight of these poor {{{{revellers}}}}} appeared to interest the Spirit very much, for he stood with Scrooge beside him in a baker's {{{{doorway}}, and, taking off the {{{{covers}}}}} as their {{{{bearers}}}}} passed, {{{{sprinkled}}}}} {{{{incense}}}}} on their dinners from his torch. And it was a very uncommon kind of torch, for once or twice, when there were angry words between some dinner-{{{{{carriers}}}}} who had {{{{jostled}}}}} each other, he shed a few {{{{drops}}}}} of water on them from it, and their good-humour was restored {{{{directly}}}}. For they said, it was a

shame to quarrel upon Christmas Day. And so it was! God love it, so it was! In time the bells ceased, and the bakers were shut up; and yet there was a genial {{{shadowing}}}} forth of all these dinners, and the {{{progress}}} of their cooking, in the thawed {{{blotch}}} of wet above each baker's oven, where the pavement smoked as if its stones were cooking too. 'Is there a {{{peculiar}}}} flavour in what you {sprinkle} from your torch?' asked Scrooge. 'There is. My own.' 'Would it apply to any kind of dinner on this day?' asked Scrooge. 'To any kindly given. To a poor one most.' 'Why to a poor one most?' asked Scrooge. 'Because it {{{needs}}} it most.' 'Spirit!' said Scrooge, after a moment's thought, 'I wonder you, of all the beings in the many {{{worlds}}} about us, should desire to {{{cramp}}} these people's opportunities of {{{innocent}}} enjoyment'. '!' cried the Spirit. 'You would {{{deprive}}} them of their means of dining every {{{seventh}}} day, often the only day on which they can be said to dine at all,' said Scrooge; 'wouldn't you?' '!' cried the Spirit. 'You seek to close these places on the Seventh Day,' said Scrooge. 'And it comes to the same thing.' 'I seek!' exclaimed the Spirit. 'Forgive me if I am wrong. It has been done in your name, or at least in that of your family,' said Scrooge. 'There are some upon this earth of yours,' returned the Spirit, 'who lay {{{claim}}} to know us, and who do their deeds of passion, {{{pride}}}, ill-will, {{{hatred}}}, {{{envy}}}, {{{bigotry}}}, and {{{selfishness}}} in our name, who are as strange to us, and all our {{{kith}}} and kin, as if they had never lived. Remember that, and charge their {{{doings}}} on themselves, not us.' Scrooge promised that he would; and they went on, invisible, as they had been before, into the {{{suburbs}}} of the town. It was a remarkable quality of the Ghost (which Scrooge had observed at the baker's), that notwithstanding his {{{gigantic}}} size, he could {{{accommodate}}} himself to any place with ease; and that he stood beneath a low roof quite as gracefully and like a supernatural creature as it was possible he could have done in any lofty hall. And perhaps it was the pleasure the good Spirit had in showing off this power of his, or else it was his own kind, generous, hearty nature, and his sympathy with all poor men, that led him straight to Scrooge's clerk's; for there he went, and took Scrooge with him, holding to his robe; and on the threshold of the door the Spirit smiled, and stopped to bless Bob Cratchit's dwelling with the sprinklings of his torch. Think of that! Bob had but fifteen 'Bob' a week himself; he {{{pocketed}}} on Saturdays but fifteen {{{copies}}} of his Christian name; and yet the Ghost of Christmas Present blessed his four-{{{roomed}}} house! Then up rose Mrs. Cratchit, Cratchit's wife, dressed out but poorly in a twice-turned gown, but brave in ribbons, which are cheap, and make a goodly show for sixpence; and she laid the cloth, {{{assisted}}} by Belinda Cratchit, second of her daughters, also brave in ribbons; while Master Peter Cratchit plunged a {{{fork}}} into the saucepan of potatoes, and getting the corners of his monstrous shirt-collar (Bob's {{{private}}} property), {{{conferred}}} upon his son and {{{heir}}} in honour of the day,) into his mouth, rejoiced to find himself so {{{gallantly attired}}}, and {{{yearned}}} to show his {{{linen}}} in the {{{fashionable}}} Parks. And now two smaller Cratchits, boy and girl, came tearing in, {{{screaming}}} that outside the baker's they had {{{smelt}}} the goose, and known it for their own; and {{{basking}}} in {{{luxurious}}} thoughts of sage and onion, these young Cratchits {{{danced}}} about the table, and {{{exalted}}} Master Peter Cratchit to the {{{skies}}}, while he (not {{{proud}}}, although his collars nearly choked him) blew the fire, until the slow potatoes, {{{bubbling}}} up, knocked loudly at the saucepan-lid to be let out and {{{peeled}}}. 'What has ever got your precious father, then?' said Mrs. Cratchit. 'And your brother, Tiny Tim? And Martha warn't as late last Christmas Day by half an hour!' 'Here's Martha, mother!' said a girl, appearing as she spoke. 'Here's Martha, mother!' cried the two young Cratchits. 'Hurrah! There's _such_ a goose, Martha!' 'Why, bless your heart alive, my dear, how late you are!' said Mrs. Cratchit, kissing her a dozen times, and taking off her {{{shawl}}} and {{{bonnet}}} for her with {{{official}}} {{{zeal}}}. 'We'd a deal of work to {{{finish}}} up last night,' replied the girl, 'and had to clear away this morning, mother!' 'Well! never mind so long as you are come,' said Mrs. Cratchit. 'Sit ye down before the fire, my dear, and have a warm, Lord bless ye!' 'No, no! There's father coming,' cried the two

young Cratchits, who were {{{{{{everywhere}}}}} at once. "Hide, Martha, hide!" So Martha hid {{{{{(herself)}}}}}, and in came little Bob, the father, with at least three feet of comforter, {{{{{{exclusive}}}}} of the {{{{{{fringe}}}}}}, hanging down before him, and his threadbare clothes {{{{{{darned}}}}} up and {{{{{{brushed}}}}} to look {{{seasonable}}}, and Tiny Tim upon his shoulder. Alas for Tiny Tim, he bore a little crutch, and had his {{{{{{limbs}}}}} {{{supported}}}} by an iron {{{frame}}}. "Why, where's our Martha?" cried Bob Cratchit, looking round. "Not coming," said Mrs. Cratchit. "Not coming!" said Bob, with a sudden {{{declension}}} in his high spirits; for he had been Tim's blood-horse all the way from church, and had come home {{{rampant}}}. "Not coming upon Christmas Day!" Martha didn't like to see him {{{disappointed}}}, if it were only in joke; so she came out {{{prematurely}}} from behind the closet door, and ran into his arms, while the two young Cratchits {hustled} Tiny Tim, and bore him off into the {{{wash}}}-house, that he might hear the pudding singing in the copper. "And how did little Tim {{{behave}}}" asked Mrs. Cratchit when she had {{{rallied}}} Bob on his credulity, and Bob had {{{hugged}}} his daughter to his heart's content. "As good as gold," said Bob, "and better. Somehow, he gets" thoughtful, sitting by himself so much, and {{{thinks}}} the strangest things you ever heard. He told me, coming home, that he hoped the people saw him in the church, because he was a cripple, and it might be pleasant to them to remember upon Christmas Day who made {{{lame}}} beggars walk and blind men see." Bob's voice was tremulous when he told them this, and trembled more when he said that Tiny Tim was growing strong and hearty. His active little crutch was heard upon the floor, and back came Tiny Tim before another word was spoken, {{{escorted}}} by his brother and sister to his stool beside the fire; and while Bob, turning up his {{{cuffs}}}--as if, poor fellow, they were {{{capable}}} of being made more {{{shabby}}}--some hot {{{mixture}}} in a jug with gin and lemons, and stirred it round and round, and put it on the hob to {{{simmer}}, Master Peter and the two {{{ubiquitous}}} young Cratchits went to fetch the goose, with which they soon returned in high {{{procession}}}. [Illustration] Such a {{{bustle}}} ensued that you might have thought a goose the rarest of all birds; a {{{feathered}}} phenomenon, to which a black {{{swan}}} was a matter of course--and, in truth, it was something very like it in that house. Mrs. Cratchit made the gravy (ready {{{beforehand}}} in a little saucepan) {{{hisssing}}} hot; Master Peter mashed the potatoes with {{{incredible vigour}}}; Miss Belinda {{{sweetened}}} up the apple sauce; Martha {{{dusted}}} the hot plates; Bob took Tiny Tim beside him in a tiny corner at the table; the two young Cratchits set chairs for everybody, not forgetting themselves, and, mounting guard upon their {{{posts}}}, crammed {{{spoons}}} into their mouths, {{{lest}}} they should {{{shriek}}} for goose before their turn came to be helped. At last the {{{dishes}}} were set on, and {{{grace}}} was said. It was succeeded by a breathless pause, as Mrs. Cratchit, looking slowly all along the {{{carving}}} knife, prepared to {{{plunge}}} it in the breast; but when she did, and when the long-expected gush {{{of stuffing}}} {{{issued}}} forth, one {{{murmur}}} of delight {{{arose}}} all round the board, and even Tiny Tim, excited by the two young Cratchits, beat on the table with the handle of his knife and {{{feebley}}} cried Hurrah! [Illustration: HE HAD BEEN TIM'S BLOOD-HORSE ALL THE WAY FROM CHURCH] There never was such a goose. Bob said he didn't believe there ever was such a goose {{{cooked}}}. Its tenderness and flavour, size and {{{cheapness}}}, were the themes of universal admiration. Eked out by apple sauce and mashed potatoes, it was a sufficient dinner for the whole family; indeed, as Mrs. Cratchit said with great delight {{{surveying}}} one small {atom} of a {{{bone}}} upon the {{{dish}}}, they hadn't ate it all at last! Yet every one had had enough, and the youngest Cratchits, in particular, were {{{steeped}}} in sage and onion to the eyebrows! But now, the plates being changed by Miss Belinda, Mrs. Cratchit left the room alone--too nervous to bear {{{witnesses}}}--to take the pudding up, and bring it in. Suppose it should not be done enough! Suppose it should break {{{in turning out}}}! Suppose somebody should have got over the wall of the back-yard

and stolen it, while they were merry with the goose--a supposition at which the two young Cratchits became livid! All sorts of {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{horrors}}}}} were supposed. Hallo! A great deal of steam! The pudding was out of the copper. A smell like a washing-day! That was the cloth. A smell like an {{{{{{{{{{{{{{eating}}}}} house and a {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{pastry}}}}} cook's next door to each other, with a laundress's next door to that! That was the pudding! In half a minute Mrs. Cratchit entered--flushed, but smiling {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{proudly}}}}} --with the pudding, like a {{speckled}} {cannon}}}-ball, so hard and firm, blazing in half of half-a- {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{quatern}}}}} of {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{ignited}}}}} {{brandy}}, and {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{bedight}}}}} with Christmas holly stuck into the top. Oh, a wonderful pudding! Bob Cratchit said, and {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{calmly}}}}} too, that he regarded it as the {{greatest}} {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{success}}}}} {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{achieved}}}}} by Mrs. Cratchit since their marriage. Mrs. Cratchit said that, now the weight was off her mind, she would confess she had her doubts about the quantity of {{{{{{{{{{{{{flour}}}. Everybody had something to say about it, but nobody said or thought it was at all a small pudding for a large family. It would have been {{{{{{{{{{{{{flat}}}}} {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{heresy}}}}} to do so. Any Cratchit would have blushed to {{{{{{{{{{{hint}}} at such a thing. [Illustration: WITH THE PUDDING] At last the dinner was all done, the cloth was cleared, the hearth swept, and the fire made up. The {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{compound}}}}} in the jug being tasted and {{{{{{{{{{{{{considered}}}}} perfect, apples and oranges were put upon the table, and a shovel full of chestnuts on the fire. Then all the Cratchit family drew round the hearth in what Bob Cratchit called a {{{{{{{{{{{circle}}}}}, meaning half a one; and at Bob Cratchit's elbow stood the family {{{{{{{{{{{display}}}}} of glass. Two {{{{{{{{{{{tumblers}}}}} and a {{{{{{{{{custard}}}}} cup without a handle. These held the hot stuff from the jug, however, as well as golden {{{{{{{{{{{goblets}}}}} would have done; and Bob {{{{{{{{{{{served}}}}} it out with beaming looks, while the chestnuts on the fire {{{{{{{{{{{sputtered}}}}} and cracked {{{{{{{{{{{noisily}}}}}. Then Bob {{{{{{{{{proposed}}}}}: 'A merry Christmas to us all, my dears. God bless us!' Which all the family re-echoed. 'God bless us every one!' said Tiny Tim, the last of all. He sat very close to his father's side, upon his little stool. Bob held his withered little hand to his, as if he loved the child, and wished to keep him by his side, and dreaded that he might be taken from him. 'Spirit,' said Scrooge, with an interest he had never felt before, 'tell me if Tiny Tim will live.' 'I see a {{{{{vacant}}}}} {{{{{seat}}},' replied the Ghost, 'in the poor chimney corner, and a crutch without an owner, {{{{{carefully}}}}} {{{{{preserved}}}}. If these shadows remain unaltered by the Future, the child will die.' 'No, no,' said Scrooge. 'Oh no, kind Spirit! say he will be {{{{{spared}}}' 'If these shadows remain unaltered by the Future none other of my race,' returned the Ghost, 'will find him here. What then? If he be like to die, he had better do it, and decrease the surplus population.' Scrooge hung his head to hear his own words {{{{{quoted}}}}} by the Spirit, and was overcome with {{{{{penitence}}}}} and grief. 'Man,' said the Ghost, 'if man you be in heart, not {{{{{adamant}}}}, {{{{{forbear}}}}} that wicked {{{{{cant}}}}} until you have {{{{{discovered what the surplus is, and where it is. Will you {{{{{decide}}}}} what men shall live, what men shall die? It may be that, in the sight of Heaven, you are more {{{worthless}}}}} and less fit to live than {{{millions}} like this poor man's child. O God! to hear the {insect} on the {{{leaf}}}}} {pronouncing}}}}} on the too much life among his hungry brothers in the {{{dust}}}}}!' Scrooge bent before the Ghost's {{{rebuke}}}, and, trembling, cast his eyes upon the ground. But he raised them {{{speedily}}}}} on hearing his own name. 'Mr. Scrooge!' said Bob. 'I'll give you Mr. Scrooge, the Founder of the Feast!' 'The Founder of the Feast, indeed!' cried Mrs. Cratchit, {{{reddening}}}}. 'I wish I had him here. I'd give him a piece of my mind to {{{feast}}}}} upon, and I hope he'd have a good appetite for it.' 'My dear,' said Bob, 'the children! Christmas Day.' 'It should be Christmas Day, I am sure,' said she, 'on which one {{{drinks}}}}} the health of such an odious, {{{stingy}}}}}, hard, {{{unfeeling}}}}} man as Mr. Scrooge. You know he is, Robert! Nobody knows it better than you do, poor fellow!' 'My dear!' was Bob's mild answer. 'Christmas Day.' 'I'll drink his health for your sake and the Day's,' said Mrs. Cratchit, 'not for his. Long life to him! A merry Christmas and a happy New Year! He'll be very merry and very happy, I have no doubt!' The children drank the {{{toast}}}}} after her. It was the first of their {{{proceedings}}}}} which had no {{{heartiness}}}}} in it. Tiny Tim drank it last of all,

but he didn't care {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{twopence}}}}}}}}}} for it. Scrooge was the Ogre of the family. The mention of his name cast a dark shadow on the party, which was not dispelled for full five minutes. After it had passed away they were ten times merrier than before, from the mere relief of Scrooge the Baleful being done with. Bob Cratchit told them how he had a situation in his eye for Master Peter, which would bring in, if {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{obtained}}}}}}}}}}, full five-and-sixpence {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{weekly}}}}}}}}}}. The two young Cratchits laughed {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{tremendously}}}}}}}}}} at the idea of Peter's being a man of business; and Peter himself looked thoughtfully at the fire from between his collars, as if he were {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{deliberating}}}}}}}}}} what particular {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{investments}}}}}}}}}} he should favour when he came into the {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{receipt}}}}}}}}}} of that {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{bewildering}}}}}}}}}} {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{income}}}}}}}}}}. Martha, who was a poor apprentice at a {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{milliner}}}}}}}}}}'s, then told them what kind of work she had to do, and how many hours she worked at a {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{stretch}}}}}}}}}} and how she meant to lie {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{abed}}}}}}}}}} to-morrow morning for a good long rest; to-morrow being a holiday she passed at home. Also how she had seen a {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{countess}}}}}}}}}} and a lord some days before, and how the lord 'was much about as tall as Peter'; at which Peter pulled up his collar so high that you couldn't have seen his head if you had been there. All this time the chestnuts and the jug went round and round; and by-and-by they had a song, about a lost child travelling in the snow, from Tiny Tim, who had a {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{plaintive}}}}}}}}}} little voice, and {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{sang}}}}}}}}}} it very well indeed. There was nothing of high mark in this. They were not a handsome family; they were not well dressed; their shoes were far from being {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{waterproof}}}}}}}}}}; their clothes were scanty; and Peter might have known, and very likely did, the inside of a {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{pawnbroker}}}}}}}}}}'s. But they were happy, grateful, pleased with one another, and {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{contented}}}}}}}}}} with the time; and when they faded, and looked happier yet in the bright sprinklings of the Spirit's torch at parting, Scrooge had his eye upon them, and especially on Tiny Tim, until the last. By this time it was getting dark, and {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{snowing}}}}}}}}}} pretty heavily; and as Scrooge and the Spirit went along the streets, the brightness of the roaring fires in kitchens, {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{parlours}}}}}}}}}}, and all sorts of rooms was wonderful. Here, the {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{flickering}}}}}}}}}} of the blaze showed {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{preparations}}}}}}}}}} for a {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{cosy}}}}}}}}}} dinner, with hot plates {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{baking}}}}}}}}}} through and through before the fire, and deep red curtains, ready to be drawn to shut out cold and darkness. There, all the children of the house were running out into the snow to meet their married sisters, brothers, {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{cousins}}}}}}}}}}, {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{uncles}}}}}}}}}}, {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{aunts}}}}}}}}}}}, and be the first to greet them. Here, again, were shadows on the window-{{{blinds}}}} of guests {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{assembling}}}}}}}}}}}; and there a group of handsome girls, all hooded and fur-{{{booted}}}, and all chattering at once, {{{tripped}}} lightly off to some near {{{neighbour}}}s house; where, woe upon the {{{single man who saw them enter--artful {{{witches}}}}, well they knew it--in a glow! But, if you had {{{judged}}} from the {{{numbers}}} of people on their way to friendly {{{gatherings}}}, you might have thought that no one was at home to give them {welcome} when they got there, instead of every house expecting company, and {{{piling}}} up its fires half-chimney high. Blessings on it, how the Ghost {{{exulted}}}! How it {{{bared}}} its {{{breadth}}} of breast, and opened its capacious {{{palm}}}, and floated on, {{{outpouring}}} with a generous hand its bright and {{{harmless}} {{{mirth}}} on everything within its {{{reach}}}! The very lamplighter, who ran on before, {{{dotting}}} the dusky street with {{{specks of light, and who was dressed to {{{spend}}} the evening {{{somewhere}}}}, laughed out loudly as the Spirit passed, though little {{{kenned}}} the lamplighter that he had any company but Christmas. And now, without a word of warning from the Ghost, they stood upon a bleak and {{{desert}}} moor, where monstrous masses of rude stone were cast about, as though it were the burial-place of {{{giants}}; and water spread itself {{{wheresoever}} it {{{listed}}}; or would have done so, but for the frost that held it {{{prisoner}}}; and nothing grew but {{{moss}}} and {{{furze}}, and {{{coarse}}, {{{rank}}} grass. Down in the {{{west}}} the setting sun had left a {{{streak}}} of {{{fiery}}} red, which glared upon the {{{desolation}}} for an instant, like a {{{sullen}}} eye, and {{{frowning}}} lower, lower, lower yet, was lost in the thick gloom of {{{darkest}}} night. 'What place is this?' asked

Scrooge. 'A place where {{{miners}}}} live, who labour in the bowels of the earth,' returned the Spirit. 'But they know me. See!' A light shone from the window of a hut, and {{{swiftly}}} they advanced towards it. Passing through the wall of mud and stone, they found a cheerful company assembled round a glowing fire. An old, old man and woman, with their children and their children's children, and another {{{generation beyond that, all {{{decked}}} out gaily in their holiday {{{attire}}}}. The old man, in a voice that {{{seldom}}} rose above the {{{howling}}} of the wind upon the {{{barren}}} {{{waste}}}, was singing them a Christmas song; it had been a very old song when he was a boy; and from time to time they all joined in the {{{chorus}}}. So surely as they raised their voices, the old man got quite blithe and loud; and so surely as they stopped, his vigour sank again. The Spirit did not tarry here, but bade Scrooge hold his robe, and, {{{passing}}} on above the moor, sped whither? Not to sea? To sea. To Scrooge's horror, looking back, he saw the last of the {{{land}}}, a frightful range of rocks, behind them; and his ears were {{{deafened}}} by the {{{thundering}}} of water, as it {{{rolled}}} and roared, and {{{raged}}} among the dreadful {{{caverns}}} it had worn, and {{{fiercely}}} tried to {{{undermine}}} the earth. Built upon a dismal {{{reef}}} of {{{sunken}}} rocks, some {{{league}}} or so from shore, on which the {{{waters}}} {{{chafed}}} and dashed, the wild year through, there stood a solitary {{{lighthouse}}}. Great heaps of seaweed clung to its {{{base}}}, and storm-birds--born of the wind, one might suppose, as seaweed of the water--rose and fell about it, like the waves they skimmed. But, even here, two men who watched the light had made a fire, that through the {{{loophole}}} in the thick stone wall shed out a ray of brightness on the awful sea. Joining their {{{horny}}} hands over the rough table at which they sat, they wished each other Merry Christmas in their can of grog; and one of them--the elder too, with his face all {{{damaged}}} and scarred with hard weather, as the figure-head of an old ship might be--struck up a {{{sturdy}}} song that was like a {{{gale}}} in itself. Again the Ghost sped on, above the black and {{{heaving}}} sea--on, on--until being far away, as he told Scrooge, from any shore, they lighted on a ship. They stood beside the {{{helmsman}} at the wheel, the look-out in the bow, the {{{officers}} who had the {{{watch}}}; dark, ghostly figures in their several stations; but every man among them {{{hummed}}} a Christmas {{{tune}}}, or had a Christmas thought, or spoke below his breath to his {{{companion of some {{{bygone}}} Christmas Day, with {{{homeward}}} hopes belonging to it. And every man on board, {{{waking}}} or {{{sleeping}}}, good or bad, had had a kinder word for one another on that day than on any day in the year; and had shared to some {{{extent}}} in its {{{festivities}}}; and had remembered those he {{{cared}}} for at a distance, and had known that they delighted to remember him. It was a great surprise to Scrooge, while listening to the moaning of the wind, and thinking what a solemn thing it was to move on through the lonely darkness over an {{{unknown {{{abyss}}}}, whose {{{depths}}} were {{{secrets}}} as {{{profound}}} as death: it was a great surprise to Scrooge, while thus engaged, to hear a hearty laugh. It was a much greater surprise to Scrooge to {{{recognise}}} it as his own nephew's and to find himself in a bright, dry, gleaming room, with the Spirit standing smiling by his side, and looking at that same nephew with {{{approving affability}}}! 'Ha, ha!' laughed Scrooge's nephew. 'Ha, ha, ha!' If you should happen, by any {{{unlikely}}} chance, to know a man more blessed in a laugh than Scrooge's nephew, all I can say is, I should like to know him too. Introduce him to me, and I'll {{{cultivate}}} his {{{acquaintance}}}. It is a fair, even-handed, {{{noble}}} {{{adjustment of things, that while there is infection in {{{disease}}} and {{{sorrow}}}, there is nothing in the world so irresistibly {{{contagious}}} as laughter and good-humour. When Scrooge's nephew laughed in this way--holding his {{{sides}}}, rolling his head, and {{{twisting}}} his face into the most extravagant {{{contortions}}--Scrooge's niece, by marriage, laughed as heartily as he. And their assembled friends, being not a bit {{{behindhand}}}, roared out lustily. 'Ha, ha! Ha, ha, ha, ha!' 'He said that Christmas was a humbug, as I live!' cried Scrooge's nephew. 'He believed it, too!' 'More shame for him, Fred!' said Scrooge's niece indignantly. Bless those

women! they never do anything by {halves}}}. They are always in earnest. She was very pretty; exceedingly pretty. With a {{dimpled}}, surprised-looking, capital}}}}}}}}}}}}}} face; a {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{ripe}}}}}}}}}}}}}} little mouth, that seemed made to be kissed--as no doubt it was; all kinds of good little {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{dots}}}}}}}}}}}}}} about her chin, that melted into one another when she laughed; and the {{sunniest}} pair of eyes you ever saw in any little creature's head. Altogether she was what you would have called {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{provoking}}}}}}}}}}}}}, you know; but satisfactory, too. Oh, perfectly satisfactory! 'He's a {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{comical}}}}}}}}}}}} old fellow,' said Scrooge's nephew, 'that's the truth; and not so pleasant as he might be. However, his offences carry their own punishment, and I have nothing to say against him.' 'I'm sure he is very rich, Fred,' hinted Scrooge's niece. 'At least, you always tell _me_ so.' 'What of that, my dear?' said Scrooge's nephew. 'His wealth is of no use to him. He don't do any good with it. He don't make himself comfortable with it. He hasn't the satisfaction}} of thinking--ha, ha, ha!--that he is ever going to {benefit}}}}}}}}}} Us with it.' 'I have no {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{patience}}}}}}}}}}}} with him,' observed Scrooge's niece. Scrooge's niece's sisters, and all the other ladies, expressed the same opinion. 'Oh, I have!' said Scrooge's nephew. 'I am sorry for him; I couldn't be angry with him if I tried. Who {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{suffers}}}}}}}}}}}} by his ill {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{whims}}}}}}}}}}}}? Himself always. Here he {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{takes}}}}}}}}}}}} it into his head to dislike us, and he won't come and dine with us. What's the consequence? He don't {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{lose}}}}}}}}}}}} much of a dinner.' 'Indeed, I think he loses a very good dinner,' {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{interrupted}}}}}}}}}}}} Scrooge's niece. Everybody else said the same, and they must be allowed to have been {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{competent}}}}}}}}}}}} {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{judges}}}}}}}}}}}}}, because they had just had dinner; and with the {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{dessert}}}}}}}}}}}} upon the table, were clustered round the fire, by {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{lamplight}}}}}}}}}}}}. 'Well! I am very glad to hear it,' said Scrooge's nephew, 'because I haven't any great {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{faith}}}}}}}}}}}} in these young housekeepers. What do _you_ say, Topper?' Topper had clearly got his eye upon one of Scrooge's niece's sisters, for he answered that a bachelor was a wretched {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{outcast}}}}}}}}}}}, who had no right to express an opinion on the {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{subject}}}}}}}}}}}. Whereat Scrooge's niece's sister--the plump one with the lace tucker: not the one with the {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{roses}}}}}}}}}}}}--blushed. 'Do go on, Fred,' said Scrooge's niece, clapping her hands. 'He never {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{finishes}}}}}}}}}}}} what he {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{begins}}}}}}}}}}}} to say! He is such a ridiculous fellow!' Scrooge's nephew {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{revelled}}}}}}}}}} in another laugh, and as it was impossible to keep the infection off, though the plump sister tried hard to do it with {aromatic}}}}}}}} {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{vinegar}}}}}}}}}}}, his {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{example}}}}}}}}}} was {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{unanimously}}}}}}}}}} followed. 'I was only going to say,' said Scrooge's nephew, 'that the consequence of his taking a dislike to us, and not making merry with us, is, as I think, that he loses some pleasant moments, which could do him no {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{harm}}}}}}}}}}}}. I am sure he loses {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{pleasanter}}}}}}}}}} {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{companions}}}}}}}}}}}} than he can find in his own thoughts, either in his {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{mouldy}}}}}}}}}}}} old office or his {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{dusty}}}}}}}}}} chambers. I mean to give him the same chance every year, whether he {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{likes}}}}}}}}}} it or not, for I pity him. He may {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{rail}}}}}}}}}}}} at Christmas till he {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{dies}}}}}}}}}}}, but he can't help thinking better of it--I {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{defy}}}}}}}}}}}} him--if he finds}}}}}} me going there, in good temper, year after year, and saying, "Uncle Scrooge, how are you?" If it only put him in the {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{vein}}}}}}}}}}}} to leave his poor clerk fifty pounds, _that's_ something; and I think I shook him yesterday.' It was their turn to laugh now, at the notion of his shaking Scrooge. But being {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{thoroughly}}}}}}}}}}}} good-natured, and not much caring what they laughed at, so that they laughed at any rate, he {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{encouraged}}}}}}}}}}}} them in their merriment, and passed the {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{bottle}}}}}}}}}}}, {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{joyously}}}}}}}}}}. After tea they had some music. For they were a {{musical}}}}}}}} family, and knew what they were about when they {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{sung}}}}}}}}}}}} a Glee or Catch, I can assure you: especially Topper, who could growl away in the {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{bass}}}}}}}}}} like a good one, and never {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{swell}}}}}}}}}}}} the large {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{veins}}}}}}}}}}}} in his forehead, or get red in the face over it. Scrooge's niece played well upon the {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{harp}}}}}}}}}}}; and played, among other {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{tunes}}}}}}}}}}}}}, a simple little air (a mere nothing: you might learn to {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{whistle}}}}}}}}}}}} it in two minutes) which had been familiar to the child who {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{fetched}}}}}}}}}}}} Scrooge from the {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{boarding}}}}}}}}}}-school, as he had been reminded}}}}}}}}}} by the Ghost of Christmas Past. When this {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{strain}}}}}}}}}}}} of music sounded, all the things that Ghost had shown him came upon his mind; he {{{{{{{{{{{{{{{softened}}}}}}}}}}}} more and more; and thought that if he could have listened to it often, years ago, he might have

{{{{{{{cultivated}}}}} } the {{{{{{{kindnesses}}}}} } of life for his own happiness with his own hands, without {{{{{{{resorting}}}}} } to the {{{{{{{sexton}}}}} }'s {{{{{{{spade}}}}} } that buried Jacob Marley. [Illustration: _The way he went after that plump sister in the lace tucker!_] But they didn't {{devote}} the whole evening to music. After a while they played at forfeits; for it is good to be children sometimes, and never better than at Christmas, when its mighty Founder was a child himself. Stop! There was first a game at blind man's-buff. Of course there was. And I no more believe Topper was really blind than I believe he had eyes in his boots. My opinion is, that it was a done thing between him and Scrooge's nephew; and that the Ghost of Christmas Present knew it. The way he went after that plump sister in the lace tucker was an {{{outrage}}} on the credulity of human nature. Knocking down the fire-{{{irons}}}, tumbling over the chairs, {{{bumping}}} up against the {{{piano}}}, {{{smothering himself amongst the curtains}}, wherever she went, there went he! He always knew where the plump sister was. He wouldn't catch anybody else. If you had {{fallen}} up against him (as some of them did) on purpose, he would have made a {{{feint}}} of endeavouring to {{{seize}}} you, which would have been an {{affront}} to your {{{understanding}}}, and would instantly have sidled off in the {{{direction}}} of the plump sister. She often cried out that it wasn't fair; and it really was not. But when, at last, he caught her; when, in spite of all her {{{silken}}} {{{rustlings}}}, and her rapid {{{flutterings}}} past him, he got her into a corner whence there was no {{{escape}}}; then his conduct was the most {{{execrable}}}. For his pretending not to know her; his pretending that it was necessary to touch her head-dress, and further to assure himself of her {{{identity}}} by pressing a certain {{{ring}}} upon her finger, and a certain chain about her neck; was {{{vile}}}, monstrous! No doubt she told him her opinion of it when, another blind man being in office, they were so very {{{confidential}}} together behind the curtains. Scrooge's niece was not one of the blind man's-buff party, but was made comfortable with a large chair and a footstool, in a snug corner where the Ghost and Scrooge were close behind her. But she joined in the forfeits, and loved her love to admiration with all the letters of the {{{alphabet}}}. Likewise at the game of How, When, and Where, she was very great, and, to the secret joy of Scrooge's nephew, beat her sisters hollow; though they were sharp girls too, as Topper could have told you. There might have been twenty people there, young and old, but they all played, and so did Scrooge; for {{{wholly}}} forgetting, in the interest he had in what was going on, that his voice made no sound in their ears, he sometimes came out with his {{{guess}} quite loud, and very often {guessed} right, too; for the {{{sharpest}}} needle, best Whitechapel, {{{warranted}}} not to cut in the eye, was not {sharper}} than Scrooge, {{{blunt}}} as he took it in his head to be. The Ghost was greatly pleased to find him in this {{{mood}}}, and looked upon him with such favour that he begged like a boy to be allowed to stay until the guests departed. But this the Spirit said could not be done. 'Here is a new game,' said Scrooge. 'One half-hour, Spirit, only one!' It was a game called Yes and No, where Scrooge's nephew had to think of something, and the rest must find out what, he only {answering}} to their {{{questions}}} yes or no, as the case was. The brisk fire of {questioning}} to which he was {{{exposed}}} from him that he was thinking of an animal, a live animal, rather a {{{disagreeable}}} animal, a {{{savag e}}} animal, an animal that growled and {{{grunted}}} sometimes, and talked sometimes and lived in London, and walked about the streets, and wasn't made a show of, and wasn't led by anybody, and didn't live in a {{{menagerie}}}, and was never {{{killed}}} in a market, and was not a horse, or an ass, or a cow, or a {{{bull}}}, or a {{{tiger}}}, or a dog, or a pig, or a cat, or a bear. At every fresh question that was put to him, this nephew burst into a fresh {{{roar}}} of laughter; and was so inexpressibly tickled, that he was obliged to get up off the sofa and {{{stamp}}}. At last the plump sister, falling into a {{{similar}}} state, cried out: 'I have found it out! I know what it is, Fred! I know what it is!' 'What is it?' cried Fred. 'It's your uncle Scro-o-o-o-o-ge.' Which it certainly was. Admiration was the universal {{{sentiment}}, though some {{{objected}}} that the reply to 'Is it a bear?' ought to have been 'Yes'; {{{inasmuch as an answer in the {{{negative}}} was sufficient to have {{{diverted}}} their thoughts from Mr. Scrooge, {{{supposing}}

they had ever had any tendency that way. 'He has given us plenty of merriment, I am sure,' said Fred, 'and it would be ungrateful' not to drink his health. Here is a glass of mulled wine ready to our hand at the moment; and I say, "Uncle Scrooge!" "Well! Uncle Scrooge!" they cried. 'A merry Christmas and a happy New Year to the old man, whatever he is!' said Scrooge's nephew. 'He wouldn't take it from me, but may he have it, nevertheless.' Uncle Scrooge! Uncle Scrooge had imperceptibly become so gay and light of heart, that he would have pledged the unconscious company in return, and thanked them in an inaudible speech, if the Ghost had given him time. But the whole scene passed off in the breath of the last word spoken by his nephew; and he and the Spirit were again upon their travels. Much they saw, and far they went, and many homes they visited, but always with a happy end. The Spirit stood beside sick-beds, and they were cheerful; on foreign lands, and they were close at home; by struggling men, and they were patient in their greater hope; by poverty, and it was rich. In almshouse, hospital, and gaol, in misery's every refuge, where vain man in his little brief authority had not made fast the door, and barred the Spirit out, he left his blessing and taught Scrooge his precepts. It was a long night, if it were only a night; but Scrooge had his doubts of this, because the Christmas holidays appeared to be condensed into the space of time they passed together. It was strange, too, that, while Scrooge remained unaltered in his outward form, the Ghost grew older, clearly older. Scrooge had observed this change, but never spoke of it until they left a children's Twelfth-Night party, when, looking at the Spirit as they stood together in an open place, he noticed that its hair was grey. 'Are spirits' lives so short?' asked Scrooge. 'My life upon this globe is very brief,' replied the Ghost. 'It ends to-night.' 'To-night!' cried Scrooge. 'To-night at midnight.' Hark! The time is drawing near.' The chimes were ringing the three-quarters past eleven at that moment. 'Forgive me if I am not justified in what I ask,' said Scrooge, looking intently at the Spirit's robe, 'but I see something strange, and not belonging to yourself, protruding from your skirts. Is it a foot or a claw?' 'It might be a claw, for the flesh there is upon it,' was the Spirit's sorrowful reply. 'Look here!' From the foldings of its robe it brought two children, wretched, abject, frightful, hideous, miserable. They knelt down at its feet, and clung upon the outside of its garment. 'O Man! look here! Look, look down here!' exclaimed the Ghost. They were a boy and girl. Yellow, meagre, ragged, scowling, wolfish, but, too, in their humility. Where graceful youth should have filled their features out, and touched them with its freshest tints, a stale and shrivelled hand, like that of age, had pinched and twisted them, and pulled them into shreds. Where angels might have sat enthroned, devils lurked, and glared out menacing. No change, no degradation, no perversion of humanity in any grade, through all the mysteries of wonderful creation, has monsters half so horrible and dread. Scrooge started back, appalled. Having them shown to him in this way, he tried to say they were fine children, but the words choked themselves, rather than be parties to a lie of such enormous magnitude. 'Spirit! are they yours?' Scrooge could say no more. 'They are Man's,' said the Spirit, looking down upon them. 'And they cling to me, appealing from their fathers.' This boy is Ignorance. This girl is Want. Beware of them both, and all of their degree, but most of all beware this boy, for on his brow I see that written which is Doom, unless the writing be erased. Deny it!' cried the Spirit, stretching out his hand towards the city. 'Slander those who tell it ye! Admit it for your factious purposes, and make it worse! And bide the end!' 'Have they no refuge or resource?' cried Scrooge. 'Are there no prisons?' said the Spirit, turning on him for the last time with his own words. 'Are there no workhouses?' The bell struck Twelve. Scrooge looked about him for the Ghost, and saw it not. As the last stroke

ceased to vibrate, he remembered the {{{prediction}}}} of old Jacob Marley, and, lifting up his eyes, beheld a solemn Phantom, {{{draped}}} and hooded, coming like a mist along the ground towards him. STAVE FOUR THE LAST OF THE SPIRITS The Phantom slowly, {{{gravely}}}, {{{silently}}} approached. When it came near him, Scrooge bent down upon his {{{knee}}}; for in the very air through which this Spirit moved it seemed to {{{scatter}}} gloom and {{{mystery. It was {{{shrouded}}} in a deep black garment, which concealed its head, its face, its form, and left nothing of it visible, save one outstretched hand. But for this, it would have been {{{difficult}}} to {{{detach}}} its figure from the night, and separate it from the darkness by which it was surrounded. He felt that it was tall and {{{stately}}} when it came beside him, and that its {{{mysterious}}} presence filled him with a solemn dread. He knew no more, for the Spirit {{{neither}}} spoke nor moved. 'I am in the presence of the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come?' said Scrooge. The Spirit answered not, but pointed {{{onward}}} with its hand. 'You are about to show me shadows of the things that have not happened, but will happen in the time before us,' Scrooge pursued. 'Is that so, Spirit?' The upper {{{portion}}} of the garment was {{{contracted}}} for an instant in its folds, as if the Spirit had inclined its head. That was the only answer he received. Although well used to ghostly company by this time, Scrooge {{{feared}}} the {{{silent}}} shape so much that his legs trembled beneath him, and he found that he could hardly stand when he prepared to follow it. The Spirit paused a moment, as observing his condition, and giving him time to {{{recover}}}. But Scrooge was all the worse for this. It {{{thrilled him with a {{{vague}}}}, {{{uncertain}}} horror to know that, behind the dusky {{{shroud}}}, there were ghostly eyes intently fixed upon him, while he, though he {{{stretched}}} his own to the {{{utmost}}}, could see nothing but a spectral hand and one great {{{heap}}} of black. 'Ghost of the Future!' he exclaimed, 'I fear you more than any spectre I have seen. But as I know your purpose is to do me good, and as I hope to live to be another man from what I was, I am prepared to bear your company, and do it with a thankful heart. Will you not speak to me?' It gave him no reply. The hand was pointed straight before them. 'Lead on!' said Scrooge. 'Lead on! The night is {{{waning}}} fast, and it is precious time to me, I know. Lead on, Spirit!' The Phantom moved away as it had come towards him. Scrooge followed in the shadow of its dress, which bore him up, he thought, and carried him along. They scarcely seemed to enter the City; for the City rather seemed to spring up about them, and {{{encompass}}} them of its own act. But there they were in the heart of it; on 'Change, amongst the {{{merchants}}}, who hurried up and down, and {{{chinked}}} the money in their pockets, and {{{conversed}}} in groups, and looked at their {{{watches}}}, and trifled thoughtfully with their great gold {{{seals}}}, and so forth, as Scrooge had seen them often. The Spirit stopped beside one little {{{knot}}} of business men. Observing that the hand was pointed to them, Scrooge advanced to listen to their talk. 'No,' said a great fat man with a monstrous chin, 'I don't know much about it either way. I only know he's dead.' 'When did he die?' inquired another. 'Last night, I believe.' 'Why, what was the matter with him?' asked a third, taking a vast quantity of snuff out of a very large snuff-box. 'I thought he'd never die.' 'God knows,' said the first, with a {{{yawn}}}. 'What has he done with his money?' asked a red-faced gentleman with a {{{pendulous}}} excrescence on the end of his nose, that shook like the {{{gills}}} of a turkey-cock. 'I haven't heard,' said the man with the large chin, {{{yawning}}} again. 'Left it to his company, perhaps. He hasn't left it to _me_. That's all I know.' This {{{pleasantry}}} was received with a general laugh. 'It's likely to be a very cheap funeral,' said the same speaker; 'for, upon my life, I don't know of anybody to go to it. Suppose we make up a party, and {{{volunteer}}}?' 'I don't mind going if a lunch is provided,' observed the gentleman with the excrescence on his nose. 'But I must be fed if I make one.' Another laugh. [Illustration: _"How are you?" said one. "How are you?" returned the other. "Well!" said the first. "Old Scratch has got his own at last, hey?"_] 'Well, I am the most {{{disinterested}}} among you, after all,' said the first speaker, 'for I never wear black {{{gloves}}}, and I never eat lunch. But I'll offer to go if anybody else will. When I come to think of it, I'm not at all sure that I wasn't his most particular friend; for we used to stop and speak whenever we met. Bye, bye!' Speakers and {{{listeners}}}

strolled away, and mixed with other groups. Scrooge knew the men, and looked towards the Spirit for an explanation. The phantom glided on into a street. Its finger pointed to two persons meeting. Scrooge listened again, thinking that the explanation might lie here. He knew these men, also, perfectly. They were men of business: very wealthy, and of great importance. He had made a point always of standing well in their esteem in a business point of view, that is; strictly in a business point of view. 'How are you?' said one. 'How are you?' returned the other. 'Well!' said the first, 'old Scratch has got his own at last, hey?' 'So I am told,' returned the second. 'Cold, isn't it?' 'Seasonable for Christmas-time. You are not a skater, I suppose?' 'No, no. Something else to think of. Good-morning!' Not another word. That was their meeting, their conversation, and their parting. Scrooge was at first inclined to be surprised that the Spirit should attach importance to conversations apparently so trivial; but feeling assured that they must have some hidden purpose, he set himself to consider what it was likely to be. They could scarcely be supposed to have any bearing on the death of Jacob, his old partner, for that was Past, and this Ghost's province was the Future. Nor could he think of any one immediately connected with himself to whom he could apply them. But nothing doubting that, to whomsoever they applied, they had some latent moral for his own improvement, he resolved to treasure up every word he heard, and everything he saw; and especially to observe the shadow of himself when it appeared. For he had an expectation that the conduct of his future self would give him the clue he missed, and would render the solution of these riddles easy. He looked about in that very place for his own image, but another man stood in his accustomed corner; and though the clock pointed to his usual time of day for being there, he saw no likeness of himself among the multitudes that poured in through the Porch. It gave him little surprise, however; for he had been revolving in his mind a change of life, and thought and hoped he saw his new-born resolutions carried out in this. Quiet and dark, beside him stood the Phantom, with its outstretched hand. When he roused himself from his thoughtful quest, he fancied, from the turn of the hand, and its situation in reference to himself, that the Unseen Eyes were looking at him keenly. It made him shudder, and feel very cold. They left the busy scene, and went into an obscure part of the town, where Scrooge had never penetrated before, although he recognised its situation and its bad reputation. The ways were foul and narrow; the shop and houses wretched; the people half naked, drunken, slipshod, ugly. Alleys and archways, like so many cesspools, disgorged their offences of smell and dirt, and life upon the stragglng streets; and the whole quarter reeked with crime, with filth, and misery. Far in this den of infamous resort, there was a low-browed, beetleling shop, below a penthouse roof, where iron, old rags, bottles, bones, and greasy offal were bought. Upon the floor within were piled up heaps of rusty keys, nails, chains, hinges, files, scales, weights, and refuse iron of all kinds. Secrets that few would like to scrutinise were bred and hidden in the mountains of unseemly rags, masses of corrupted fat, and sepulchres of bones. Sitting in among the wares he dealt in, by a charcoal stove made of old bricks, was a grey-haired rascal, nearly seventy years of age, who had screened himself from the cold air without by a frouzy curtaining of miscellaneous tatters hung upon a line and smoked his pipe in all the luxury of calm retirement. Scrooge and

the Phantom came into the presence of this man just as a woman with a heavy bundle
{{{slunk}}}}} into the shop. But she had scarcely entered, when another woman,
{{{similarly}}}}} laden, came in too; and she was closely followed by a man
in faded black, who was no less startled by the sight of them than they had been upon the
{{{recognition}}}}} of each other. After a short period of blank astonishment, in which
the old man with the pipe had joined them, they all three burst into a laugh. 'Let the
{{{charwoman}}}}} alone to be the first!' cried she who had entered first. 'Let the
laundress alone to be the second; and let the undertaker's man alone to be the third. Look here,
old Joe, here's a chance! If we haven't all three met here without meaning it!' 'You couldn't have
met in a better place,' said old Joe, {{{removing}}}}} his pipe from his mouth. 'Come
into the parlour. You were made free of it long ago, you know; and the other two an't
{{{strangers}}}. Stop till I shut the door of the shop. Ah! how it
{{{skreeks}}}}}! There an't such a rusty bit of {{{metal}}}}} in the place
as its own hinges, I believe; and I'm sure there's no such old bones here as mine. Ha! ha! We're
all {{{suitable}}}}} to our calling, we're well {{{matched}}}}}.
Come into the parlour. Come into the parlour.' The parlour was the space behind the
{{{screen}}}}} of rags. The old man {{{raked}}}}} the fire together
with an old stair-rod, and having trimmed his {{{smoky}}}}} lamp (for it was night) with the
{{{stem}}}}} of his pipe, put it into his mouth again. While he did this, the
woman who had already spoken threw her bundle on the floor, and sat down in a
{{{flaunting}}}}} manner on a stool, {{{crossing}}}}} her {{{elbows}}}}} on her knees, and looking with a bold {{{defiance}}}}} at the other two. 'What odds, then?
What odds, Mrs. Dilber?' said the woman. 'Every person has a right to take care of themselves.
He always did!' 'That's true, indeed!' said the laundress. 'No man more so.' 'Why, then, don't
stand staring as if you was afraid, woman! Who's the wiser? We're not going to
{{{pick}}}}} {{{holes}}}}} in each other's {{{coats}}}}, I
suppose?' 'No, indeed!' said Mrs. Dilber and the man together. 'We should hope not.' 'Very well
then!' cried the woman. 'That's enough. Who's the worse for the {loss}}}' of a few things like
these? Not a dead man, I suppose?' 'No, indeed,' said Mrs. Dilber, laughing. 'If he wanted to
keep 'em after he was dead, a wicked old screw,' pursued the woman, 'why wasn't he
{{{natural}}} in his {{{lifetime}}}? If he had been, he'd have had somebody to look after
him when he was struck with Death, instead of lying gasping out his last there, alone by himself.'
'It's the {{{truest}}}' word that ever was spoke,' said Mrs. Dilber. 'It's a judgment
on him.' 'I wish it was a little heavier judgment,' replied the woman: 'and it should have been, you
may {{{depend}}}}} upon it, if I could have laid my hands on anything else.
Open that bundle, old Joe, and let me know the value of it. Speak out plain. I'm not afraid to be
the first, nor afraid for them to see it. We knew pretty well that we were {helping}}}' ourselves
before we met here, I believe. It's no sin. Open the bundle, Joe.' But the {{{gallantry}}}} of her
friends would not allow}}}' of this; and the man in faded black, mounting the
{{{breach}}}}} first, produced _his_ plunder}}}'. It was not {{{extensive}}}}}. A {seal}}}' or two, a {{{pencil}}}-case, a pair of sleeve-buttons, and a
{{{brooch}}}} of no great value, were all. They were {{{severally}}}} examined and
{{{appraised}}}}} by old Joe, who {{{chalked}}}}} the
{{{sums}}}} he was {{{disposed}}}} to give for each upon the wall, and added them
up into a {{{total}}}}} when he found that there was nothing more to come.
'That's your account,' said Joe, 'and I wouldn't give another sixpence, if I was to be boiled for not
doing it. Who's next?' [Illustration: _"What do you call this?" said Joe. "Bed-curtains."_] Mrs.
Dilber was next. Sheets and {{{towels}}}}, a little {{{wearing}}}}} {{{apparel}}}}, two old {{{fashioned}}}}} silver {{{teaspoons}}}},
a pair of sugar-{{{tongs}}}}, and a few boots. Her account was
{{{stated}}}}} on the wall in the same manner. 'I always give too much to
ladies. It's a {{{weakness}}}} of mine, and that's the way I {{{ruin myself}}}', said
old Joe. 'That's your account. If you asked me for another {{{penny}}}}, and made it an
open question, I'd {{{repent}}}}} of being so {{{liberal}}}}, and knock off
half-a-crown.' 'And now {{{undo}}}}} _my_ bundle, Joe,' said the first woman.
Joe went down on his knees for the greater {{{convenience}}}}} of opening it, and, having
{{{unfastened}}}} a great many {{{knots}}}}, {{{dragged}}}}} out a large

heavy {roll} of some dark stuff. 'What do you call this?' said Joe. 'Bed-curtains?' 'Ah!' returned the woman, laughing and leaning {forward} on her crossed arms. 'Bed-curtains!' 'You don't mean to say you took 'em down, rings and all, with him lying there?' said Joe. 'Yes, I do,' replied the woman. 'Why not?' 'You were born to make your fortune,' said Joe, 'and you'll certainly do it.' 'I certainly shan't hold my hand, when I can get anything in it by {reaching} it out, for the sake of such a man as he was, I promise you, Joe,' returned the woman {coolly}. 'Don't drop that oil upon the blankets, now.' 'His blankets?' asked Joe. 'Whose else's do you think?' replied the woman. 'He isn't likely to take cold without 'em, I dare say.' 'I hope he didn't die of anything catching? Eh?' said old Joe, {stopping} in his work, and looking up. 'Don't you be afraid of that,' returned the woman. 'I an't so {fond} of his company that I'd {loiter} about him for such things, if he did. Ah! you may look through that shirt till your eyes {ache}, but you won't find a hole in it, nor a threadbare place. It's the best he had, and a fine one too. They'd have {wasted} it, if it hadn't been for me.' 'What do you call {wasting} of it?' asked old Joe. 'Putting it on him to be buried in, to be sure,' replied the woman, with a laugh. 'Somebody was {fool} enough to do it, but I took it off again. If {calico} an't good enough for such a purpose, it isn't good enough for anything. It's quite as {becoming} to the body. He can't look {uglier} than he did in that one.' Scrooge listened to this {dialogue} in horror. As they sat {grouped} about their {spoil}, in the scanty light {afforded} by the old man's lamp, he viewed them with a {detestation} and {disgust} which could hardly have been greater, though they had been {obscene} {demons} {marketing} the {corpse} itself. 'Ha, ha!' laughed the same woman when old Joe {producing} a {flannel} bag with money in it, told out their several {gains} upon the ground. 'This is the end of it, you see! He frightened every one away from him when he was alive, to profit us when he was dead! Ha, ha, ha!' 'Spirit!' said Scrooge, {shuddering} from head to foot. 'I see, I see. The case of this unhappy man might be my own. My life {tends} that way now. Merciful heaven, what is this?' He {recoiled} in terror, for the scene had changed, and now he almost touched a bed--a bare, {uncurtained} bed--on which, beneath a ragged sheet, there lay a something covered up, which, though it was {dumb}, {announced} itself in awful {language}. The room was very dark, too dark to be observed with any {accuracy}, though Scrooge glanced round it in obedience to a secret {impulse, anxious to know what kind of room it was. A pale light, {rising in the outer air, fell straight upon the bed; and on it, plundered and {bereft, {unwatched}}, {unwept, {uncared}} for, was the body of this man. Scrooge glanced towards the Phantom. Its steady hand was pointed to the head. The {cover} was so {carelessly} adjusted that the {slightest} raising of it, the motion of a finger upon Scrooge's part, would have disclosed the face. He thought of it, felt how easy it would be to do, and {longed} to do it; but he had no more power to {withdraw} the {veil} than to dismiss the spectre at his side. Oh, cold, cold, rigid, dreadful Death, set up {thine} {altar} here, and dress it with such terrors} as thou hast} at thy {command}; for this is thy {dominion}! But of the loved, {revered}, and {honoured} head thou {canst} not turn one hair to thy dread purposes, or make one {feature} odious. It is not that the hand is heavy, and will fall down when released; it is not that the heart and pulse are still; but that the hand was open, generous, and true; the heart brave, warm, and {tender}, and the pulse a man's. Strike, Shadow, {strike}! And see his good deeds {springing} from the wound, to sow the world with life immortal! No voice {pronounced} these words in Scrooge's ears, and yet he heard them when he looked upon the bed. He thought, if this man could be raised up now, what would be his {foremost} thoughts? Avarice, hard dealing, {gripping} cares? They have brought him to a rich end, truly! He lay in the dark, empty house, with not a man, a woman, or a child to say he was kind to me in this or that, and for the memory of one

kind word I will be kind to him. A cat was tearing at the door, and there was a sound of gnawing beneath the hearthstone. What they wanted in the room of death, and why they were so restless and disturbed, Scrooge did not dare to think. 'Spirit!' he said, 'this is a fearful place. In leaving it, I shall not leave its lesson, trust me. Let us go!' Still the Ghost pointed with an unmoved finger to the head. 'I understand you,' Scrooge returned, 'and I would do it if I could. But I have not the power, Spirit. I have not the power.' Again it seemed to look upon him. 'If there is any person in the town who feels emotion caused by this man's death,' said Scrooge, quite agonised, 'show that person to me, Spirit, I beseech you!' The Phantom spread its dark robe before him for a moment, like a wing; and, withdrawing it, revealed a room by daylight, where a mother and her children were. She was expecting some one, and with anxious eagerness; for she walked up and down the room, started at every sound, looked out from the window, glanced at the clock, tried, but in vain, to work with her needle, and could hardly bear the voices of her children in their play. At length the long-expected knock was heard. She hurried to the door, and met her husband; a man whose face was careworn and depressed, though he was young. There was a remarkable expression in it now, a kind of serious delight of which he felt ashamed, and which he struggled to repress. He sat down to the dinner that had been hoarding for him by the fire, and when she asked him faintly what news (which was not until after a long silence), he appeared embarrassed how to answer. 'Is it good,' she said, 'or bad?' to help him. 'Bad,' he answered. 'We are quite ruined?' 'No. There is hope yet, Caroline.' 'If he relents,' she said, 'amazed,' 'there is! Nothing is past hope, if such a miracle has happened.' 'He is past relenting,' said her husband. 'He is dead.' She was a mild and patient creature, if her face spoke truth; but she was thankful in her soul to hear it, and she said so with clasped hands. She prayed forgiveness the next moment, and was sorry; but the first was the emotion of her heart. 'What the half-drunken woman, whom I told you of last night, said to me when I tried to see him and obtain a week's delay--and what I thought was a mere excuse to avoid me--turns out to have been quite true. He was not only very ill, but dying, then.' 'To whom will our debt be transferred?' 'I don't know. But, before that time, we shall be ready with the money; and even though we were not, it would be bad fortune indeed to find so merciless a creditor in his successor.' We may sleep to-night with light hearts, Caroline! Yes. Soften it as they would, their hearts were lighter. The children's faces, hushed and clustered round to hear what they so little understood, were brighter; and it was a happier house for this man's death! The only emotion that the Ghost could show him, caused by the event, was one of pleasure. 'Let me see some tenderness connected with a death,' said Scrooge; 'or that dark chamber, Spirit, which we left just now, will be for ever present to me.' The Ghost conducted him through several streets familiar to his feet; and as they went along, Scrooge looked here and there to find himself, but nowhere was he to be seen. They entered poor Bob Cratchit's house; the dwelling he had visited before; and found the mother and the children seated round the fire. Quiet. Very quiet. The little Cratchits were as still as statues in one corner, and sat looking up at Peter, who had a book before him. The mother and her daughters were engaged in sewing. But surely they were very quiet! "And he took a child, and set him in the midst of them." Where had Scrooge heard those words? He had not dreamed them. The boy must have read them out as he and the Spirit crossed the threshold. Why did he not go on? The mother laid her work upon the table, and put her hand up to her face. 'The colour hurts my eyes,' she said. The colour? Ah, poor Tiny Tim! 'They're better now again,' said Cratchit's wife. 'It makes them weak by candle-light; and I wouldn't show weak eyes to your father when he comes home for the world. It must be near his time.' 'Past it rather,' Peter answered, shutting up his book. 'But I think he has walked a little slower than he used, these few last evenings,' mother. They were very quiet again. At last she said, and in a steady, cheerful voice, that only faltered once: 'I have known him walk with--I have known him walk with Tiny Tim upon his shoulder very fast indeed.'

'And so have I,' cried Peter. 'Often.' 'And so have I,' exclaimed another. So had all. 'But he was very light to carry,' she resumed, intent upon her work, 'and his father loved him so, that it was no trouble, no trouble. And there is your father at the door!' She hurried out to meet him; and little Bob in his comforter--he had need of it, poor fellow--came in. His tea was ready for him on the hob, and they all tried who should help him to it most. Then the two young Cratchits got upon his knees, and laid, each child, a little cheek against his face, as if they said, 'Don't mind it, father. Don't be {{{{{{grieved!}}} Bob was very cheerful with them, and spoke pleasantly to all the family. He looked at the work upon the table, and praised the industry and {{{{{{speed}}}}}} of Mrs. Cratchit and the girls. They would be done long before Sunday, he said. 'Sunday! You went to-day, then, Robert?' said his wife. 'Yes, my dear,' returned Bob. 'I wish you could have gone. It would have done you good to see how green a place it is. But you'll see it often. I promised him that I would walk there on a Sunday. My little, little child!' cried Bob. 'My little child!' He broke down all at once. He couldn't help it. If he could have helped it, he and his child would have been {{{{{{farther}}}}}} apart, perhaps, than they were. He left the room, and went upstairs into the room above, which was lighted {{{{{{cheerfully}}}}}, and hung with Christmas. There was a chair set close beside the child, and there were signs of some one having been there {{{{{{lately}}}}}}. Poor Bob sat down in it, and when he had thought a little and {{{{{{composed}}}}}} himself, he kissed the little face. He was {{{{{{reconciled}}}}}} to what had happened, and went down again quite happy. They drew about the fire, and talked, the girls and mother working still. Bob told them of the extraordinary {{{{{{kindness}}}}}} of Mr. Scrooge's nephew, whom he had scarcely seen but once, and who, meeting him in the street that day, and seeing that he looked a little--'just a little down, you know,' said Bob, inquired what had happened to {{{{{{distress}}}}}} him. 'On which,' said Bob, 'for he is the {{{{{{pleasantest}}}}}}-spoken gentleman you ever heard, I told him. "I am heartily sorry for it, Mr. Cratchit," he said, "and heartily sorry for your good wife." By-the-bye, how he ever knew _that_ I don't know.' 'Knew what, my dear?' 'Why, that you were a good wife,' replied Bob. 'Everybody knows that,' said Peter. 'Very well observed, my boy!' cried Bob. 'I hope they do. "Heartily sorry," he said, "for your good wife. If I can be of service to you in any way," he said, giving me his {{{{{{card}}}}, "that's where I live. Pray come to me." Now, it wasn't,' cried Bob, 'for the sake of anything he might be able to do for us, so much as for his kind way, that this was quite delightful. It really seemed as if he had known our Tiny Tim, and felt with us.' 'I'm sure he's a good soul!' said Mrs. Cratchit. 'You would be sure of it, my dear,' returned Bob, 'if you saw and spoke to him. I {{{{{{shouldn't}}}}} be at all surprised--mark what I say!--if he got Peter a better situation.' 'Only hear that, Peter,' said Mrs. Cratchit. 'And then,' cried one of the girls, 'Peter will be keeping company with some one, and setting up for himself.' 'Get along with you!' retorted Peter, {{{{{{grinning}}}}}. 'It's just as likely as not,' said Bob, 'one of these days; though there's plenty of time for that, my dear. But, however and whenever we part from one another, I am sure we shall none of us forget poor Tiny Tim--shall we--or this first parting that there was among us?' 'Never, father!' cried they all. 'And I know,' said Bob, 'I know, my dears, that when we recollect how patient and how mild he was; although he was a little, little child; we shall not quarrel {{{{{{easily}}}}}} among ourselves, and forget poor Tiny Tim in doing it.' 'No, never, father!' they all cried again. 'I am very happy,' said little Bob, 'I am very happy!' Mrs. Cratchit kissed him, his daughters kissed him, the two young Cratchits kissed him, and Peter and himself shook hands. Spirit of Tiny Tim, thy childish {{{{{{essence}}}}} was from God! 'Spectre,' said Scrooge, 'something {{{{{{informs}}}}} me that our parting moment is at hand. I know it but I know not how. Tell me what man that was whom we saw lying dead?' The Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come conveyed him, as before--though at a {{{{{{different}}}}} time, he thought: indeed there seemed no order in these latter {{{{{{visions}}}}, save that they were in the Future--into the {{{{{{resorts}}}}} of business men, but showed him not himself. Indeed, the Spirit did not stay for anything, but went straight on, as to the end just now {{{{{{desired}}}}, until {{{{{{besought}}}}} by Scrooge to tarry for a moment. 'This court,' said Scrooge, 'through which we {{{{{{hurry}}}}} now, is where my place of {{{{{{occupation}}}}} is, and has been for a length of time. I see the house. Let me behold what I shall be in days to come.' The Spirit stopped; the hand was pointed {{{{{{elsewhere}}}}}. 'The house is yonder,' Scrooge exclaimed. 'Why do you point away?' The {{{{{{inexorable}}}}} finger underwent no change. Scrooge {{{{{{hastened}}}}}

to the window of his office, and looked in. It was an office still, but not his. The {{{{{{furniture}}}}} was not the same, and the figure in the chair was not himself. The Phantom pointed as before. He joined it once again, and, {{{{{{wondering}}}}} why and whither he had gone, accompanied it until they reached an iron gate. He paused to look round before entering. A {{{{churchyard}}}}. Here, then, the wretched man, whose name he had now to learn, lay {{{{{{underneath}}}}}} the ground. It was a worthy place. Walled in by houses; overrun by grass and {{{{{{weeds}}}}}}, the growth of {{{{{{vegetation}}}}}}'s death, not life; choked up with too much {{{{{{burying}}}}}}; fat with repleted}}}}}} appetite. A worthy place! The Spirit stood among the {{{{{{graves}}}}}}, and pointed down to One. He advanced towards it trembling. The Phantom was {{{{{{exactly}}}}}} as it had been, but he dreaded that he saw new meaning in its solemn shape. 'Before I draw nearer to that stone to which you point,' said Scrooge, 'answer me one question. Are these the shadows of the things that Will be, or are they shadows of the things that May be only?' Still the Ghost pointed downward to the grave by which it stood. 'Men's courses will {{{{{{foreshadow}}}}}} certain ends, to which, if {{{{{{persevered}}}}}} in, they must lead,' said Scrooge. 'But if the courses be departed from, the ends will change. Say it is thus with what you show me!' The Spirit was {{{{{{immovable}}}}} as ever. Scrooge {{{{{{crept}}}}}} towards it, trembling as he went; and, {{{{{{following}}}}}} the finger, read upon the stone of the neglected grave his own name, EBENEZER SCROOGE. 'Am I that man who lay upon the bed?' he cried upon his knees. The finger pointed from the grave to him, and back again. 'No, Spirit! Oh no, no!' The finger still was there. 'Spirit!' he cried, tight clutching at its robe, 'hear me! I am not the man I was. I will not be the man I must have been but for this intercourse. Why show me this, if I am past all hope?' For the first time the hand appeared to shake. 'Good Spirit,' he pursued, as down upon the ground he fell before it, 'your nature {{{{{{intercedes}}}}}} for me, and {{{{{{pities}}}}}} me. Assure me that I yet may change these shadows you have shown me by an altered life?' The kind hand trembled. 'I will honour Christmas in my heart, and try to keep it all the year. I will live in the Past, the Present, and the Future. The Spirits of all Three shall strive within me. I will not shut out the {{{{{{lessons}}}}}} that they teach. Oh, tell me I may {{{{{{sponge}}}}} away the writing on this stone!' In his {{{{{{agony}}}}}} he caught the spectral hand. It sought to free itself, but he was strong in his entreaty, and {{{{{{detained}}}}}} it. The Spirit {{{{{{stronger}}}}} yet, {{{{{{repulsed}}}}} him. Holding up his hands in a last {{{{{{prayer}}}}}} to have his fate {{{{{{reversed}}}}}}, he saw an alteration in the Phantom's {{{{{{hood}}}}}} and dress. It shrunk, {{{{{{collapsed}}}}}}, and {{{{{{dwindled}}}}}} down into a bedpost. STAVE FIVE [Illustration] THE END OF IT Yes! and the bedpost was his own. The bed was his own, the room was his own. Best and {{{{{{happiest}}}}}} of all, the Time before him was his own, to make amends in! 'I will live in the Past, the Present, and the Future!' Scrooge repeated as he scrambled out of bed. 'The Spirits of all Three shall strive within me. O Jacob Marley! Heaven and the Christmas Time be praised for this! I say it on my knees, old Jacob; on my knees!' He was so {{{{{{fluttered}}}}} and so glowing with his good {{{{{{intentions}}}}}}, that his broken voice would scarcely answer to his call. He had been {{{{{{sobbing}}}}}} {{{{{{violently}}}}} in his {{{{{{conflict}}}}} with the Spirit, and his face was wet with tears. 'They are not torn down,' cried Scrooge, {{{{{{folding}}}}}} one of his bed-curtains in his arms, 'They are not torn down, rings and all. They are here--I am here--the shadows of the things that would have been may be dispelled. They will be. I know they will!' His hands were busy with his garments all this time: turning them inside out, putting them on upside down, tearing them, {{{{{{mislaying}}}}}} them, making them parties to every kind of {{{{{{extravagance}}}}}}. 'I don't know what to do!' cried Scrooge, laughing and crying in the same breath, and making a perfect Laocoon of himself with his {{{{{{stockings}}}}}. 'I am as light as a feather, I am as happy as an {{{{{{angel}}}}}}, I am as merry as a {{{{{{schoolboy}}}}, I am as {{{{{{giddy}}}}} as a drunken man. A merry Christmas to everybody! A happy New Year to all the world! Hallo here! Whoop! Hallo!' He had {{{{{{frisked}}}}}} into the sitting-room, and was now standing there, perfectly {{{{{{winded}}}}}}. 'There's the saucepan that the gruel was in!' cried Scrooge, starting off again, and going round the fireplace. 'There's the door by which the Ghost of Jacob Marley entered! There's the corner where the Ghost of Christmas Present sat! There's the window where I saw the wandering

Spirits! It's all right, it's all true, it all happened. Ha, ha, ha!' Really, for a man who had been out of practice for so many years, it was a splendid laugh, a most illustrious laugh. The father of a long, long line of brilliant laughs! 'I don't know what day of the month it is,' said Scrooge. 'I don't know how long I have been among the Spirits. I don't know anything. I'm quite a baby. Never mind. I don't care. I'd rather be a baby. Hallo! Whoop! Hallo here!' He was checked in his transports by the churches ringing out the lustiest peals he had ever heard. Clash, clash, hammer; ding, dong, bell! Bell, dong, ding; hammer, clash, clash! Oh, glorious, glorious! Running to the window, he opened it, and put out his head. No fog, no mist; clear, bright, jovial, stirring, cold; cold, piping for the blood to dance to; golden sunlight; heavenly sky; sweet fresh air; merry bells. Oh, glorious! Glorious! 'What's to-day?' cried Scrooge, calling downward to a boy in Sunday clothes, who perhaps had loitered in to look about him. 'EH?' returned the boy with all his might of wonder. 'What's to-day, my fine fellow?' said Scrooge. 'To-day!' replied the boy. 'Why, CHRISTMAS DAY.' 'It's Christmas Day!' said Scrooge to himself. 'I haven't missed it. The Spirits have done it all in one night. They can do anything they like. Of course they can. Of course they can. Hallo, my fine fellow!' 'Hallo!' returned the boy. 'Do you know the poulterer's in the next street but one, at the corner?' Scrooge inquired. 'I should hope I did,' replied the lad. 'An intelligent boy!' said Scrooge. 'A remarkable boy! Do you know whether they've sold the prize turkey that was hanging up there?--Not the little prize turkey: the big one?' 'What! the one as big as me?' returned the boy. 'What a delightful boy!' said Scrooge. 'It's a pleasure to talk to him. Yes, my buck!' 'It's hanging there now,' replied the boy. 'Is it?' said Scrooge. 'Go and buy it.' 'Walk-ER!' exclaimed the boy. 'No, no,' said Scrooge. 'I am in earnest. Go and buy it, and tell 'em to bring it here, that I may give them the directions where to take it. Come back with the man, and I'll give you a shilling.' Come back with him in less than five minutes, and I'll give you half-a-crown!' The boy was off like a shot. He must have had a steady hand at a trigger who could have got a shot off half as fast. 'I'll send it to Bob Cratchit's,' whispered Scrooge, rubbing his hands, and splitting with a laugh. 'He shan't know who sends it.' It's twice the size of Tiny Tim. Joe Miller never made such a joke as sending it to Bob's will be! The hand in which he wrote the address was not a steady one; but when he did, somehow, and went downstairs to open the street-door, ready for the coming of the poulterer's man. As he stood there, waiting his arrival, the knocker caught his eye. 'I shall love it as long as I live!' cried Scrooge, patting it with his hand. 'I scarcely ever looked at it before. What an honest expression it has in its face! It's a wonderful knocker!--Here's the turkey. Hallo! Whoop! How are you! Merry Christmas! It was a turkey! He never could have stood upon his legs, that bird.' He would have snapped 'em short off in a minute, like sticks of sealing-wax. 'Why, it's impossible to carry that to Camden Town,' said Scrooge. 'You must have a cab.' The chuckle with which he said this, and the chuckle with which he paid for the turkey, and the chuckle with which he paid for the cab, and the chuckle with which he recompensed the boy, were only to be exceeded by the chuckle with which he sat down breathless in his chair again, and chuckled till he cried. Shaving was not an easy task, for his hand continued to shake very much; and shaving requires attention, even when you don't dance while you are at it. But if he had cut the end of his nose off, he would have put a piece of sticking-plaster over it, and been quite satisfied. He dressed himself 'all in his best,' and at last got out into the streets. The people were by this time pouring forth, as he had seen them with the Ghost of Christmas Present; and, walking with his hands behind him, Scrooge regarded every one with a delighted smile. He looked so irresistibly pleasant, in a word, that three or four good-humoured fellows said, 'Good-morning, sir! A merry Christmas to you!' And Scrooge said often afterwards that, of all the blithe sounds he had ever heard, those were the blithest in his ears. He had not gone far when, coming on towards him, he beheld the portly gentleman who had walked into his counting-house the day before, and said, 'Scrooge and Marley's, I believe?' It sent a pang across his heart to think how

this old gentleman would look upon him when they met; but he knew what path lay straight before him, and he took it. 'My dear sir,' said Scrooge, {quicken} his {pace}, and taking the old gentleman by both his hands, 'how do you do? I hope you succeeded yesterday. It was very kind of you. A merry Christmas to you, sir!' 'Mr. Scrooge?' 'Yes,' said Scrooge. 'That is my name, and I fear it may not be pleasant to you. Allow me to ask your {pardon}. And will you have the {goodness}-----' Here Scrooge whispered in his ear. 'Lord bless me!' cried the gentleman, as if his breath were taken away. 'My dear Mr. Scrooge, are you serious?' 'If you please,' said Scrooge. 'Not a {farthing} less. A great many back-{payments} are {included} in it, I assure you. Will you do me that favour?' 'My dear sir,' said the other, shaking hands with him, 'I don't know what to say to such {munifi}-----' 'Don't say anything, please,' retorted Scrooge. 'Come and see me. Will you come and see me?' 'I will!' cried the old gentleman. And it was clear he meant to do it. 'Thankee,' said Scrooge. 'I am much obliged to you. I {thank} you fifty times. Bless you!' He went to church, and walked about the streets, and watched the people {hurrying} to and fro, and patted} the children on the head, and questioned beggars, and looked down into the kitchens of houses, and up to the windows; and found that everything could yield him pleasure. He had never dreamed that any walk--that anything--could give him so much happiness. In the afternoon he turned his {steps towards his nephew's house. He passed the door a dozen times before he had the {courage} to go up and knock. But he made a {dash} and did it. 'Is your master at home, my dear?' said Scrooge to the girl. 'Nice girl! Very.' 'Yes, sir.' 'Where is he, my love?' said Scrooge. 'He's in the dining-room, sir, along with mistress. I'll show you upstairs, if you please.' 'Thankee. He knows me,' said Scrooge, with his hand already on the dining-room lock. 'I'll go in here, my dear.' He turned it gently, and sidled his face in round the door. They were looking at the table (which was spread out in great {array}); for these young housekeepers are always nervous on such {points}, and like to see that everything is right. 'Fred!' said Scrooge. Dear heart alive, how his niece by marriage started! Scrooge had forgotten, for the moment, about her sitting in the corner with the footstool, or he wouldn't have done it on any account. 'Why, bless my soul!' cried Fred, 'who's that?' [Illustration: _It's I, your uncle Scrooge. I have come to dinner. Will you let me in, Fred?_] 'It's I. Your uncle Scrooge. I have come to dinner. Will you let me in, Fred?' Let him in! It is a mercy he didn't shake his arm off. He was at home in five minutes. Nothing could be {heartier}. His niece looked just the same. So did Topper when _he_ came. So did the plump sister when _she_ came. So did every one when _they_ came. Wonderful party, wonderful {games}, wonderful {unanimity}, wonderful happiness! But he was early at the office next morning. Oh, he was early there! If he could only be there first, and catch Bob Cratchit coming late! That was the thing he had set his heart upon. And he did it; yes, he did! The clock struck nine. No Bob. A quarter past. No Bob. He was full eighteen minutes and a half behind his time. Scrooge sat with his door wide open, that he might see him come into the tank. His hat was off before he opened the door; his comforter too. He was on his stool in a {jiffy}, driving away with his pen, as if he were trying to {overtake} nine o'clock. 'Hallo!' growled Scrooge in his accustomed voice as near as he could {feign} it. 'What do you mean by coming here at this time of day?' 'I am very sorry, sir,' said Bob. 'I _am_ behind my time.' 'You are!' repeated Scrooge. 'Yes, I think you are. Step this way, sir, if you please.' 'It's only once a year, sir,' pleaded Bob, appearing from the tank. 'It shall not be repeated. I was making rather merry yesterday, sir.' 'Now, I'll tell you what, my friend,' said Scrooge. 'I am not going to stand this sort of thing any longer. And therefore,' he continued, {leaping} from his stool, and giving Bob such a dig in the waistcoat that he {staggered} back into the tank again--'and therefore I am about to raise your salary!' Bob trembled, and got a little nearer to the ruler. He had a {momentary} idea of knocking Scrooge down with it, holding him, and calling to the people in the court for help and a {strait}-waistcoat. 'A merry Christmas, Bob!' said Scrooge, with an earnestness that could not be {mistaken}, as he clapped him on the back. 'A merrier Christmas, Bob, my good fellow, than I have given you for many a year! I'll raise your salary, and {endeavour} to assist your struggling family, and we will {discuss} your {affairs} this very afternoon, over a Christmas bowl of {smoking {bishop}}, Bob! Make up the fires and buy another coal-{scuttle}

before you dot another i, Bob Cratchit!" [Illustration: _"Now, I'll tell you what, my friend," said Scrooge. "I am not going to stand this sort of thing any longer."_] Scrooge was better than his word. He did it all, and {{{{{{{{{{{infinitely}}}}}}}} more; and to Tiny Tim, who did NOT die, he was a second father. He became as good a friend, as good a master, and as good a man as the good old City knew, or any other good old city, town, or {borough}}}}}} in the good old world. Some people laughed to see the alteration in him, but he let them laugh, and little {{{{{{{{{{{heeded}}}}}}}} them; for he was {{{{{{{{{{{wise}}}}}}}} enough to know that nothing ever happened on this globe, for good, at which some people did not have their {{{{{{{{{{{fill}}}}}}}} of laughter in the outset; and knowing that such as these would be blind {{{{{{{{{{{anyway}}}}}}}}}, he thought it quite as well that they should wrinkle up their eyes in {{{grins}}}}}}}}}} as have the {{{{{{{{{{{malady}}}}}}}}}} in less {{{{{{{{{{{attractive}}}}}}}}}} forms. His own heart laughed, and that was quite enough for him. He had no further intercourse with Spirits, but lived upon the Total-Abstinence Principle ever afterwards; and it was always said of him that he knew how to keep Christmas well, if any man alive {possessed}} the knowledge. May that be truly said of us, and all of us! And so, as Tiny Tim observed, God bless Us, Every One! [Illustration] +-----
-----+ |Transcriber's {note}}}}}}: The Contents were added by the {{{{{{{{{{{transcriber}}}}}}}}}}.| +-----
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