



A  
CHRISTMAS  
CAROL

The Play



John Leech

Mr. Fezziwig's Ball.

STAVE ONE:  
MARLEY'S GHOST

Scene 3

DICKENS, SCROOGE, CRATCHIT

*As DICKENS begins his story, the house lights are slowly dimmed and the proscenium lights go up. Perhaps some soft music is played. DICKENS moves towards the centre of the curtain, addressing the audience. SCROOGE can sometimes be heard muttering, counting or naming figures, writing them down in his book.*

DICKENS: 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. Old Marley was as dead as a doornail. – Why a doornail, I don't really know. I would have thought a coffin-nail more appropriate. But – the wisdom of our ancestors is in this simile, and I'm not going to disturb it. And so I repeat that Marley was as dead as a doornail. 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 friend, his sole mourner.

SCROOGE: *(murmuring, ad lib)* Thirty-four, thirty-five ...

DICKENS: Scrooge never painted out old Marley's name, however. *(pointing to the sign)* There it stood, years afterwards, above the warehouse door: "Scrooge & Marley". Sometimes people new to the business called Scrooge Scrooge, and sometimes Marley. He answered to both names. It was all the same to him.

SCROOGE: *(with a harsh, greedy voice)* Sixty-nine, seventy! Ha, seventy guineas. Not bad. Not bad. *(writes in his book)*

DICKENS: Oh! But he was a tight-fisted hand at the grindstone, was Scrooge! A squeezing, wrenching, grasping, clutching, covetous old sinner! Hard and sharp as flint; and solitary as an oyster. External heat and cold had little influence on him. No warmth could warm, no cold

could chill him, no wind that blew was bitterer than he. Foul weather didn't know where to have him. (*SCROOGE is heard counting.*) Nobody ever stopped him in the street to say, with gladsome looks, (*making a few steps towards SCROOGE, as if he was going to address him*) "My dear Scrooge, how are you? When will you come to see me?"

SCROOGE: (*still counting, to himself*) Bah! Humbug.

DICKENS: (*shrugs his shoulders, as if to say: there you are!*) No children asked him what time it was, no man or woman ever once in all his life inquired the way to such and such a place, of Scrooge. (*The proscenium lights are slowly dimmed, except in SCROOGE's office.*) But what did Scrooge care! It was the very thing he liked. Once upon a time – of all the good days in the year, upon a Christmas Eve – old Scrooge sat busy in his office, with Bob Cratchit, his clerk. It was cold, bleak, biting, foggy weather; and the city clocks had just gone three, but it was quite dark already. – Look! The door of Scrooge's office is open that he may keep an eye upon his clerk, who is copying letters in a dark, tiny room next to his. Scrooge has a very small fire, but his clerk's fire is so very much smaller that it looks like one coal. But he can't replenish it, for Scrooge keeps the coal-scuttle to himself.

*All that time, CRATCHIT, who is wearing gloves with the fingers cut off, has been trying to warm his stiff fingers by rubbing them, blowing at them, warming his hands at the candle, wrapping himself into the long ends of his comforter etc.*

## Scene 4

### SCROOGE, NEPHEW, CRATCHIT, DICKENS

*The NEPHEW enters, perhaps by the auditorium door, in his hand some Christmas parcels. The music stops.*

NEPHEW: A merry Christmas, Uncle! God save you!

SCROOGE: Bah! Humbug!

NEPHEW: Christmas a humbug, Uncle! You don't mean that, I'm sure?

SCROOGE: I do. Merry Christmas! What right have you to be merry? What reason have you to be merry? You're poor enough.

BOY: Fanny! Little Fan!

*The music stops.*

SCROOGE: *(to SPIRIT)* My sister.

FANNY: I have come to bring you home! To bring you home, home, home!

BOY: Home, little Fan?

FANNY: Yes! Home, for good and for all. Father is so much kinder now than he used to be, that home's like heaven! He spoke so gently to me one dear night 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.

BOY: Oh, Fan!

SCROOGE: *(smiling, the memories are now very much alive again)* Oh, Fan! You are quite a woman, little Fan!

FANNY: And you 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.

BOY: Coming home for Christmas! Coming home for good!

*FANNY takes him by the hand and draws him out towards the back. The right curtain closes, the light on the scene goes out.*

## Scene 11

### SCROOGE, SPIRIT OF CHRISTMAS PAST, DICKENS

SCROOGE: I remember now. It was the most wonderful Christmas of my life.

SPIRIT: Your sister was always a delicate creature, and often in poor health.

SCROOGE: So she was, Spirit, but she had a large heart, God bless her, she really had.

SPIRIT: *(testing him)* She died as a woman and had, as I think, children.

SCROOGE: One child.

SPIRIT: True. Your nephew.

SCROOGE: Yes. *(with more than just a hint of remorse)* My nephew. *(fishing in his pocket for coins)* I wish – I wish ... but it's too late now.

SPIRIT: What is the matter?

SCROOGE: There were some children singing a Christmas carol at my office last night. I should like to have given them something, that's all.

SPIRIT: Let us see another Christmas.

*They move over to the right side of the proscenium.*

SPIRIT: *(pointing at the left curtain)* Do you know this warehouse?

SCROOGE: Know it? I was apprenticed here!

## Scene 12

**SCROOGE, SCROOGE AS A YOUNG MAN, DICK WILKINS,  
FEZZIWIG, MRS FEZZIWIG, BELLE, ANN, GUESTS, FIDDLER,  
SPIRIT OF CHRISTMAS PAST, DICKENS**

*The left curtain opens. YOUNG SCROOGE and DICK WILKINS are seen sitting at or on a counter, brooms in their hands, obviously taking a rest. There are perhaps a few chairs and a few large boxes, barrels or the like.*

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

DICK: What's the time, Ebenezer?

YOUNG SCROOGE: *(looking at an imaginary clock on the wall, with an expectant smile)* Five more minutes, Dick.

DICK: Only five? Five more minutes for Christmas Eve and the party?

YOUNG SCROOGE: Do you think she is coming?

DICK: *(pretending not to understand)* Who?

YOUNG SCROOGE: Why 'who'? Come on, you know very well. Belle.

DICK: Oh, Belle Fezziwig? *(teasing him)* No, she is certainly not coming. *(startled by a noise in the background)* But Old Fez is!

*They pick up their brooms and proceed to sweep around the counter.*

SPIRIT: *(looking into the future, a sound of prophecy in his voice)* I see a vacant seat in the chimney corner, and a little crutch without an owner, carefully preserved. If these shadows remain unaltered by the future, the child will die.

SCROOGE: *(leaving the side stage and advancing towards the SPIRIT)* No, no, kind Spirit, say he will be spared.

SPIRIT: If these shadows remain unaltered by the future, no other Christmas will find him here. Where should your clerk take the money from to pay for a doctor? And – *(looking SCROOGE hard in the face while quoting him)* if he be likely to die, had he not better do it and decrease the surplus population?

SCROOGE: No – I didn't mean it like that, Spirit. I didn't know all this.

*He covers his face remorsefully with his hands but straightens himself again on hearing his name:*

CRATCHIT: Mr Scrooge! I'll give you Mr Scrooge, the founder of the feast.

MRS CRATCHIT: *(putting down her glass, angrily)* The founder of the feast indeed! I wish I had him here – I'd give him a piece of my mind to feast upon, and I hope he'd have a good appetite for it, too.

CRATCHIT: *(trying to calm her)* My dear, the children. Christmas Day.

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

CRATCHIT: My dear, Christmas Day.

MRS CRATCHIT: *(after a little pause, overcoming her anger)* I'll drink his health for your sake and the day's, not for his. *(rather sourly)* Long life to him! A merry Christmas and a happy New Year! He'll be very merry and very happy, I have no doubt.

*As they drink, the NEPHEW's loud and hearty laughter can be heard from behind the left curtain. The light on the right stage goes out and the right curtain closes.*

## Scene 18

### SCROOGE, SPIRIT OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT, NEPHEW, CAROLINE, TOPPER, ISABEL, 1st GUEST, 2nd GUEST, DICKENS

*With every new outburst of his NEPHEW's laughter, SCROOGE is more tempted to laugh, too. He tries to find out where the laughter is coming from. The left curtain opens and the lights go on. The NEPHEW's sitting room has a few chairs and a table with white linen. NEPHEW, CAROLINE, TOPPER, ISABEL and the GUESTS partly sit, partly stand around the table and listen to the NEPHEW. There is a jug and some glasses on the table.*

NEPHEW: He said that Christmas was a humbug, as I live! And he believed it, too!

CAROLINE: More shame for him, Fred.

*NEPHEW laughs and drinks from his glass, the others join him.*

SCROOGE: *(entering the scene, looking at CAROLINE)* So that's my niece. Hm. Pretty. Very. *(He stands in the background, more and more feeling like one of the party.)*

NEPHEW: He's a comical old fellow, that's the truth. And not so pleasant as he might be. However, who suffers by his ill whims? He himself, always. Here he takes it into his head to dislike us, and he won't come and dine with us. Well, what's the consequence? *(teasing his wife)* He doesn't lose much of a dinner. *(laughs)*

CAROLINE: *(a little indignantly)* Indeed, he loses a very good dinner.

ISABEL: That's very true. It was a delicious dinner.

1st GUEST: Excellent, really excellent.

NEPHEW: Well, I'm very glad to hear it, because I don't have great faith in these young housekeepers.

CAROLINE: Oh, Fred!

NEPHEW: What do you say, Topper?

TOPPER: Er – er – a bachelor is a wretched outcast, who has no right to express an opinion on the subject. *(meaningfully to ISABEL)* Don't you think so, Isabel?

ISABEL: *(blushing)* Oh, Topper, leave it.

1st GUEST: What about a song?

2nd GUEST: Not yet. Not right after such a dinner.



STAVE FIVE:  
THE END OF IT

Scene 25

SCROOGE, 1st CHILD, DICKENS

*After a few moments of darkness, warm, bright light fills SCROOGE's room. At the 3/4 hour chime of Big Ben he awakens, sits up, rubs his eyes and looks about him.*

SCROOGE: Where am I? Oh, the armchair is my own. And the room's my own. And best of all, the time before me is my own, to make amends in! – But *(realizing it with a laugh)* – I don't know what day it is! I don't know how long I've 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. *(listening to the merry ringing of the church bells)* Ah, I must have a look out of the window. *(goes towards the front stage to open an imaginary window)* No fog! No mist! Mmmh – sweet, fresh air; golden sunlight; heavenly sky. Oh, what a glorious day! But – what day is it?

*The 1st CHILD has entered by a door in the auditorium and walks across the stage front on the auditorium floor, perhaps eating an apple.*

SCROOGE: *(calling down to him from his window)* Hey, my boy, what's today?

1st CHILD: Eh?

SCROOGE: What's today, my fine fellow?

1st CHILD: Today? Why, Christmas Day!

SCROOGE: *(to himself)* It's Christmas Day! I haven't missed it. The spirits have done it all in one night. – Hallo, my fine fellow!

1st CHILD: Hallo!

SCROOGE: Do you know the poulterer's, in the next street but one, at the corner?

1st CHILD: I should hope I did.

SCROOGE: *(to himself)* An intelligent boy! 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?

1st CHILD: What, the one as big as me?

SCROOGE: *(to himself)* What a delightful boy! It's a pleasure to talk to him. – Yes, my buck!

1st CHILD: It's hanging there now. Nobody can pay what they're asking for it.

SCROOGE: Is it? Go and buy it.

1st CHILD: *(assuming that SCROOGE is making fun of him)* Walk-er!

SCROOGE: No, no, I'm in earnest. Go and buy it for me. I can pay for it. Tell them Mr Scrooge wants to buy it, and then bring it here that I may give you the direction where to take it. Come back with the turkey, and I'll give you a shilling. Come back in less than five minutes, and I'll give you half a crown!

*1st CHILD darts off back from where he had come.*

SCROOGE: *(chuckling)* I'll send it to Bob Cratchit's! He shan't know who sends it. It's twice the size of Tiny Tim. There never was a joke like sending such a turkey to Bob's!

*During these words SCROOGE has taken off his dressing-gown and his slippers and has put on his overcoat and his shoes. He leaves by the door in the back wall. As he does so, the main curtain begins to close. Just before the two halves join, SCROOGE comes out between them onto the proscenium. The 1st CHILD returns with an enormous turkey and carries it up onto the proscenium, aching under its weight.*

1st CHILD: Here's the turkey, sir.

SCROOGE: Now this is what I call a turkey! He can never have stood upon his legs, that bird – would have snapped 'em off in a minute, like sealing wax. – Well done, my boy. Here's your half crown. *(hands the boy some money)*

1st CHILD: *(highly pleased)* Thank you very much, sir!

SCROOGE: And now take the turkey to my clerk. *(The 1st CHILD sets off immediately.)* Stop! Where are you going? I must give you his address!

1st CHILD: I know Mr Cratchit, sir. I know everybody in our part of town, sir. *(to himself, trotting off again by the same door)* I never knew he was such a kind old gentleman! I wish there were more of them around.

SCROOGE: He knows everybody in our part of town. Hm. I also want to know everybody here. I must have been living like a – like an oyster in its shell, really and truly.

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 houses pleasantly, and no one wish to lay it!

Their faithful friend and servant  
C. D.

Facsimile from Dickens' original manuscript of 1843

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## Sir Roger de Coverley

The dance described on page 24 of the text is *Sir Roger de Coverley*, an old English social dance which commonly livened up Christmas parties. Right up till the 1920s, all ages would mix happily while dancing it. It is still occasionally danced today, though more often at children's parties. The traditional tune may be varied during the dance by putting in any other good jig.

Play section A of the music twice, section B twice, then play once right through – and start again at the beginning.

### Dancing instructions

Form two lines, boys facing girls, the boys with their left shoulders to the band (the *top* of the dance – the other end is the *bottom*).

1. As the music starts, the top boy moves down between the lines and the bottom girl moves up (*advance*). They meet in the middle and return to their places (*retire*). Then the top girl and bottom boy do the same. These four people then dance variations on this figure.
2. Top boy and bottom girl go forward again, hold right hands and turn round each other clockwise before returning. Bottom boy and top girl do the same.
3. Hold left hands, turn anti-clockwise.
4. Hold both hands, turn.
5. Don't take hands, but turn back to back, passing round each other clockwise.
6. Go forward and bow/curtsey on meeting.
7. The Chain (*Corkscrew*): Top boy and top girl (his partner) take right hands and change places, he goes to the top of the line of girls and she to the top of the line of boys. They give their left hands to the next in line, releasing their right hands from their partners', and pass the dancer whose hand they hold on their left. As they move down the line they take the next boy/girl with the right hand, passing on the right; then the next, taking the left hand and passing on the left, and so on down to the bottom.

Carefully turn the puddings out of the basins or cloths onto a plate. Decorate with a small piece of holly. Pour flaming brandy or rum over the puddings as you bring them to the table. Serve with brandy butter or whipped cream (*Schlagsahne*).

## MINCE-PIES

### Ingredients for mincemeat filling

9 oz Cox's apples, chopped	250g Apfel, kleingeschnitten
1½ oz candied orange peel	40g Orangeat
9 oz raisins	250g Rosinen
9 oz currants	250g Korinthen
5 oz sultanas	140g Sultaninen
7 oz grapes or tangerines, chopped	200g Trauben oder Mandarinen, kleingeschnitten
6 oz brown sugar	170g brauner Zucker
2 rounded tablespoons chopped almonds	4 gehäufte Esslöffel gehackte Mandeln
grated rind and juice of 1 lemon	geriebene Schale und Saft einer Zitrone
pinch of ground cinnamon	Prise gemahlener Zimt
pinch of ground nutmeg	Prise gemahlener Muskat
if wanted: 1 small glass brandy or sherry	bei Bedarf: Branntwein oder Sherry

### Method

Mix the ingredients well. Uncooked mincemeat can be kept in jars for two weeks. This quantity will fill two eight-inch pies or two to three dozen little pies.

Make a shortcrust pastry mixture and roll out thinly. Line the pie-tins with  $\frac{2}{3}$  of this, fill with mincemeat and cover with lids made out of the remaining pastry. Press the edges down, brush with egg yolk and prick the tops. Bake for 30 to 40 minutes at 190°C (Gas Mark 5). Serve hot with whipped cream.

shortcrust pastry	Mürbeteig
jar	Glas mit Deckel
pie-tin	Blechform
edge	Rand
egg yolk	Eigelb
to prick	hineinstecken
whipped cream	Schlagsahne
glass with a lid	
metal container for baking pies in	
not the middle but round the outside	
the yellow part of an egg	
to make little holes in, e.g. with a fork	
cream that has been beaten	

## TWELFTH-CAKE

### Ingredients

8 oz butter	225g Butter
grated rind of 1 lemon	geriebene Schale einer Zitrone
5 oz icing sugar	140g Puderzucker
3 oz flour	85g Mehl
baking powder	Backpulver
3 oz ground rice	85g gemahlener Reis od. Speisestärke
pinch of salt	Prise Salz
6 egg yolks	Eigelb
3 egg whites	Eiweiß
extra icing sugar	zusätzlicher Puderzucker

### Method

Beat the butter and grated lemon rind till creamy and then sift and beat in the icing sugar. Sift the ground rice, flour, baking powder and salt together and add  $\frac{1}{3}$  of this to the creamed mixture. Add two egg yolks and do the same again with the remaining flour and yolks. Fold in the stiffly beaten egg whites and turn into a buttered tin. Bake at 180° C (Gas Mark 4) for about one hour. Test with a knitting needle to see if it is cooked. Cover with lemon butter icing or just icing sugar and decorate with figures of the Three Kings or crowns and stars.

to sift	to shake through a sieve (= Sieb)	sieben
to add	to mix in (with the other ingredients)	hinzufügen
remaining	that is still there	übrig
to fold in	to mix in by turning carefully with a spoon	unterheben
tin	metal container for baking a cake in	Blechform
icing	sugar covering for a cake	Glasure