

CHARLES DICKENS

Charles Dickens (1812-1870) was a very popular writer who lived in England in Queen Victoria's time (1819-1901). He was famous for the humour and sympathy of his characterization and his criticism of social injustice.

A Christmas Carol

I. EBENEZER SCROOGE OF "SCROOGE & MARLEY"

Ebenezer Scrooge and Jacob Marley were colleagues. They had a business called "Scrooge & Marley" and they worked together. They lived in the same house, too. They were very rich because they were not generous or kind. People were afraid of them and they never smiled. One 24th December Marley died and seven years later ...

It was Christmas Eve and Bob Cratchit was working in Scrooge's office. He was Scrooge's clerk. He had a wife and six children but Scrooge only paid him very little money, so he was very poor. Suddenly a man entered and surprised Scrooge, "Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year, Uncle!" It was Scrooge's nephew. "Would you like to have Christmas dinner with us tomorrow?" Scrooge was not happy. He didn't like Christmas. "Bah, Humbug!" he replied in disgust! (humbug = sciocchezza)

II. THE OFFICE IS CLOSED FOR CHRISTMAS

Two men entered the office to collect money for the poor. Scrooge gave no money! A little boy sang a carol outside the door. Scrooge frightened him away. In the evening he said, "Cratchit, you can stay at home tomorrow. I will pay you but it is not right to pay a man who stays at home!" Then Scrooge closed the office.

III. SCROOGE MEETS AN OLD FRIEND

Scrooge went to his usual restaurant to eat. Then he went home. His flat was in an office building. At night he was the only person in the building. As he opened the door, he looked at the door knocker: he saw Marley's face! Going upstairs he saw the shadows of a strange horse and carriage: it was a hearse which carries dead people to the cemetery! In his room an old bell started ringing! He heard chains moving in the living room! Suddenly the ghost of Jacob Marley entered in chains!!

IV. SCROOGE TALKS TO MARLEY'S GHOST

Scrooge didn't believe in ghosts until Marley really frightened him. Marley said, "I made this long, heavy chain during my life. It is the chain of not-caring, of self-love, when money is more important than caring!" Then he said, "Scrooge, you are making yourself a long, heavy chain, too!" To help Scrooge change lifestyle he promised to send three ghosts.

V. THE GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST

The next night a ghost appeared who took him back in time. They went to his village where he saw his old friends and his old school. He saw a little boy alone in the school. It was little Scrooge. He felt happy. He remembered the little boy singing carols at the office today! He was sorry because he had frightened the boy. Then he saw his little sister talking to a bigger Scrooge, "Come home for dinner!" Old Scrooge said to the ghost, "That's my sister. She's dead now but my nephew is her son." He was sad.

VI. SCROOGE AT FEZZIWIG'S

Then the ghost took him to old Mr. Fezziwig. Scrooge had started working for Mr. Fezziwig together with Dick Wilkins. Mr. Fezziwig was very kind. He made life and work enjoyable. This was much more important than money. Scrooge was very happy

because he remembered a party organised by Mr. Fezziwig, with dancing, music and many happy people. Then the ghost disappeared!

VII. THE GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT

Another ghost arrived. Together they visited the streets of London on Christmas Eve: everyone was happy, playing games, throwing snowballs, buying special food and presents for Christmas.

"They were in a street in London. It was Christmas morning. There was snow everywhere. When people stepped on it, their boots made a rough, pleasant crunching noise as they walked along. They brushed the snow from the paths in front of their homes, and threw it down from the house tops. Little boys thought it was great fun to watch the snow falling down into the road below, and breaking up into small white clouds when it hit the ground.

The street itself was not very bright, but there was happiness everywhere. The people who were clearing the snow from their houses were full of fun. They called out to each other as they brushed the snow away. Sometimes they threw snowballs at each other. They laughed if their snowballs hit the wrong person, and they laughed even more if they hit the right one.

The shop windows were full of light and colour. There were fat birds hanging in the meat shops, chickens and ducks, geese and turkeys. Every bird was ready to be taken home and cooked for Christmas dinner. If they were too big to be cooked at home, they could be cooked in the kitchens of the bakers' shops.

In the fruit shops there were heaps of oranges and lemons, apples and pears, with so many bright colours, - red, green, orange and yellow. All were ready for carrying home in paper bags to eat after dinner. In other shops you could smell the tea and the coffee, and that smell was mixed with the smell of cakes and puddings, all full of good things to eat, and looking very sweet."

VIII. CHRISTMAS AT BOB CRATCHIT'S

The ghost took Scrooge to see Bob Cratchit's family celebrating Christmas. They are very poor but happy. They ate a delicious goose, drank wine, had Christmas pudding and then they played games. Scrooge was happy to see them. Then ghost said, "Tiny Tim, the smallest child, has problems with his legs. He is going to die." Scrooge was very sad.

IX. CHRISTMAS AT SCROOGE'S NEPHEWS HOUSE

The ghost took Scrooge to his nephew's house. There he saw a wonderful Christmas party with good food and games. Scrooge enjoyed watching the party.

X. THE GHOST OF THE FUTURE

The 'Ghost of Yet to Come' arrived. It was all black and very frightening. It didn't speak and Scrooge couldn't see its face. It was a serious ghost. The ghost showed Scrooge the future: Scrooge was dead and everyone was happy because he had no friends.

XI. TINY TIM IS DEAD

The ghost showed Scrooge a very sad family. It was Cratchit's family. Tiny Tim was dead! He was in the cemetery with dead Scrooge.

XII. SCROOGE WAKES UP ON CHRISTMAS MORNING

Scrooge woke up very happy and with many new ideas. He sent a big goose to Cratchit's house for Christmas. He gave a lot of money to the poor. He ate Christmas dinner with his nephew who was very surprised. The next day he gave Cratchit extra money for his work. Tiny Tim did not die and Scrooge became a very good old man.

The End