

## Dickens | A Christmas Carol



# Charles Dickens

## A Christmas Carol

Mit Illustrationen von Arthur Rackham  
Herausgegeben von Herbert Geisen



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## Author's Preface

The narrow space within which it was necessary to confine these Christmas Stories, when they were originally published, rendered their construction a matter of some difficulty, and almost necessitated what is peculiar in their machinery. I never attempted great elaboration of detail in the working out of character within such limits, believing that it could not succeed. My purpose was, in a whimsical kind of masque which the goodhumour of the season justified, to awaken some loving and forbearing thoughts, never out of season in a Christian land.



1 **preface:** Vorwort. Dickens stellte dieses Vorwort seiner 1852 veröffentlichten Sammlung *Christmas Books* voran, die folgende Geschichten enthielt: *A Christmas Carol* (1843), *The Chimes* (1844), *The Cricket on the Hearth* (1845), *The Battle of Life* (1846) und *The Haunted Man* (1847).

In den folgenden Jahren veröffentlichte Dickens in der von ihm herausgegebenen Zeitschrift *Household Words* zahlreiche Kurzgeschichten zur Weihnachtsthematik. \* 5 **to necessitate:** erforderlich machen. \*

6 **machinery:** hier: Aufbau, Konstruktion. Dieser Ausdruck wurde im Epos vornehmlich für die Götterwelt verwandt. \* 8 **whimsical:** spaßig, seltsam. \* 9 **masque:** Maskenspiel (ursprünglich höfische Unterhaltung, später gehörten solche Maskenspiele auch zu den typischen Unterhaltungen der Weihnachtszeit in England). \* 10 **forbearing:** nachsichtig, geduldig. \*

## 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. 5

Their faithful Friend and Servant,  
C.D.

December 1843.

## Characters

10

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*

15

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*

20



3 **to put out**: hier: verstimmen, ärgern. \* 6 **to lay**: hier: (einen Geist) bannen. \* 11 **Cratchit**: sprechender Name: abgeleitet von *to scratch* ›kratzen (auf dem Papier)‹. \* **Scrooge**: sprechender Name: Geizhals. \*



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*

5 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*

10 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*

15 MRS. DILBER, *a laundress*

FAN, *the sister of Scrooge*

MRS. FEZZIWIG, *the worthy partner of Mr. Fezziwig*



3 **spectre:** Geist (eines Toten). \* 5 **marine-store:** Handlung für Schiffsbedarf. \* **receiver of stolen goods:** Hehler. \* 6 **covetous:** habgierig. \* 10 **comely:** anmutig. \* **matron:** Hausfrau (impliziert Würde und Erfahrung). \* 15 **laundress:** Wäscherin. \*



# A Christmas Carol

In Prose being

*A Ghost Story of Christmas*







## Stave I Marley's Ghost

Marley was dead, to begin with. There is no doubt what-  
ever about that. The register of his burial was signed by  
5 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.

10 Mind! I don't mean to say that I know, of my own knowl-  
edge, 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 wis-



[Titel] **carol:** Jubellied. \* 1 **stave:** Strophe. \* 7 **'Change:** Börse. \* **to put one's hand to s.th.:** etwas unterzeichnen. \* 12 **ironmongery:** Eisen-  
waren, Eisenartikel. \*

dom 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 5 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 10 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 won- 15 derful 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- 20 aged gentleman rashly turning out after dark in a breezy spot – say Saint Paul's Churchyard for instance – literally to astonish his son's weak mind.



1 **simile**: Gleichnis. \* **unhallowed**: ungeheiligt. \* 2 **done for**: erledigt. \* 7 **executor**: Testamentsvollstrecker. \* 8 **assign**: Abtretungsempfänger; Rechtsnachfolger. \* 8 f. **residuary legatee**: Nachvermächtnisnehmer (Empfänger des nach Abzug sämtlicher Verbindlichkeiten verbleibenden Nachlasses). \* 10 **to be cut up**: tief betrübt sein. \* 12 **to solemnise**: feierlich begehen. \* 20 **rampart**: Schutzwall. \*

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  
5 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  
10 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.  
15 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.  
20 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



7 **tight-fisted**: knauserig. \* **grindstone**: Mühlstein; d.h., er lässt andere für wenig Lohn hart arbeiten. \* 8 **to wrench**: drehen, winden; etwas entwinden. \* 9 **covetous**: gierig, lüstern. \* **flint**: Feuerstein. \* 11 **self-contained**: verschlossen. \* 12 **to nip**: kneifen, zwicken. \* 12 f. **to shrivel**: hier: runzlig machen. \* 13 **gait**: Gang. \* 14 **shrewdly** (adv.): schlau. \* **grating**: knarrend. \* 15 **rime**: Reif; Raureif. \* 16 **wiry**: hier: Anspielung auf spärlichen, drahtähnlichen Bartwuchs. \* 17 **dog-days** (pl.): Hundstage. \* 18 **to thaw**: auftauen. \* 22 **pelting**: prasselnd. \*

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.

5

Nobody ever stopped him in the street to say, with glad-  
some 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 ap-  
peared 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!'

15

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 know-  
ing 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

20



1 **entreaty**: dringende Bitte. \* 2 **sleet**: Graupel. \* 4 **to come down**: her-  
niederkommen; nachgeben. \* 6 f. **gladsome**: freudig. \* 8 **to implore**:  
anflehen. \* 14 **to wag**: wedeln. \* 17 **to edge one's way**: sich (seitwärts)  
vorbeidrücken; sich (vorwärts) schieben. \* 19 **'nuts' to**: Riesenspaß  
für. \* 21 f. **counting-house**: Kontor. \* 22 **bleak**: öde, rau. \* **withal**:  
obendrein; dazu. \* 23 **wheezing**: schnaufend; keuchend. \*



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 coalbox 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 a 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



5 **to flare:** flackern. \* 6 **ruddy:** rötlich. \* **smear:** Schmierfleck. \* **palpable:** greifbar, fühlbar. \* 7 **chink:** Spalte, Ritze. \* 10 **dingy:** schmutzig-braun. \* 17 **to replenish:** wieder auffüllen. \* 21 **comforter:** warmer Schal. \*

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, but 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



1 **intimation**: Andeutung. \* 14 f. **morose**: mürrisch. \* 16 f. **on the spur of the moment**: spontan. \* 26 **dead against**: genau einem entgegen. \*

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.

5 ‘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.’

10 ‘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 –  
15 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-  
20 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



3 **holly:** Stechpalme (Ilex). Schon aus vorchristlicher Zeit stammt der Brauch, mit immergrünen Gewächsen zur Zeit der Wintersonnenwende an die Unsterblichkeit des Lebens zu erinnern. Im englischen Sprachraum werden auch heute noch zu Weihnachten, neben Ilex, Efeu und Mistelzweige als Weihnachtsdekoration verwendet. Auch eines der traditionellen englischen Weihnachtsgerichte, der Wildschweinkopf, wurde oft mit einem Ilexzweig dekoriert serviert. \* 15 **veneration:** Verehrung. \*

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, 5 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.’ 10

‘Don’t be angry, uncle. Come! Dine with us tomorrow.’

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?’ 15

‘Why did you get married?’ said Scrooge.

‘Because I fell in love.’

‘Because you fell in love!’ growled Scrooge, as if that were the only one thing in the world more ridiculous than a merry Christmas. ‘Good afternoon!’ 20

‘Nay, uncle, but you never came to see me before that happened. Why give it as a reason for not coming now?’

‘Good afternoon,’ said Scrooge.

‘I want nothing from you; I ask nothing of you; why cannot we be friends?’ 25

‘Good afternoon,’ said Scrooge.

‘I am sorry, with all my heart, to find you so resolute. We



5 **impropriety**: Unschicklichkeit. \* **to poke**: schüren. \* 6 **to extinguish**: auslöschen. \* 14 **extremity**: äußerste Not. \*

have never had any quarrel, to which I have been a party. But I have made the trial in homage to Christmas, and I'll keep my Christmas humour to the last. So A Merry Christmas, uncle!

5 'Good afternoon!' said Scrooge.

'And A Happy New Year!'

'Good afternoon!' said Scrooge.

His nephew left the room without an angry word, notwithstanding. He stopped at the outer door to bestow  
10 the greetings of the season on the clerk, who, cold as he was, was warmer than Scrooge; for he returned them cordially.

'There's another fellow,' muttered Scrooge; who overheard him: 'my clerk, with fifteen shillings a week, and a  
15 wife and family, talking about a merry Christmas. I'll retire to Bedlam.'

This lunatic, in letting Scrooge's nephew out, had let two other people in. They were portly gentlemen, pleasant to behold, and now stood, with their hats off, in Scrooge's  
20 office. They had books and papers in their hands, and bowed to him.

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



1 **be a party to s.th.:** an etwas beteiligt sein. \* 2 **in homage to:** aus Ehrfurcht vor. \* 8 f. **notwithstanding:** trotzdem. \* 13 f. **to overhear:** zufällig hören; belauschen. \* 16 **Bedlam:** abgeleitet aus *St. Mary of Bethlehem*, seit dem Mittelalter Name eines Irrenhauses in London. \* 17 **lunatic:** Irrer, Wahnsinniger. \* 18 **portly:** stattlich. \*

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

‘We have no doubt his liberality is well represented by his surviving partner,’ said the gentleman, presenting his credentials.

It certainly was; for they had been two kindred spirits. At the ominous word ‘liberality,’ Scrooge frowned, and shook his head, and handed the credentials back.

‘At this festive season of the year, Mr. Scrooge,’ said the gentleman, taking up a pen, ‘it is more than usually desirable that we should make some slight provision for the Poor and destitute, who suffer greatly at the present time. Many thousands are in want of common necessities; hundreds of thousands are in want of common comforts, sir.’

‘Are there no prisons?’ asked Scrooge.

‘Plenty of prisons,’ said the gentleman, laying down the pen again.

‘And the Union workhouses?’ demanded Scrooge. ‘Are they still in operation?’



5 **credentials** (pl.): Empfehlungsschreiben. \* 7 **ominous**: unheilvoll. \* 12 **destitute**: hilflos, mittellos. \* 19 **Union workhouses**: Seit dem Gesetz von 1834 ist den einzelnen Gemeinden die Armenfürsorge entzogen. Größere Verwaltungseinheiten schließen sich zu *unions* zusammen, die Armenhäuser errichten und betreiben. Der utilitaristischen Tendenz der Gesetzgeber entsprechend sollte es den Armen in diesen Anstalten nicht besser gehen als den am schlechtesten bezahlten Arbeitern. Vor diesem Hintergrund ist es nicht erstaunlich, dass diese Institutionen äußerst schlecht angesehen waren. Vgl. zu Dickens’ Einstellung gegenüber den Armenhäusern auch *Oliver Twist* (1838/39). \*



*They were portly gentlemen,  
pleasant to behold.*

‘They are. Still,’ returned the gentleman, ‘I wish I could say they were not.’

‘The Treadmill and the Poor Law are in full vigour, then?’ said Scrooge.



3 **Treadmill:** Tretmühle. \* **Poor Law:** Seit dem wichtigsten der frühen Armengesetze aus dem Jahre 1601, das den Gemeinden die Sorge für die aus der Gemeinde stammenden Armen übertragen und den Pächtern und Bauern, nicht aber den Großgrundbesitzern, die Finanzierung der Armenfürsorge durch die *poor rates* auferlegt hatte, waren im Laufe der Jahrhunderte eine Vielzahl stark unterschiedlicher lokaler Maßnahmen eingeführt worden, so etwa das *Speenhamland system*, das bei Löhnen, die unter dem von der Gemeinde festgesetzten Existenzminimum lagen, einen Ausgleich bis zur Höhe dieses Minimums vorsah. Diese wie auch viele anderen Maßnahmen wurden auf vielfältige Weise zum Schaden der Armensteuerpflichtigen missbraucht. Um das Armenrecht zu vereinheitlichen und die finanziellen Aufwendungen für die Armenfürsorge zu senken, wurde 1834 ein neues Armengesetz verabschiedet, das jegliche Art von *outdoor relief* zugunsten der Einweisung in Armenhäuser abschaffte. Vgl. auch Anm. zu 22,19 *Union workhouses*. \*

‘Both very busy, sir.’

‘Oh! I was afraid, from what you said at first, that something had occurred to stop them in their useful course,’ said Scrooge. ‘I’m very glad to hear it.’

‘Under the impression that they scarcely furnish Christian cheer of mind or body to the multitude,’ returned the gentleman, ‘a few of us are endeavouring to raise a fund to buy the Poor some meat and drink, and means of warmth. We choose this time because it is a time, of all others, when Want is keenly felt, and Abundance rejoices. What shall I put you down for?’ 5 10

‘Nothing!’ Scrooge replied.

‘You wish to be anonymous?’

‘I wish to be left alone,’ said Scrooge. ‘Since you ask me what I wish, gentlemen, that is my answer. I don’t make merry myself at Christmas and I can’t afford to make idle people merry. I help to support the establishments I have mentioned – they cost enough; and those who are badly off must go there.’ 15

‘Many can’t go there; and many would rather die.’ 20

‘If they would rather die,’ said Scrooge, ‘they had better do it, and decrease the surplus population. Besides – excuse me – I don’t know that.’



18 **to be badly off**: arm dran sein. \* 22 **surplus**: überschüssig. Anspielung auf Thomas R. Malthus, *Essay on the Principle of Population* (1798), der die These vertritt, dass das Bevölkerungswachstum das Nahrungsmittelwachstum bei Weitem übertreffe und dass deshalb vor allem der ärmere Bevölkerungsteil Geburtenkontrolle praktizieren müsse, um das Überleben der menschlichen Rasse sicherzustellen. \*



‘But you might know it,’ observed the gentleman.

‘It’s not my business,’ Scrooge returned. ‘It’s enough for a man to understand his own business, and not to interfere with other people’s. Mine occupies me constantly. Good  
5 afternoon, gentlemen!’

Seeing clearly that it would be useless to pursue their point, the gentlemen withdrew. Scrooge resumed his labours with an improved opinion of himself, and in a more facetious temper than was usual with him.

10 Meanwhile the fog and darkness thickened so, that people ran about with flaring links, proffering their services to go before horses in carriages, and conduct them on their way. The ancient tower of a church, whose gruff old bell was always peeping slyly down at Scrooge out of a gothic  
15 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-  
20 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 sullenly congealed, and turned to misanthropic ice. The



9 **facetious**: scherzhaft, witzig. \* 11 **flaring**: hell aufflackernd. \*  
**link**: Fackel. \* **to proffer**: anbieten. \* 13 **gruff**: mürrisch; barsch. \*  
16 **tremulous**: zitternd; bebend. \* **vibration**: Schwingung. \* 20 **brazier**: große Kohlenpfanne. \* 22 f. **rapture**: Entzücken. \* 23 **water-plug**: Wasserzapfstelle; Hydrant. \* 24 **congealed**: erstarrt; gefroren. \*