

A Christmas Carol

The following extract is from 'A Christmas Carol' by Charles Dickens. In this story the central character is visited by a series of three ghosts in his bedroom on Christmas Eve. These visitations, representing his past life, his present life and a likely future, resulted in him becoming a much more generous person with a happier future. In the extract, Scrooge is just finishing work on Christmas Eve and going home for the night.



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.”

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 great-coat up to the chin. “But I suppose you must have the whole day. Be here all the earlier next morning.”

The clerk promised 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 great-coat), 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 his 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 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 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 gateway of the house, that it seemed as if the Genius of the Weather sat in mournful meditation on the threshold.

