

I 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 mourner¹.

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 executor², his sole administrator, his sole assign, his sole residuary legatee³, 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 solemnized⁴ it with an undoubted bargain.

Scrooge never painted out Old Marley's name. There it stood, years afterwards, above the warehouse door: Scrooge and Marley.

Oh! He was a tight-fisted hand at the grindstone, Scrooge! a squeezing, wrenching, grasping, scraping, clutching, covetous⁵, old sinner!



The cold within him froze his old features, nipped his pointed nose, shriveled⁶ his cheek, stiffened his gait⁷; made his eyes red, his thin lips blue; and spoke out shrewdly in his grating⁸ 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 thaw⁹ 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 pelting¹⁰ rain less open to entreaty.

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.

- 1 mourner [ˈmɔːrnər] (n.) a person at a funeral 送葬者；哀悼者
- 2 executor [ˈɛkzɪkjʊtɔːr] (n.) somebody named in a will or appointed by a court to carry out the instructions contained in a will 遺囑執行人
- 3 legatee [ˈleɪtɪː] (n.) a recipient of a bequest made in a will 遺產受贈人
- 4 solemnize [ˈsɒləˈnaɪz] (v.) observe or perform with dignity or gravity 使顯莊嚴
- 5 covetous [ˈkɒvətʊs] (a.) desiring something too much, especially something that belongs to someone else 貪圖的；垂涎的
- 6 shrivel [ˈʃrɪvəl] (v.) to become dry, smaller and covered with lines as if by crushing or folding 使乾枯
- 7 gait [geɪt] (n.) a way of walking, running, or moving along on foot 步態
- 8 grating [ˈɡreɪtɪŋ] (a.) irritating or annoying 咯吱作響的；刺耳的
- 9 thaw [θɔː] (v.) to (cause to) change from a solid, frozen state to a liquid or soft one, because of an increase in temperature 解凍
- 10 pelting [ˈpeltɪŋ] (a.) paltry; petty 瑣微的



Even the blind men's dogs appeared to know him; and when they saw him coming on, would tug¹¹ 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. The door of the counting-house was open that he might keep his eye upon his clerk, who in a dismal¹² 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.



Old Scrooge sat busy in his counting-house.

¹¹ tug [tʌk] (v.) to pull at or drag somebody or something with a sharp forceful movement 用力拉或拖

¹² dismal [ˈdɪzml] (a.) causing gloom or depression 陰暗的



“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, “Humbug¹³!”

“Don’t be cross¹⁴, 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?”

“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—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 scrap¹⁵ 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!”

¹³ humbug [ʃhKmbKE] (n.) nonsense; rubbish 胡說八道

¹⁴ cross [krc:s] (a.) annoyed or angry 發怒的

¹⁵ scrap [skr\$P] (n.) a small piece or remnant that has been detached from or torn off a larger piece 一點點；少量



“Don’t be cross, uncle!”