

A Christmas Carol

CHARLES
DICKENS



"The greatest little book in the world."—A. EDWARD NEWTON

COMPLETE AND UNABRIDGED

Pocket BOOK EDITION







A
Christmas

BY *CHARLES*



Illustrated by

Pocket BOOKS, INC.





Carol



DICKENS

Julian Brazelton

NEW YORK CITY



IMPORTANT NOTE

This book is *not* a condensation or a digest of the original. It is the *complete* book.

In praise of A CHRISTMAS CAROL

"A Christmas Carol—the greatest little book in the world! . . . It has been translated into almost every language under heaven. . . In London, when it first appeared, people stopped one another in the streets with the question, 'Have you read it?' and the answer was, 'Yes, God bless him, I have' . . . The Carol is a tribute to the race and a glory to the man who wrote it. . ."

—A. EDWARD NEWTON

"A Christmas Carol, one of the famous masterpieces of English literature. It has quite literally gone around the world. . ."

—STEPHEN LEACOCK

"It is the work of the master of all the English humorists now alive; the young man who came and took his place calmly at the head of the whole tribe, and who has kept it. . . It seems to me a national benefit, and to every man and woman who reads it a personal kindness."

—THACKERAY

"To give so much pleasure, to add so much to the happiness of the world, by his writings, as Mr. Dickens has succeeded in doing, is a felicity that has never been attained in such full measure by any other author."

—CHARLES ELIOT NORTON

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CONTENTS

STAVE ONE

<i>Marley's Ghost</i>	11
-----------------------	----

STAVE TWO

<i>The First of the Three Spirits</i>	58
---------------------------------------	----

STAVE THREE

<i>The Second of the Three Spirits</i>	102
--	-----

STAVE FOUR

<i>The Last of the Spirits</i>	160
--------------------------------	-----

STAVE FIVE

<i>The End of It</i>	199
----------------------	-----



ILLUSTRATIONS

	FACING PAGE
<i>"I wear the chain I forged in life," replied the Ghost.</i>	47
<i>"Then the shouting and the struggling, and the onslaught that was made on the defenseless porter!"</i>	97
<i>" . . . while Bob . . . compounded some hot mixture . . . and stirred it round and round . . ."</i>	123
<i>" . . . on 'Change, among the merchants . . . who conversed in groups . . ."</i>	163
<i>"It was a Turkey! He never could have stood upon his legs, that bird."</i>	205
<i>"I have come to dinner. Will you let me in, Fred?"</i>	213

STAVE ONE



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 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.

Mind! I don't mean to say that I know, of my own knowledge, what there is particularly dead about a door-nail. I might have been inclined, myself, to regard a coffin-nail as the dearest piece of ironmongery in the trade. But the wisdom of our ancestors is in the simile; and my

A Christmas Carol

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 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 was an excellent man of business on the very day of the funeral, and solemnized 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 wonderful can come of the story I am going to relate. If we

Marley's Ghost

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-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.

Scrooge never painted out old Marley's name. There it stood, years afterward, above the warehouse door: Scrooge and Marley. The firm was known as Scrooge and Marley. Sometimes people new to the business called Scrooge 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, clutch-

A Christmas Carol

ing, covetous old sinner! Hard and sharp as flint, from 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, shriveled his cheek, stiffened his gait, made his eyes red, his thin lips blue, and spoke out shrewdly in his grating 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 thaw 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 pelting rain less open to entreaty. Foul weather didn't know where to have him. The heaviest rain,

Marley's Ghost

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.

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. Even the blind men's dogs appeared 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!"

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,

A Christmas Carol

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. It was cold, bleak, biting weather, foggy withal, and he could hear the people in the court outside go wheezing 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 neighboring 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