

Old Fezziwig laid down his pen, and looked up at the clock, which pointed to the hour of seven. He rubbed his hands; adjusted his capacious waistcoat; laughed all over himself, from his shows to his organ of benevolence; and called out in a comfortable, oily, rich, fat, jovial voice:

‘Yo ho, there. Ebenezer. Dick.’

Scrooge’s former self, now grown a young man, came briskly in, accompanied by his fellow-prentice.

‘Dick Wilkins, to be sure.’ said Scrooge to the Ghost. ‘Bless me, yes. There he is. He was very much attached to me, was Dick. Poor Dick. Dear, dear.’

‘Yo ho, my boys.’ said Fezziwig. ‘No more work to-night. Christmas Eve, Dick. Christmas, Ebenezer. Let’s have the shutters up,’ cried old Fezziwig, with a sharp clap of his hands, ‘before a man can say Jack Robinson.’

You wouldn’t believe how those two fellows went at it. They charged into the street with the shutters — one, two, three — had them up in their places — four, five, six — barred them and pinned them — seven, eight, nine — and came back before you could have got to twelve, panting like race-horses.

‘Hilli-ho!’ cried old Fezziwig, skipping down from the high desk, with wonderful agility. ‘Clear away, my lads,

and let's have lots of room here. Hilli-ho, Dick. Chirrup, Ebenezer.'

Clear away. There was nothing they wouldn't have cleared away, or couldn't have cleared away, with old Fezziwig looking on. It was done in a minute. Every movable was packed off, as if it were dismissed from public life for evermore; the floor was swept and watered, the lamps were trimmed, fuel was heaped upon the fire; and the warehouse was as snug, and warm, and dry, and bright a ball-room, as you would desire to see upon a winter's night.

In came a fiddler with a music-book, and went up to the lofty desk, and made an orchestra of it, and tuned like fifty stomach-aches. In came Mrs Fezziwig, one vast substantial smile. In came the three Miss Fezziwigs, beaming and lovable. In came the six young followers whose hearts they broke. In came all the young men and women employed in the business. In came the housemaid, with her cousin, the baker. In came the cook, with her brother's particular friend, the milkman. In came the boy from over the way, who was suspected of not having board enough from his master; trying to hide himself behind the girl from next door but one, who was proved to have had her ears pulled by her mistress. In they all