

He was checked in his transports by the churches ringing out the lustiest peals he had ever heard. Clash, clang, hammer; ding, dong, bell. Bell, dong, ding; hammer, clang, clash. Oh, glorious, glorious.

Running to the window, he opened it, and put out his head. No fog, no mist; clear, bright, jovial, stirring, cold; cold, piping for the blood to dance to; Golden sunlight; Heavenly sky; sweet fresh air; merry bells. Oh, glorious. Glorious.

‘What’s to-day.’ cried Scrooge, calling downward to a boy in Sunday clothes, who perhaps had loitered in to look about him.

‘Eh.’ returned the boy, with all his might of wonder.

‘What’s to-day, my fine fellow.’ said Scrooge.

‘To-day.’ replied the boy. ‘Why, Christmas Day.’

‘It’s Christmas Day.’ said Scrooge to himself. ‘I haven’t missed it. The Spirits have done it all in one night. They can do anything they like. Of course they can. Of course they can. Hallo, my fine fellow.’

‘Hallo.’ returned the boy.

‘Do you know the Poulterer’s, in the next street but one, at the corner.’ Scrooge inquired.

‘I should hope I did,’ replied the lad.

‘An intelligent boy.’ said Scrooge. ‘A remarkable boy. Do you know whether they’ve sold the prize Turkey that was hanging up there — Not the little prize Turkey: the big one.’

‘What, the one as big as me.’ returned the boy.

‘What a delightful boy.’ said Scrooge. ‘It’s a pleasure to talk to him. Yes, my buck.’

‘It’s hanging there now,’ replied the boy.

‘Is it.’ said Scrooge. ‘Go and buy it.’

‘Walk-er.’ exclaimed the boy.

‘No, no,’ said Scrooge, ‘I am in earnest. Go and buy it, and tell them to bring it here, that I may give them the direction where to take it. Come back with the man, and I’ll give you a shilling. Come back with him in less than five minutes and I’ll give you half-a-crown.’

The boy was off like a shot. He must have had a steady hand at a trigger who could have got a shot off half so fast.

‘I’ll send it to Bon Cratchit’s.’ whispered Scrooge, rubbing his hands, and splitting with a laugh. ‘He shan’t know who sends it. It’s twice the size of Tiny Tim. Joe Miller never made such a joke as sending it to Bob’s will be.’

The hand in which he wrote the address was not a steady one, but write it he did, somehow, and went