will you have the goodness' — here Scrooge whispered in his ear.

'Lord bless me.' cried the gentleman, as if his breath were taken away. 'My dear Mr Scrooge, are you serious.'

'If you please,' said Scrooge. 'Not a farthing less. A great many back-payments are included in it, I assure you. Will you do me that favour.'

'My dear sir,' said the other, shaking hands with him. 'I don't know what to say to such munificence.'

'Don't say anything please,' retorted Scrooge. 'Come and see me. Will you come and see me.'

'I will.' cried the old gentleman. And it was clear he meant to do it.

'Thank you,' said Scrooge. 'I am much obliged to you. I thank you fifty times. Bless you.'

He went to church, and walked about the streets, and watched the people hurrying to and fro, and patted children on the head, and questioned beggars, and looked down into the kitchens of houses, and up to the windows, and found that everything could yield him pleasure. He had never dreamed that any walk — that anything — could give him so much happiness. In the afternoon he turned his steps towards his nephew's house.

He passed the door a dozen times, before he had the courage to go up and knock. But he made a dash, and did it:

'Is your master at home, my dear.' said Scrooge to the girl. Nice girl. Very.

'Yes, sir.'

'Where is he, my love.' said Scrooge.

'He's in the dining-room, sir, along with mistress. I'll show you up-stairs, if you please.'

'Thank you. He knows me,' said Scrooge, with his hand already on the dining-room lock. 'I'll go in here, my dear.'

He turned it gently, and sidled his face in, round the door. They were looking at the table (which was spread out in great array); for these young housekeepers are always nervous on such points, and like to see that everything is right.

'Fred.' said Scrooge.

Dear heart alive, how his niece by marriage started. Scrooge had forgotten, for the moment, about her sitting in the corner with the footstool, or he wouldn't have done it, on any account.

'Why bless my soul.' cried Fred,' who's that.'