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A Christmas Carol

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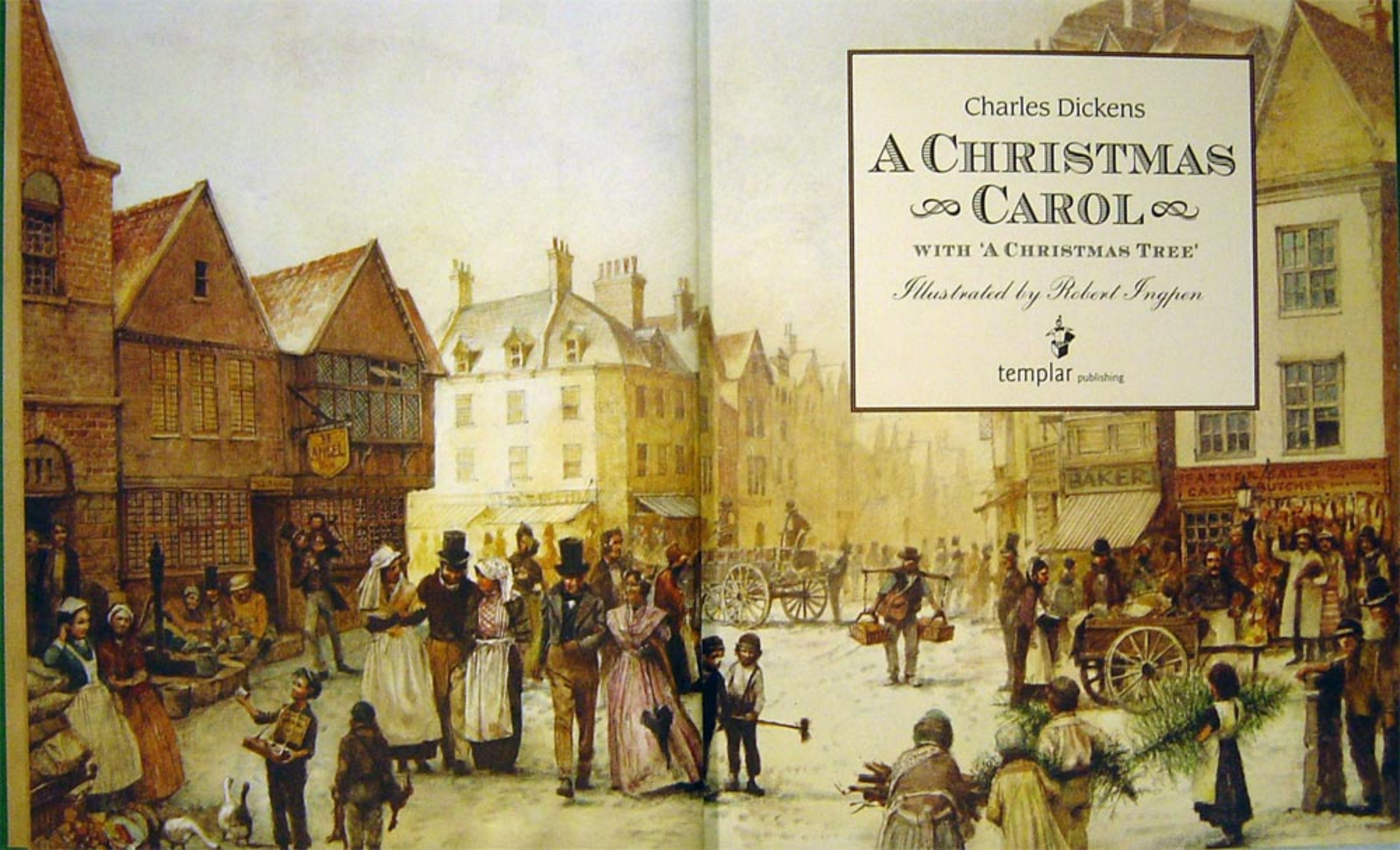
Charles Dickens

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Charles Dickens

A Christmas Carol

WITH 'A CHRISTMAS TREE'

Illustrated by Robert Ingpen

templar publishing

A TEMPLAR BOOK

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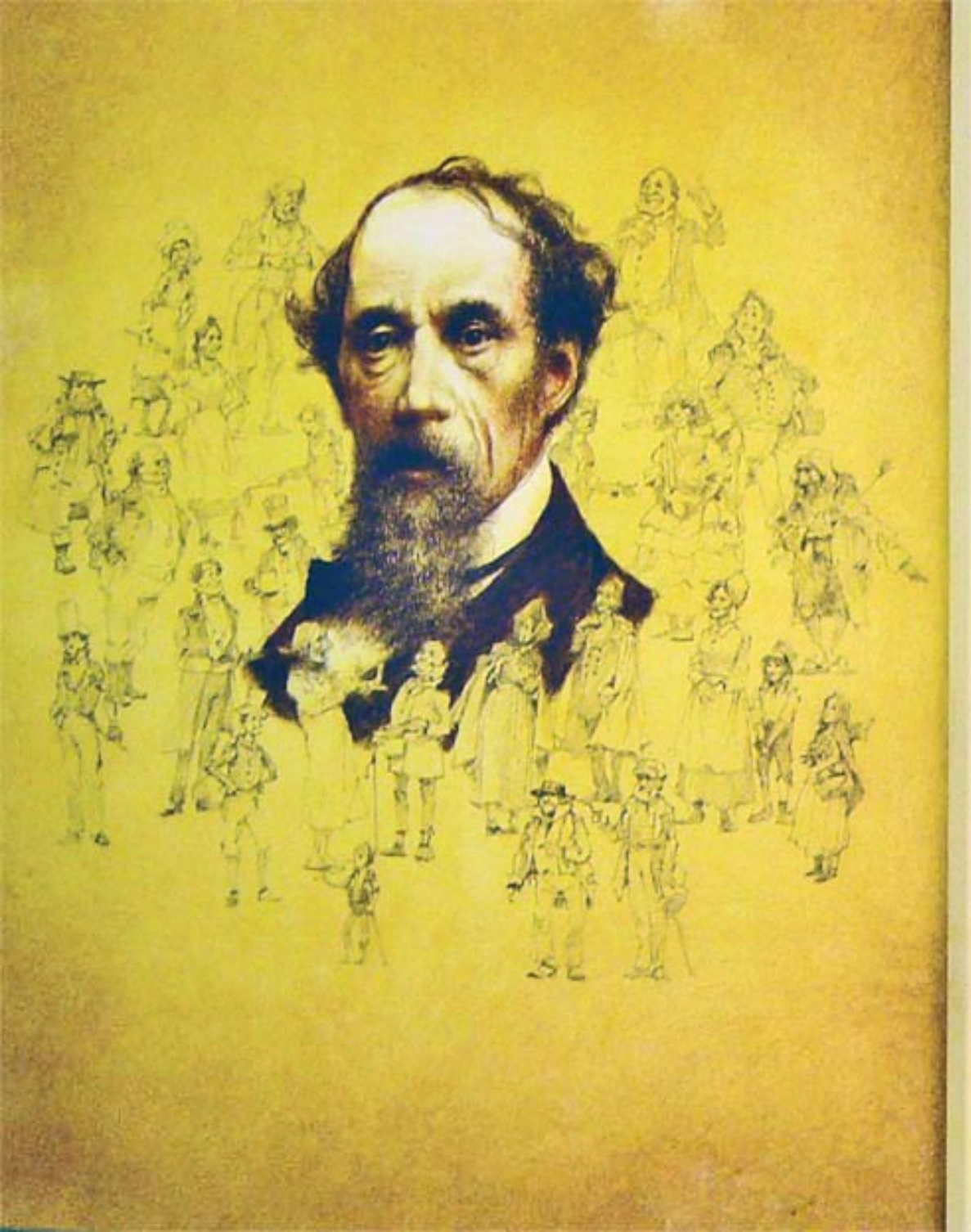
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Charles Dickens and A Christmas Carol

Charles Dickens was born in Portsmouth on 7 February 1812, the second of eight children. When he was twelve, his father, a government clerk, was sent to prison for bad debt, and Dickens was sent to work in a blacking factory where he endured appalling conditions and was witness to much poverty and hardship – an influence that later became a theme in many of his works.

Dickens began his literary career as a journalist, becoming parliamentary reporter for the *Morning Chronicle*, as well as publishing a series of sketches in various periodicals under the pseudonym 'Boz'. *The Pickwick Papers*, a series of short stories published in 1836–7, became a publishing phenomenon and following its success, Dickens went on to write such acclaimed works as *Oliver Twist* (1837–9), *Nicholas Nickleby* (1838–9), *David Copperfield* (1849–50) and *Great Expectations* (1860–1), creating some of the finest stories and most memorable characters in English literature.

Dickens' energy was seemingly inexhaustible: as well as a huge list of novels, he published an autobiography, edited weekly periodicals including *Household Words* and *All Year Round*, wrote travel books and administered charitable organisations. He loved the theatre and wrote plays, even performing in front of Queen Victoria in 1851. He also travelled widely, notably to the United States, where he lectured against slavery. He was a passionate campaigner against poverty, and particularly for the welfare and education of poor children in the cities. He died aged 58 in 1870.

carol singing, introducing the practice of card giving, which was borrowed from St Valentine's Day. Victoria's husband, Prince Albert, was very enthusiastic about the festival, and brought with him the German custom of decorating an evergreen tree. The Christmas tree ('that pretty German toy' as Dickens calls it in *A Christmas Tree*) at Windsor Castle was featured in *The Illustrated London News* in 1848, and soon everyone wanted to decorate a tree in their own homes. But perhaps the biggest influence on the way Christmas was celebrated was Charles Dickens.

Christmas was a matter close to Dickens' heart. His Christmas stories, and most importantly, *A Christmas Carol*, reinvented Christmas for his readers as a one-day holiday infused with sentimental philanthropic values. In the novel's scenes of warmth and gaiety, Dickens captured the sheer joyousness of the Christmas celebration – of families gathering together and sharing the Christmas feast; playing forfeits and blind-man's buff; feasting, drinking and merrymaking.



Dickens adored the bustle of the city and the excitement of the innovations and excesses of the Industrial Revolution. *A Christmas Carol* is, in some ways, an ode to that consumption. The Christmas shops are described in mouth-watering detail: 'There were great round, pot-bellied baskets of chestnuts, shaped like the waistcoats of jolly old gentlemen, lolling at the doors, and tumbling out into the street in their apoplectic opulence. There were ruddy, brown-faced, broad-girthed Spanish Onions, shining in the fatness of their growth like Spanish Friars...' and the happy revellers bask in self-indulgence. But alongside this, Charles Dickens was acutely socially aware of the disparities between the rich and the poor, and throughout his life and work he campaigned to improve the lot of those stricken by poverty. He makes his point by the contrast in his story between scenes of extreme poverty and despair with those of joyous festivity. In seeing his world through the eyes of Ebenezer Scrooge, the reader appreciates the possibility of true redemption in even the most cold-hearted individual, and the significance of always maintaining a generosity of spirit. The message of *A Christmas Carol* – what Christmas should be – is encapsulated by Scrooge's nephew, Fred, in the first chapter: 'I have always thought of Christmas time, when it has come round, as a good time; a kind, forgiving, charitable 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.' The philosophy of Christmas being a time for kindness to others is *A Christmas Carol*'s legacy, and the reason why the book has been loved by so many for so long.

'I will honour Christmas in my heart, and try to keep it all the year.'

Scrooge, *A Christmas Carol*

ILLUSTRATOR'S NOTE

Illustrating a book of stories by Charles Dickens is a privilege and a test. The illustrator works with common equipment like pencils, brushes, paints and paper. Then there are accepted procedures and modes of operation that are familiar and habitual until someone exceptional like Mr Dickens comes along, and an extra effort is needed. Maybe this is similar to the way a doctor approaches routine medical problems until he is confronted by a rare and unexpected disorder, and an extra effort is needed. For *A Christmas Carol* and *A Christmas Tree* I have had to take longer to create each illustration than is normal. More care and effort has been taken to try to 'picture' the events in the strange journey of redemption by Ebenezer Scrooge, and to portray the characters Dickens invites us to meet at Christmas time. Everything was harder than I expected it would be. Thank you Mr Dickens.

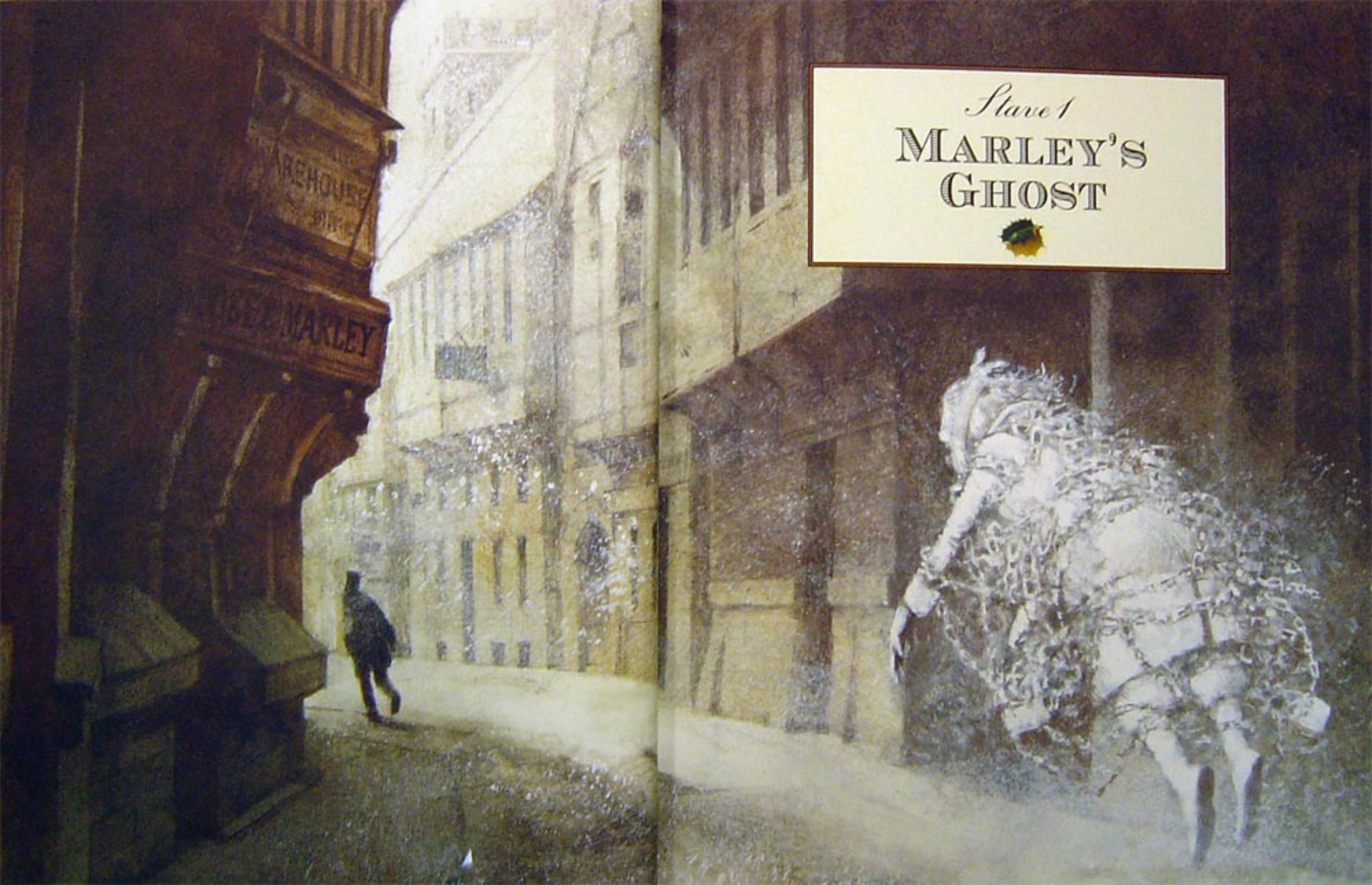
Robert Ingpen
February 2007

PREFACE

I have endeavoured in this Ghostly little book, to raise the Ghost of an Idea, which shall not put my readers out of humour with themselves, with each other, with the season, or with me.
May it haunt their houses pleasantly, and no one wish to lay it.

Their faithful Friend and Servant, C.D.
December, 1843.





Stave 1

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.

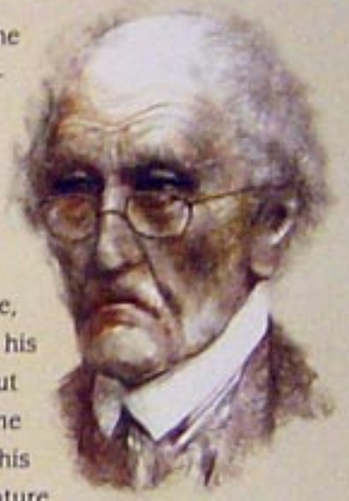
Mind! I don't mean to say that I know, of my own knowledge, what there is particularly dead about a door-nail. I might have been inclined, myself, to regard a coffin-nail as the deadest piece of ironmongery in the trade. But the wisdom of our ancestors is in the simile; and my unhallowed hands shall 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 solemnised 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 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 afterwards, 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, clutching, 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, shrivelled 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, nor 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, 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