

SCROOGE. Why, it's old Fezziwig! Bless his heart, it's Fezziwig, alive again!

(FREDERICK enters as YOUNG SCROOGE, now about twenty-one, as cheerful as SCROOGE is dour. With him is FORSTER as DICK WILKINS, equally cheerful and twenty-one.)

FEZZIWIG. *(Moving a chair upstage.)* No more work tonight. Christmas Eve, Dick! Christmas, Ebenezer! Let's have the place cleared away before a man can say "Jack Robinson"!

(DICK and EBENEZER set to work, clearing away a space large enough to permit dancing, singing as they go.)

SCROOGE. Dick Wilkins, to be sure! Bless me, yes. He was very much attached to me, was Dick. Dear, dear...

(As they work, in comes REBECCA as BELLE, the FEZZIWIGS' daughter and YOUNG SCROOGE's fiancée, CATHERINE as MRS. FEZZIWIG, and HELEN and CHARLEY as LITTLE FEZZIWIGS. More singing; punch is poured and partaken of. As MR. and MRS. FEZZIWIG speak, they take us in, as if there a large gathering present.)

MRS. FEZZIWIG. Hilli-ho! Clear away my lads and let's have lots of room here!

FEZZIWIG. Hilli-ho, Dick! Chirrip, Ebenezer!

(As the clearing-away ends.)

My dears, it's Christmas Eve. A toast to that glorious occasion! May tomorrow, and the whole of the New Year, find us merry, content, and above all, filled with the happy good will of the season toward all our fellows!

(Everyone cheers.)

And, in honor of that great day, I have engaged the services of the most renowned musician in the City of London. His nimble tricks over and amongst the

strings of the most splendid of instruments are too well-known for me to relate them. You all know him; you're all acquainted with his miraculous capacity to raise the spirits of even the most mortuary of countenances. Ladies and gentlemen, I give you the highly-valued...

(With a flourish, he indicates the GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST, who stands ready with violin and bow.)

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST. My, my. Don't deserve it, really. Ladies and gents, "Little Christmas Child."

(He - or, magically, the violin alone - strikes up a reel based on "Little Christmas Child." The dancing begins. After a moment or two, in which he's transported to a state he hasn't experienced in many years, SCROOGE acts like a man possessed, laughing, dancing among the partners, jesting if someone misses a step, etc. The dancing ends amid loud applause for the fiddler, which GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST acknowledges with a deep bow.)

A small matter to make these silly folk so full of gratitude.

SCROOGE. Small?

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST. Is it not? He has spent but three or four pounds of your mortal money. Is that so much that he deserves praise?

SCROOGE. It isn't that at all, Spirit. He had the power to render us happy or unhappy; to make our service light or burdensome. The happiness he gave was quite as much as if it had cost a fortune...

(He is suddenly quiet.)

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST. What is the matter?

SCROOGE. Nothing particular.

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST. Something, I think.