

when *she* came. So did every one, when *they* came. Wonderful party, wonderful games, wonderful unanimity, won-der-ful happiness!

But he was early at the office next morning. Oh, ⁵he was early there! If he could only be there first, and catch Bob Cratchit coming late! That was the thing he had set his heart upon.

And he did it; yes, he did! The clock struck nine. No Bob. A quarter past. No Bob. He was ¹⁰full eighteen minutes and a half behind his time. Scrooge sat with his door wide open, that he might see him come into the tank.

His hat was off before he opened the door; his comforter, too. He was on his stool in a jiffy; driv-
¹⁵ing away with his pen, as if he were trying to overtake nine o'clock.

"Hallo!" growled Scrooge, in his accustomed voice as near as he could feign it. "What do you mean by coming here at this time of day?"

²⁰ "I am very sorry, sir," said Bob. "I *am* behind my time."

"You are?" repeated Scrooge. "Yes. I think you are. Step this way, sir, if you please."

"It's only once a year, sir," pleaded Bob, appear-
²⁵ing from the tank. "It shall not be repeated. I was making rather merry yesterday, sir."

"Now, I'll tell you what, my friend," said Scrooge; "I am not going to stand this sort of thing any longer. And therefore," he continued, leaping from his stool, ³⁰and giving Bob such a dig in the waistcoat that he staggered back into the tank again,—“and therefore, I am about to raise your salary!”

Bob trembled, and got a little nearer to the ruler. He had a momentary idea of knocking Scrooge down ³⁵with it, holding him, and calling to the people in the court for help and a strait-waistcoat.

"A Merry Christmas, Bob!" said Scrooge, with an