

Frederick T. Vander, in evening dress, came out from the back room with a copy of the "Christmas Carol" in his hand. He was in good voice and looked like a perfect Bob Cratchet. He even had the white scarf inside his coat with its fluttering white ends. I resolutely put aside the opinion I had of him as a husband and father and settled down to enjoy the performance.

"Marley was dead," he began, and we were off. Let the wind blow, let the tin roof crackle and buckle, we were listening to an immortal tale. The little man knew how to present his story. He played all parts with equal facility; he was Scrooge, tight-fisted and wizened, harsh of voice and hard of heart; he was the timid little clerk trying to warm himself at the candle. He was the fog that came pouring into every chink, "making the houses across the street into mere phantoms." And how well he did the nephew all in a glow of good fellowship who came in to wish old Scrooge a merry Christmas!—which he defined as—"A kind forgiving charitable time . . . when men and women open their shut-up hearts freely and think of the people below them as fellow passengers to the grave, and not another race bound on other journeys!"

So intent were we on the story that no one noticed that the fire was burning low and it was not until the knocker on the door changed to Marley's face that someone on the outer fringe of the audience came forward and mended the fire noisily. The Interpreter glared at the interruption but resumed the story. The caretaker of the hall, Mr. Miller, roused to his duty by this alien hand laid on his stove, reasserted his authority by piling in more wood and more wood, and soon the crackling of the stove joined the rumbling of the tin roof. The audience stretched their chilly hands to the warmth and went adventuring on the high seas where grizzled men raised their voices in praise of Christmas.