

INTRODUCTION.

"Who can listen to objections regarding such a book as this? It seems to me a national benefit, and to every man or woman who reads it a personal kindness."—*Thackeray*.

"In December, 1843, all England was aroused from its selfish slumbering by the sound of a carol. It was no carol sung by a bird; it was sung by a man, and that man was Charles Dickens. He called it *A Christmas Carol*; but the Anglo-Saxon world has known it ever since as "*The Christmas Carol*," as if, since the birth of Him who made the 25th of December a holiday, humanity had known no song worthy of being likened unto it. Thirty-eight years this carol has been sung, and yet every twelve-month its pure melody receives as hearty a welcome as Christmas itself. Hungry ears have listened to no better hymn of praise; hungry eyes have feasted on no truer or more loving counsel."—*Kate Field*.

PREFATORY NOTE.

The *Christmas Carol*, the first of a long series of Christmas stories by Charles Dickens, published in December, 1843, was hailed on every side with enthusiastic greeting. It was the work of such odd moments of leisure as were left while writing *Martin Chuzzlewit*. Dickens has told us of what befell him in its composition, with what a strange mastery it seized him for itself, how he wept over it, and laughed, and wept again, and excited himself to an extraordinary degree, and how he walked thinking of it fifteen and twenty miles about the back streets of London, and many and many a night after all sober folks had gone to bed. And when it was done, as he told his friend, President Felton, of Harvard College, he let himself loose like