

CRATCHIT

And a Merry Christmas to you and your wife, sir.

SCROOGE

There's another fellow. My clerk, with fifteen shillings a week, and a wife and family, talking about a merry Christmas. I'll retire to Bedlam.

SOLICITOR #1

Scrooge and Marley's, I believe. (*referring to his list*) Have I the pleasure of addressing Mr. Scrooge or Mr. Marley?

SCROOGE

Mr. Marley has been dead these seven years. He died seven years ago, this very night.

SOLICITOR #2

We have no doubt his liberality is well represented by his surviving partner.

SOLICITOR #1

At this festive season of the year, Mr. Scrooge, it is even more desirable that we should make some slight provision for the Poor and destitute, who suffer greatly at the present time. Many thousands are in want of common necessities; hundreds of thousands are in want of common comforts, sir.

SCROOGE

Are there no prisons?

SOLICITOR #1

Plenty of prisons.

SCROOGE

And the Union workhouses? Are they still in operation?

SOLICITOR #1

They are. Still, I wish I could say they were not.

SCROOGE

The Treadmill and the Poor Law are in full vigour, then?

SOLICITOR #1

Both very busy, sir.

SCROOGE

Oh! I was afraid, from what you said at first, that something had occurred to stop them in their useful course. I'm very glad to hear it.

SOLICITOR #2

Under the impression that they scarcely furnish Christian cheer of mind or body to the multitude a few of us are endeavoring to raise a fund to buy the Poor some meat and drink, and means of warmth. We choose this time, because it is a time, of all others, when Want is keenly felt, and Abundance rejoices. What shall I put you down for?

SCROOGE

Nothing!

SOLICITOR #2

You wish to be anonymous?

SCROOGE

I wish to be left alone. Since you ask me what I wish, gentlemen, that is my answer. I don't make merry myself at Christmas and I can't afford to make idle people merry. I help to support the establishments I have mentioned-- they cost enough-- and those who are badly off must go there.

SOLICITOR #1

Many can't go there; and many would rather die.

SCROOGE

If they would rather die, they had better do it, and decrease the surplus population. Besides -- **excuse me** -- I don't know that.

SOLICITOR #2

But you might know it.

SCROOGE

It's not my business. It's enough for a man to understand his own business, and not to interfere with other people's. Mine occupies me constantly. Good afternoon, gentlemen! (*The gentleman start to exit.*)

BOB CRATCHIT

(stopping them) Sirs.

SOLICITOR #2

Merry Christmas.

BOB CRATCHIT

Merry Christmas, sirs.

(The gentlemen exit.)