

THE CHIMES

A Goblin Story of Some Bells that Rang an Old
Year Out and a New Year In

Adapted from the story by Charles Dickens
and with Original Music

by

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Adaptation and music

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CHARACTERS

Toby "Trotty" Veck, a "ticket-porter" or messenger
Margaret "Meg" Veck, Toby's 20-year old daughter
Richard, Meg's fiancée
Alderman Cute, a Justice of the Peace
Mr. Filer, a political economist
Sir Joseph Bowley, a rich paternalist MP
Lady Bowley, much younger wife of Sir Joseph
Mr. Fish, Sir Joseph's secretary
Will Fern, a countryman
Lilian Fern, Will's orphaned niece
Tugby, a door-porter at Sir Joseph Bowley's residence
Mrs. Anne Chickenstalker, a local shopkeeper
The Drum, a friend of Toby's
The Spirits of the Bells

NOTE: Numbers as character names in script indicate that one person should read all similarly marked lines.

MUSICAL NUMBERS

- 1: The Bells of London (The Company)
- 2: The Chimes (Instrumental)
- 2a: The Chimes, reprise (Instrumental)
- 2b: The Quarter Hour (Instrumental)
- 3: Put 'Em Down (The Company)
- 4: Echoes of Christmas (Instrumental)
- 5: The Year Was Old (The Company)
- 6: Benediction (The Company)
- 7: Put 'Em Down, reprise (The Company)
- 8: Toby Veck (The Company)
- 9: Toby Veck, reprise (Instrumental)
- 10: The Spirit of the Bells (The Company)
- 11: Listen! (The Company)
- 12: God Rest Ye Merry (Instrumental)
- 12a: When and How (The Company)
- 13: Follow! (The Company)
- 14: The Bells (Instrumental)
- 15: Trotty's Dance (Instrumental)
- 16: Finale Ultimo (The Company)

THE CHIMES

Act One

The First Quarter.

SETTING: A more or less bare stage, with a rows of chairs angled on either side sufficient to accommodate the COMPANY. The NARRATOR has a chair and small table DSL. If projections are used, then, UC, a projection screen bordered with a 'Victorian-appropriate' frame.

(MUSIC CUE 1: The Bells of London; VIDEO UNIT 1: Churches; the COMPANY start in the house and come to the stage as they sing.)

SOPRANOS

WE GO UP AND WE GO DOWN TO RING THE BELLS OF LONDON TOWN.
WE GO UP AND WE GO DOWN TO RING THE BELLS OF LONDON TOWN.

SOPRANO/ALTO

WE GO UP AND WE GO DOWN TO RING THE BELLS OF LONDON TOWN.
WE GO UP AND WE GO DOWN TO RING THE BELLS OF LONDON TOWN.

MEN

LONDON TOWN.

WOMEN

WE RING THE BELLS.

MEN

LONDON TOWN.

WOMEN

WE RING THE BELLS.

ALL

LONDON TOWN. WE RING THE BELLS.
LONDON TOWN. WE RING THE BELLS.
WE GO UP AND WE GO DOWN TO RING THE BELLS OF LONDON TOWN.
WE GO UP AND WE GO DOWN TO RING THE BELLS OF LONDON TOWN.

MEN

LONDON TOWN.

WOMEN

WE RING THE BELLS.

MEN

LONDON TOWN.

WOMEN

WE RING THE BELLS.

SOPRANOS

"ORANGES AND LEMONS" SAY THE BELLS OF ST. CLEMENT'S.

ALTOS

"BULLSEYES AND TARGETS" SAY THE BELLS OF ST. MARGARET'S.

MEN

"BRICKBATS AND TILES" SAY THE BELLS OF ST. GILES'.

WOMEN

"HALFPENCE AND FARTHINGS" SAY THE BELLS OF ST. MARTIN'S.

MEN

"PANCAKES AND FRITTERS" SAY THE BELLS OF ST. PETER'S.

ALL

"KETTLES AND PANS" SAY THE BELLS OF ST. ANNE'S.

WOMEN

"TWO STICKS AND AN APPLE" SAY THE BELLS OF WHITECHAPEL.

MEN

"MAIDS IN WHITE APRONS" SAY THE BELLS AT ST. KATHERINE'S.

ALL

"POKERS AND TONGS" SAY THE BELLS OF ST. JOHN'S.

SOPRANOS

"YOU OWE ME TEN SHILLINGS" SAY THE BELLS OF ST. HELEN'S.

ALTOS

"WHEN WILL YOU PAY ME?" SAY THE BELLS OF OLD BAILEY.

MEN

"WHEN I GROW RICH" SAY THE BELLS OF SHOREDITCH.

WOMEN

"WHEN WILL THAT BE?" SAY THE BELLS OF STEPNEY.

MEN

"I DO NOT KNOW"

ALL
SAYS THE GREAT BELL OF BOW.

WE GO UP AND WE GO DOWN TO RING THE BELLS OF LONDON TOWN.
WE GO UP AND WE GO DOWN TO RING THE BELLS OF LONDON TOWN.

MEN
LONDON TOWN.

WOMEN
WE RING THE BELLS.

MEN
LONDON TOWN.

ALL
WE RING THE BELLS.

(MUSIC ENDS; VIDEO UNIT 2: Steeples and bells; the COMPANY
are on stage)

1
There are not many people – little and big, young and old, yet growing up or already
growing down again - there are not, I say, many people who would care to sleep in a
church.

2
I don't mean at sermon-time in warm weather

3
(when the thing has, I am told, actually been done, once or twice)

2
but in the night

1
and alone.

4
I challenge anyone, on any gusty winter's night, to meet me in an old churchyard,

5
before an old church-door

4
and empower me to lock him in

6
until morning.

2
The night-wind has a dismal trick of wandering round a building of that sort,

3
moaning as it goes;

4
and of trying the windows and the doors;

5
and seeking out some crevice by which to enter.

6
And when it has got in, it wails and howls: stalking through the aisles, gliding round and round the pillars, soaring up to the roof, and striving to rend the rafters:

5
It has an awful voice, that wind at Midnight, singing in a church!

1
But, high up in the steeple!

2
High up in the steeple, where it is free to come and go through many an airy arch

3
and to twist and twine itself about the giddy stair,

4
and twirl the groaning weathercock,

5
and make the very tower shake and shiver!

1
High up in the steeple, where the belfry is,

6
and iron rails are ragged with rust,

2
and sheets of lead and copper crackle and heave.

1
High up in the steeple of an old church,

3
far above the light and murmur of the town

4
and far below the flying clouds that shadow it,

5
is a wild and dreary place at night:

1
and high up in the steeple of an old church,

ALL
dwelt the Chimes I tell of.

(MUSIC CUE 2: The Chimes)

2
Centuries ago, so many centuries that no one knew their names, these Bells had been
baptized by bishops, but they now hung, nameless, in the church-tower.

3
Not speechless, though.

2
Far from it.

3
They had clear, lusty voices; and far and wide they might be heard upon the wind.

4
On stormy nights, they had been sometimes known to beat a blustering Nor' Wester "all to
fits," as Toby Veck said.

5
Toby Veck!

6
- though they called him Trotty Veck, yet his name was Toby.

2

And for my part, whatever Toby Veck said, I say.

3

I stand by Toby Veck, although he stood all day long just by the church-door.

4

In fact he was a porter,

5

Toby Veck,

4

and waited there for jobs.

5

It was a breezy,

6

goose-skinned,

1

blue-nosed,

2

red-eyed,

3

stony-toed,

4

tooth-chattering place to wait

5

in the winter-time.

1

The wind came tearing round each corner, express, to have a blow at Toby.

2

And bouncing past him, it would suddenly wheel round, as if it cried –

3

Why, here he is!

4

His feeble little cane would wrestle and struggle unavailingly in his hand,

6

and his legs would undergo tremendous agitation,

1

and Toby himself, all aslant, and facing

2

now in this direction,

3

now in that,

1

would be so

2

banged and

3

buffeted, and so

4

touzled, and

5

worried, and

6

hustled,

1

and lifted off his feet, that it was a miracle he wasn't carried up bodily into the air and rained down again,

2

to the great astonishment of the natives,

1

on some strange corner of the world where porters are unknown.

2

Toby would warm himself by exercise, and trotting up and down, he would brighten, and go back more brightly to his niche by the church-wall.

3

They called him Trotty from his pace. He could have walked faster perhaps; but rob him of his trot, and Toby would have taken to his bed and died.

4

A weak, small, spare old man, he was a very Hercules,

5

this Toby,

4

in his good intentions.

5

He loved to earn his money.

6

He delighted to believe

1

– Toby was very poor, and couldn't well afford to part with a delight –

6

that he was worth his salt.

5

With a shilling message or an eighteenpenny parcel, his courage rose high.

4

He would call out to Postmen ahead of him to get out of the way; devoutly believing that he must inevitably run them down;

3

and he had perfect faith

2

– not often tested –

3

in his being able to carry anything that man could lift.

1

Thus, Toby trotted. With leaky shoes and chilly hands, Toby trotted. Stepping out to look up at the belfry when the Chimes resounded, Toby trotted.

2

The Chimes were company to him.

(MUSIC CUE 2a: The Chimes, reprise)

3

They, like Toby, hung there in all weathers, with the wind and rain driving in upon them; facing the houses

4

but never getting any nearer to the blazing fires or any of the good things that were constantly handed through the doors and the railings.

5

Being a simple man, he invested the Chimes with a strange and solemn character.

6

They were so mysterious,

1

often heard and never seen;

2

so high up,

3

so far off,

4

so full of such a deep strong melody,

5

that he regarded them with a species of awe.

6

In short, they were very often in his ears,

1

and very often in his thoughts,

2

but always in his good opinion;

3

Toby was taking a warming trot one cold day, when the last drowsy sound of Twelve o'clock hummed like a melodious monster Bee all through the steeple.

TOBY

Dinner-time, eh!

4

said Toby, trotting up and down before the church.

5

Toby's nose was very red, and his shoulders were very near his ears, and his legs were very stiff, and altogether he was a long way upon the frosty side of cool.

TOBY

Dinner-time, eh!

5

repeated Toby,

6

He took a silent trot, after that, for a minute or two.

TOBY

There's nothing,

1

- but here he stopped short in his trot, and with some alarm, felt his nose carefully all the way up. Not being much of a nose, he had soon finished.

TOBY

I thought it was gone,

2

said Toby, trotting off again.

TOBY

I couldn't blame it if it was to go. It's a good deal tried, poor creetur, at the best of times; for when it DOES get hold of a pleasant whiff or two (which an't too often) it's generally from somebody else's dinner, a-coming home from the baker's.

3

This reminded him of his other thought, which he had left unfinished.

TOBY

There's nothing

4

said Toby,

TOBY

more regular in its coming round than dinner-time, and nothing less regular in its coming round than dinner. That's the great difference between 'em. I wonder whether anyone would buy that observation for the Papers.

5

Toby was only joking.

TOBY

Lord! The Papers is full of observations. Here's last week's paper, now –

6

taking a very dirty one from his pocket

TOBY

– full of observations – mostly about the Poor! It almost goes against the grain to read a paper now. It frightens me. I don't know what we Poor People are coming to. Lord send we may be coming to something better in the New Year!

MEG

Why, father, father!

1

said a pleasant voice, hard by. But Toby, not hearing it, continued to trot backwards and forwards, talking to himself.

TOBY

It seems we can't go right, or do right, or be righted. We seem to be dreadful things; we give a deal of trouble; we are always being complained of and guarded against. We seem to have no business on the Earth. Supposing it should really be that we have no right to a New Year - supposing we really ARE intruding -

MEG

Why, father, father!

2

Toby heard the voice this time, and shortening his sight, which had been directed into the very heart of the New Year, saw his own child, and looked into her eyes.

3

Bright eyes they were. Eyes so beautiful and true, despite twenty years of work and poverty, that Trotty Veck squeezed the blooming face between his hands.

TOBY

Why, Pet, what's to do? I didn't expect you to-day, Meg.

MEG

But here I am! And not alone; not alone!

TOBY

Why, you don't mean to say –

4

looking curiously at a basket which she carried in her hand

TOBY

– that you –

MEG

Smell it, father. Only smell it! Let me just lift up the corner; just a lit-tle ti-ny cor-ner. There. Now. What's that?

5

Toby took the shortest possible sniff at the edge of the basket.

TOBY

Why, it's hot!

MEG

It's burning hot! Ha, ha, ha!

TOBY

Ha, ha, ha!

6

roared Toby, with a sort of kick.

TOBY

It's scalding hot!

MEG

But what is it? You haven't guessed. A little bit more of the cover. Now guess!

1

Toby, putting a hand on each knee, bent down his nose to the basket.

TOBY

Ah! It's very nice. It an't - I suppose it an't Polonies?

MEG

No! Nothing like Polonies!

2

Another sniff.

TOBY

It improves every moment. It an't Trotters. Liver? No. That don't answer to liver. And I know it an't sausages. I'll tell you what it is. It's chitterlings!

MEG

No, it an't! No, it an't!

TOBY

Why, I shall forget my own name next. It's tripe!

4

Tripe it was.

5

And Meg protested it was the best tripe ever stewed.

MEG

I have tied it all up in a pocket-handkerchief; and if I am proud for once, and spread that for a cloth, and call it a cloth, there's no law to prevent me; is there?

TOBY

Well, they're always a-bringing up some new law or other.

MEG

Now, on the Post or on the Steps? An't we grand? Two places to dine!

TOBY

The steps to-day, my Pet. Steps in dry weather. Post in wet.

MEG

Then here, here it is, all ready! And beautiful it looks! Come, father. Come!

5

As he was stooping to sit down, the Chimes rang.

(MUSIC CUE 2b: The 1/4 Hour)

TOBY

Amen!

6

said Trotty, pulling off his hat and looking up towards them.

MEG

Amen to the Bells, father?

TOBY

Many's the kind thing they say to me.

MEG

The Bells do, father! Well!

TOBY

Bless you, dear, how often have I heard them bells say, "Keep a good heart, Toby! Keep a good heart!"

MEG

Well, I never!

TOBY

When things is very bad, very bad indeed, I mean, then it's "Job coming soon, Toby! Job coming soon!"

MEG

And it comes - at last, father.

TOBY

Never fails. Why, Lord forgive me! Sitting here gorging myself; and you before me there, never so much as breaking your fast -

MEG

But I have broken it, father, all to bits. I have had my dinner.

TOBY

Nonsense, two dinners in one day! It an't possible! You might as well tell me that two New Year's Days will come together.

MEG

I have had my dinner, father, and if you'll go on with yours, I'll tell you how your dinner came to be brought and - and something else besides.

1

Toby took up his knife and fork again, and went to work.

MEG

I had my dinner, father, with - with Richard. His dinner-time was early; and as he brought his dinner with him, we - we had it together, father.

2

Trotty took a little beer, and smacked his lips. Then he said,

TOBY

Oh!

MEG

And Richard says, father –

3

And stopped.

TOBY

What does Richard say, Meg?

MEG

Richard says, father –

4

Another stoppage.

TOBY

Richard's a long time saying it.

MEG

He says, father, we are poor now, father, and we shall be poor a year from now, but we are young now, and years will make us old before we know it.

5

A bolder man than Trotty Veck could not have denied it. Trotty held his peace.

MEG

So Richard says, father; as his work was yesterday made certain for some time to come, and as I have loved him, full three years, will I marry him on New Year's Day. It's short

MEG Cont.

notice, but I haven't my fortune to be settled, or my wedding dresses to be made and as I wished there should be something to make this a happy day to you as well, father, I made a little treat and brought it to surprise you.

RICHARD

And see how he leaves it cooling on the step!

6

It was this same Richard – handsome, well-made, powerful he was; with eyes that sparkled, black hair that curled and a smile that bore out Meg's eulogium.

RICHARD

See how he leaves it cooling on the step! Meg don't know what he likes. Not she!

1

Trotty immediately reached up his hand to Richard when the house-door opened without any warning, and a footman very nearly put his foot into the tripe.

2

Out of the ways here, will you! WILL you clear the road, or won't you?

3

Strictly speaking, the last question was irrelevant, as they had already done it.

4

What's the matter, what's the matter? – said the gentleman now coming out of his house, with creaking boots, a watch-chain, and clean linen, and an expression of having important engagements elsewhere. – What's the matter! What's the matter!

2

Why don't you let our door-steps be? CAN'T you let 'em be?

4

That'll do, that'll do! Halloo there! Porter! Come here. What's that? Your dinner?

TOBY

Yes, sir.

4

Bring it here, bring it here. So! This is your dinner, is it?

5

A low-spirited man of meagre habit and disconsolate face had came out with him.

6

The first gentleman called to the low-spirited one by the name of

4

Filer!

5

Mr. Filer looked closely at the remnant of Toby's dinner.

6

But Mr. Filer didn't eat it.

5

This is a description of animal food, Alderman, commonly known to the labouring population of this country by the name of tripe.

4

The Alderman laughed, and winked; for he was a merry fellow, Alderman Cute. Oh, and a sly fellow too! A knowing fellow. Deep in the people's hearts! He knew them, Cute did. Believe me!

5

But who eats tripe? – said Filer – There is more loss in the boiling of tripe than of any other animal substance whatever. The waste on the amount of tripe eaten by the lower classes each year would victual a garrison of five hundred men for five months of thirty-one days each, and a February over. The Waste, the Waste!

1

Trotty was aghast. He had starved a garrison of five hundred men!

5

Who eats tripe? – said Mr. Filer, warmly – Who eats tripe?

2

Trotty made a miserable bow.

5

You do, do you? Then I'll tell you something. You snatch your tripe, my friend, out of the mouths of widows and orphans.

TOBY

I hope not, sir. I'd sooner die of want!

5

Divide the amount of tripe before-mentioned, Alderman, by the estimated number of

5 Cont.

existing widows and orphans, and the result will be one pennyweight of tripe to each. Not a grain is left for that man. He's a robber.

TOBY

Trotty was so shocked he was happy to see the Alderman finish the tripe himself.

4

Now, you Porter! Don't you ever tell me that you haven't enough to eat, and of the best; because I know better. I have tasted your tripe, you know, and you can't "chaff" me. That's the right word, isn't it? Ha, ha, ha!

1

Turning to his friends

4

Easiest thing on earth to deal with this sort of people, if you understand 'em.

3

Famous man for the people, Alderman Cute! Never out of temper with them!

4

Now, there's a great deal of nonsense talked about Want and I intend to Put it Down. Starvation is all in vogue, and I mean to Put it Down. Your daughter, eh?

2

said the Alderman, chucking Meg under the chin.

1

Always affable, Alderman Cute! Knew what pleased the working classes!

4

Where's her mother?

TOBY

Dead. Was called to Heaven when she was born.

4

And – to the young smith – you're making love to her, are you?

RICHARD

Yes – nettled by the question.– We are going to be married on New Year's Day.

5

What! Married!

RICHARD

We're rather in an 'urry, you see, in case it should be Put Down first.

5

Married! Married!! A man may labour all his life for the benefit of such people and may heap up mountains of facts and figures and he can no more hope to persuade 'em that they have no business to be married, than he can hope to persuade 'em that they have no business to be born – which has been proved.

4

Alderman Cute laid his forefinger on the side of his nose, saying – Observe! Keep your eye on the practical man! – and called Meg to him. – Come here, my girl!

MEG

Meg approached.

4

I'm going to give you some advice, because I'm a Justice. You know I'm a Justice?

MEG

Yes.

4

You are going to be married. After you are married, you'll quarrel with your husband and become a Distressed Wife. You will, because I tell you so. I give you fair warning that I have made up my mind to Put Down all Distressed Wives. So, don't be brought before me. You'll have children – boys. Those boys will run wild in the streets, without shoes and stockings. I am determined to Put all boys without shoes and stockings Down. Your husband will die young and leave you with a baby. Then you'll be turned out of doors, and wander up and down the streets. I am resolved to Put all Wandering Mothers Down. All young mothers, all sick persons, all young children. And if you attempt to drown yourself, or hang yourself, I'll have no pity for you, for I have made up my mind to Put all suicide Down! So don't try it on. And as for you, you dull dog, what do you want to be married for? Why, she'll be an old woman before you're a middle-aged man! And a pretty figure you'll cut then, with a draggle-tailed wife and a crowd of squalling children crying after you wherever you go!

3

O, he knew how to banter the common people, Alderman Cute! (Blessing on him.)

4

Go along with you, and repent. Don't make such a fool of yourself as to get married on New Year's Day. Go along with you!

1

The Alderman had Put them Down and they left, silently, ashamed.

4

As you happen to be here – said the Alderman to Toby – you shall carry a letter for me. Can you be quick? You're an old man.

TOBY

Toby murmured that he was “very quick, and very strong.”

4

How old are you?

TOBY

I'm over sixty, sir.

5

Oh, really! This man's a great deal past the average age. He should be dead!

4

Never mind. Take this letter. And take this shilling.

5

If you take that shilling, you'll be robbing an entire parish of old women and orphans of ninep'nce-ha'p'ny a-piece. I wouldn't give him more than sixp'nce.

4

Very well. Sixp'nce.

TOBY

And very well off to get that, sir.

4

Then the Alderman walked off in high feather; but, he immediately came hurrying back, as if he had forgotten something. – Porter!

TOBY

Sir!

4

Take care of that daughter of yours. She's much too handsome.

5

Much! She's robbed five hundred ladies of a bloom a-piece. Dreadful!

4

She'll come to no good. Take care of her! – With which, he hurried off again.

TOBY

Wrong every way. Wrong every way! Born bad. No business on Earth!

1

The Chimes came clashing in upon him as he said the words. (MUSIC CUE 3: Put 'em Down.) Full, loud, resounding - but with not a drop encouragement.

TOBY

The tune's changed. There's not a word of comfort in it. Why should there be? I have no business with the New Year nor with the old one neither. Let me die!

2

Still the Bells, pealing forth their changes, made the very air spin.

VOICES

PUT 'EM DOWN, PUT 'EM DOWN!
FACTS AND FIGURES, FACTS AND FIGURES!
NO BUSINESS, NO BUSINESS!
BORN BAD! BORN BAD!
PUT 'EM DOWN, PUT 'EM DOWN!
FACTS AND FIGURES, FACTS AND FIGURES!
NO BUSINESS, NO BUSINESS!
BORN BAD! BORN BAD!

1

He pressed his bewildered head between his hands, to keep it from splitting asunder and, finding the alderman's letter in one of them, he fell, mechanically, into his usual trot, and trotted off.

(MUSIC CUE 4: Echoes of Christmas)

END OF THE FIRST QUARTER

THE CHIMES

Act One

The Second Quarter.

2

The letter Toby had received from Alderman Cute was addressed to a great man in a great district of the town.

3

The greatest district of the town.

4

Commonly called “the world” by its inhabitants.

5

Toby considered the weighty name on the address, and pondered the amount of gold and silver associated with the name.

TOBY

How different from us! Whose share of life does he take but his own! As to snatching tripe from anybody's mouth - he'd scorn it!

6

Toby interposed a corner of his apron between the letter and his fingers.

4

And he trotted on.

5

It was a hard frost, that day.

6

The air was bracing,

1

crisp

2

and clear.

3

The wintry sun

4

though powerless for warmth

3

looked brightly down upon the ice and set a radiant glory there.

4

At other times, Trotty might have learned a poor man's lesson from the wintry sun

5

but, he was past that, now.

(MUSIC CUE 5: The Year Was Old)

ALL

THE YEAR WAS OLD, THE PATIENT YEAR
HAD LIVED THROUGH SORROW, LOVE AND FEAR.

SPRING, WINTER, SUMMER AND THE FALL
IT LABOURED ROUND AND THROUGH THEM ALL
AND NOW LAID DOWN ITS WEARY HEAD AT LAST.

SHUT OUT FROM HOPE, FROM HAPPINESS,
BROUGHT JOYS TO OTHERS, NONETHELESS.

MADE ITS APPEAL IN ITS DECLINE
TO BEAR ITS TOILING DAYS IN MIND,
TO HAVE ITS PATIENT HOURS BE REMEMBERED,

4

Trotty might have read a poor man's allegory in the fading year;

5

but he was past that, now.

ALL

THE STREETS WERE FULL OF MOTION,
AND THE SHOPS WERE BRIGHTLY GAY.
WHAT WELCOMES AND REJOICINGS
WAITED FOR THE NEW YEAR DAY.

THE NEW YEAR, THE NEW YEAR.
EVERYWHERE THE NEW YEAR!
THE NEW YEAR, THE NEW YEAR.
EVERYWHERE THE NEW YEAR!

WAITING FOR THE OLD TO PASS AWAY.

ALL Cont.

THE DYING YEAR WAS DONE AND PAST;
AND NOW ITS THOUGHTS WERE MOVING ON,

THE OLD YEAR'S PATTERNS FADING FAST,
BEFORE ITS FINAL BREATH WAS GONE,
BEFORE THE PROMISE OF ITS NEW-BORN HEIR.

THE STREETS WERE FULL OF MOTION,
AND THE SHOPS WERE BRIGHTLY GAY.
WHAT WELCOMES AND REJOICINGS
WAITED FOR THE NEW YEAR DAY.

THE NEW YEAR, THE NEW YEAR.
EVERYWHERE THE NEW YEAR!
THE NEW YEAR, THE NEW YEAR.
EVERYWHERE THE NEW YEAR!

WAITING FOR A NEW YEAR, YOUNG AND BOLD.
TROTTY HAD NO PART IN NEW OR OLD.

1

Toby's usual trot brought him, in due time, to the end of his journey.

2

To the mansion of Sir Joseph Bowley,

3

Member of Parliament.

3

The door was opened by a Porter.

4

Such a Porter!

5

Not of Toby's order.

6

Quite another thing.

1

This Porter underwent some hard panting before he could speak;

2
having winded himself by coming incautiously out of his chair.

1
When he had found his voice –

2
which was a long way off and hidden under a load of meat

1
– he said in a fat whisper,

3
Who's it from?

TOBY
Toby told him.

3
You're to take it in, yourself, – pointing to a room at the end of a long passage.

4
Knocking at the room-door, he was told to –

5
Enter!

4
– from within; and so found himself in a spacious library with stately lady and a not very stately gentleman who wrote from her dictation

5
An older, statelier gentleman walked up and down, looking complacently from time to time at his own picture - full length –

6
very full length

5
– hanging over the fireplace.

BOWLEY
What is this? Mr. Fish, will you have the goodness to attend?

FISH

From Alderman Cute, Sir Joseph.

BOWLEY

Is this all? Have you nothing else, Porter?

TOBY

Toby replied in the negative.

BOWLEY

You have no bill or demand upon me, have you? I allow no description of account to be carried into the New Year. So that if death was to - to -

FISH

To cut?

BOWLEY

To sever, sir, the cord of existence - my affairs would be in a state of preparation.

LADY BOWLEY

My dear Sir Joseph! - said the lady, who was a great deal younger than the gentleman. - How shocking!

BOWLEY

Lady Bowley, at this season of the year we should think of - of - ourselves. We should look into our - our accounts. We should feel that every event of so eventful a season is a matter of deep moment between a man and his - his banker.

6

Sir Joseph delivered these words as if he desired that Trotty should be improved by such discourse.

LADY BOWLEY

Upon my word - said his lady, glancing at the letter - I don't think I should subscribe after all. It is so very dear.

BOWLEY

What is dear, my dear?

LADY BOWLEY

That Charity, my love. They only allow two votes for a subscription of five pounds. Really monstrous!

BOWLEY

Lady Bowley, is the luxury of feeling in proportion to the number of votes?

LADY BOWLEY

Ah! You are the Poor Man's Friend, Sir Joseph.

BOWLEY

I AM the Poor Man's Friend – glancing at the poor man present. – As such I may be taunted. As such I have been taunted. But I ask no other title.

TOBY

Bless him for a noble gentleman! – thought Trotty.

BOWLEY

I don't agree with Cute here, for instance – holding out the letter – Filer, either. My friend, the Poor Man, need not be Put Down. My friend, the Poor Man, in my district, is my business. I say “My good fellow, I will treat you paternally.”

TOBY

Toby began to feel more comfortable.

BOWLEY

Your only business, my good fellow – looking at Toby – your only business is with me. I will think for you; I know what is good for you. You are not put here that you should swill and guzzle and associate brutally with food –

TOBY

Toby thought remorsefully of the tripe

BOWLEY

– but that you should feel the Dignity of Labour. Go forth into the cheerful morning air. Live temperately, be respectful, exercise self-denial, bring up your family frugally, pay your rent regularly and you may trust to me to be your Father.

LADY BOWLEY

Nice children, indeed, Sir Joseph! Rheumatisms, and fevers, and crooked legs, and asthmas, and all kinds of horrors!

BOWLEY

None the less am I the Poor Man's Friend and Father. Every New Year's Day, I will drink his health. Once every year, I will address him with the deepest feeling. And when, upheld no more by these and the Dignity of Labour, he sinks into his grave, I will be a Friend and a Father - on the same terms – to his children.

TOBY

Toby was greatly moved.

LADY BOWLEY

And have you a thankful family, Sir Joseph?

BOWLEY

My lady, Ingratitude is known to be the sin of that class. I expect no other return.

TOBY

Ah! Born bad! – thought Toby – Nothing melts us.

BOWLEY

What man can do, I do. They must be Dependent on me. If wicked and designing persons tell them otherwise, and they are guilty of insubordinate conduct and black-hearted ingratitude, which is undoubtedly the case, it is their nature. Yet I am their Friend and Father still.

1

With that great sentiment, he opened the Alderman's letter; and read it.

BOWLEY

My lady, the Alderman reminds me that he has had “the distinguished honour” of meeting me at the house of our mutual friend Deedles, the banker; and he inquires whether it will be agreeable to me to have Will Fern Put Down.

LADY BOWLEY

MOST agreeable! The worst of them! He has committed robbery, I hope?

BOWLEY

Why no. Not quite. Very near. He came up to London, it seems, to “better himself” (that's his story) and, being found asleep in a shed, was taken into custody. The Alderman observes (very properly) that he is determined to Put this sort of thing Down.

LADY BOWLEY

Let it be so! When I introduced pinking and eyelet-holing among the men in the village, so their evenings would not be idle, and had the lines –

(MUSIC CUE 6: Benediction)

ALL

LET US LOVE OUR OCCUPATIONS,
BLESS THE SQUIRE AND HIS RELATIONS,
LIVE UPON OUR DAILY RATIONS,
ALWAYS KNOW OUR PROPER STATIONS.
AMEN.

LADY BOWLEY

– set to music for them to sing, this very Fern touched that hat of his, and said, “I humbly ask pardon, my lady, but I an't a great girl!” Insolence and Ingratitude! Sir Joseph! Make an example of him!

BOWLEY

Mr. Fish –

2

Mr. Fish seized his pen, and wrote from Sir Joseph's dictation.

BOWLEY

Private. “My dear Sir. I thank you for your courtesy in the matter of William Fern. It appears to me that when he comes before you again his committal for some term would be a service to society, and would be a salutary example to that, generally speaking, misguided class to whom examples are greatly needed. I am, sir” and so forth. So, at the close of the year, I close my account with William Fern!

3

Trotty had long ago relapsed into his dejection and was very low-spirited when he stepped forward to take the letter.

BOWLEY

With my compliments and thanks. Stop!

FISH

Stop! – echoed Mr. Fish

BOWLEY

You have heard remarks I have made respecting the solemn time at which we have arrived, and the duty of being prepared. Now, my friend, can you say that you also have made preparations for a New Year?

TOBY

I am afraid, sir, that I am a - a - little behind-hand with the world.

BOWLEY

Behind-hand with the world!

TOBY

There's a matter of ten or twelve shillings owing to Mrs. Chickenstalker.

BOWLEY

To Mrs. Chickenstalker!

TOBY

A shop, sir, in the general line. Also a little money on account of rent. It oughtn't to be owing, I know, but we have been hard put to it, indeed!

4

Sir Joseph gestured with both hands, as if he gave the thing up altogether.

BOWLEY

How a man, an old man, a man grown grey, can look a New Year in the face, with his affairs in this condition; how he can lie down at night, and get up again in the morning, and - There! Take the letter. Take the letter!

TOBY

I heartily wish it was otherwise, sir. We have been tried very hard.

BOWLEY

Take the letter, take the letter!

FISH

Take the letter, take the letter!

5

In the street, poor Trotty pulled his worn old hat down on his head, to hide the grief he felt at entering the New Year so unprepared.

6

He didn't even lift his hat to look up at the Bell tower when he returned.

1

He halted there a moment, from habit:

2

and knew that it was growing dark,

3

and that the steeple rose above him,

4

indistinct and faint,

5

in the murky air.

6

He knew the Chimes would ring soon but he only made the more haste to deliver the Alderman's letter for he dreaded to hear them singing.

(MUSIC CUE 7: Put 'em Down, reprise)

ALL

FRIENDS AND FATHERS, FRIENDS AND FATHERS!
FACTS AND FIGURES, FACTS AND FIGURES!
PUT 'EM DOWN! PUT 'EM DOWN!
NO BUSINESS! NO BUSINESS!
BORN BAD! BORN BAD!

5

Toby, delivering his letter with all speed, set off trotting homeward.

4

But what with his pace,

3

which was at best an awkward one in the street;

4

and what with his hat,

2

which didn't improve it;

4

he trotted against somebody in less than no time,

1

and was sent staggering out into the road.

TOBY

I beg your pardon, I'm sure! – pulling up his hat – I hope I haven't hurt you.

1

Toby was much more likely to be hurt himself:

2

and indeed, he had flown out into the road, like a shuttlecock.

1

But he was in real concern for the other party: and said again,

I hope I haven't hurt you? TOBY

3

The man, a sinewy, country-looking man, with grizzled hair, and a rough chin; stared at him. But, satisfied of his good faith, he answered:

No, friend. You have not hurt me. WILL

Nor the child, I hope? TOBY

3

He glanced at a little girl with the man.

Nor the child. I thank you kindly. WILL

3

The man plodded wearily away, with the child.

4

The traveller stopped and –

3

seeing Trotty standing there yet

4

– seemed undecided whether to return

5

– or to go on.

4

After doing first the one –

5

and then the other –

3

he came back, and Trotty went half-way to meet him.

WILL

Can you tell me where Alderman Cute lives?

TOBY

I'll show you his house with pleasure.

WILL

I was to see him in court to-morrow but I want to clear myself. So, maybe he'll forgive my going to his house to-night.

TOBY

It's impossible that your name's Fern!

WILL

Eh! – in astonishment.

TOBY

Fern! Will Fern!

WILL

That's my name.

TOBY

Why then – seizing him by the arm – for Heaven's sake, don't go to him! He'll Put you Down as sure as ever you were born. Don't go to HIM!

3

Trotty told him what he knew.

4

The subject of his history nodded his head now and then

5

and once or twice threw back his hat,

6

and passed his freckled hand over a brow

3

But he did no more.

WILL

It's true enough in the main. I have gone against his plans; to my misfortun'. Them gentlefolks will search and pry, and have us free from spot or speck – I hope they have character as good – but to be so, their lives must hardly worth the keeping. I never took

WILL Cont.

with that hand - holding it before him - what wasn't my own; and never held it back from work, however hard, or poorly paid. But when work won't maintain me like a human creetur; when my living is so bad that I am Hungry, out of doors and in; when I see my child's life begin that way, go on that way, and end that way, without chance or change; then I say to the gentlefolks "Keep away from me! Let my cottage be. We've nowt to do with one another!" I only want to live like one of the Almighty's creeturs. I can't - I don't - and so there's a pit between me and them that can and do.

TOBY

Trotty knew he spoke the Truth.

WILL

Well! I don't know as this Alderman could hurt me much by sending me to jail; but you see - ! - pointing at the child.

TOBY

She has a beautiful face.

WILL

I've thought so, many times, when my hearth was cold, and cupboard bare. I thought so t'other night, when we were taken like thieves. But they - they shouldn't be hard upon the little ones, should they, Lilian? That's hardly fair upon a man!

TOBY

Toby, to divert the current of his thoughts, inquired if his wife were living.

WILL

I never had one. She's my brother's orphan. Nine year old. They'd have taken her, at the Union Workhouse, but I took her instead, and she's lived wi' me. Her mother's friend is here in London but it's a large place. Never mind, Lilly!

6

Meeting the child's eyes with a smile, he shook Toby by the hand.

WILL

I'm thankful to you. I'll take your advice, and keep clear of this -

TOBY

Justice.

WILL

Ah! That's the word. Justice. And to-morrow will try whether there's better fortun' to be met with. Good night. A Happy New Year!

TOBY

Stay! – catching at his hand – I'm a poor man, but I can give you lodging for one night and never miss it. Come home with me! Tell me if I go too quick for you. I'm very fast! Here we are and here we go! Round this first turning, and past the pump, and sharp off up the passage to the left, opposite the public-house. Here we are and here we go! Mind the kidney pieman at the corner! Here we are and here we go! Down the Mews here, Uncle Will, and stop at the black door, with “T. Veck, Ticket Porter,” wrote upon a board; and here we are and here we go, and here we are indeed, my precious. Meg, surprise for you!

1

With which words Trotty, in a breathless state, set the child down before his daughter in the middle of the floor.

2

The little visitor looked once at Meg; and ran into her arms.

TOBY

Here we are and here we go! Here, Uncle Will, here's a fire, you know! Why don't you come to the fire? Here we are and here we go! Meg, where's the kettle? Here it is and here it goes, and it'll bile in no time!

3

Meg knelt before the child and dried her wet feet on a cloth.

4

She laughed at Trotty too, moving at his trot from one part of the room to another - so that Trotty could have blessed her where she kneeled –

5

for when they had entered, she was sitting by the fire in tears.

MEG

Why, father! You're crazy to-night, I think. I don't know what the Bells would say to that. Poor little feet. How cold they are!

LITTLE LILIAN

Oh, they're warmer now! – exclaimed the child

MEG

We haven't rubbed 'em half enough. And we'll brush the damp hair; and bring some colour to the poor face and then, we'll be so happy - !

6

The child clasped her round the neck and said

LITTLE LILIAN

Oh Meg! oh dear Meg!

MEG

Why, father!

TOBY

Here I am and here I go, my dear!

MEG

Good Gracious me! He's crazy! He's put the dear child's bonnet on the kettle, and hung the lid behind the door!

TOBY

It's a curious circumstance, but well known to my friends, that I never care, myself, for rashers of bacon, nor for tea. I like to see other people enjoy 'em, but to me, as food, they're disagreeable.

1

Yet Trotty sniffed the savour of the hissing bacon

2

- ah! -

1

as if he liked it; and when he poured the boiling water in the tea-pot, he suffered the fragrant steam to curl about his nose.

3

And he neither ate nor drank, except a morsel for form's sake, which he appeared to relish, but declared was perfectly uninteresting to him.

2

No. Trotty's occupation was to see Will Fern and Lilian eat and drink;

MEG

– and so was Meg's. Meg smiled at Trotty –

TOBY

Trotty laughed at Meg.

MEG

Meg made believe to clap her hands, applauding Trotty –

TOBY

Trotty conveyed, in dumb-show, unintelligible narratives of how and when and where he had found their visitors, to Meg;

ALL

and they were happy. Very happy.

TOBY

Although – as he watched Meg's face – the match is broken off, I see!

2

When his guests had finished their feast –

TOBY

Now, I'll tell you what. The little one, she sleeps with Meg.

LITTLE LILIAN

With good Meg! With Meg.

TOBY

That's right. And I shouldn't wonder if she would kiss Meg's father, won't she? I'm Meg's father, by the by.

3

The child, having kissed him, fell back upon Meg again.

TOBY

She's as sensible as Solomon. Here we come and here we - no, we don't - I don't mean that - I - what was I saying, Meg, my precious?

MEG

Meg looked towards their guest.

TOBY

To be sure! Will Fern, you come along with me. You're broken down for want of rest. Get her to bed, Meg. Now, Will, it's not much of a place: only a loft; but, there's plenty of sweet hay up there, belonging to the stables; and it's as clean as hands, and Meg, can make it. Cheer up! A new heart for a New Year, always!

6

He took his newspaper from his pocket, and began to read, his thoughts directed into the channel the day's events had so marked out and shaped.

1

The two wanderers had set him on another, happier course of thinking for a time; but reading of the crimes and violences of the Poor People, he relapsed.

2

He came to an account of a woman who had laid her desperate hands not only on her own life but that of her young child.

TOBY

Unnatural and cruel! Unnatural and cruel! Born bad, with no business on the earth. It's too true, too just, too full of proof. Born Bad!

3

The Chimes took up the words suddenly - burst out so loud, and clear, and sonorous - that the Bells seemed to strike him in his chair.

(MUSIC CUE 8: Toby Veck)

ALL

TOBY VECK, TOBY VECK! WAITING FOR YOU, TOBY!
TOBY VECK, TOBY VECK! WAITING FOR YOU, TOBY!

COME AND SEE US, COME AND SEE US!
DRAG HIM TO US, DRAG HIM TO US!
HAUNT AND HUNT HIM, HAUNT AND HUNT HIM!
BREAK HIS SLUMBERS, BREAK HIS SLUMBERS!

TOBY VECK, TOBY VECK! DOOR WIDE OPEN, TOBY!
TOBY VECK, TOBY VECK! DOOR WIDE OPEN, TOBY!

COME AND SEE US, COME AND SEE US!
DRAG HIM TO US, DRAG HIM TO US!
HAUNT AND HUNT HIM, HAUNT AND HUNT HIM!
BREAK HIS SLUMBERS, BREAK HIS SLUMBERS!

TOBY VECK! TOBY VECK!
TOBY! TOBY! TOBY! TOBY!
TOBY VECK!

TOBY

Meg! Do you hear anything?

MEG

I hear the Bells, father. They're very loud to-night.

TOBY

Meg – whispered Trotty – listen to the Bells!

4

She listened but she didn't understand.

TOBY

If the tower-door is open, what does it mean? If it's shut, that's enough.

1

He was pretty certain that he should find it shut and locked

2

for he seen it open no more than three times in all.

4

What was his astonishment then,

5

coming bare-headed to the church

6

and putting his hand into the dark nook,

1

that he found the door standing ajar!

TOBY

What have I to fear? It's a church!

2

So he went in.

3

It was very dark.

4

And very quiet.

5

Entering, he stumbled and struck the door with his foot

6

and it closed with a

BANG! ALL

1
and he couldn't open it again.

2
Trotty groped his way on in the dark.

3
Up

4
up

5
up

6
and round

1
and round

2
and up, up, up;

3
higher, higher, higher

ALL

UP!

4
At length, the dull, stifling atmosphere began to freshen:

5
presently the wind blew so strong, that he could hardly keep his legs.

1
The Bells themselves were higher.

3
Up, up, up!

4
By ladders, now.

5
And climb and clamber

6
up, up, up

1
higher, higher

ALL
HIGHER UP!

2
Ascending through the floor, he came into the presence of the Bells.

3
A heavy sense of dread fell instantly upon him

4
His head went round and round.

5
Giddy, out of breath, and frightened, Toby sank down in a swoon.

(MUSIC CUE 9: Toby Veck, reprise)

END OF ACT ONE

THE CHIMES
Act Two
The Third Quarter.

(MUSIC CUE 10: The Spirit of the Bells)

1
WHEN AND HOW THE NIGHT-BLACK STEEPLE CHANGED TO SHINING LIGHT;

2
WHEN AND HOW THE LONELY TOWER FILLED WITH FORMS IN FLIGHT;

3
WHEN AND HOW THE WHISPERED “HAUNT HIM”

4
BREATHING THROUGH HIS SWOON,

3
CHANGED TO SHOUTED “BREAK HIS SLUMBERS”,

5
CHANGED TO MOURNFUL TUNE,

6
THERE ARE NO MEANS TO TELL.

1
WHEN AND HOW HE CEASED TO DREAM CONFUSED THOUGHTS OF THE
DAY

2
WHEN AND HOW HIS WAKENED SENSES FILLED HIM WITH DISMAY

3
WHEN AND HOW HIS EYES SHOWED PICTURES,

4
WHIRLING THROUGH HIS MIND,

3
IMAGES LIKE HAUNTED VISIONS,

4
WAKING THOUGHTS WON’T FIND,

5

THERE IS NO WAY TO KNOW.

ALL

HE SAW THE TOWER, SWARMING WITH PHANTOMS
ELF-LIKE CREATURES OF THE BELLS.
LEAPING AND FLYING, DROPPING AND FALLING,
POURING UNCEASING FROM THE BELLS.

WOMEN

HE SAW THEM DANCE, AND HEARD THEM SING

MEN

HE SAW THEM WEEP, AND HEARD THEM HOWL.

ALL

ON THE GROUND AND IN THE AIR,
CLIMBING ROPES OR PEERING, PEEPING THROUGH THE WALLS.

SEVERALLY

UGLY, HANDSOME, CRIPPLED, YOUNG AND OLD
KIND AND CRUEL, MERRY, SHY OR BOLD

ALL

RIDING OUTWARD THROUGH THE WORLD
SOOTHING DREAMS AND YELLING NAMES
PLAYING MUSIC; PLAYING TRICKS;
FLASHING FACES ON THE TROUBLED, SLEEPING WORLD.

SEVERALLY

UGLY, HANDSOME, CRIPPLED, YOUNG AND OLD
KIND AND CRUEL, MERRY, SHY OR BOLD

TOBY

Bewildered by the uproar of the bells, Trotty turned his white face here and there.

ALL

BLASTED AIR - COLD AND SHRILL! -
CAME MOANING THROUGH THE TOWER.
THE GREAT CHIMES STOPPED. THE SWARM COLLAPSED
AND MELTED INTO AIR.

WOMEN
FAINTING, FALLING, FADING OUT,

MEN
THEY GRASPED THE EMPTY AIR,

WOMEN
TWISTING, SPINNING AS THEY DIED

MEN
AT LAST THEY DISAPPEARED,
AND AS THEY DIED AWAY,

WOMEN
AS THEY DIED AWAY,

ALL
THE GREAT BELL SPOKE.

BELL 1
(FX) What visitor is this!

TOBY
I thought the Chimes called my name! They have cheered me often.

BELL 1
(FX) And you have thanked them?

TOBY
A thousand times!

BELL 1
(FX) How?

TOBY
I am a poor man and could only thank them in words.

BELL 1
(FX) Have you never done us wrong in words?

TOBY
No!

BELL 1

(FX) Never done us foul, and false, and wicked wrong, in words?

TOBY

Nev – ! But he stopped, and was confused.

BELL 1

(FX) The voice of Time cries to man, Advance! Time is for his greater worth, his greater happiness, his better life. Seek to turn Time back, or stay him on his course and Time will strike the meddler dead!

TOBY

It was quite by accident if I did!

BELL 1

(FX) Who puts into the mouth of Time lamentation for days which have passed - who does this, does wrong. And you have done wrong to us, the Chimes.

TOBY

If you knew how often you have kept me company; how often you have cheered me, you won't bear malice for a hasty word!

BELL 1

(FX) Who hears in us, the Chimes, one note disdainning hope or the joy of the many-sorrowed throng does us wrong.

TOBY

Oh, forgive me!

BELL 1

(FX) Who hears in us an echo of the dull vermin of the earth: the Putters Down, the Crushers and the Breakers, who does so, does us wrong!

TOBY

Not meaning it! Not meaning it!

BELL 1

(FX) Who shuts his mind upon his kind; abandons them as vile, does wrong to Heaven, man, time and eternity. And you have done that wrong!

(MUSIC CUE 11: Listen!)

TOBY

Spare me! for Mercy's sake!

1, 2

LISTEN! – SAID THE BELL.

3,4

LISTEN! – CRIED THE SHADOWS.

1, 2

LISTEN! – SAID THE BELL.

5,6

LISTEN! –CRIED A CHILD'S PLEADING VOICE.

1

The organ sounded in the church below, swelling, expanding more and more, it rose

2

up

3

up

4

up

5

up

6

higher, higher, higher

ALL

up!

1

until the tower walls could not contain it, and it soared into the sky.

1, 2

LISTEN! – SAID THE BELL.

3,4

LISTEN! – CRIED THE SHADOWS.

1, 2

LISTEN! – SAID THE BELL.

5,6

LISTEN! – CRIED THE CHILD'S PLEADING VOICE.

GROUP

AH! AH! AH! Etc.

1

A solemn strain of blended voices, rose into the tower.

2

- a Dirge -

4

and Trotty heard his child among the singers.

SOLO

AH! AH! AH! Etc.

TOBY

She is dead! Meg is dead! Her Spirit calls to me. I hear it!

BELL 1

(FX) She lives, but her Spirit bewails dead hopes and imaginings. Follow her! To desperation!

ALL

FOLLOW HER!

BELL 1

(FX) The Spirit of the Chimes is your companion. Go! It stands behind you!

TOBY

Trotty turned, and saw the child Will Fern had carried in the street!

ALL

SHOW HIM WHAT HE HAS BECOME!

6

The tower opened and he beheld himself, lying at the bottom, crushed.

TOBY

Dead!

ALL

DEAD!

TOBY

I missed my step and fell down - a year ago?

ALL

NINE YEARS AGO!

1

As they answered, where their figures had been, there the Bells were.

2

And they rung. Vast multitudes of phantoms sprung into existence as they had before; faded as the Chimes stopped; dwindled into nothing.

(END OF MUSIC CUE 11)

4

In a poor, mean room; working at embroidery as he had often seen before her; Meg was presented to his view. He held his trembling breath.

MEG

Changed. The light of the clear eye, dimmed. The bloom, faded from the cheek.

6

She looked up from her work, at a companion. The old man recognised the child's expression lingering still – the eyes, now turned inquiringly on Meg.

LILY

Meg, why do you look at me so often?

MEG

Are my looks so altered, that they frighten you?

LILY

Nay, dear! But why not smile, when you look at me?

MEG

I do so. Do I not?

LILY

Now you do but not when you think I don't see you. You were once so cheerful.

MEG

Am I not now? Do I make our weary life more weary to you, Lilian?

LILY

You are the only thing that made me care to live. So many long nights of hopeless, endless work – not to live grandly, but to earn bare bread; to scrape together enough to toil upon, and want upon! Oh Meg! How can the world bear to look upon such lives!

MEG

Lilly! Why, Lilly! You! So pretty and so young!

LILY

That is the worst of all! Strike me old, Meg! Wither me, and shrivel me, and free me from the thoughts that tempt me in my youth!

TOBY

Trotty turned to look upon his guide. But the Spirit of the child was gone.

6

Nor did he remain, for Sir Joseph Bowley, Friend of the Poor, held a great festival at Bowley Hall, in honour of Lady Bowley whose natal day was New Year's Day.

5

Mr. Filer was there.

4

The great Alderman Cute was there

1

Many guests were there.

TOBY

Trotty's ghost was there, poor phantom, looking for its guide.

2

There was to be a great dinner in the Great Hall.

3

And Sir Joseph Bowley, Friend and Father of the Poor, was to make his great speech.

2

Certain plum-puddings were eaten by his Friends and Children

3

– in another Hall –

2

– first; and –

1

at a given signal

2

– Friends and Children flocked in among their Friends and Fathers, to hear the speech, with not one manly eye unmoistened.

1

Even more than this, Sir Joseph Bowley, Baronet and Member of Parliament, was to play a match at skittles – with his tenants!

4

Which quite reminds me of the days of stout, bluff, old King Hal. Ah! Fine character!

5

Very – said Mr. Filer – For marrying women and murdering 'em. Considerably more than the average number of wives, by the bye.

4

You'll marry the beautiful ladies, and not murder 'em, eh? – this to the heir of Bowley, aged twelve – He'll be in Parliament before we have time to look about us!

TOBY

Thought Trotty: Oh, the difference of shoes and stockings! Richard, where is he? I can't find Richard! Where is Richard?

2

The skittle-playing came off with immense success.

3

Sir Joseph knocked the pins about quite skilfully.

2

Young Master Bowley took an innings as well,

1

and everybody said that when a Baronet and the Son of a Baronet played at skittles, the country was coming round, as fast as it could come.

2

At its proper time, the Banquet was served up.

3

The sight was gay in the extreme

4

the ladies were very handsome

5

the visitors delighted, cheerful, and good-tempered.

6

When the doors were opened, the people flocked in, in their rustic dresses,

TOBY

but Trotty only murmured – Where is Richard! I can't see Richard!

1

There were some speeches made

2

and Lady Bowley's health was proposed –

ALL

Hear! Hear!

3

and Sir Joseph Bowley made his great speech, showing that he was

BOWLEY

the born Friend and Father

3

and so forth; and had given as a Toast,

BOWLEY
his Friends and Children, and the Dignity of Labour!

1
when a slight disturbance at the bottom of the Hall attracted Toby's notice.

2
After some

3
confusion

4
noise

5
and opposition

6
one man stood forward by himself.

TOBY
Not Richard. No. Trotty knew Will Fern as soon as he stepped forth.

BOWLEY
What is this! This man is a criminal from prison! Mr. Fish, sir – !

WILL
My Lady, you was born on New Year. Get me a minute's leave to speak.

3
She made some intercession for him.

WILL
Gentlefolks! You've drunk the Labourer. Look at me!

BOWLEY
Just come from jail.

WILL
Not for the first time, nor the second, nor the third, nor the fourth.

FILER

Four times is over the average. He ought to be ashamed of himself.

WILL

You see me at the worst but let me speak for these poor people.

BOWLEY

There's not a man here who would have him for a spokesman.

WILL

What I say is none the less true. You see the cottage over yonder? Well, I lived there. How hard, how bitter hard I lived there, I won't say. 'Tis hard to grow up decent, common decent, in such a place. Yet I grewed up a man and not a brute – or I was then. As I am now, there's nothing can be said.

BOWLEY

He is! Let him be an example to my Friends here.

WILL

Now, you great Magistrates see a man with discontent on his face, and you says "He's suspicious. Watch that fellow!" and from that hour, whatever Will Fern does, or doesn't - all one - it goes against him.

BOWLEY

Sir Joseph stuck his thumbs in his waistcoat-pockets, and leaned back in his chair, and smiled – Of course! I told you so. The common cry!

WILL

I tries to live elsewhere and I'm a vagabond. To jail with him! I comes back here and breaks a branch or two. To jail with him! One of your game-keepers sees me in broad day, near my own garden. To jail with him! I has a angry word with him, when I'm free again. To jail with him! I cuts a stick. To jail with him! I eats a rotten apple or a turnip. To jail with him! I begs a trifle on the road. To jail with him! Anybody finds me anywhere, a-doing anything – to jail with him, jail's the only home he's got.

BOWLEY

A very good home too!

WILL

Who can give me back my liberty or my good name? But, there's others here. Give 'em, in mercy, better homes when they're in their cradles; better food when they're a-working for their lives; kinder laws when they're a-going wrong; and don't set jail, jail, jail, afore 'em, every turn.

TOBY

The room and all the company vanished from Trotty's sight. His daughter was again before him, but in a poorer, meaner garret than before; and with no Lilian by her side.

1

The frame at which she had worked, was covered up upon a shelf.

2

The chair in which Lilian had sat was turned against the wall.

3

A history was written in these little things, and in Meg's grief-worn face.

MEG

Meg strained her eyes to work and when the night closed in, worked on.

5

A great part of the evening had worn away, when a man came to her door.

6

A slouching, moody, drunken sloven

1

wasted by intemperance and vice

2

and with matted hair and unshorn beard

3

Trotty had his wish. He saw Richard.

RICHARD

Still at work, Margaret? You work late.

MEG

I generally do.

RICHARD

And early?

MEG

And early.

RICHARD

So she said. She said you never owned that you tired. Not all the time you lived together. But I told you that, the last time I came.

MEG

You did, and made me a solemn promise to tell me nothing more.

RICHARD

How can I help it, Margaret? She has been to me again!

MEG

Again!

RICHARD

Twenty times again. Margaret, she haunts me. She comes behind me in the street. I hear her foot upon the ashes when I'm at my work. She brings it where I live: she sends it in letters; she taps at the window and lays it on the sill. "For Heaven's love, give her this!" What CAN I do? Look at it!

MEG

When she comes again, tell her, Richard, that I love her, I bless her, and pray for her. But, that I cannot look upon it!

RICHARD

I told her so, as plain as words could speak. I've taken this gift back a dozen times. But when she stood before me, face to face, what could I do?

MEG

You saw her! O, Lilian, my sweet girl!

RICHARD

"How does she look, Richard? Does she speak of me? Is she thinner? Richard, you loved her once. Others stepped between you but you did love her!" I suppose I did. That's neither here nor there – "Richard, tell her that you have seen me; tell her anything; tell her everything, and take this back, and she will not refuse it again." – she will not refuse it again. You won't take it, Margaret?

MEG

She shook her head.

RICHARD

Good night, Margaret.

MEG
Good night!

3
In any mood, grief or torture of mind or body, Meg's work must be done.

MEG
She sat down to her task, and plied it.

5
Night

6
midnight.

MEG
Still she worked.

2
She had a meagre fire, the night being very cold.

3
The Chimes rang half-past twelve while she worked and when they ceased

MEG
she heard a gentle knocking at the door.

5
Before she could so much as wonder who was there, it opened.

MEG
Lilian!

LILY
She was swift, and fell upon her knees clinging to Meg's dress.

MEG
Up, dear! Up! Lilian! My own dearest!

LILY
Never more, Meg; never more! Here it will be, close to you!

MEG

Sweet Lilian! Child of my heart!

LILY

Never more, Meg. Never more! On my knees before you, let me die.

MEG

We will live together, work together, hope together, die together!

LILY

Let it be here. Let me see the last of your dear face upon my knees! Forgive me, Meg!
Forgive me! I know you do, I see you do, but say so!

MEG

But the girl did not hear the words Meg spoke.

TOBY

As she died, the Spirit of the child returning, innocent and radiant, touched the old man
with its hand, and beckoned him away.

(MUSIC CUE 12: God Rest Ye Merry)

END OF THE THIRD QUARTER

THE CHIMES
Act Two
The Fourth Quarter.

(MUSIC CUE 12a: When and How)

ALL

BLACK ARE THE BROODING CLOUDS THAT TROUBLE THE DEEP WATERS
WHEN FIRST THE SEA OF THOUGHT AT ONCE GIVES UP ITS DEAD.

MONSTERS UNCOUTH AND WILD, ARISE, ARE RESURRECTED:
PARTS AND SHAPES OF DIFFERENT THINGS ARE JOINED AND MIXED BY
CHANCE;

WHEN, AND HOW, BY WHAT DEGREES EACH SEPARATES FROM EACH
WHEN EVERY SENSE AND OBJECT OF THE MIND RESUMES ITS FORM –

THERE IS NO MAN –
THERE IS NO MAN –
THERE IS NO MAN CAN TELL.

1

Years passed. Trotty, with the Spirit of the child, stood looking on at mortal company.

2

Fat company, rosy-cheeked company, comfortable company.

3

They were but two, but they were red enough for ten.

4

This cosy couple sat looking at the glowing sparks dropping into the grate.

5

It gleamed not only in the little room, but in the little shop beyond.

6

A little shop, quite crammed and choked with the abundance of its stock;

1

a perfectly voracious little shop

2

Cheese, butter,

firewood, soap,	3
pickles, matches,	4
bacon, beer,	5
peg-tops, sweetmeats,	6
cold ham,	1
birch brooms,	2
salt,	3
blacking,	4
vinegar,	5
lard,	6
bread,	1
eggs,	2
and pencils!	3

TOBY

Trotty recognised Mrs. Chickenstalker, always inclined to corpulence. The second person was the former porter of Sir Joseph Bowley. It was a sorrow to Trotty to think he no longer had even a negative place in Mrs. Chickenstalker's ledger.

TUGBY

What sort of a night is it, Anne? – stretching out his legs before the fire – Here I am if it's bad, and I don't want to go out if it's good.

MRS. CHICKENSTALKER

Blowing and sleeting hard. Dark. And very cold.

TUGBY

I'm glad we had muffins. It's a night meant for muffins – and he laughed.

MRS. CHICKENSTALKER

You're in spirits, Tugby, my dear.

TUGBY

No. Not particular. I'm a little elevated. The muffins came so pat!

3

And he chuckled until he was black in the face.

MRS. CHICKENSTALKER

Good gracious, goodness, lord-a-mercy bless and save the man! What's he doing? – thumping him violently on the back.

TUGBY

Blowing, sleeting, dark and very cold, is it, my dear?

MRS. CHICKENSTALKER

Hard weather indeed.

TUGBY

Years are like that. Some of 'em die hard; some of 'em die easy. This one is making a fight for it. There's a customer, my love!

MRS. CHICKENSTALKER

Now then! What's wanted? Oh! I didn't know it was you, sir.

4

A gentleman in black, who, with his hat on one side, and hands in his pockets, sat down astride on the table-beer barrel.

MAN

This is a bad business up-stairs, Mrs. Tugby. The man can't live.

TUGBY

Not the back-attic can't!

MAN

The back-attic, Mr. Tugby, is coming down-stairs fast.

TUGBY

Tugby stood in silent consternation for some time.

MAN

The back-attic, Mr. Tugby, is Going.

TUGBY

Then he must Go before he's Gone.

MAN

I don't think you can move him. He can't live long.

TUGBY

He's going to die upon the premises. Going to die in our house!

MRS. CHICKENSTALKER

And where should he have died, Tugby?

TUGBY

In the workhouse. What are workhouses made for?

MRS. CHICKENSTALKER

I won't have it, Tugby. He was a handsome, steady, manly youth; she, the sweetest girl eyes ever saw; her father, he fell from the steeple, but he was the hardest-working, childest-hearted man that ever drew breath; and when I turn them out of house and home, may angels turn me out of Heaven!

TOBY

And Trotty said – Bless her! Bless her!

MAN

Now, how did she come to marry the man?

MRS. CHICKENSTALKER

That is not the least cruel part of the story. They were to have been married on a New Year's Day, but a gentlemen told him that he'd soon repent it and that people like them had no business to be married. And told her he would desert her and her children, and

that it was wicked for people like them to be man and wife and their trust was broken, and so was the match. But never did a woman grieve more when he went wrong.

MAN

He went wrong, did he?

MRS. CHICKENSTALKER

Well, sir, he took to drinking. He lost his looks, his health, his strength: everything!

MAN

He didn't lose everything, Mrs. Tugby, he gained a wife. How?

MRS. CHICKENSTALKER

I'm coming to it, sir. This went on, he sinking; she enduring, poor thing. At last, no one would employ or notice him; and doors were shut upon him, go where he would.

MAN

Well?

MRS. CHICKENSTALKER

Well, sir, he went to her, and kneeled to her and made a prayer to her to save him.

MAN

And she?

MRS. CHICKENSTALKER

She came to me to ask about living here. "I will make the trial," she said, "in the hope of saving him." And she said Lillian had trusted him, and so they were married.

MAN

I suppose he used her ill, after they were married? – stretching himself.

MRS. CHICKENSTALKER

I don't think he did. His illness came. How they have lived, I hardly know!

TUGBY

I know. Like Fighting Cocks! At our expense!

2

He was interrupted by a cry from the upper story of the house.

MAN

I think you needn't trouble to remove him. He has spared you that.

3

Saying so, he ran up-stairs

MRS. CHICKENSTALKER

followed by Mrs. Tugby

TUGBY

while Mr. Tugby panted, more than commonly short-winded by the weight of the till, in which there had been an inconvenient quantity of copper.

TOBY

Trotty, with the child beside him, floated up the staircase like mere air.

3

It was over.

(MUSIC CUE 13: Follow!)

1, 2

FOLLOW! – SAID THE BELL.

3,4

FOLLOW! – CRIED THE SHADOWS.

1, 2

FOLLOW! – SAID THE BELL.

5,6

FOLLOW! – SAID THE CHILD’S PLEADING VOICE.

TOBY

He hovered, saw her child: so plaintive in its wail. He watched as she held it in her arms; and cried – She loves it! She loves it!

1

He saw day come and night; day, night; the time go by; he heard the child moan, saw it tire her out but his comfort was, she loved it!

6

One night her door was softly opened, and a man looked in.

MEG

William Fern!

WILL

For the last time, Margaret. For the last time.

MEG

What have you done?

WILL

Let me hold the child. I held the same face when Lilian's mother died and left her.

MEG

Lilian's mother! – Something fierce and terrible began to mingle with her love.

TOBY

Her old father quailed.

1, 2

LEARN IT! – SAID THE BELL.

3,4

LEARN IT! – CRIED THE SHADOWS.

1, 2

LEARN IT! – SAID THE BELL.

ALL

LEARN IT FROM ONE DEAREST TO YOUR HEART!

WILL

Forget me from this hour, and try to think the end of me was here.

MEG

What have you done?

WILL

There'll be a Fire to-night. There'll be Fires to light the distant sky red. East, West, North, and South, they'll be blazing. When you see that Hell, remember what a Hell was lighted up inside of me and others like me, and see its flames reflected in the clouds. Good bye!

3

She sat stupefied, until her infant roused her to hunger, cold, and darkness.

4

She paced the room with it the livelong night, hushing, soothing it.

5

Why was her step so quick, her eye so wild, her love so fierce and terrible?

TOBY

But, it is Love. It is Love. She'll never cease to love it!

6

She dressed the child next morning. It was the last day of the Old Year.

1

She tried once more tried to find some means of life.

2

She tried till night –

3

– and never broke her fast.

4

She tried in vain.

5

She mingled with an abject crowd

6

who tarried in the snow to receive the public charity –

1

– whose officer would call them in, and question them, and say to this one,

2

Go to such a place

6

to that one

3

Come next week;

6
to pass another here and there

5
from hand to hand

4
from house to house

6
until he wearied and lay down to die.

3
Here, too, she failed.

4
It was night

5
bleak

6
dark

1
She was faint and giddy, saw no one standing in the doorway of her home.

TUGBY
O! – he said softly. – You have come back?

MEG
She looked at the child, and shook her head.

TUGBY
Haven't you lived here long enough without paying rent? Haven't you, without any money, been a pretty constant customer at this shop?

MEG
She repeated the same mute appeal.

TUGBY
Suppose you find another lodging. Come! Don't you think you could manage it?

MEG

She said in a low voice – To-morrow.

TUGBY

I'm speaking softly to avoid a quarrel; I won't carry quarrels and disturbances into a New Year. But if you don't go away, I'll speak loud. Go along!

MEG

Like Lilian! To be like Lilian!

1, 2

FOLLOW! – SAID THE BELL.

3,4

FOLLOW! – CRIED THE SHADOWS.

1, 2

FOLLOW! – SAID THE BELL.

5,6

FOLLOW! – CRIED A CHILD'S PLEADING VOICE.

ALL

FOLLOW HER! TO DESPERATION!

TOBY

She loves the child! She loves it still!

ALL

FOLLOW HER! TO DESPERATION!

TOBY

Have mercy on her!

ALL

LEARN IT FROM ONE DEAREST TO YOUR HEART!

3

She hurried on; the same light in her eyes, the same words in her mouth,

MEG

Like Lilian! To be like Lilian!

ALL AT ONCE SHE STOPPED. ALL

The rolling River 1

Swift and dim 2

Where Winter Night 3

Sat brooding 4

Like the last dark thoughts 5

Of those who sought 6

A refuge there. 1

The River! ALL

Her desperate footsteps hurried with the swiftness of its rapid waters. 2

He tried to touch her TOBY

but, the wild distempered form, 3

the fierce and terrible love, 4

the desperation that had left all human hold behind, 5

TOBY

swept by him like the wind.

MEG

She paused a moment on the brink, before the dreadful plunge.

TOBY

In a shriek, he addressed the figures in the Bells – I have learnt it! From the creature dearest to my heart!

6

He could wind his fingers in her dress; could hold it!

TOBY

I have learnt it! Pity my wickedness, and ignorance, and save her.

ALL

THE VOICES STILL WERE SILENT.

TOBY

Heaven meant her to be good. There is no mother on the earth who might not come to this, if such a life had gone before. Have mercy on my child, who, even now, means mercy to her own, and dies herself to save it!

1

She was in his arms.

2

He held her now.

3

His strength was like a giant's.

TOBY

I see the Spirit of the Chimes! I know there is a Sea of Time yet to rise, in which all who wrong us or oppress us will be swept away. I know that we must trust and hope, and doubt not ourselves, or the good in others. O Spirits, I am grateful!

4

He might have said more; but, the Bells,

5
the old familiar Bells,
6
the Chimes began to ring the joy-peals for a New Year.
1
so lustily
2
so merrily
3
so happily
4
so gaily

TOBY
that he leapt upon his feet, and broke the spell that bound him.

(END OF MUSIC CUE 13; END OF VIDEO CUE)

MEG
Whatever you do, father, don't eat tripe again for dinner; how you HAVE been going on!

5
She was working with her needle, at the little table by the fire; dressing her simple gown
with ribbons for her wedding.

6
So quietly happy,
1
so blooming and youthful,
2
so full of beautiful promise,

TOBY
he uttered a great cry as at an Angel in his house; then flew to clasp her in his arms.

3

But, he caught his feet in the newspaper and someone rushed between them.

RICHARD

No! Not even you. The first kiss in the New Year is mine. I have been waiting outside the house to hear the Bells! A happy life, my darling wife!

1

You never in all your life saw anything like Trotty after this!

2

He sat down in his chair and beat his knees and cried;

3

he sat down in his chair and beat his knees and laughed;

4

he sat down in his chair and beat his knees and laughed and cried together;

5

he got out of his chair and hugged Meg;

6

he got out of his chair and hugged Richard;

1

he got out of his chair and hugged them both at once;

TOBY

he was constantly sitting down and getting out, and never stopping for a single moment –
And to-morrow's your wedding- day, my pet! Your real, happy wedding-day!

(MUSIC CUE 14: The Bells)

RICHARD

To-day! The Chimes are ringing in the New Year. Hear them!

2

They WERE ringing! Bless their sturdy hearts, they WERE ringing!

3

Great Bells as they were; melodious, deep-mouthed, noble Bells;

4
cast in no common metal;

5
made by no common founder;

6
when had they ever chimed like that, before!

TOBY
But, to-day, my pet. You and Richard had some words to-day.

MEG
Because he's such a bad fellow, father. He'd have made no more of speaking out and Putting Down that great Alderman than he would have of –

RICHARD
Kissing Meg – suggested Richard. Doing it too!

MEG
But I wouldn't let him, father. Where would have been the use!

TOBY
Richard, my boy! You was turned up Trumps when you was born and Trumps you must be till you die! But, you were crying by the fire to-night, when I came home!

MEG
I was only thinking that, when I'm married, you might miss me, and be lonely.

TOBY
Why, here she is! Here's little Lilian! Ha ha ha! Here we are and here we go! O here we are and here we go! And Uncle Will too! O, Will, the vision that I've had to-night! O, Will, the obligations that you've laid me under, my good friend!

2
Before Will Fern could make the least reply, a band of music burst into the room, attended by a lot of neighbours, screaming

3
A Happy New Year, Meg!

4
A Happy Wedding!

5

Many of em!

2

and other fragmentary good wishes of that sort.

6

The Drum stepped forward – Trotty Veck, my boy! Your daughter is going to be married to-morrow. There an't a soul that don't wish you both all the happiness the New Year can bring. We are here to play it in and dance it in, accordingly.

6

The Drum was rather drunk, by-the-bye; but, never mind.

ALL

This was received with a general shout.

TOBY

What a happiness it is, I'm sure.

1

They were ready for a dance in half a second

MEG

(Meg and Richard at the top);

6

and the Drum was on the very brink of feathering away with all his power;

1

when a good-humoured woman of some fifty years, or thereabouts, came running in

TOBY

It's Mrs. Chickenstalker! – And sat down and beat his knees again.

MRS. CHICKENSTALKER

Married, and not tell me, Meg! Never! Here I am; and as it's New Year's Eve, too, I had a little flip made, and brought it with me.

TOBY

Mrs. Tugby! – said Trotty, saluting her soundly – I should say, Chickenstalker! Bless your heart and soul! A Happy New Year, and many of 'em! Mrs. Tugby – saluting her again – I should say, Chickenstalker, this is William Fern and Lilian.

MRS. CHICKENSTALKER

Not Lilian Fern whose mother died in Dorsetshire!

1

Mrs. Chickenstalker took him by the hands; saluted Trotty on his cheek again of her own free will; and took the child to her capacious breast.

TOBY

Will Fern! Not the friend you was hoping to find?

WILL

Ay! And like to prove a'most as good a friend as one I already found.

TOBY

O! Let us have music!

(MUSIC CUE 15: Trotty's Dance)

6

While the Chimes were yet in lusty operation out of doors

TOBY

Trotty (Meg and Richard demoted to second couple) led off Mrs. Chickenstalker in a new dance founded on his own peculiar trot.

(The Company dance)

1

Had Trotty dreamed?

2

Or, are his joys and sorrows,

3

and the actors in them,

2

but a dream;

3

himself a dream;

4
the teller of this tale a dreamer,

5
waking but now?

6
If it be so, bear in mind from whence these shadows come; and

1
– as wide or as limited as your sphere may be –

6
endeavour to correct, improve, and soften them.

TOBY
So may the New Year be a happy one to you,
So may each year be happier than the last,

ALL
and not the meanest of our brethren debarred their rightful share.

(The COMPANY bow; MUSIC CUE 15 ends)

(Music Cue 16: Finale Ultimo)

THE STREETS WERE FULL OF MOTION,
AND THE SHOPS WERE BRIGHTLY GAY.

WHAT WELCOMES AND REJOICINGS
WAITED FOR THE NEW YEAR DAY.

THE NEW YEAR, THE NEW YEAR.
EVERYWHERE THE NEW YEAR!

THE NEW YEAR, THE NEW YEAR.
EVERYWHERE THE NEW YEAR!

WAITING FOR A NEW YEAR, YOUNG AND BOLD.
WISH YOU PEACE WHATE'ER THE NEW YEAR HOLD.

END OF THE CHIMES