Evidence That "A Christmas Carol" Was Originally Written by Mathew Franklin Whittier and Abby Poyen Whittier, Rather Than by Charles Dickens

By Stephen Sakellarios, M.S. ©2020

Background

In a previous article, I introduced my research into my past life as obscure 19th-century author Mathew Franklin Whittier, younger brother of the Quaker poet, John Greenleaf Whittier. I described my methods, which combine the paranormal with ordinary scholarship, and I reported some of my more notable findings. Included in those findings was the discovery that Mathew had been the anonymous author of a number of works which were claimed by, or which have been subsequently claimed for, other authors. Some few of these are famous, and in this article we will examine what is, perhaps, the most remarkable (and controversial) discovery—that Mathew and his first wife and soul-mate, Abby Poyen, were the original co-authors of "A Christmas Carol," which is universally attributed to 19th-century British author Charles Dickens. Abby Poyen was first cousin to Charles Poyen, who introduced mesmerism (hypnosis) to America in 1834. Charles stayed at Abby's family home for five months when he first arrived in that country, at which time Abby was 18 years old (she married Mathew two years later, in 1836). Abby's father, Joseph Poyen, was a marquis, and her mother, Sally Elliot Poyen, has been described by historians as "brilliant."

"A Christmas Carol," self-published by Charles Dickens in 1843, has been called "the greatest little book in the world." It is said to have been Dickens' own favorite, from which he frequently read aloud when he toured the United States in 1867. The sheer fame of this work causes anyone I share my discovery with to automatically and instinctively assume I am claiming past-life co-authorship out of self-aggrandizement. This temptation is so overwhelming, that my evidence is rarely taken seriously even for a fraction of a second, no less examined. That I have been practicing strict honesty with myself and others as a spiritual discipline since I was 20 years old, that I hold a master's degree in counseling, and that I was rigorous in my investigations, seem to count for naught. Nonetheless, *I would ask you to read this entire presentation with an open mind*.

For as long as I can remember, I have felt an affinity for "A Christmas Carol," but of course that is not unusual. However, in my public blog, of May 31, 2006—roughly a year after I had first discovered the historical Mathew Franklin Whittier—I wrote:

> Here's something that might be useful as evidence. I have a strong feeling that I had some impact or influence on Charles Dickens's writing of "A Christmas Carol," as Matthew Whittier. But I have seen absolutely no evidence in that regard.

This entry was captured by Archive.org's "Wayback Machine," and as of this writing it can be accessed at the following URL:

> https://web.archive.org/web/20060722122340/http://www.ial.goldthread.com/update5_31_0

6.html

This means that my reported past-life impression was preserved in the form of a dated, independently-archived public record, which I could not have tampered with after the fact. It also establishes (assuming my veracity) that I had not researched the matter, either formally or informally, prior to that date.

You will note that I was still spelling Mathew's first name with two letter "t's," as I had not yet found the one piece of correspondence in which he signs with his full name, indicating he spelled it "Mathew" (typically, he would sign "M.F. Whittier"). At this time, I had not researched his life in much depth. What I had read about him indicated that he was only responsible for writing one satirical anti-slavery series featuring "Ethan Spike" from "Hornby," plus some verses which had not been preserved. Regarding his "Ethan Spike" satires, unofficial John Greenleaf Whittier biographer William Sloan Kennedy remarked that he "should not advise anyone to take the trouble to hunt them up," and that they "prove incontestably that but one genius is born in a family."[1] No doubt this was said by way of contrast while expressing his gushing admiration for Mathew's famous brother; but in any case, there is certainly no indication in the official Whittier lore that Mathew was capable of co-authoring such a work as "A Christmas Carol." Thus, I had no obvious reason, based on readily-available sources, to have recorded this extraordinary and seemingly implausible impression. Meanwhile, Charles Dickens is generally portrayed not only as a great author, but a great humanitarian, who wrote first and foremost for the purposes of social reform. This is all I had when I began researching the question in 2009.

That I did, in fact, launch my formal research effort that year is documented in an e-mail to my first volunteer assistant, dated Oct. 6, 2009:

> You can't prove reincarnation to someone who goes into irrational denial to avoid it. But you can convince people on the cusp; and you can get publicity for the idea. I don't care about publicity for myself; I care about publicity for the ideas. Nailing the Dickens scenario just might do it.
>
> But no, I don't feel we should concentrate exclusively on that because we are dead-ended there, just as we seem to be dead-ended everywhere we turn. I'm waiting for the universe to do something—the ball is in the universe's court.

The implausibility of Charles Dickens having written "A Christmas Carol"

My research took me in two different directions. First of all, the more deeply I delved into Dickens' life, and into his supposed authorship of this classic, the clearer it became that he could not possibly have written it; and that he, himself, was of less than sterling character. We won't spend a great deal of time on this subject, today, but it is treated in greater depth in my e-book, "Mathew Franklin Whittier in his own words," and its sequel, "Mathew Franklin Whittier in his own world."

Charles Dickens began his literary career, which is to say, beyond straight reporting, writing frivolous social comedies. The first of his works which one might interpret as social reform*

literature was “Oliver Twist,” initially published in serial form from 1837 to 1839. His illustrator for this series was George Cruikshank. However, after Dickens’ death, by letter to the Dec. 30, 1871 “Times,” Cruikshank revealed that the ideas for this novel had been his own—and this, to a degree not generally admitted by scholars who touch upon the subject:

> When … *Bentley’s Miscellany* was first started, it was arranged that Mr. Charles Dickens should write a serial and which was to be illustrated by me; and in a conversation with him as to what the subject should be for the first serial, I suggested to Mr. Dickens that he should write the life of a London boy, and strongly advised him to do this, assuring him that I would furnish him with the subject and supply him with all the characters, which my large experience of London life would enable me to do. My idea was to raise a boy from a most humble position up to a high and respectable one—in fact, to illustrate one of those cases of common occurrence, where men of humble origin by natural ability, industry, honesty, and honourable conduct, raise themselves to first-class positions in society.
> * * *
> I think it will be allowed from what I have stated that I am the originator of “Oliver Twist,” and that all the principal characters are mine, but I was much disappointed by Mr. Dickens not carrying out my first suggestion. Mr. Dickens named all the characters in his work himself, but before he commenced writing the story he told me that he had heard an omnibus conductor mention some one as Oliver Twist, which name, he said he would give the boy, as he thought it would answer his purpose. I wanted the boy to have a very different name, such as Frank Foundling or Frank Steadfast; but I think the word Twist proves to a certain extent that the boy he was going to employ for his purpose was a very different sort of boy from the one introduced and recommended to him by me.

Editors of the various London papers don’t seem to have believed him; some even ridiculed him. I conclude, however, that he was telling the truth without exaggeration. Note Cruikshank implies that Dickens took his intention to write *moral* fiction, and reduced it, in concept, to something more worldly. This is precisely what I am claiming with regard to Dickens’ treatment of Mathew and Abby Whittier’s original rendition of “A Christmas Carol.”

Dickens’ friend and official biographer, John Forster, protested vehemently against Cruikshank’s claim, which solidified public opinion against Cruikshank. There the matter has remained to this day. We will shortly see evidence, however, that Forster was quite willing to lie for Dickens.

Oddly, a very similar claim appears to have been made by the widow of Robert Seymour, who illustrated the earlier “Pickwick Papers.” This charge was also vehemently denied by Dickens in the preface to his 1867 edition, wherein he stated:

> That, Mr. Seymour never originated or suggested an incident, a phrase, or a word, to be found in this book. That Mr. Seymour died when only twenty-four pages of this book were published, and when assuredly not forty-eight were written. That I believe I never saw Mr. Seymour’s hand-writing in my life. That, I never saw Mr. Seymour but once in my life, and that was on the night but one before his death, when he certainly offered no

> suggestion whatsoever. That I saw him then in the presence of two persons, both living, perfectly acquainted with all these facts, and whose written testimony to them I possess. Lastly, that Mr. Edward Chapman (the survivor of the original firm of Chapman and Hall) has set down in writing, for similar preservation, his personal knowledge of the origin and progress of this book, of the monstrosity of the baseless assertions in question, and (tested by details) even of the self-evident impossibility of there being any truth in them.

The mystery deepens (and darkens) further, in a 2011 article by Eleanor Harding entitled "Did ruthless Charles Dickens drive a man to suicide? Young writer 'stole' project from illustrator who shot himself dead." Harding, in turn, quotes Stephen Jarvis,[2] of the Dickens Fellowship:

> There's no doubt in my mind that Dickens contributed to his death. There's this view that Dickens was an earthbound saint, which is just not the case.

Given the various *other* indications of plagiarism which I have uncovered concerning Dickens, my impression is that, in the 1867 preface, he "doth protest too much." But these arguments are too bold in their claims to be merely dismissed, which means—if they are untrue—that Dickens must have outright fabricated them. This, in turn, gives us some idea of his *modus operandi*. He was, in short, willing not only to twist the truth, but to tell the outrageous lie if he could get away with it. Note that if Seymour committed suicide shortly after meeting with Dickens, the very fact that Dickens has expressed no compassion whatsoever (never mind taking any responsibility) is, in itself, damning.

Based on "Oliver Twist," Dickens gained a reputation as a social reformer. But not everyone was fooled. Famous 19th-century psychic Andrew Jackson Davis, known as the "Poughkeepsie Seer," remarked:

> Mr. Dickens has thought fit to denounce the physical demonstrations of spiritualism, upon a single visit to the professional demonstrator or medium, where he paid his half-crown, and where he went with the foregone conclusion that he was about to detect an imposture. Is that, we ask, the way to settle a great question, in which not this single medium, but hundreds of thousands of mediums, and the habitual observers of those mediums, is concerned?
>
> * * *
>
> Now our opinion is that, so far from Mr. Dickens being at all qualified for philosophical inquiry, the long habits of his literary life have very much disqualified him for the search after any great truth. Mr. Dickens has not been seeking after truth so much as after the melodramatic and grotesque in effect. He has mixed so much, in pursuit of material for his fictions, with the lowest and most corrupt and degraded of the London populace; with cadgers, and costermongers, and touters, and swindlers, and artful dodgers, for his Quilps, his Fagans, and Dick Swivelers, that his mind has become nearly ruined for any other department of inquiry. Wherever he goes, he looks for low cunning, and sordid trick, and base motive, and a false and fictitious state of things.[3]

In other words, in Davis' opinion, Dickens was a *sensationalist*, and no social reformer, at all.

Dickens had found that the idea suggested by Cruikshank was a success. But when his works were taken to be social reform literature, the mantle was thrust upon him. At this point he decided to begin playing the role, since his new-found popularity as well as his bank account depended on it. In short, if my interpretation is correct, wherever you see Dickens expressing those sentiments consistent with a social reformer, whether in his books or in public, *it is all imposture*, and the myth of Dickens as a reformer is a great sand castle. In this regard, remember that Dickens was not only a *writer*, but an *actor*.

At the time Dickens hurriedly dashed off "A Christmas Carol" within an absurdly short period of six weeks, he was desperate for cash and concerned about falling into debt. This was *not*—as both Dickens and Forster dramatically portrayed it—a matter of writing in a fit of spiritual and literary inspiration, like Handel composing "The Messiah." It so happens there is hard evidence that Forster was himself a liar, whose testimony cannot be relied upon, and who would, in fact, fabricate lies for his friend and idol. In a paper entitled "Madness and the Dickens Marriage: A New Source,"[4] Prof. John Bowen explores a collection of correspondence between Catherine Dickens' long-time friend and neighbor, Edward Dutton Cook, and Cook's friend and fellow journalist William Moy Thomas. The letters, which concern the period near the close of Catherine's life, after she and Dickens were separated, were purchased by the Houghton Library of Harvard University in 2014. The "bombshell" of Bowen's paper is that as she was dying, she revealed a number of secrets to Cook and his wife, Lynda. Bowen tells us that Catherine had told Cook of Dickens' affair with actress Ellen Ternan, including details such as "the address of the house he had bought for her [Ternan], and about her subsequent life as the wife of a clergyman." He then quotes Cook as follows:

> But he [Dickens] discovered at last that she had outgrown his liking. She had borne ten children and had lost many of her good looks, was growing old, in fact. He even tried to shut her up in a lunatic asylum, poor thing! But bad as the law is in regard to proof of insanity he could not quite wrest it to his purpose.

This account certainly fits with all the other evidence I have collected concerning Dickens' real character, as I have discussed it in my book, "Mathew Franklin Whittier in his own words." But here, we are most especially concerned with Catherine's view of Forster, because it is Forster who certifies Dickens' grandiose explanation of how he wrote "A Christmas Carol," in his biography. Bowen tells us that when Cook telegrammed to report Forster's death, Thomas replied on Feb. 2, 1876:

> Many thanks for the Telegram. Mrs. Dickens happened to be here when it arrived and thus had the earliest information of the event. Of course she knew Forster well—but she had little reason to like him much—for he was Dickens' adviser and agent in all the dirty work of the separation...

Cook had made an even stronger statement in a letter written to Thomas on Nov. 15, 1875:

> We live here in a sort of anti-Forster atmosphere from Mrs. C.D.'s living next door. She hates him bitterly.

The clear inference is that Catherine perceived Forster as a negative influence and a meddler, a role he may have played in Dickens' life for some time. If Forster would stoop to "dirty work"—including, presumably, lying for Dickens—in order help Dickens smear Catherine, *then he would also repeat Dickens' lie as to how he supposedly wrote "A Christmas Carol."* And note in particular the phrase "adviser and agent." This implies that not only was Forster repeating what he had been instructed by Dickens to say, but that, at least to some extent, he was the *architect* of these lies. For all we know, then, it might have been Forster who originally suggested the following explanation to Dickens:

> Now if instantly on the receipt of this you will send a free and independent citizen down to the Cunard wharf at Boston, you will find that Captain Hewitt of the Britannia Steamship (my ship) has a small parcel for Professor Felton of Cambridge; and in that parcel you will find a Christmas Carol in prose; being a short story of Christmas by Charles Dickens. Over which Christmas Carol Charles Dickens wept and laughed and wept again, and excited himself in a most extraordinary manner in the composition; and thinking whereof, he walked about the black streets of London, fifteen and twenty miles, many a night when all the sober folks had gone to bed.[5]

This was written by Dickens, portraying himself in dramatic third person, to Prof. Cornelius Conway Felton. Now see how John Forster revives the legend in his biography of Dickens, roughly 30 years later. Keep in mind that in 1843, Dickens' "Martin Chuzzlewit" series was waning in popularity, and that this was in large measure the cause of his financial distress:

> Active as he had been in the now ending year, and great as were its varieties of employment; his genius in its highest mood, his energy unwearied in good work, and his capacity for enjoyment without limit; he was able to signalize its closing months by an achievement supremely fortunate, which but for disappointments the year had also brought might never have been thought of. He had not begun until a week after his return from Manchester, where the fancy first occurred to him, and before the end of November he had finished, his memorable *Christmas Carol*. It was the work of such odd moments of leisure as were left him out of the time taken by two numbers of his *Chuzzlewit*; and though begun with but the special design of adding something to the *Chuzzlewit* balance, I can testify to the accuracy of his own account 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 black streets of London, many and many a night after all sober folks had gone to bed.[6]

First of all, Forster has contradicted himself, because it would require many hours to walk fifteen or twenty miles at night on a regular basis, so this could not have been written in "odd moments of leisure," by definition. We are talking 15 minutes per mile, at the fastest normal pace. It works out to roughly four hours per night, if he walked 15 miles at a fast pace (being excited). And if he walked 20 miles, it would be five hours. In other words, half the night, and then there is the time it would have taken to add to the manuscript, itself. This, Dickens tells us, he did "many a night," which Forster embellishes to "many and many a night." How many nights would that be, over a six-week period—say, three days a week, at minimum, or 18 nights, for a total of at least 72

hours? The wonder of it is that he wasn't mugged, or didn't catch his death of cold, never mind the sleep he would have lost.

But if Forster's *first* characterization is the correct one—that Dickens wrote this book in "odd moments of leisure"—then that would be consistent with an author *revising* an existing manuscript. The additional description would have been added to cover for the fact that such a powerful work obviously cannot have been the product of anyone's leisure moments.

So let's try to imagine the scene. Dickens is composing the story while walking the black streets of London, and he gets an idea for a passage. What does he do—pull out a notebook, strike a match (weather permitting), and scribble down his idea while holding the match with one hand and at the same time bracing the sheet of paper against the wind? Over and over? To be fair, although they are characterized as "black streets," perhaps there are street lamps handy (which might or might not throw enough light for writing). Or, perhaps he carries a lantern, though that would certainly make him easy prey for robbers; and again, there's the difficulty of holding the lantern while writing. Or does he keep all the ideas in his head until he gets home?

Just to be certain, I ran this scenario by a British friend, who wrote back:

> The weather would have been atrocious and London was notorious for the smog from industry as well at that time. I remember it from coming from a mining town as a kid, you couldn't see your hand in front of you.

Not a very practical way to write a book—but it certainly makes for high drama. And *when* do people typically resort to high drama? When they want to impress people, of course, but more importantly, *when they are lying*. And the possible implications are even worse. This same friend added:

> ...the only things happening at night on the streets of London were skullduggery, prostitution and copious amounts of gin, hardly a place to go for a stroll. Unless you were using those services.

Which brings up the distinct possibility that if Dickens *was* spending "many" nights out on the black streets of London, he was using the writing of "A Christmas Carol" as an excuse.

Be that as it may, with this new evidence of Forster's role in Dickens' attempt to have Catherine put away, his credibility in this personal testimony regarding the "Carol" becomes null and void, and we are back to Dickens' cover letter to Felton. But once we remove Forster's endorsement as Dickens' friend and official biographer, the whole thing immediately strikes one as implausible, and moreover smacks of fraud. Dickens may or may not have been talented enough to compose a world classic within six weeks, whether on the black streets of London or at home in his study, but he definitely wouldn't have been able to accomplish it *in his leisure time*. And he had no credentials whatsoever to produce a *spiritual* classic in *any* amount of time. What has actually happened, is that Dickens has latched onto someone else's manuscript which he takes lightly, thinks of as a way to make a quick buck, and tinkers with in his spare time. But the public recognizes the work's genius, and suddenly Dickens finds not only his bank account restored, but

his fame rekindled. He must now explain this discrepancy.

Dickens and plagiarism

There are additional instances in which Dickens was either caught plagiarizing another author, or was accused of it. It has been documented by historians that Dickens' chapter on slavery in "American Notes" borrows heavily from "American Slavery As It Is." This latter booklet was written anonymously by Theodore Dwight Weld, his wife Angelina, and her sister, Sarah Grimke, being published by the American Anti-Slavery Society. Dickens, in addition to copying American newspaper advertisements for runaway slaves from this booklet more or less verbatim (sans citations), appears to have re-worked certain passages in a more dramatic fashion. For example, on page 60 of the Society's booklet is given the following quote, along with its proper citation:

> "We have heard of slavery as it exists in Asia, and Africa, and Turkey—we have heard of the feudal slavery under which the peasantry of Europe have groaned from the days of Alaric until now, but excepting only the horrible system of the West India Islands, we have never heard of slavery in any country, ancient or modern, Pagan, Mohammedan, or *Christian! so terrible in its character*, as the slavery which exists in these United States."—*Seventh Report American Colonization Society*, 1824.

While on page 193 of "American Notes":

> What! shall we declaim against the ignorant peasantry of Ireland, and mince the matter when these American taskmasters are in question? shall we cry shame on the brutality of those who hamstring cattle: and spare the lights of Freedom upon earth who notch the ears of men and women, cut pleasant posies in the shrinking flesh, learn to write with pens of red-hot iron on the human face, rack their poetic fancies for liveries of mutilation which their slaves shall wear for life and carry to the grave, breaking living limbs as did the soldiery who mocked and slew the Saviour of the world, and set the defenceless creatures up for targets! Shall we wimper over legends of the tortures practiced on each other by the Pagan Indians, and smile upon the cruelties of Christian men!

On at least one occasion, Dickens used the weight of his own reputation to mercilessly crush that of a journalist who had accused him of plagiarism. When Thomas Powell, in "The Living Authors of England," presented plausible evidence that Dickens had plagiarized "David Copperfield" from "The Career of Puffer Hopkins," by American author Cornelius Mathews, Dickens attacked Powell viciously (and, I believe, based on what I've learned of Dickens' *modus operandi*, spuriously), as follows:

> He is a Forger and a Thief. He was managing-clerk to an eminent merchant's house in the city of London, and during a series of years forged and altered checks, until he had defrauded them to the extent of thousands upon thousands of pounds. His robberies being discovered one day, he took up his hat, went to a chemist's, bought some laudanum, walked off to a warm bath, and was found in it insensible. … After some

> months' endurance of the misery and shame of his position he was taken up at Croydon (ten miles from London,) for passing several forged checks to divers trades-people in that neighborhood; was stated to the magistrate to be mad; and was actually continued for some time in a lunatic asylum, that the prosecutions against him might not go on. From the lunatic asylum he found his way to New York. He arrived there with a forged letter of recommendation…[7]

Note that a compulsive liar's first line of defense is always projection. Thus, Dickens opens the above remarks by projecting onto Powell—who has not, himself, plagiarized anything—the label of "forger." But like Cruikshank's claim, Powell's is not taken seriously even today.

Following up with Powell's actual comparison (which I won't reproduce here, for brevity's sake), I found that much as we see in the above comparison, it is not *word-for-word* plagiarism. However, it does plausibly appear that Dickens re-worked Cornelius Mathews' earlier passage, essentially stealing his idea. Thus, whatever Powell may or may not have been, personally, he was manifestly *right*.

According to an online write-up of the 2012 bicentennial exhibition on Dickens at the British Library, in 1861 a painter named Thomas Heaphy charged that Dickens plagiarized a story he had already submitted to a magazine. Heading up a piece entitled "Four Ghost Stories" in Dickens' own publication, "All the Year Round," was one story concerning the spirit of a beautiful young woman who appeared to a painter and asked him to paint her portrait for her father. Heaphy, a portrait painter by profession, claimed that this had actually happened to him. Dickens' letters to Heaphy denying that the plagiarism was intentional are reproduced in a book entitled "A Wonderful Ghost Story." In this correspondence, Dickens apologizes profusely for an *unintentional* error in having obtained the story second-hand and uncredited. By letter of Sept. 15, 1861, he writes:

> I received the story published in that journal first among the "Four Ghost Stories," from a gentleman of a distinguished position, both literary and social, who, I do not doubt, is well known to you by reputation. He did not send it to me as his own, but as the work of a young writer in whom he feels an interest, and who previously contributed (all through him) another ghost story. I will immediately let him know what correspondence I have had with you, and you shall be made acquainted with the nature of his reply.
>
> You may be quite certain, I feel sure, that there has been no betrayal of confidence on the part of any one connected with the magazine for whom you reserved your story. It must have been repeatedly told (though probably never correctly) in more circles than one. It happens that Mr Layard is staying here with me, and instantly recognized the version printed in *All the Year Round*, as *a* version of a story he heard at Sir Edward Lytton's, in Hertfordshire, some time since.

In a subsequent letter of the 20th, Dickens adds:

> Sir Edward Lytton received *his* version in writing from Mr Edward Ward. Sir Edward informs me that his version was very superior to that published here. I therefore suppose

> it is told nearer your own. He is searching for the MS., but has not yet been able to lay his hand upon it.

We see that this is not simply something which Edward Bulwer-Lytton (as he is generally referred to) *heard*; he received it as a manuscript. It is not absolutely clear *who* is looking for the manuscript—Bulwer-Lytton, or Ward . However, it appears that Ward has "informed" Dickens but cannot find the manuscript—a copy of which (presumably) he had sent to Bulwer-Lytton. It is also unclear who has sent a manuscript to Dickens.

Meanwhile, the British Library article tells us, regarding Heaphy's initial protest:

> Heaphy wrote to Dickens in a rage, claiming that not only had he written up an identical story, ready for publication in the Christmas issue of a rival magazine, but that it had really happened to him—and on 13 September too, the very date Dickens had added in pencil in the margin of his own version.

This would be an impossibly tight turn-around. If Heaphy's experience occurred on Sept. 13, 1861, how is there time for Dickens to have published the story the following day, on the 14th? "Four Stories" does, in fact, appear on page 588 of "All Year Round," bearing the date Sept. 14, 1861. The introduction, which is also the introduction to this particular account, reads:

> All four shall be told exactly as I, the present narrator, have received them. They are all derived from credible sources; and the first—the most extraordinary of the four—is well known at first hand to individuals still living.

It would seem that I am missing *something*, though without spending months attempting to track this down, I'm not quite sure what it is. It strikes me, however, that the facts, as asserted by Dickens, are quite elusive. First, the story comes from a manuscript written by a mysterious young writer, who for some reason submits ghost stories through an unidentified, yet prominent, social and literary figure—who nonetheless has evidently failed to get it published for him, and hence has sent it to Dickens to claim as his own. (Obviously, he is not prominent enough that the editors take his suggestions, nor is he looking after the young man's best interests.) Then, further details are supplied, such that Bulwer-Lytton received the same account in written form from Sir Edward Ward (and I can find no ready indication online that Ward was a prominent literary figure, nor, as of this writing, can I identify him at all).[8] Ward says his account is far superior to the one written by the unidenitified young writer, which Dickens received from the unidentified gentleman. Yet, no direct comparison can be made, since Ward cannot just now lay his hands on his manuscript. Nor, so far as I can tell, is there any indication that he was ever able to do so. In short, I smell a rat, but like the missing manuscript, I can't quite locate it.

Adding to the confusion is John Forster's version of events, which is excerpted, in "A Wonderful Ghost Story" from his biography. Citing "Life of Charles Dickens," vol. iii, page 483," it opens:

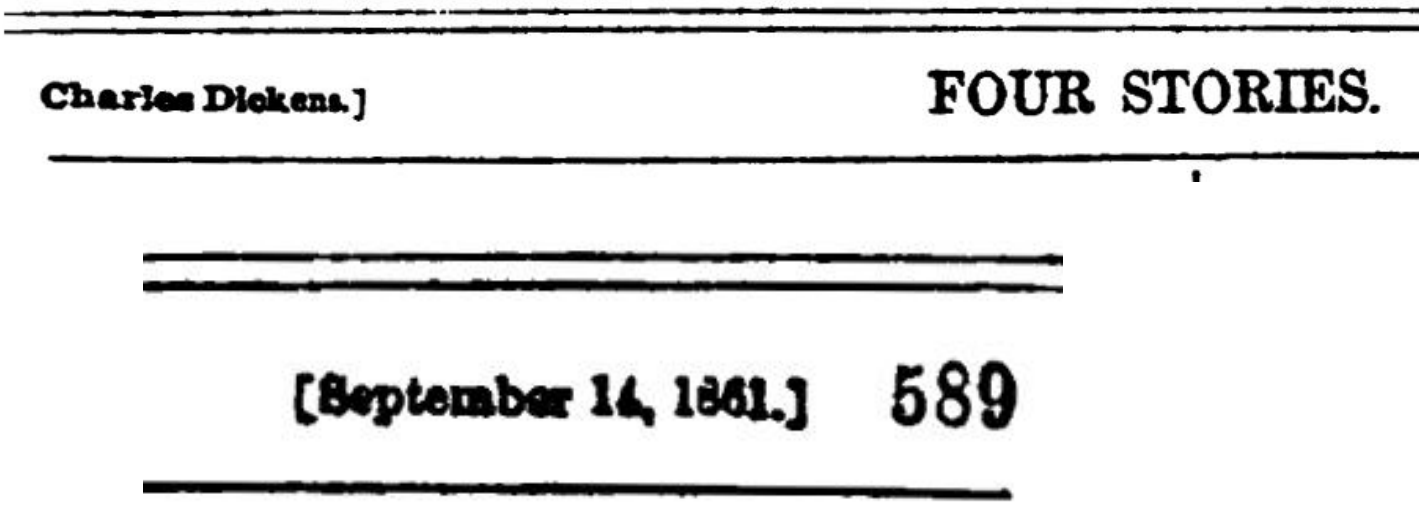
> "Among his good things (Charles Dickens') should not be omitted his telling of a ghost story. He had something of a hankering after them, as the readers of his briefer pieces well know; and such was his interest generally in things supernatural that, but for the

> strong restraining power of his common sense, he might have fallen into the follies of spiritualism.

Forster has confirmed that Dickens did *not* believe in these subjects; but we know that Bulwer-Lytton, who received a manuscript from Ward, *did*, which is probably why his name has been brought into this. Forster's narration continues:

> Such a story is related in the 125th number of *All the Year Round*, which before its publication both Mr. Layard and myself saw at Gad's Hill, and identified as one related by Lord Lytton. It was published in September, and in a day or two led to what Dickens will relate:—'The artist himself, who is the hero of that story (to Lord Lytton, 15th September 1861), has sent me in black and white his own account of the whole experience...

Presumably, Dickens is writing Bulwer-Lytton that Heaphy had subsequently sent him his own account after Dickens' was published. But if he is writing to Bulwer-Lytton on the 15th, this would be the day after publication. *Technically* it might be possible, if Heaphy purchased Dickens' magazine the very day it hit the streets (if indeed it was available on the official date of publication), read the story, and immediately sent his own manuscript with a cover letter by courier or in the mail. Dickens, receiving it that day or the following day, then wrote to both Bulwer-Lytton and Heaphy.


Charles Dickens.] FOUR STORIES.

[September 14, 1861.] 589

Remember that in Dickens' letter of Sept. 15 to Heaphy, he had explained:

> I received the story published in that journal first among the "Four Ghost Stories," from a gentleman of a distinguished position, both literary and social, who, I do not doubt, is well known to you by reputation. He did not send it to me as his own, but as the work of a young writer in whom he feels an interest, and who previously contributed (all through him) another ghost story. I will immediately let him know what correspondence I have had with you, and you shall be made acquainted with the nature of his reply.

But by letter of Sept. 20, Dickens had once again written to Heaphy:

> Sir Edward Lytton received *his* version in writing from Mr Edward Ward. Sir Edward informs me that his version was very superior to that published here. I therefore suppose it is told nearer your own. He is searching for the MS., but has not yet been able to lay his hand upon it.

It appears to me that the entire issue of Bulwer-Lytton and Ward is a red herring, since neither of them could have been Dickens' source. Quite possibly Layard, if he happened to be present, was not actually consulted, either. And as for Dickens' disarming reassurance that Heaphy's publisher hadn't betrayed him, I think that's a barefaced lie. One need only suppose that Dickens had a standing agreement to pay the editor, or someone else working for the magazine who could intercept the mail, handsomely for any "ghost stories" which might come across their desk.

Logistically, the entire question hinges on *who* supposedly sent him the manscript. This person is said to have received it from a mysterious "young writer." That rules out Bulwer-Lytton, who received, or borrowed, his manuscript—the superior one—*from Ward*. But so far as I can tell, Ward was not a "gentleman of distinguished position, *both literary and social*," as I can find no mention of him online. And if Dickens *had* received the manuscript from Ward, how could Dickens' published version be far inferior, in Ward's eyes, to his own? Thus, Ward is also eliminated from consideration, which means that the "gentleman" implausibly remains unidentified to this day. I say"implausibly," because since he was supposedly prominent, historians should have been able to identify him by this time. And how did Dickens know that the account was "well known *at first hand* to individuals still living"? (emphasis added) Would the "gentleman" have told him so, and yet withheld the man's name? Or was this simply asserted in the text of the manuscript Dickens received?

Thomas Frank Heaphy, born in 1813, was the eldest son of famous portrait painter Thomas Heaphy "the Elder." One would not think that merely reducing his name to an initial would be very effective in disguising his identity. If this story was being spread about, and if anyone became curious—which they certainly *should* have—it would be a simple matter to identify him by his initial, "H" combined with his profession. And *if* Dickens either knew, or could easily have determined, Heaphy's identity, he had no business publishing Heaphy's story without his permission. Whether the story was commonly known or obscure makes no difference. Ethically, Dickens was bound to approach Heaphy for permission, and to ascertain whether Heaphy, himself, intended on publishing it.

Dickens' explanation is both convoluted and implausible. Therefore, I tentatively conclude that he did, in fact, illegally and knowingly obtain Heaphy's manuscript from the publisher to which Heaphy had recently submitted the story, and made a hash of it, just as he made a hash of "A Christmas Carol" when he got his hands on *that* manuscript. I do not know where the writer of the British Library article got the impression that Heaphy claimed the original paranormal event occurred on Sept. 13, as the story could not possibly have appeared the following day in "All the Year Round" (unless it had occurred the previous year, on Sept. 13, 1860). What the penciled-in date in the margin of Dickens' manuscript (i.e., "version") could have actually meant, we don't know.

The most obvious evidence of plagiarism

With all of these examples taken together, I can make a fairly strong case that Dickens was not above plagiarism, aided and abetted by John Forster. However, what convinced me that Dickens could not possibly have written "A Christmas Carol" is staring us all in the face. In the "Carol," one finds authentic mystical and occult references, much as one sees in the film "Ghost," which screenplay was written by Bruce Joel Rubin—a serious student of kundalini yoga. Here, one finds earthbound spirits, along with the more obscure teaching that they can only manifest to the eyes of mortals under certain conditions. There is the teaching of karma ("I wear the chains I forged in life"); the life review; spirit guides; the idea that by physical contact with a being from a higher realm, one's own rate of bodily vibration can be raised, which may even make levitation possible; and conversion of the heart, or "turning." *It is clear, to anyone who has studied these subjects, that this story was originally written by a deep student of esoteric literature—and that Dickens, far from being such a student, was actually a skeptic ignorant in such matters*. Dickens had no idea what he held in his hands, when he began copying over this manuscript to revise it for public consumption. So much so, that when he published his version of it, he dismissively subtitled it "A Ghost Story of Christmas." And note one curious point—Andrew Jackson Davis, who eloquently pointed out Dickens' worldly consciousness, and who met personally with Mathew in 1854, *completely omits any mention of "A Christmas Carol"*—the one book published under Dickens' signature which would seem to contradict Davis' assessment. I suspect the reason is that Mathew, who was active in spiritualist circles, had confided in Davis at some point; and that this, as much as Dickens' opposition to spiritualism, was behind his strongly-worded condemnation.

Lest the skeptic posit that Dickens used the services of a more knowledgeable *consultant*, the metaphysics contained in his other Christmas attempts are largely fanciful, as one might expect from a worldly man—a distinction which Mathew, writing an anonymous review, wryly pointed out in the Jan. 20, 1849 Boston "Weekly Museum." This review concerns one of Dickens' subsequent stories, "The Haunted Man or the Ghost's Bargain:"

> The tale is well told, and though standing in the same category with many of Dickens's later works, which are not so uniformly fresh and brilliant as his earlier ones, yet it has several strong examples of his peculiar humor and pathos, and these, though they are but occasional, well pay, with the moral, for the time expended in perusing the work. The work is an unpretending one, is brief, and was doubtless written in a day or two. So it would be absurd to make an elaborate criticism upon it: but we will venture one opinion upon a fault of which its author is guilty in this as in other of his works. We mean where he attempts to be mysteriously sublime. There he is utterly and ludicrously out of his element, and stands in pitiable contrast to Bulwer. There is little of the lofty in the composition of Boz. He handles it in a most clumsy manner. He knocks at the temple-door of the oracle, but she is froward, and he only bruises his fist. It is to his humor and pathos and expressive delineations of uncouth character that he should solely stick, and leave profundity and attempts to awe to those of a more spiritual turn.

Although not directly stated, the clear implication is that if Dickens was incapable of this task in later attempts, and should leave the matter to other authors, *he could not possibly have*

accomplished it the first time, either. And yet none would argue that "A Christmas Carol" is, indeed, "mysteriously sublime." The reason that Bulwer, i.e., Edward Bulwer-Lytton, is specifically referenced here by comparison, is that he was, in fact, knowledgeable in matters of spiritualism and the occult. It so happens that filling the entire front page of the first edition of Mathew's own short-lived newspaper, the Salisbury "Monitor," is a chapter from Bulwer-Lytton's book, "The Pilgrims of the Rhine." Mathew's newspaper premiered on Feb. 15, 1838, while Bulwer-Lytton's book had been published two years earlier. Chapter VIII, from which Mathew has drawn, is entitled "The Soul in Purgatory; Or, Love Stronger Than Death."

There is a great deal more evidence indicating that Dickens did not have the necessary spiritual development, or knowledge of metaphysics, to write "A Christmas Carol."† However, we turn now to the second prong of my investigations—the question of what evidence there may be to suggest that Mathew and Abby Whittier were the real and original authors.

The evidence that Mathew Franklin Whittier and Abby Poyen Whittier were the original authors of "A Christmas Carol"

We have already seen that in year 2006, I made a dated public record of my past-life impression that Mathew had had "some impact or influence" on the writing of "A Christmas Carol." I phrased it that way, of course, in an excess of caution. It seemed just as outrageous to me, then, as it no-doubt seems to anyone else, today. Actually my feeling was stronger than what I had written—I felt that I had had some part in writing the "Carol." So a few years later I began—not permitting myself any great hopes—to investigate whether or not there was hard evidence to support this impression. And the deeper I dug, the more I found. There is so much evidence, I literally will not be able to fit it all in an article of this size. But we will hit some of the highlights.

The first thing I learned, was that in the three-volume published edition of Dickens' correspondence, there is a record of an "acknowledgment of a letter" from Mathew, the only portion in Dickens' own hand being the signature.[9] It is dated Feb. 21, 1842, written while Dickens was still on his tour of America and not long after he had left Boston. This was probably one of many such notes written by Dickens' secretary. It simply tells us that Mathew had written Dickens a personal letter; and that in due course, Dickens signed a canned acknowledgment. This, however, confirms that there was definitely *direct communication*, at least from Mathew to Dickens. Almost certainly, Mathew had written a detailed, lengthy letter concerning both literature and social reform—which Dickens handed to his secretary along with dozens of other letters, having barely skimmed it, if he bothered to read it, at all. The simple reason Dickens would have responded this way, is that he was not what Mathew had taken him to be. Otherwise, the depth and quality of Mathew's many essays and editorials bear witness that whatever he wrote, in this one opportunity to correspond with a much-admired literary figure, would have been quite worthy of a personal reply.

The next clue I uncovered was that Mathew was personal friends with author Oliver Wendell Holmes, who was one of the men responsible for making the arrangements for Dickens' public welcome dinner in Boston. This is hardly implausible, inasmuch as I have evidence that Mathew ran in the same circles as his famous brother. But what it means is that Mathew would almost

certainly have had a personal introduction to Dickens, through Holmes. The reason this is inevitable, is that Mathew did *not* only write the one satirical series, beginning in 1846, as his biographer and other Whittier historians erroneously reported. In the course of my investigations, I learned that Mathew was actually a child prodigy, who began publishing sophisticated work in a major Boston literary newspaper, the "New-England Galaxy," at age 12, in 1825. By 1842, when Dickens first visited America, Mathew had been publishing under a variety of pseudonyms—and in many different genres, including adventure stories, editorials, humorous sketches, social reform literature and poetry—for 17 years. Not only that, but as the junior editor of a New York newspaper in the early 1830's, he had published Holmes' poetry. Furthermore, as Mathew had expressed in correspondence to his brother, he admired Dickens' productions. So with all these facts taken into account, it is a foregone conclusion that Holmes would have introduced Mathew to Dickens, at the dinner where 150 authors were in attendance. In short, we can reasonably assume that Mathew met Dickens personally, and not only that, he was introduced as an author, a former editor, and a personal friend of Oliver Wendell Holmes, who was a prominent literary figure in Boston.

So far, I have shown that Dickens could not possibly have been the author of "A Christmas Carol"; and that Mathew Franklin Whittier would have met Dickens in Boston, in 1842. We definitely know that Mathew wrote Dickens a letter, which he acknowledged receiving shortly after leaving Boston. But many aspiring authors presented Dickens with manuscripts, during that tour—and many people wrote him letters. The letters were destroyed; I have found no indication of what was done with the manuscripts. So what evidence do I have, suggesting that Mathew and Abby's manuscript was the one Dickens was drawing from? There is, in fact, an alternate theory, put forth by Prof. Natalie McKnight, that Dickens drew inspiration from stories published in the Lowell "Offering." This newspaper, containing stories by the girls who worked in the Lowell mills, was given to Dickens during his tour of a progressive factory there.[10] Why am I so certain it was Mathew and Abby's work that shaped the "Carol"? And why do I claim that Dickens actually *re-wrote their original*, rather than simply garnering a few ideas from them?

For this, one would have to see over a dozen of Abby's short stories, and dozens of Mathew's stories, as well as his novels. This is where we have an embarrassment of riches—far more than I can share in this article. Perhaps we should begin by clarifying the respective roles that I believe each of these authors played in the writing of "A Christmas Carol." Mathew was by nature a philosopher, and his primary literary interest was in satire, for the purposes of social and political reform. At a young age, he appears to have made a serious study of the best British satirists of the previous centuries. He was clever, creative, insightful and funny. He had a particular facility for creating ingenious plots, and a fondness for puns. His influence in the "Carol" is obvious, and I could provide literally hundreds of matching style examples. His style was somewhat similar to Dickens' (at one point, Mathew wrote a series of stories under the admiring pseudonym, "Dickens, Jr."), except that his prose was crisper. As evidence that Mathew avowedly preferred literary conciseness, in his "Quails" travelogue[11] of Sept. 20, 1851, he quotes the late Hugh Blair, D.D., a Professor of Rhetoric and Belles-Lettres, as follows:

> Simplicity and conciseness are never-failing characteristics of the style of a sublime writer. He rests on the majesty of his sentiments, not on the pomp of his expression. The main secret of being sublime is, to say great things in few and plain words; for every

> superfluous decoration degrades a sublime idea. The mind rises and swells when a lofty description or sentiment is presented to it in its native form. But no sooner does the poet attempt to *spread out* this sentiment or description, and to deck it round and round with glittering ornaments, than the mind begins to fall from its high elevation; the transport is over; the beautiful may remain, but the sublime is gone.

Abby Poyen Whittier's contribution to "A Christmas Carol"

However, it is Abby's contribution we must primarily focus our attention on, here, inasmuch as she was the spiritual powerhouse. She was certainly not humorless, though she was more likely to imply a poignant, piercing irony, than to resort to puns. But she had a very deep understanding of what has been called the Perennial Philosophy. In these matters, she had been Mathew's teacher. He had started out, as one might expect, a skeptic; but by the time they would have begun writing "A Christmas Carol" she had largely convinced him. Thus, they open the "Carol" with one voice—the voice of a confirmed believer, attempting to convince the skeptical reader. This was not *feigned* by Dickens (as it would have to have been, had he written it)—*it was the sincere expression of the real authors' combined faith*.

I have concluded that it was Abby who wrote the scenes featuring the "ghosts of Christmas," or rather, what would have originally been conceived, by her, as Ebenezer Scrooge's *spirit guides*. The speech of Marley's Ghost, the earth-bound spirit, would also have been hers. Where, exactly, the idea of transforming the spirit guides into ghosts of Christmas past, present and future came in, we don't know. It's possible that Mathew, himself, contributed this idea, before Dickens ever got his hands on the manuscript. But the sheer transformative power of this story was Abby's. Therefore, we must first establish that the historical Abby Poyen *was*, in fact, a plausible candidate to have wielded such power. We have already seen that Abby was first cousin to mesmerist Charles Poyen, so we know that an openness to exotic phenomena ran in that side of her family. I will shortly demonstrate that this vein ran even more strongly on her mother's side.

I could reproduce a number of Abby's mystical poems for consideration, but then I would have to deal head on with plagiarist Albert Pike's spurious claim on them; and that would require a lengthy paper in itself. Instead, I will share three poems which are definitely *not* Pike's. The following is Mathew's first published love poem to Abby, declaring his love to her when she was 15 years old, and he was 19. This appears in the Feb. 25, 1832 edition of the New York "Constellation," which newspaper Mathew was editing under editor-in-chief, Asa Greene:

> TO MISS MOLLY BLUEBERRY.
>
> Bright peerless Queen of my idolatry,
> Type of an angel's form—star of my love—
> Shadowless, stainless girl—I bend to thee
> As to a radiant being from above.
> Who would not bow at Beauty's lovely shrine?
> Who would not worship Angel purity?
> Who would not call thee Molly, all divine,

When bending at thy feet a lover's knee?
Oh! pictureless being with a Seraph's mien,
A spirit pure and radiantly bright;
One tone of thy sweet voice will bid love's stream
Gush thro' my heart with rapturous delight.
Thou art my joy—my heaven—my *every thing*,
And at thy feet my heart and hopes I fling.

There are a great many private references embedded in this poem, which need not concern us, here. It is clear enough that in Mathew's sight, she is a spiritual person, such as might originate the passages in the "Carol" I am attributing to her. Note that she has a "sweet voice." Abby was a musical prodigy, as well as being a literary prodigy. This goes to the naming of the story, "A Christmas Carol," and also to the fact that the chapters are called "staves." I believe that this was Abby's idea, and that Dickens simply retained it. But the word "staves" has two meanings. A "stave" can be a musical verse, or it can also mean the rungs of a ladder. This would have been intentional, and it signified that each chapter was a rung on a ladder to spiritual enlightenment. Dickens, the secularist, would not have had any interest in conveying such a meaning. In fact, he made a concerted effort to *tone down* the spiritual emphasis of the work, attempting to turn it into mere entertainment as a "ghost story." Therefore, the symbolism of this double entrendre must have simply escaped his notice.

In the July 16, 1831 edition of the same paper, Mathew thanks Abby for a birthday present of a hand-knitted nightcap (Mathew's birthday was July 18th). Clearly, she has embroidered some esoteric symbols on it—astrological or otherwise—for which Mathew, still officially a Quaker in 1831, feigns concern. They already love each other; but at this time, with Abby having just turned 15 on June 2nd, he has not yet formally "declared." The poem, entitled "Lines, Addressed to a Lady, on being presented by her with a night-cap fantastically decorated," begins:

I took a short nap,
Dear girl, in thy cap,
And dreamt of each hieroglyphic,
As black as the ace
Of spades was its face,
An omen to me quite terrific.

I feared that a frown
On that brow of thine own,
Might gather in anger or gloom,
And cloud the warm sky
That smiles in thine eye,
And destroy all my hopes in the bloom.

But thy pretty hand wove
An emblem of love,
A work of such exquisite art,
That sure even Cupid

Must be very stupid
To take it for aught but thy *heart*.

Mathew published a number of Abby's stories, as well as an essay and two of her poems, posthumously. These works begin appearing eight years after her death, in the 1849 Boston "Weekly Museum"; as well as in the Boston "Carpet-Bag," on one occasion, a few years later. The first number of the series, entitled "Mary Mahony," was signed with Abby's maiden initials, "A.P.," as were the poems that Albert Pike had claimed for himself years earlier. But this body of work could not have been written, or submitted, by Pike. In fact, the one poem of his I found in the "Weekly Museum" was signed with his full name; and in any case, there is definite confirmation that the author of "Mary Mahony" is a woman.

The poem I wish to share, from the May 25, 1850 edition of the "Weekly Museum," is entitled, simply, "Lilias," which is the Scottish version of the name Lily. Abby's mother, Sally Elliot Poyen, was of Scottish descent. As I mentioned earlier, historians have called her "brilliant," and it was evidently she who taught Abby spiritualism and related subjects. Abby's father, Joseph Poyen, was an immigrant from Guadeloupe. In the West Indies, Catholicism may have mixed more easily with occult teachings than it did in Europe and America; hence, with such a background, he would have felt more comfortable with his wife's beliefs. However, he appears to have run the household along French lines, inasmuch as Charles Poyen implies that the French language was spoken in the Poyen home. We can assume, therefore, that the children were officially raised Catholic, while Abby's mother would still have been free to teach them her own beliefs. It is to the marriage of a French Catholic from Guadeloupe, and a spiritualist descended from the Scotts, that we owe the interesting confluence of these two streams in "A Christmas Carol." The explanation that it is a "Ghost Story of Christmas" is simply a fiction invented by Dickens.

In this poem, Lilias, a.k.a. young Abby, has spent the entire day roaming the countryside, looking for the faeries which her mother has told her live in Nature. Note the spiritual experience which she reports in the last stanza:

"Lilias, bright Lilias! silver-spoken Lilias—
Tell us where your ways have been?
Tell us of the sights you've seen?—
Wandering the day-long, thus
Far away from all of us—
Nimble-footed Lilias?"

"Oh, mother! I've been by the oaken tree,
Adown by the brookside, o'er the lea,
Far away, up in the mountains blue,
And thickets, and pastures, and meadows through.
I have been to look for the sylvan bands
That you say inhabit such beautiful lands;
And, mother, I sought again and again,
The plains and the woodlands o'er in vain.

"But as I looked in the brooks as I hurried by,
And there lay the sunlight, and the clear blue sky;
I glanced at the towers, and on every one
Was the light of a marvelous glory strown,
And the grass-blades—oh, and the very air
Bore token their footsteps had just been there.

"And was it so, mother?—and would they fly
From the mere approach of such as I!
Or were they concealed there?—the light that shone
Up from the earth—was it not their own?
I think it was even the living glow
Of their very presence, entranced me so,
I think they dwell always, wherever bloom
Or the gladness of springing life finds home,
And the beauty of verdure, and flowing wreath,
Is the raiment that God hath clothed them with."

I think most would agree that this is delightfully written, and so were Abby's short stories. At the same time, most if not all of them call attention to some underprivileged type or class, as for example Irish immigrants, orphans, disabled persons, young women forced by circumstances to enter the work force, mistreated boys who run away from home, and elderly women falsely accused of witchcraft. This is *true* social reform literature, written from a strong moral core. The writer is clearly a devotional Christian; but at the same time, many of these stories feature some aspect of mysticism or the occult. There are palm-readers, and a reference to astrology; there is a depiction of meditation; there is a young woman who—like Abby—has a deep understanding of German mysticism. The third element common to several of these stories, is that they feature a magical child—not *overtly* magical, but this is obviously implied. It is almost as though, drawing on her Catholic background, Abby is depicting *child-saints*—precisely as one sees with the character of "Tiny Tim" in "A Christmas Carol."

In the story "Old Alice," which appears in the Aug. 3, 1850 edition of the "Weekly Museum," Abby tells us of a bitter, lonely old woman whose heart is transformed by a mysterious young boy who, undaunted by her apparent gruffness, begins visiting her. He has overheard her telling stories out loud to herself, and from his initial curiosity, has become her constant companion:

> It is wonderful what importance will attach to so trivial an occurrence in solitude. When the intruder was gone, Alice verily believed she had been entertaining an angel unawares. On the morrow he came again, however; the same boy, with the same unaccountable old ways, and somehow there came into old Alice's mind images of "The poor Wayfaring Man," and Christ blessing little children, with the sight of him, and instead of sharp words, she surprised herself welcoming him, and took such pains, in finishing the story, to intersperse agreeable additions, he staid the whole forenoon. The next day he was there again, and again the next day, and the next, and finally, it was no more of a rarity to see his face in the house than the face of the great tall clock.

> He was a curiosity for a boy; very sedate and old-fashioned; very quaint in his boyish turn of thought, and with a way of listening to a tale that must have flattered even Alice's story-telling pride. The strange, ghostly narrations pleased him most; tales of imps and hobgoblins, mermaids and fairies, and he would sit there, with his little hands folded, looking into the fire, and pondering them in his mind, for hours together. Old Alice was a kind of child with him, and the two assimilated like old cronies.

In this story, also, there is a lyrical depiction of Alice's spiritual awakening (in this case, just before she is seized by the townspeople and accused of witchcraft). Note that the child-saint figure in this story has effectively redeemed Alice, just prior to her persecution and death. Clearly, the author identifies with Old Alice as an *authentic Christian* (i.e., once converted), despite the irony that traditional Christians would label her a heretic:

> And there was old Alice, looking out into the stilly twilight, and thinking all was so placid and beautiful that night, she recognized the presence of the angels. It was good, she thought, there had come the breath of childhood into her hut; the old scripture was fulfilled, for the lion of her nature had nestled with the lamb, and a little child had led them. All her soul's harshness was melted into harmony, all her old misanthropy, all jealousy and petty malice and weary dreariness of life were gone, and the lone old creature looked up to the sky and watched the stars as they came out one by one, with a heart softened and lifted up to God as it had never been before. It was sweet to be there listening; she caught the music of the leaves as the evening stole on, peaceful, and low, and holy, and she wandered farther still among the trees. She seemed to feel the breath of the Almighty, and, like the plants, was conscious of renewed life. Farther and farther on she wandered. Poor old Alice! in the midst of it all, the crowd was upon her, and she was seized and carried away to a place of security, almost before she knew of what she was accused.

Without intending to belabor the obvious, I wish to call attention, here, to the sheer beauty and power of Abby's prose. I have not made the claim concerning her co-authorship of "A Christmas Carol" lightly.

Finally, in Abby's stories, she reveals a precocious understanding of depth psychology—she was essentially depicting *psychotherapy* in Scrooge's "regression." For comparison, we need only look at her story entitled "Wilderness Refuge."[12] Young Herman's father is tortured by guilt, because of having once killed a cabin boy in a fit of anger at sea, when he was a captain. Herman, with a Christ-like love, remains devoted and casts a soothing spiritual balm over his father's nightmares:

> There had been warm greetings in the little room, and though it was vacant now, and the remains of the burning logs were covered up with ashes, even now, spite of its wonted gloom, there was almost a smile upon the face of things. Moonlight came in and lay upon the floor like the halo of a blessing, and the homely brightening of the little windows—the very breathing of the night wind told tales of hope and love.

> The room was vacant, indeed, but not long so; for now an inner door swung softly open, and the features of the little Herman came to view. It was the same bright, hopeful face he had brought home, and the very aspect of the room seemed to catch its radiance; it might have been Herman, or it might have been a spirit, but the figure stole across the room noiselessly as the moonbeams themselves. It paused before another door—the father's door—and seemed to listen; then the latch was raised, and it glided in. There was moonlight struggling to dissipate the heavy gloom there, too, but the new presence aided it like a charm; on it went till it reached the bedside, and then stood mutely gazing down upon the slumbering occupant.
>
> A hard, stern face it was, scowling even in repose; but the watcher leaned over it with an expression of the deepest love. Some slight derangement of the bed covering seemed to have required his care, and he folded the blankets about the throat, and bent to listen to the strange, unquiet breathing with almost more than motherly solicitude, and his presence surely dissipated shadows there, whatever might have fashioned them; for he had scarcely reached the door again, when the dreamer was convulsed with agony, and writhed and shrieked out wildly in his sleep. The next moment, however, all was peace; he had been soothed and reassured, though not awakened, and the intruder had crept up to the same pillow, and lay there beside him like a pure spirit.

Also in "Wilderness Refuge" is a description of meditation. Young Herman has just been told of his father's terrible secret:

> Herman was relieved when the man was gone. Now he had liberty to think; and he laid his head between his hands and traced the shadows in his mind, until the whole seemed as a passing scene. New, strange, dismal thoughts they were, yet he brooded over them patiently and almost hopefully. Light mingled in among their forms at length, and he seemed looking down into his own mind as upon the shifting scenery of a moving panorama.—Brighter visions arose, and a new world had opened to his view—he was among the angels, as it were, and his whole soul was full of light.

Mathew Franklin Whittier's contribution to "A Christmas Carol"

Turning back now to Mathew, his typical prose, compared with that which originally appeared in Dickens' handwritten draft of the "Carol," shows a distinct similarity. As said, his style was, by his own admission, crisp; while Dickens' was more flowery and verbose. Where you can make out Dickens' revisions in that handwritten draft—which is very difficult, because he deliberately obscured the earlier writing with a heavy corkscrew motion—it appears that 90% of the changes were simply for the purpose of stretching out the prose. By our standards of composition, today, he was *making it worse*. But Mathew's style, and especially his humor, are evident throughout the work. This would take us too long to demonstrate in the present article, but several examples and comparisons are given in my books. To get a sense of how Dickens appears to have extended Mathew's prose, one example, taken from the introduction, will suffice. As best I can determine, Dickens' earlier draft of the opening—which presumably reflects more of Mathew's style—originally read as follows:

> Marley was dead: to begin with. There is no doubt whatever about that. The register of his burial was signed by the clergyman, the clerk, the undertaker, and his mourner. Scrooge signed it: and Scrooge's name was good upon 'change, for anything he put his hand to. Old Marley was as dead as a door-nail.
>
> Alas! I don't mean to say that I know, myself, what there is particularly dead about a door-nail. I should have been inclined, myself, to consider a coffin-nail as the deadest piece of ironmongery in the trade. But the wisdom of our ancestors is in the simile; and my unhallowed hands shall not disturb it, or the Country's done for. You will therefore permit me to repeat that Marley was as dead as a door-nail.

Dickens' subsequent revision (the published version) reads:

> Marley was dead: to begin with. There is no doubt whatever about that. The register of his burial was signed by the clergyman, the clerk, the undertaker, and the chief mourner. Scrooge signed it: and Scrooge's name was good upon 'Change, for anything he chose to put his hand to. Old Marley was as dead as a door-nail.
>
> Mind! I don't mean to say that I know, of my own knowledge, what there is particularly dead about a door-nail. I might have been inclined, myself, to regard a coffin-nail as the deadest piece of ironmongery in the trade. But the wisdom of our ancestors is in the simile; and my unhallowed hands shall not disturb it, or the Country's done for. You will therefore permit me to repeat, emphatically, that Marley was as dead as a door-nail.

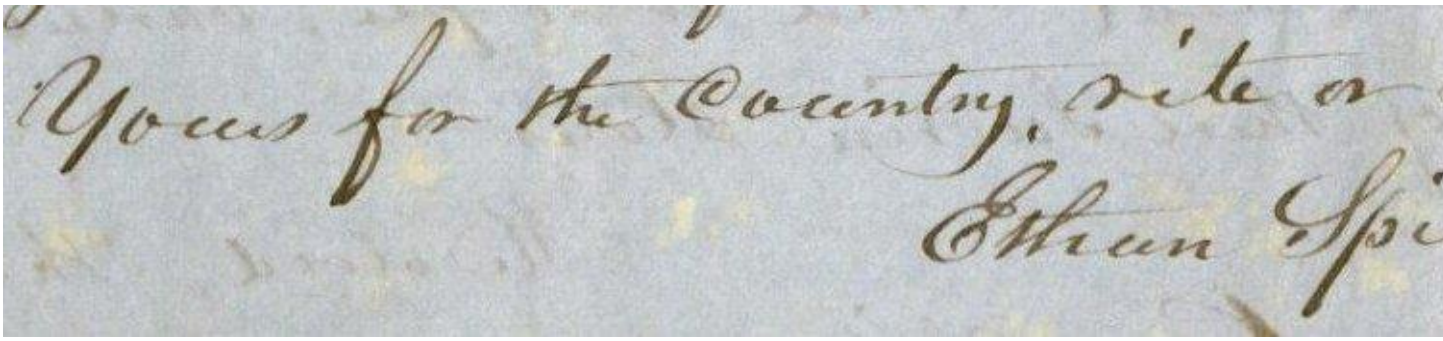
Note in particular that where Mathew had "I don't mean to say that I know, myself," Dickens has revised it to, "I don't mean to say that I know, of my own knowledge..." *Why*? It merely pads the sentence with a redundancy, and breaks the flow. A great many of the revisions in Dickens' draft appear to be of this ilk. It is, simply, the editorial work of someone arbitrarily *putting his own stamp* on someone else's prose, and perhaps artificially lengthening the work to make it more suitable for publication.

In my digitized database containing over 2,300 of Mathew's published works, I found the phrase "good upon 'change" (with "'change" either capitalized or lower case) in five different pieces. Of these, two were definitely published prior to "A Christmas Carol," and the other three may have been (as I will discuss when I come to Mathew's stolen portfolio). The phrase appears to be a shortened version of the colloquialism "upon Exchange," meaning the stock exchange or the market. In the 1830's, Mathew had worked in this field in New York City, and in fact he was the real author of "The Perils of Pearl Street, Including a Taste of the Dangers of Wall Street," which historians have mistakenly attributed to his editor, Asa Greene. That book was published in 1834. Using the search function in Archive.org, which does accept double word combinations, I was unable to find the phrase "upon 'change" in any of Charles Dickens' works published before 1843, including his short story collections.

Similarly, I found "dead as a door nail" in two of Mathew's works published prior to 1843, along with three variations, like "dead as a barn-door" and "dead as a stone." After 1843, there are two more instances, and another variation. Conversely, I was unable to find any instances of this

colloquialism in Dickens' works prior to 1843.

There are a number of expressions in the "Carol" which were Mathew's favorites, in addition to jokes and puns which would be absolutely typical for him. However, inasmuch as Mathew admired Dickens, and Dickens, himself, could conceivably have been influenced by *Mathew's* work for New York City papers in the 1830's, to the extent they were available in London, it becomes tricky to prove Mathew's authorship merely by isolating these elements. I will simply note that Mathew, in his "Ethan Spike" satires, was fond of having his conservative character proclaim variations on "my country, right or wrong," as we see in the following signature:



Mathew had a habit of re-using his favorite literary elements several years later, in other publications and under new pseudonyms. In this, he was like all comedians, who bring back—and, if possible, improve upon—their old "gags." In the Nov. 6, 1830 edition of the New York "Constellation," we see the following passage in Mathew's unsigned editorial entitled "Belief in Dreams":

> "*Happened* to dream!" exclaimed the good woman, taking a large pinch of snuff. "Do you think that dreams come by chance? Impossible! they are ordained by heaven to forewarn us of what is to come."
>
> "Just as much, ma'am, as you're ordained to eat a hearty supper of plum-cake and cheese just before going to bed."
>
> "Plum-cake and cheese! O Lord, what a *skiptick* you are. Do you think all my dreams are owing to plum-cake and cheese?"
>
> "Perhaps not, to those particular articles. Any thing which oppresses the stomach, is apt to disorder the brain, and produce unquiet sleep; and this kind of sleep it is that causes dreams. Affections originating in the mind produce a similar result. If you retire to rest with your mind ill at ease, from whatever cause, whether from anger, jealousy or remorse, you will probably experience unpleasant dreams. The body and the mind mutually affect each other. If both were in perfect health—the body exempt from all disease and the mind free from care, you would never dream."

The back-story, here, is that Abby, who was tutoring Mathew via correspondence, had been slipping occult teachings into her curriculum; while she, herself, may have been psychic, and if

so, would have been relating her prescient dreams to him. At this stage, he remained a skeptic, even to the point of lampooning some of these subjects. But as said, by the time he and Abby began working on "A Christmas Carol" in 1838, he had accepted most of her beliefs. That's why, when he returned to this literary idea for the "Carol," writing the part of Ebenezer Scrooge, he was now taking the devil's advocate position. I have already mentioned that Mathew was a philosopher, and loved puns. He also suffered from dyspepsia:

> "You don't believe in me," observed the Ghost.
>
> "I don't," said Scrooge.
>
> "What evidence would you have of my reality beyond that of your senses?"
>
> "I don't know," said Scrooge.
>
> "Why do you doubt your senses?"
>
> "Because," said Scrooge, "a little thing affects them. A slight disorder of the stomach makes them cheats. You may be an undigested bit of beef, a blot of mustard, a crumb of cheese, a fragment of an underdone potato. There's more of gravy than of grave about you, whatever you are!"

Now, there are a number of Mathew's short stories which appear to be precursors to "A Christmas Carol." The problem is, they were part of a portfolio which was stolen in 1848 by another pair of plagiarists, Francis A. Durivage and George P. Burnham, being published by them piecemeal in 1848-1855—many years after the publication of the "Carol." However, I believe that these particular stories were actually written *earlier*, before Abby's death in 1841—and that Mathew and Abby drew from them for their collaboration. Thus, where Abby's stories are concerned, because she died in 1841 the only research issue is to prove that they were hers—which I can do beyond a reasonable doubt. But when we get to Mathew's purported precursors, the question is not only his authorship, but *when* he wrote them. I am satisfied the evidence shows that these stories were also written before Dickens' publication of "A Christmas Carol" in 1843.

If I am right about this chronology, the evidence itself is compelling. For example, in "The New Year's Stockings," which is found in Durivage's compilation, "The Three Brides, Love in a Cottage, and Other Tales," we have a clerk named "Simon Quillpen" and his miserly employer, old Lawyer Litatat. Simon is so poor that he cannot afford gifts for his "little wife and three very little children, Bob, Chiffy, and the baby." Here we see Simon Quillpen begging his employer for a small loan:

> "Mr. Latitat, sir!" cried Quillpen, with desperate resolution, as he saw the great man about to disappear—"please, sir—could you let me have a little money to-night?"
>
> "Why! What do you want of money?" retorted the lawyer, "O! I 'spose you have a host of unpaid bills."

> “No, sir; no sir; that’s not it,” Simon hastened to say. “I hain’t got nary bill standing. I pay as I go. Cash takes the lot!”
>
> “None of your coarse, vulgar slang to me!” said Latitat. “Reserve it for your loose companions. If not to pay bills, what for?”
>
> “Please, sir,—we, that is Mrs. Q. and myself, want to put something in the children’s stockings, sir.”
>
> “Then put the children’s legs in ‘em!” said the lawyer with a grin. “I make no payments to be used for any such ridiculous purposes. Good night. Yet stay—take this letter—there’s money in it—a large amount—put it in the post-office with your own hands as you go home.”
>
> “And you can’t let me have a trifle?” gasped Simon.
>
> “Not a cent!” snarled the lawyer, and he slammed the door behind him, and went heavily down the stairs.

Note that Mathew loved colloquial expressions; so one of the worst things a villain could do, in Mathew’s world, would be to disparage Quillpen for using them. No doubt the charge had been leveled at him. In the final resolution of “Stockings,” it happens that Quillpen’s employer was only testing him, and is more than generous. Here, we see some elements in common with “A Christmas Carol”—but when we get to a story entitled “The New Year’s Bells” (included in the same compilation), we find a full-blown precursor to the “Carol.” In fact, it would not be too strong to suggest that this was a working template.

It is once again New Year’s Eve, and this time a terrible, icy storm is blowing in from the north through a small village. A cruel, miserly landlord named “Israel Wurm” (a predecessor to “Ebenezer Scrooge”) comes to collect his rent from a poor widow with two little boys. She cannot afford to pay, and he threatens to evict her into the cold. But on his walk home, passing through a graveyard, he feels compelled to sit down upon a flat tombstone, falling asleep there. In his dreams, he first sees the old village sexton digging a grave. Upon asking whose it is, the sexton is coy, saying only that the man died the previous night, and is to be buried that day. The grave, of course, turns out to be his own, in a scene strongly reminiscent of Scrooge’s encounter with the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come:

> “Methinks this haste is somewhat indecorous,” said Israel Wurm.
>
> “Oh, for the matter of that,” said the sexton, “the sooner this fellow’s out of the way the better. There’s nobody to mourn for him.”
>
> “Is he a pauper, then?”
>
> “O no! he was immensely rich.”

> “And had he no relations—no friends?”
>
> “For relations he had a nephew, who inherits all his property. The young dog will make the money fly, I tell you. As for friends, he had none. The poor dreaded him—the good despised him; for he was a hardhearted, selfish, griping [gripping] man. In a word, he was a Miser,” said the sexton.
>
> “A miser,” faltered the trembling dreamer; “what was his name?”
>
> “Israel Wurm,” replied the sexton.

The similarities between this story and “A Christmas Carol” don’t end there. The dream which follows has Israel seeing himself as a boy, walking with his friend Mark near the schoolhouse—very much like Scrooge seeing himself as a boy, in the “Carol.” At this age, Israel is generous with Mark. Suddenly, the scene fades:

> Israel stood before a huge illuminated screen, in the midst of a gaping company of sight seers. He could see nothing but a confused mass of heads, vaguely lighted by the rays from that vast screen. It was some kind of exhibition.
>
> “Now, ladies and gentlemen,” said a strange voice issuing from the darkness, “we shall show you the wonders of the oxy-hydrogen microscope; natural objects magnified five thousand times. Look at behold the proboscis of the common house fly.”
>
> Israel gazed with the rest and soon a huge object, resembling the trunk of a monster elephant, appeared on the illuminated disk. It passed away.
>
> “Now, ladies and gentlemen,” said the voice, “look well to the illuminated screen. What do you see now?”
>
> “Nothing!” was the universal and indignant answer.
>
> “I thought so,” replied the voice. “Yet you have before you a miser’s soul magnified five thousand times; a million such would not produce an image on the screen.”

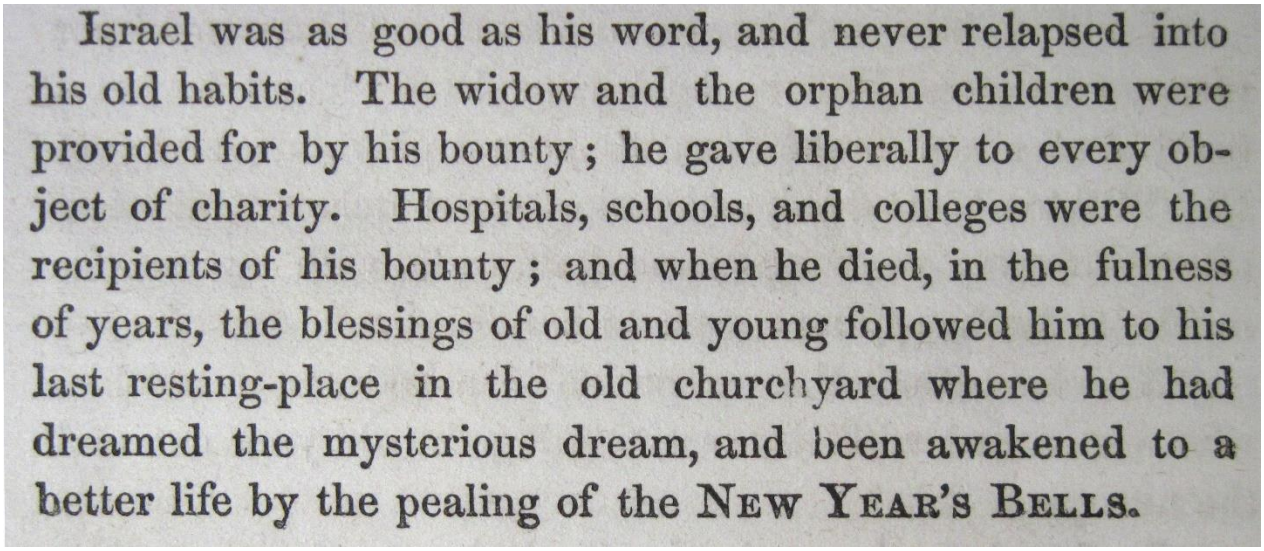
Now Israel finds himself, still dreaming, in hell, when he is awakened from his dream by the village butcher and the schoolmaster, and by the distant sound of boys ringing in the New Year. Just as Scrooge is depicted in the “Carol,” Israel Wurm is transformed:

> “How came you asleep there?” asked Farmer Harrowby, “Why, you might have perished in the drift.”
>
> “I was overcome by drowsiness,” answered Israel. “I was very cold; I’d been to make a call on Widow Redman, and the poor soul was out of wood. By the way, farmer, the first thing after sunrise, I want you to be sure to gear up your ox team, and take a cord

> of your best hickory and pitch pine to the widow."
>
> "And who'll pay me?" asked the farmer, doubtfully.
>
> "I will, to be sure," answered Israel. "Have not I got money enough? Here—hold your hand;" and he put a handful of silver in the farmer's honest palm. "And you, Mr. Wilkins," he added, addressing the butcher, "take her the best turkey you've got, and half a pig, with my compliments, and a happy new year to her."

In my opinion, the similarity between this dialogue, and that found in "A Christmas Carol" after Scrooge's conversion, where Scrooge promises to pay the boy passing under his window "half a crown" to deliver a turkey to Bob Cratchit's house, is far beyond chance. It is in the closing, however, that we not only find another parallel, but the *same phrase* as that found in what I believe to be Mathew and Abby's original closing of "A Christmas Carol." Here, in "The New Year's Bells," we read:

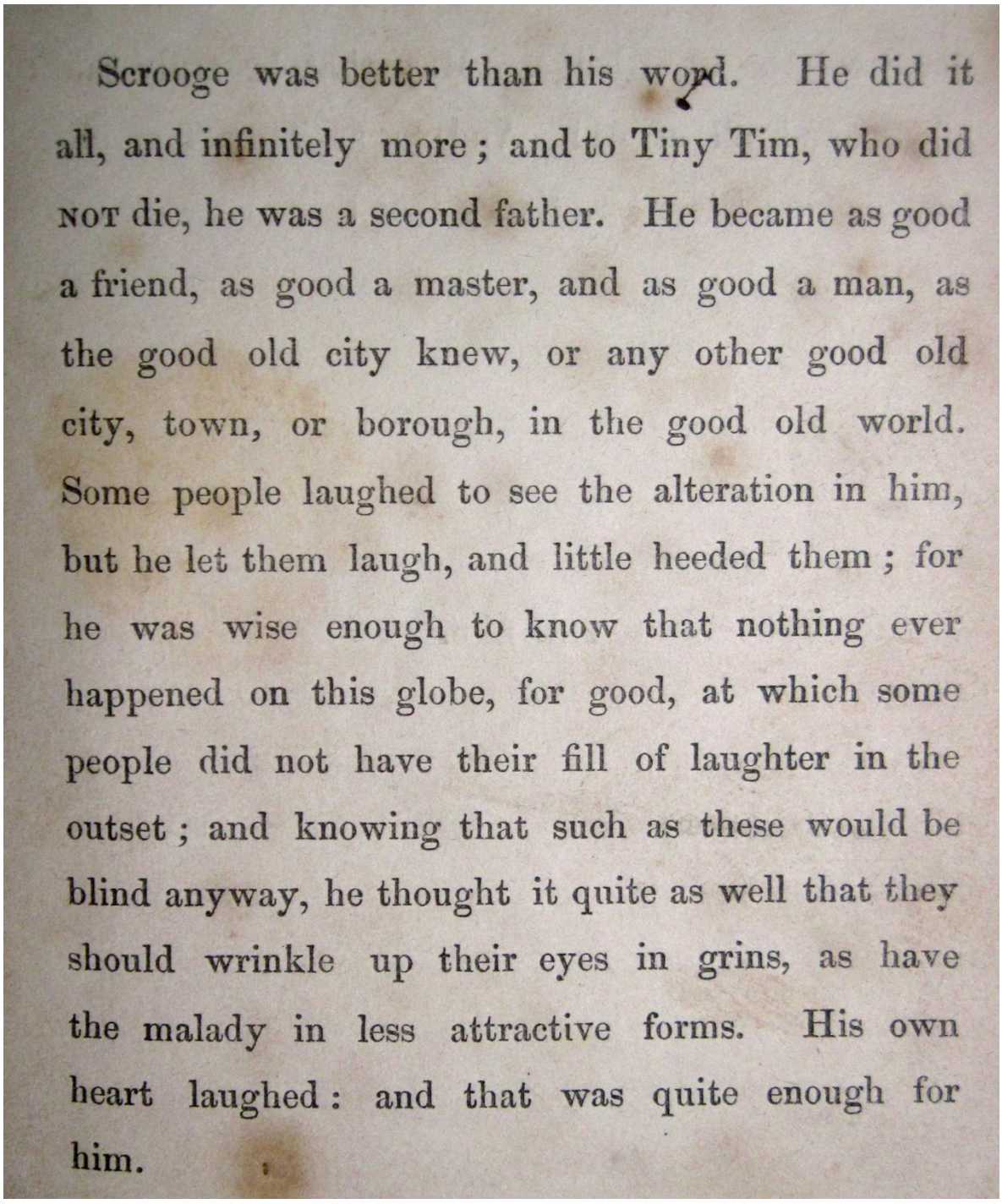
> Israel was as good as his word, and never relapsed into his old habits. The widow and the orphan children were provided for by his bounty; he gave liberally to every object of charity. Hospitals, schools, and colleges were the recipients of his bounty; and when he died, in the fulness of years, the blessings of old and young followed him to his last resting-place in the old churchyard where he had dreamed the mysterious dream, and been awakened to a better life by the pealing of the NEW YEAR'S BELLS.


Israel was as good as his word, and never relapsed into his old habits. The widow and the orphan children were provided for by his bounty; he gave liberally to every object of charity. Hospitals, schools, and colleges were the recipients of his bounty; and when he died, in the fulness of years, the blessings of old and young followed him to his last resting-place in the old churchyard where he had dreamed the mysterious dream, and been awakened to a better life by the pealing of the NEW YEAR'S BELLS.

If this sounds familiar, it's because it is eerily similar to the *next-to-last* paragraph of "A Christmas Carol":

> Scrooge was better than his word. He did it all, and infinitely more; and to Tiny Tim, who did NOT die, he was a second father. He became as good a friend, as good a master, and as good a man, as the good old city knew, or any other good old city, town, or borough, in the good old world. Some people laughed to see the alteration in him, but he let them laugh, and little heeded them; for he was wise enough to know that nothing

ever happened on this globe, for good, at which some people did not have their fill of laughter in the outset; and knowing that such as these would be blind anyway, he thought it quite as well that they should wrinkle up their eyes in grins, as have the malady in less attractive forms. His own heart laughed: and that was quite enough for him.



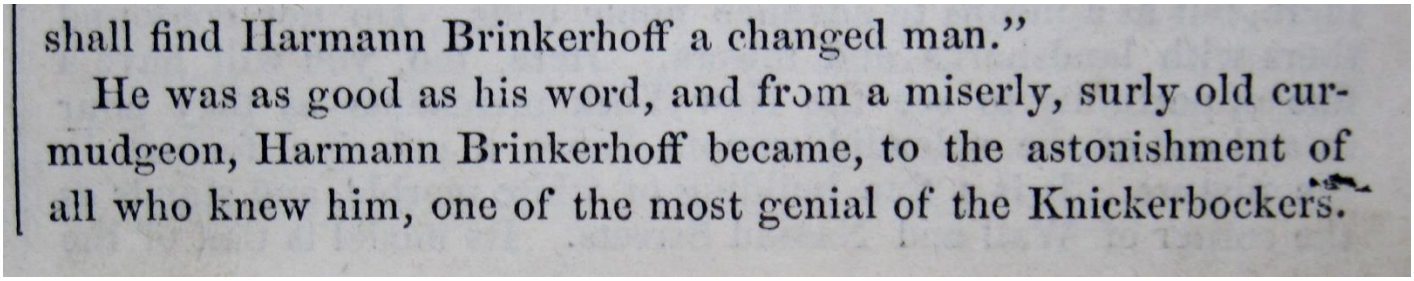
Scrooge was better than his word. He did it all, and infinitely more; and to Tiny Tim, who did NOT die, he was a second father. He became as good a friend, as good a master, and as good a man, as the good old city knew, or any other good old city, town, or borough, in the good old world. Some people laughed to see the alteration in him, but he let them laugh, and little heeded them; for he was wise enough to know that nothing ever happened on this globe, for good, at which some people did not have their fill of laughter in the outset; and knowing that such as these would be blind anyway, he thought it quite as well that they should wrinkle up their eyes in grins, as have the malady in less attractive forms. His own heart laughed: and that was quite enough for him.

Although the revision does not appear in this handwritten draft, I believe that in an earlier one

Dickens probably revised "Scrooge was as good as his word" to "Scrooge was better than his word." My reasoning is that being as "good as one's word" is a statement of *integrity*; whereas being "better than one's word" attempts to do it one better by translating it into *generosity*. The former is a terse statement of Quaker ethics meaning that one *keeps one's word*; the latter is a more worldly interpretation, albeit a positive one.

This is not the only time Mathew ended a story in a similar manner. Another tale, evidently stolen from Mathew by Durivage and published in the April 21, 1855 edition of "Ballou's Pictorial," is entitled "A Story of Old Times." This one features a retired New York merchant named Harmann Brinkerhoff, who is wealthy, vain, proud and stubborn, being what we would call, today, a "control freak." His son, Nicholas, is "as unlike his father as possible." At the conclusion of the story, the elder Brinkerhoff undergoes a complete character transformation when, having thought his son was dead, he discovers he is alive after all. The author writes:

> He was as good as his word, and from a miserly, surly old curmudgeon, Harmann Brinkerhoff became, to the astonishment of all who knew him, one of the most genial of the Kinckerbockers.


shall find Harmann Brinkerhoff a changed man."

He was as good as his word, and from a miserly, surly old curmudgeon, Harmann Brinkerhoff became, to the astonishment of all who knew him, one of the most genial of the Knickerbockers.

Now, if we look back at the next-to-last paragraph of "A Christmas Carol," which I believe was the original ending, we can see why it is unlikely to have been written by Dickens, and why it would be a perfect fit for Mathew. At the time that Mathew and Abby would have begun work on this story—in the Fall of 1838—they had recently borne the brunt of heavy persecution, both for their outspoken support of abolition, and because of Abby's involvement in mysticism and the occult. They were undoubtedly being ridiculed, and what we see in this paragraph is Mathew's philosophical way of handling it as a humorist. This passage was quite literal *for him*. But it was no match at all for Dickens, who was a famous, celebrated author accustomed to lauds and honors. Note that it is not strictly apropos of anything in the story line. We would hardly expect the transformed Ebenezer Scrooge to be laughed at for his new-found generosity and kindness—at least, not after the initial shock, and not by very many. In other words, while some people may have initially "laughed to see the alteration in him," this would have been over quickly—whereas the narrator's remarks imply continuing persecution, which requires him to *adopt a particular stance*. Therefore, this passage suggests an ongoing personal experience of the author, which has been projected somewhat arbitrarily onto the temporary situation of the newly-reformed Ebenezer Scrooge. As such, it is *far* more plausible for Mathew, than for Charles Dickens.

Again, the only question is whether these and a few other stories—once they have been wrested from Durivage and Burnham, and identified as Mathew's own—were written *before* "A

Christmas Carol" was published, or *after*. The answer is that they cannot have been written afterwards, because Mathew, a man of integrity, prided himself on his originality. And these (especially "The New Year's Bells") are far too close to claim mere "inspiration," no less coincidence. If "Bells" had been written afterwards, it would come well within the definition of plagiarism. But the portfolio which Durivage and Burnham gained publication rights for—probably by tricking Mathew into signing a bogus contract—bears evidence of going back at least as far as the early 1830's. It is thus entirely possible that Mathew wrote these stories well before the "Carol" was published. And because Mathew prided himself on his originality, it is effectively *impossible* that he wrote them afterwards. Ironically, the only reason we have them, today, is that Durivage didn't care. Mathew, himself, never would have published them.

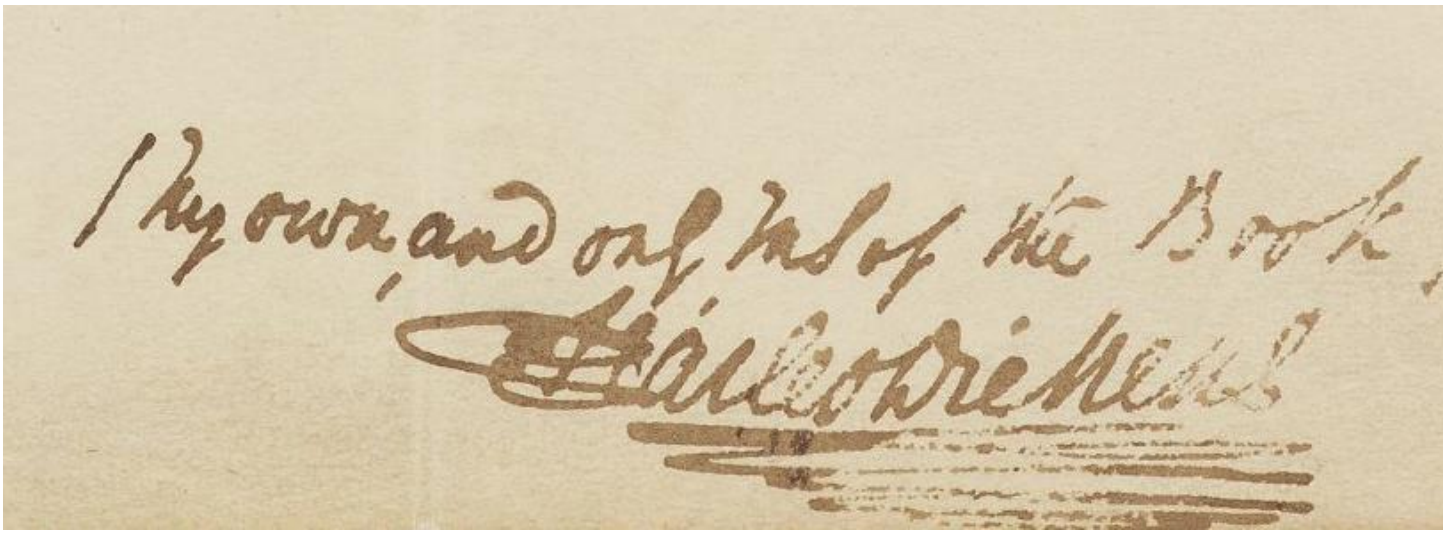
Further supporting my conclusions is the fact that the name, "Israel Wurm," suggests a Jew, despite the fact that the character is said to be a Christian. At the very least, it is insensitive, and at worst, an ethnic slur. This would be far more characteristic of Mathew's early work—say, from 1830—than his work even eight years later (when I believe Mathew and Abby first began work on the "Carol"). The name "Ebenezer Scrooge" suggests a similar character, without identifying the villain's ethnicity. ("Ebenezer" was not an uncommon name in New England at the time.)

Concerning precursors, the usual academic position is that Dickens' contribution to the 1836 Christmas "Pickwick Papers," entitled "The Story of the Goblins Who Stole a Sexton," stands as proof that he further developed its plot elements to write the "Carol." There are indeed some similarities, in the sense that the supernatural (i.e., goblins) is involved in the transformation of a misanthropic loner. But what is specifically missing in "Goblins" is real spirituality, and authentic metaphysics. Certainly, it is a story of the personal redemption, through fanciful paranormal creatures, of a Scrooge-like character. But this is precisely what we would expect from a worldly man who loves ghost stories, writing for the Christmas season. On the other hand, the metaphysical side of the story bears about as much similarity to "A Christmas Carol," as a carnival does to a symphony. The difference between the two stories is not so much a matter of *degree*, as Les Standiford suggests in "The Man Who Invented Christmas," as it is a matter of *kind*. And this is precisely why worldly scholars miss the distinction—they simply aren't qualified, despite their academic training, to know the difference. Without intending to boast, as of this writing I have studied spirituality and metaphysics for roughly 47 years, and I have the necessary training to discern it.

Even before learning of Robert Seymour, in the course of writing this article my gut feeling, concerning "Goblins," was that Dickens stole the idea from some other story, and re-worked it to reflect fanciful metaphysics and worldly (i.e., social), rather than spiritual, redemption. Now it appears that this is precisely what Dickens did, though we will probably never know whether Seymour's original conception was, like the "Carol," more spiritual.

Evidence contained in Dickens' handwritten draft

Some of the strongest evidence pointing to the authorship of "A Christmas Carol" by a more spiritual writer or writers, can be found by scrutinizing the handwritten draft which Dickens boldly claimed was his "Own, and only, Manuscript" of "A Christmas Carol."



Again, I have concluded for several reasons that the one available to us, today, probably wasn't the first draft. He would have started by hand-copying Mathew and Abby's original, which he would have unceremoniously tossed in the fireplace. Next, he would have gone through a series of drafts, so that this may be the second or third. As I have explained, Mathew and Abby were both deeply spiritual persons; and Abby, in particular, was steeped in various religious and esoteric traditions, with the Catholicism of her upbringing (including the writings of the Catholic saints and mystics) as a base. There is evidence that she studied astrology, the Hermetic teachings, German mysticism and Eastern mysticism; and she might well have been familiar with high Alchemy (which is concerned with the transformation of consciousness), and perhaps the Kabala. This should not be surprising—we are familiar with Thomas Merton's explorations outside of Christianity, for example. But the audacious intent of this particular work was nothing short of transforming humanity, one reader at a time, by bringing him or her through a vicarious conversion experience. This is no "Ghost Story of Christmas." Dickens, facing the urgent need to forestall imminent debt with a "potboiler," had to dumb it down, spiritually. In so doing, he may have removed a great many of Abby's references to high mysticism, as well as her devotion to God. He left her description of the "Ghost of Christmas Past" more-or-less intact; but he completely re-wrote the character of the "Ghost of Christmas Present" so as to render him a bare-chested giant surrounded by every conceivable meat dish, whereas Abby was a modest Victorian and, apparently, a vegetarian. I suspect Abby of being a vegetarian, because Mathew teased her about it, just as he had teased her about prescient dreams.

The illustration of this Ghost downplays what the text tells us regarding the massive pile of meat accompanying him, which, as it is clearly implied, he is rather grossly *sitting* on:

> Heaped up on the floor, *to form a kind of throne*, were turkeys, geese, game, poultry, brawn, great joints of meat, sucking-pigs, long wreaths of sausages, mince-pies, plum-puddings, barrels of oysters, red-hot chestnuts, cherry-cheeked apples, juicy oranges, luscious pears, immense twelfth-cakes, and seething bowls of punch, that made the chamber dim with their delicious steam. (emphasis added)

Mathew signed the following poem with the pen-name, “Trismegistus.” “Trismegistus,” a reference to the fabled mystic teacher of the ancient world, Hermes Trismegistus, means “thrice great.” Evidently, Mathew was responding to Abby’s metaphysical curriculum by adopting this pseudonym in jest. The poem appears in the June 29, 1835 New York “Transcript,” having been reprinted from the New Haven “Herald.” (Seen in connection with another poem appearing with it on the page, this one may have precipitated a quarrel.)[13] It begins:

A SMALL SPECIMEN OF THE FASHIONABLY SIMPLE
STYLE FOR THE LOVERS OF NATURE.

Yea, geese *are* good; a charm is their's
  Which ducks, though fat and plump, have not;
Though nourished by the summer airs
  And fatted in a swampy spot.

And turkey too—oh, who would say
  That turkey is not *very* good;
For, search the land, and search the sea,
  You cannot meet with better food.

There is another significant revision concerning the Ghost of Christmas Present, where he mentions to Scrooge that he "has more than eighteen hundred brothers." If you look carefully at the handwritten draft, you see that Dickens added the phrase, "more than." Originally, then, there was a definite figure, "eighteen hundred." The passage, as Abby wrote it, suggests that according to her esoteric sources, there are exactly 1,800 members of the spiritual hierarchy, who act as guides for men and women on earth. Dickens decided to obfuscate it, by making it a more general estimate. That way, it didn't sound so much like a teaching from a particular mystery school. Instead, he left his readers to take it at face value that this Ghost had a great many (literal) siblings, giving the impression that the reference was merely thrown in for effect.

Directly below, in the narrative, appears yet another reference to authentic occult teachings which has been watered down by Dickens:

> The Ghost of Christmas Present rose.
>
> "Spirit," said Scrooge submissively, "conduct me where you will. I went forth last night on compulsion, and I learnt a lesson which is working now. To-night, if you have aught to teach me, let me profit by it."
>
> "Touch my robe!"
>
> Scrooge did as he was told, and held it fast.
>
> Holly, mistletoe, red berries, ivy, turkeys, geese, game, poultry, brawn, meat, pigs, sausages, oysters, pies, puddings, fruit, and punch, all vanished instantly. So did the room, the fire, the ruddy glow, the hour of night, and they stood in the city streets on Christmas morning, where (for the weather was severe) the people made a rough, but brisk and not unpleasant kind of music, in scraping the snow from the pavement in front of their dwellings, and from the tops of their houses, whence it was mad delight to the boys to see it come plumping down into the road below, and splitting into artificial little snow-storms.

All who have studied the genuine Teachings know that a being from an exalted realm has a higher rate of vibration. In order to interact with him or her, one's own rate of vibration must be raised accordingly. This is why the spirit requests Scrooge to touch his robe. But that such a being should be portrayed as an epicurean lover of every conceivable type of meat dish, is oxymoronic, as all teachings tell us that meat consumption *lowers* one's vibrations. It would have to have been Dickens who re-wrote the depiction of this Ghost, transforming him into a meat-loving giant (it has been suggested that Dickens patterned the Ghost of Christmas Present on John Forster). Abby's original must have been too much like the Ghost of Christmas Past to

suit him—because, of course, *she* was striving for authenticity.

But see what happens in the scene which immediately follows. They are now in a market, and what should be for sale in that market, but *fruits and vegetables*—no meat at all! Dickens' "Ghost" would be miserable, here. Note that the plums are French. I conclude that we are now back in Abby's original text:

> The Grocers'! oh, the Grocers'! nearly closed, with perhaps two shutters down, or one; but through those gaps such glimpses! It was not alone that the scales descending on the counter made a merry sound, or that the twine and roller parted company so briskly, or that the canisters were rattled up and down like juggling tricks, or even that the blended scents of tea and coffee were so grateful to the nose, or even that the raisins were so plentiful and rare, the almonds so extremely white, the sticks of cinnamon so long and straight, the other spices so delicious, the candied fruits so caked and spotted with molten sugar as to make the coldest lookers-on feel faint and subsequently bilious. Nor was it that the figs were moist and pulpy, or that the French plums blushed in modest tartness from their highly-decorated boxes, or that everything was good to eat and in its Christmas dress; but the customers were all so hurried and so eager in the hopeful promise of the day, that they tumbled up against each other at the door, crashing their wicker baskets wildly, and left their purchases upon the counter, and came running back to fetch them, and committed hundreds of the like mistakes, in the best humour possible; while the Grocer and his people were so frank and fresh that the polished hearts with which they fastened their aprons behind might have been their own, worn outside for general inspection, and for Christmas daws to peck at if they chose.

In my opinion, this suggests that as Dickens approached the end of the story, and as his window of opportunity to publish was narrowing, he became less and less concerned about making all the plot elements consistent. We will shortly see that his haste became his undoing.

The reader of "A Christmas Carol" will recall having earlier seen the teaching regarding vibration level—which as all mystics know is directly tied to qualities of the heart—in a scene featuring the Ghost of Christmas Past:

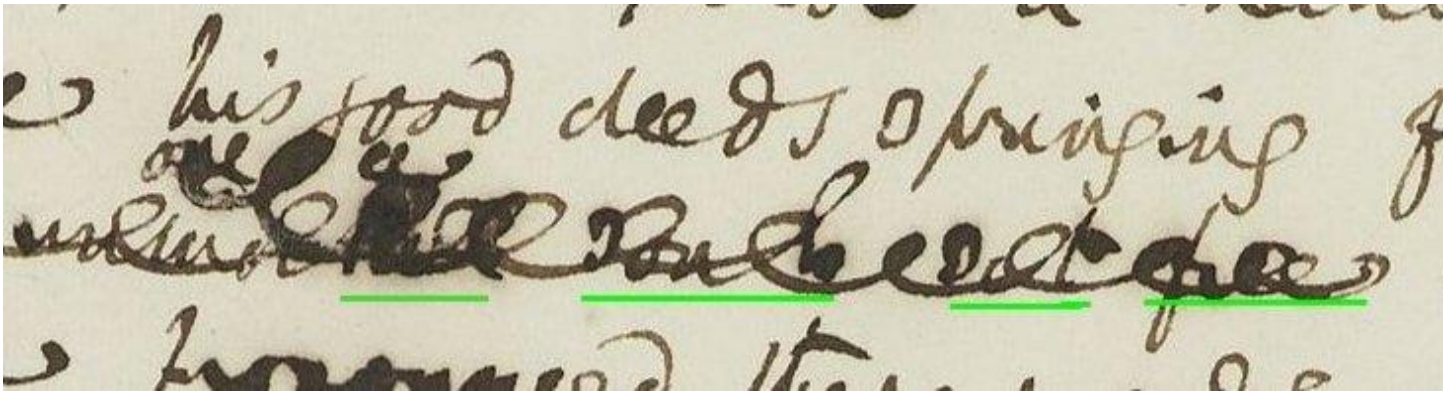
> It put out its strong hand as it spoke, and clasped him gently by the arm.
>
> "Rise! and walk with me!"
>
> It would have been in vain for Scrooge to plead that the weather and the hour were not adapted to pedestrian purposes; that bed was warm, and the thermometer a long way below freezing; that he was clad but lightly in his slippers, dressing-gown, and nightcap; and that he had a cold upon him at that time. The grasp, though gentle as a woman's hand, was not to be resisted. He rose: but finding that the Spirit made towards the window, clasped his robe in supplication.
>
> "I am a mortal," Scrooge remonstrated, "and liable to fall."

> "Bear but a touch of my hand *there*," said the Spirit, laying it upon his heart, "and you shall be upheld in more than this!"

All of this is Abby's prose, expressing her spirituality, her femininity, her love of birds and animals, and her quaint, indulgent view of humanity. I could present a dozen more examples from her short stories for comparison, but as we do not have enough space here to do them justice, we will move on to other evidence. Before we do, however, I should briefly point out a logical inconsistency. If Abby originally conceived of these spirits as guides, like angels; and if the third spirit (not "ghost," which term generally implies earth-bound spirits) was the one overseeing transition to the other side (i.e., death), then it would not, strictly-speaking, be a "ghost of Christmas future." The nature of Christmas future depends on each person, and his or her actions. Regarding Scrooge in particular, *his* future Christmas depends upon *his* actions. It will not do to define the personality of this third spirit as a figure of a doomed future Christmas. That would contradict the very premise of the story, which is, that Scrooge can *choose* a bright future! Therefore, this spirit had to have originally been conceived as a figure analogous to the Angel of Death, *before* the idea of ghosts "past, present and future" was introduced.

Two "smoking guns"

That much is admittedly speculation, but two "smoking guns" come in specifically where Dickens has watered down or outright secularized Abby's spiritual references. In the first that I discovered, Dickens' handwritten draft contains a brief speech by the "Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come," which originally ended, as near as I can make it out, with the words "his soul set free immortal!" This statement suggests influence from the Vedantic teaching of *Moksha* or Liberation, but Dickens has replaced it with a namby-pamby, religious-sounding but meaningless phrase, "to sow the world with life immortal!" Note that in Christianity, if anybody "sows the world with life immortal" it is the person of Jesus, to which one might perhaps add the apostles and subsequent evangelists; but here, as the paragraph has survived his editing process, it refers simply to a man who has lived a good life: "...the hand was open, generous, and true; the heart brave, warm, and tender; and the pulse a man's." In Christianity, the ongoing argument is between faith *with* "works," vs. faith alone, leading to salvation. That works, by themselves, *lead to immortal life* is not an especially popular position. Abby, meanwhile, appears to have reached outside of traditional Christian theology, though precisely what her views were is difficult to discern at this point. Dickens has evidently inserted his own substitution, which he felt sounded "religious enough" for his purposes.

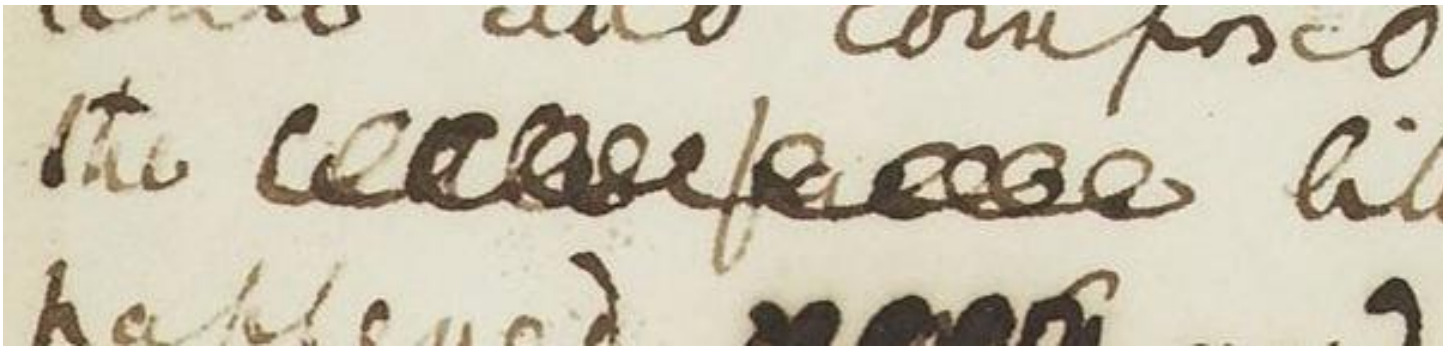


The second piece of evidence is even more compelling, despite the fact that what I discovered in Dickens' handwritten draft, which first brought it to my attention, turns out to be far weaker than I had initially thought. I have always striven for complete transparency in my research, and I will continue in that tradition, now.

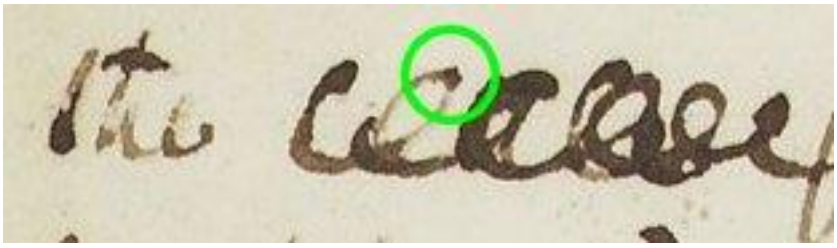
In the scene where the "Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come" takes Scrooge back to his clerk's house, to show him a Christmas scene of the future, Bob Cratchit comes home late. He has been walking home slowly, as the text is worded, for at least the past three days, and the inference is clear that this delay is a result of tarrying at the gravesite of Tiny Tim. (If not, one would have to assume that he was walking *so* slowly, that it made him markedly late—thus, "walking slowly" is used in family conversation as a euphemism.) The reader naturally assumes that Tim is newly-dead and that his body is in the grave—but then, upon arriving home, Bob retires upstairs to a room "lighted cheerfully, and hung with Christmas," to sit beside "the child." He composes himself, and returns to his family waiting for him downstairs. The little I could find by way of commentary on this passage, seems to indicate that scholars and readers have assumed that the "child" is the body of Tiny Tim, lying in state. But this cannot be—nor can it be Tiny Tim alive, in his final illness. All the Cratchit children, meanwhile, are accounted for. The key, here, is that as the family is awaiting Bob's arrival, his son, Peter, remarks "I think he has walked a little slower than he used, these few last evenings..." The word "few" can only signify three or more. Conservatively, then, we would have to believe that Bob has been tarrying at an *empty grave* for three evenings, *while his son's body lay upstairs at home*; or, alternatively, *while his son lay upstairs dying*. The latter is impossible, while the former is extremely implausible, no matter how pleasant the graveyard may be. Unless Bob is an extremely selfish man, he has more pressing business at home. So far as I have been able to determine, 19th-century families would not leave a body upstairs for three days; and if they did, the father most certainly would not hang back at the empty gravesite, or even walk home slowly, while his son's body lay there at home with his grieving family. The whole scene is a logistical nightmare. *No-one in his right mind would have written it that way from scratch*. This is beyond mere sloppiness (as has been suggested by at least one scholar, concerning this work as a whole). But a plagiarist who was in a great hurry to get the book printed in time for the Christmas season, to save himself from debt, and nearing the end of the narrative, might have made such a blunder. All Dickens wanted to do, at that late stage in his revisions, was to remove the blatantly religious references and get the blasted thing off to a publisher!

For additional clues, we turn once again to Dickens' handwritten manuscript. When I initially scrutinized this particular section of the draft, it appeared to me that the word "child" may have originally been capitalized, as "Child," such that it had once read, "the Child's face" instead of "the little face." A sudden realization came to me, even before I checked whether it was historically accurate: in the 19th century, deeply religious families did not deck an upstairs room out for Christmas as we might, today, with candy canes, and Frosty the Snowman, and Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer, and paper snowflakes. This would have been a *family shrine*, and in the center of it would have been a crèche, with the *Baby Jesus*. This was no ordinary child—this was the Christ Child. Bob Cratchit, upon leaving Tiny Tim's grave—which, as one has naturally and rightly assumed, had Tiny Tim's body in it—went upstairs to compose himself *sitting by the Christ Child*. And this is why we are told the chair bore evidence of having been sat in,

recently—because other family members had been doing the same. It was the author's way—Abby's way—of telling us that this was a household of faith.

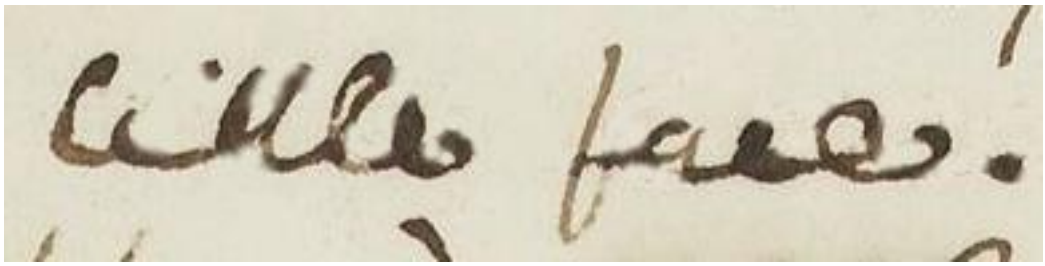


However, while I believe the sudden impression that came to me was correct, it is probably not reflected in the handwritten draft as I had initially interpreted. On closer examination, I found that the first redacted word appears to be "little," inasmuch as the dot for the letter "i" is precisely in the position it should be:



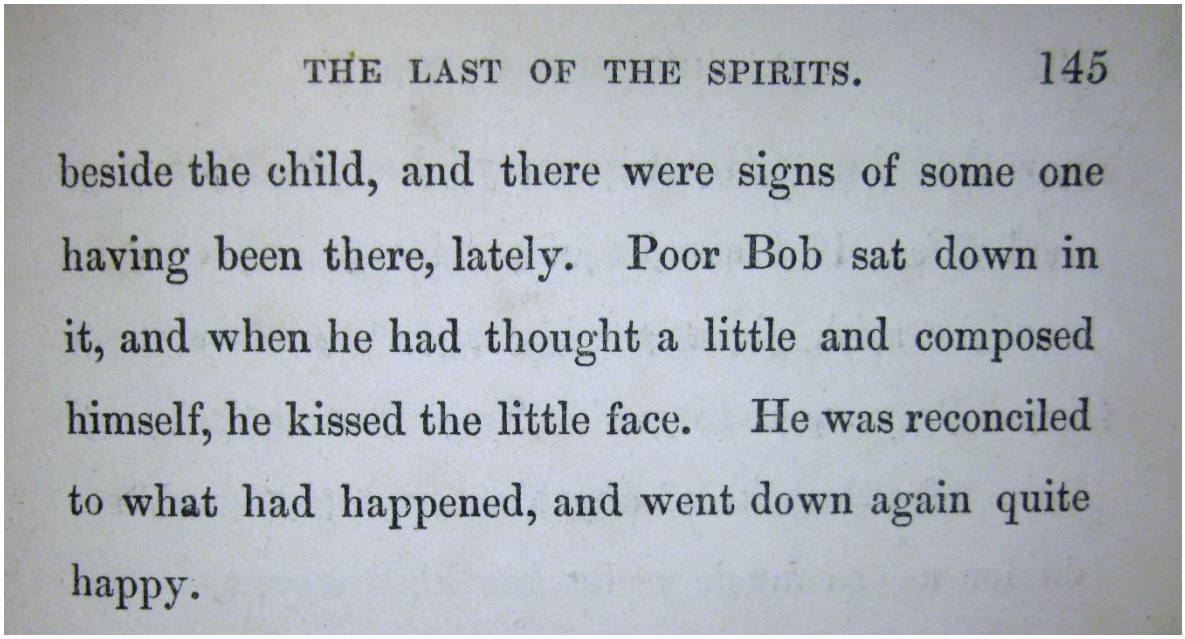
Below, taken from the same page, is the phrase, "little, little child" for comparison:

The word which follows appears to have been "face," so that when I used Photoshop Elements to remove what I believed to be the corkscrew redactions, I was left with the following:



Apparently, Dickens wrote “little face,” scribbled it out, and re-wrote it. Probably, even though this was the second or third draft, he was still struggling with the passage, which accounts for his vacillation on the matter. I would guess that in the original, “little face” was a reference to the dimunitive size of the wooden figure. Dickens deleted it as part of removing all allusions to the crèche; but then, decided to bring it back in, so that it now stood as a reference to Tiny Tim’s “little face.” I do not believe that Dickens, himself, intended his readers to *infer* that this was the Christ Child, because he would have given some more specific—and more respectful—indication, including capitalizing the word “Child.”

Thus, the insight which was triggered for me, even if not directly supported in the redacted text, is the only logical explanation. Dickens did, indeed, render this mysterious “child” with a lower-case letter “c”; and he gave no indication that this was a religious shrine, except to remark, in passing, that the room was “lighted cheerfully, and hung with Christmas.” I feel it’s obvious that what he has done, is to edit out all those references which were explictly religious, leaving the scene wide open to an interpretation which is nothing less than macabre.



THE LAST OF THE SPIRITS. 145

beside the child, and there were signs of some one having been there, lately. Poor Bob sat down in it, and when he had thought a little and composed himself, he kissed the little face. He was reconciled to what had happened, and went down again quite happy.

Note that this is not a matter of having dropped and broken an expensive piece of dinnerware in the kitchen. One “has a little thought” about such things, and becomes “reconciled to what had happened”—but one *prays* when one has lost a child (I know, having experienced it myself). It occurs to me that, so far as I can recall, I don’t remember ever seeing this scene in any movie version of “A Christmas Carol.” That must be because every director has taken it to mean that Bob Cratchit, after postponing his arrival as long as he can, immediately goes upstairs, thinks a little bit, kisses his son’s three-day-old corpse, and trips lightly down the stairs “quite happy.” So much for Dickens the great novelist.

The “Friends of Oak Grove” website, in an article entitled “Victorian Funeral Customs and

Superstitions," informs us:

> Most wakes also lasted 3-4 days to allow relatives to arrive from far away. The use of flowers and candles helped to mask unpleasant odors in the room before embalming became common.

Thus, the objection may be raised that it would have been technically possible for the Cratchit family to keep Tiny Tim's body in the house for "a few days," though it typically would have been laid in a casket, in the parlor—not in an upstairs room "lighted cheerfully, and hung with Christmas." It's obvious, at least to me, that Abby had originally described the crèche in a room "lighted cheerfully," while Dickens, in his hurry to complete his revisions, simply neglected to change the atmosphere accordingly when he swapped out the Christ Child for Tiny Tim's corpse. There is no mention of any relatives arriving from distant locations in the "Carol" narrative (and if there had been, Bob should have hurried home to receive them); nor does this explain why he would be so self-centered as to linger *at the empty gravesite*, on his way home from work, for several evenings in a row while his grieving family awaited his coming. It does, however, explain why *Dickens* would have thought it (barely) plausible. This scenario also creates the psychological absurdity that Bob Cratchit was the type to avoid stressful situations, even at the time of his family's greatest need; but then, upon eventually arriving home, he would find relief by going upstairs to *sit beside the corpse*—a complete about-face in coping styles. The skeptic may point out that in Victorian times, families would sometimes create a doll representing a deceased infant—but again, Tiny Tim would have been perhaps six or seven years old at the time of his death, and I could find no indication that this was done for older children. Furthermore, such dolls would have been expensive, and this is a poor family. Finally, if the Cratchits are a family of faith—which we know they are, based on Bob Cratchit's family prayer, and the promise to visit Tiny Tim's grave on Sundays—they would be less inclined to resort to such a psychological crutch than an unbelieving family.

To anticipate the skeptical reader, it is also impossible that Dickens could have revised his own earlier plot in this instance. But a secularist would not have portrayed religious devotion (especially, Catholic-style religious devotion featuring the worship of a carved figure) in the first place; while no sincerely religious author could have been convinced to secularize it for the general public. And if a Protestant had wanted to tone down the scene's Catholic leanings, he could have easily retained the references to the Christ Child and the family's faith, while discretely omitting the inference of direct worship at the crèche, rather than replacing the Child with a corpse.

There are barely-plausible explanations that Bob Cratchit had only visited the future gravesite of Tiny Tim that one evening, and that the other "few" evenings on which he had arrived home late, he had been walking slowly; that the family had kept Tiny Tim's corpse upstairs for several days (since Bob would have begun walking slowly only *after* the death); or, alternatively, that Dickens meant to infer that it was, indeed, a crèche in the upstairs room, but saw fit not to mention the Christ Child by name, preferring to use only the word "child" in lower case. I consider all of these skeptical explanations extremely unlikely.

A third religious reference may have been inadvertently left in by Dickens, because he didn't

realize just how radical it was. As every school child knows, after Bob Cratchit concludes the family prayer with the words "God bless us," Tiny Tim famously adds, "God bless us every one!" This was not as innocent a statement, in the early 19th-century, as it may seem to us today, nor is it merely "cute." Just as the word "stave" has two meanings, this phrase can either be taken to mean all the members of the *family*, or the whole of *humanity*. Many Christians of that era believed in the "elect" and the "damned." It was specifically the Universalists who asserted that all are saved. This statement by Tiny Tim is, therefore, tantamount to a defiant assertion of the Universalist position, which also accords with the esoteric sources Abby would have studied.

In concluding this portion of my argument, I would point out that, as Lord Elrond said to Gandalf in Rivendell, "Our list of allies grows *thin*." The list of authors who could combine all the elements which we see in the original version of "A Christmas Carol," as I have extrapolated them, is short, indeed. We must, obviously, have an exceptionally talented writer, and almost certainly an experienced one. He or she must be especially proficient with clever plots, and with humor, having a fondness for puns. He or she must be writing from a strong moral core, having a personal character to match; and he or she must be a social reformer. But most significantly, he or she must combine Christian devotion with authentic spiritualist and occult teachings. Remember, this is no "ghost story." Finally, if he or she is not from England, he or she must have demonstrated the ability to convincingly set a story in that country.

So how many authors actually embodied all of these attributes, in the 1830's or early 1840's? Both Mathew and Abby, as they have been revealed in my study, were child prodigies with an impressive published track record beginning at least by age 12 and 14, respectively. Mathew was a humorist, having made a deep study of the European satirists of previous centuries, and he loved puns. He himself had lived for many years in New York City, so he was well-familiar with city life; and he had set a great many of his lengthy adventure tales in other countries, as well as a novel published in 1850 which opens in London. Abby brought to the table her knowledge of mysticism and the occult; and both were deeply devotional Christians and social reformers. Together, they are a perfect match in what is, given the power and quality of this work, a very small field of plausible contenders.

On the other hand, when we debunk the idea that "A Christmas Carol" was a "ghost story," Charles Dickens doesn't even come close to fitting this profile, especially if the plot and characters of "Oliver Twist" were not his ideas, originally.

Some of the clues precluding Dickens' authorship of "A Christmas Carol" are in-your-face obvious, as are some which point to Mathew and Abby Whittier's original co-authorship. But some are more subtle, and only take on significance once Mathew's own style of communicating to posterity in "code" is understood. We have already seen one example in his review of Dickens' subsequent Christmas story. I discovered many such instances in the course of my research, several of which will be presented in another article concerning Edgar Allan Poe and "The Raven."

Encoded clues in Mathew's review of Dickens' 1867 public reading in America

Dickens revisited America in 1867-68 when he toured the country giving public readings, and

these performances frequently featured exerpts from “A Christmas Carol.” Mathew, being unable to obtain a ticket for Dickens’ Boston appearance, was nonetheless able to procure one at a theater in New York City, albeit in the “nosebleed” section. His review appeared in the Jan. 4, 1868 edition of the Portland (Maine) “Transcript,” where he dated his remarks from Dec. 20, 1867. He signed with a “star,” or single asterisk, which signature he had used, off-and-on, since the early 1830’s.

Mathew was Dickens’ fan when he would have turned over his and Abby’s precious manuscript to him in 1842; and despite occasional misgivings over the years, it would seem that he is still a fan in 1867. Except that he possesses a secret that no-one else in the world knows—he, Mathew, along with his late wife Abby, had been the original authors of the “Carol.” The situation is not so implausible as you may imagine—it would be like Bill Danoff and Taffy Nivert, the original composers of “Country Roads,” attending a concert where John Denver is performing that classic (except that John Denver publicly acknowledged his debt to them). So here, when Dickens begins to read, Mathew’s comments appear to be favorable. Even so, he is honest enough not to gush where gushing isn’t warranted.

Actually, what he tells us is very strange. One can’t quite figure out whether, in late 1867, he suspects Dickens of being the scoundrel that he is, or not. Personally, I think (and feel, from past-life emotions) that he was conflicted in himself about it:

> Having read in a Boston letter that the enunciation of the first sentence of the Carol assured his success in Boston, we were dismayed at perceiving nothing remarkable in that half-dozen words. But when the reader came to the paragraph, “Oh! But he was a tight-fisted hand at the grind-stone, was Scrooge! a squeezing, wrenching, grasping, clutching, covetous old sinner!” we knew who it was that spoke. There’s no other man in the world who can write as Dickens does. And now surely there’s nobody who can read like him. We recalled our first perusal of the book, and beheld
>
> > “Another morn risen on mid-noon.”
>
> Fezziwig’s ball was admirably managed and was a complete success. In came “Mrs. Fezziwig one vast animated smile.” The story of the Christmas dinner at the Cratchits was delightfully told, and nothing in mimic life could be more pathetic, than the obsession of Bob Cratchit when he exclaims, “my little, little child! my little child!”

The “first half-dozen words” of “A Christmas Carol,” are:

> Marley was dead: to begin with.

As I suggested earlier, this opening narration is given *by a believer*. What Mathew means when he says he was “dismayed” that these six words, uttered by Dickens, were unimpressive, is that Dickens sounded *inauthentic*. In other words, it’s not just that Dickens took awhile to get warmed up. It’s his inability to express these particular six words with sincerity, that dismays Mathew. On the other hand, he found that Dickens’ reading about the character of Scrooge—a worldly man—*was* authentic.

Thus, it was coming home to him that Dickens was far more like Scrooge than he was like the narrator of the story.

Furthermore, if I am not mistaken, where Mathew writes, “There’s no other man in the world who can write as Dickens does,” this is not a refutation of my conclusions, as it first appears. Rather, it is a *confirmation* of them. Technically, this is a neutral statement. He does *not* say, “There’s no other man in the world who can write as *well* as Dickens does.” I believe that the phrase “as well” is deliberately withheld. Thus, as it is written, this neither praises Dickens’ writing style, nor criticizes it. Neither does it actually say that Dickens *wrote* what he was reading aloud that night. All those things are merely *implied*.

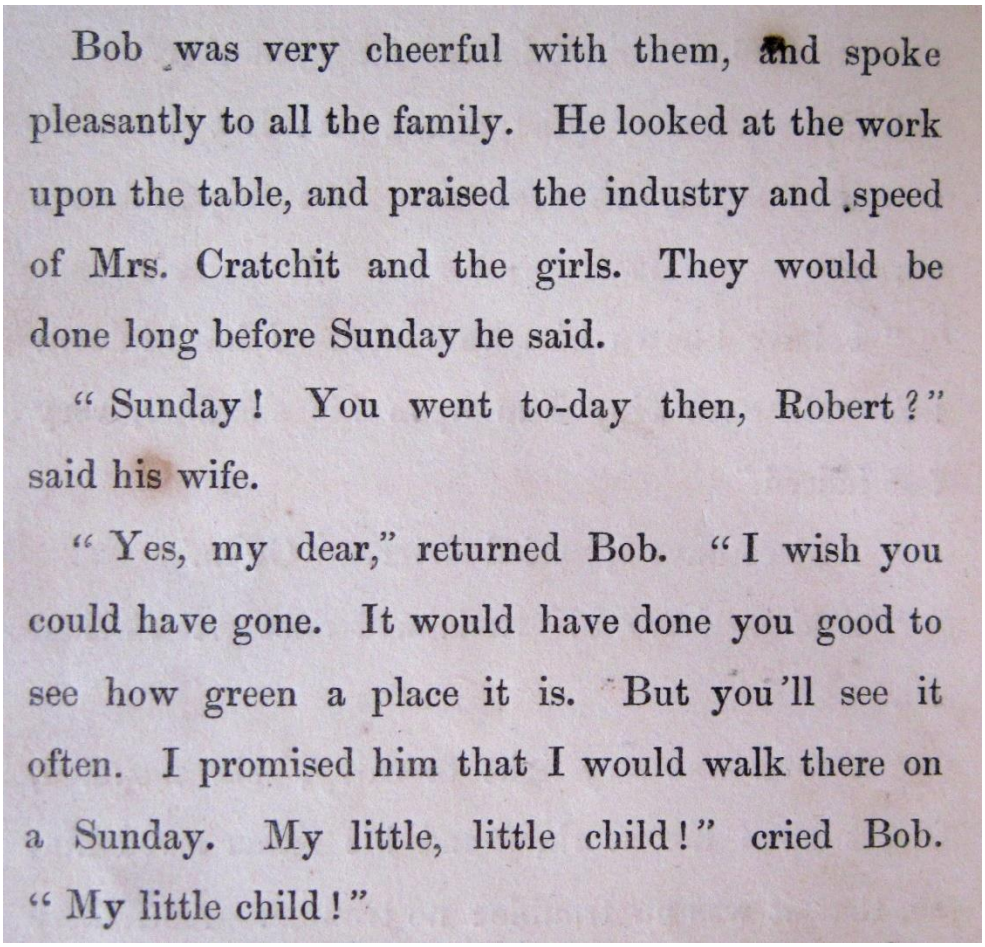
In code, it means:

> Nobody in the world writes precisely as Dickens does, and this was not originally written in Dickens’ style. It was written in my style and in Abby’s style—and Dickens was not entirely successful in converting it to his own.

But there is more embedded, here. One use that Mathew frequently made of these encoded messages to posterity, was to convey something deeply personal about his own history, and especially his relationship with Abby. He has not disappointed us, here, in this most crucial of circumstances. If I am correct, this young couple began work on the “Carol” shortly after their first child, Joseph Poyen Whittier, died on August 5, 1838. It was, as I feel, Mathew’s way of pulling Abby out of a deep depression, by asking for her help in a project to benefit humanity. Here again, one must refrain from simply assuming what is *implied* for a general audience. Instead, one must read the passage literally:

> ...nothing in mimic life could be more pathetic, than the obsession of Bob Cratchit when he exclaims, “my little, little child! my little child!”

Mathew is not saying that Dickens’ *reading* was so emotionally powerful to him. He is saying that the *original facts* on which this passage was based are still overpowering, all these many years later. “Cratchit” *was* Mathew, in “mimic life”; and what he had originally written, “my little, little child! my little child!” had once been *his own expression of grief* upon learning of the death of his son, in 1838—which would have been quite fresh at the time he and Abby were writing the “Carol.”



Bob was very cheerful with them, and spoke pleasantly to all the family. He looked at the work upon the table, and praised the industry and speed of Mrs. Cratchit and the girls. They would be done long before Sunday he said.

"Sunday! You went to-day then, Robert?" said his wife.

"Yes, my dear," returned Bob. "I wish you could have gone. It would have done you good to see how green a place it is. But you'll see it often. I promised him that I would walk there on a Sunday. My little, little child!" cried Bob. "My little child!"

Now, *this* is strange. Because when I took the photograph, above, from my 1844 original, I found first of all that it is on the page preceding the suspicious passage concerning Bob retiring upstairs to sit with the "child." But moreover, I'm confused—if this is not Sunday, and Bob is saying that certain items will be completed by Sunday—no doubt clothing for the funeral—then why does Mrs. Cratchit say, "Sunday! You went to-day then, Robert?" Obviously he went "today," because they were all just talking about how he had been late coming home (i.e., from work) several days in a row, including that very evening. And why would preparations for Sunday indicate that he had been there "today"? Perhaps Bob has made arrangements with the cemetery to have the funeral on Sunday, which then tells Mrs. Cratchit that he had been there "today." But presumably (i.e., unless he was a *very* slow walker when depressed) he had also been there the day before, and the day before that, and the day before *that*. It appears, to me, that something in the text, which originally explained this, has been rather inexpertly deleted—like software that hasn't been completely uninstalled. I would have to guess that about a page and a half is missing.

I will dismiss the possibility that Tiny Tim's body couldn't be buried until Spring due to frozen ground, because Dickens' story portrays the sexton plying his trade at this time of year. An additional question that comes to mind, is whether this poor urban family could have *afforded* a burial at a gravesite pleasant enough to want to linger at. This suggests, in turn, that Bob Cratchit did *not* tarry at the grave simply because it was a pleasant scene. *The only reason he would have made such a daily pilgrimage, is if Tiny Tim's body was buried therein.*

There is yet another piece of code in the star-signed review. Mathew frequently quoted lines of verse in his works. If there was a secret he wished to convey, he would rely upon the astute reader to look up the quote, and to find the code embedded *in its context*—very much as he may have done in the example, above, if he had directed posterity's attention to it purposefully. In other words, it is the lines he *didn't* quote, in the immediate vicinity of the lines he *did*, which reveal the secret.

In this case, the line he quotes, "Another morn risen on mid-noon," derives from that portion of William Wordsworth's poem, "The Prelude: Or, Growth of a Poet's Mind," entitled "Cambridge and the Alps." The relevant excerpt reads:

> That streamlet whose blue current works its way
> Between romantic Dovedale's spiry rocks;
> Pried into Yorkshire dales, or hidden tracts
> Of my own native region, and was blest
> Between these sundry wanderings with a joy
> Above all joys, that seemed another morn
> Risen on mid noon; blest with the presence, Friend!
> Of that sole Sister, her who hath been long
> Dear to thee also, thy true friend and mine,
> Now, after separation desolate,
> Restored to me—such absence that she seemed
> A gift then first bestowed.

Now we have the reference directly tied to a dear sister, i.e., a woman, restored to him after a "separation desolate," while feeling as though something was a "gift then first bestowed." I believe he is referring to that moment when he first held in his hands a printed copy of "A Christmas Carol," which felt, to him, as though Abby had returned to him. This was his immediate reaction upon his "first perusal of the book." He has made this clear, by tying his "first perusal" to being reunited with a "dear sister" after a "separation desolate." Note that Mathew can use this technique because he has an encyclopedic knowledge of poetry and prose. He often finds precisely matching verses and passages for these coded messages, from both popular and obscure sources—and this is something which sets him apart from many of his imitators, who would not have the repertoire necessary to pull it off. (In this lifetime, I am only able to trace his references thanks to internet search engines.)

The real history of the original manuscript

I am going to briefly leave the realm of "smoking guns," and the kind of proof which I can provide in a matter of a few paragraphs. Based on my entire 11-year exploration of the deep historical record—comprising far too many pieces of interlocking evidence to enumerate, here—I have traced the beginnings of "A Christmas Carol" to a little town in Massachusetts called Methuen. There, in what is now called the "Tenney Gatehouse," which doubles as the home of the local historical society, is an upstairs bedroom where, if I am not mistaken, Mathew and Abby began work on the "Carol." Abby, distraught over the loss of their precious 11-month-old

son, Joseph, was given to taking long walks along the nearby river; Mathew, concerned that she might throw herself in, was her constant companion, and hence could take no time out for work. They were the guests of his second cousin, Richard Whittier, a farmer, in his two-story farmhouse. Mathew knew that the only way to pull Abby out of her depression was to appeal to her compassion for humanity. They had had many long discussions about the deepest root causes of suffering, and what they, as two ordinary people, could possibly do about it. Accordingly, each had written stories with a theme of spiritual redemption; but now, Mathew suggested they write another one, a master story, together. Both of them being paralyzed with grief, it would be easiest to begin by borrowing elements from these earlier efforts; but once they got started, the fire of creativity was kindled, and their grief became the very engine of their combined genius. Each reader would be taken through the path to redemption, by identifying with the central character, Ebenezer Scrooge; and their late son, little Joseph, would lead the transformation in the person of "Tiny Tim" (or whatever the character's original name was—quite possibly, he was actually named "Joseph," as a tribute). "God bless us, everyone" would be Joseph's message to the world, even though he was not able to live long enough to have taught humanity, himself—as Mathew and Abby both felt he would have.

This, if my past-life memory and scholarship are correct, is the room in which "A Christmas Carol" was born:

Conclusion

What I've shared in this article are some of the strongest pieces of evidence for Mathew and Abby Whittier's original co-authorship of "A Christmas Carol," but by no means all. I haven't talked about what scholars have dubbed Dickens' "Violated Letter," a sanctimonious public denial of his affair with actress Ellen Ternan which was written in much the same theatrical tone as his description of how he wrote the "Carol" on the "black streets of London." It reveals him—in the light of what we know, today—as a shameless hypocrite who could not possibly have written a work of such spiritual power as "A Christmas Carol." Nor have I touched upon Mathew's two impassioned social reform novels—one of them, entitled "The Debtors' Prison: A Tale of a Revolutionary Soldier," published in 1834.[14] This was nine years before Dickens published the "Carol," at a time when he, himself, was writing fluff, i.e., "A Dinner at Poplar Walk." Similarly, I haven't shared all of Mathew and Abby's respective precursor works, including Abby's *other* Christmas story, featuring a mysterious visiting palm reader and an old brass door knocker in the shape of a lion.


the festive season, when a loud
cient brazen lion upon the door
atten-
ıd rev-
the old
ıe broad
through
l airy
ımarka-
such an
ı a time.
unk at
from a
ınd anx-
ry face.
pened, and a female form was ush-

Nor have I mentioned Mathew's essay in the Dec. 24, 1842 Portland "Transcript," urging Americans to celebrate Christmas as it is celebrated in England; or Abby's essay entitled "Festival Days," fondly describing an Irish woman (probably a client in her charity work) who, despite her poverty, would combine Christmas with Thanksgiving, enumerating her blessings in the midst of her hardships. I will close with Abby's own description. What you are about to read,

is the *true* voice of "A Christmas Carol":

> I remember a poor old Irish woman, who used to adorn her cabin with choicest garlands for the Christmas day, and then, from some glimmering idea she had caught up in America, mix in *thanksgiving* to eke out the rest. No thanksgiving, expressed, as is the custom, by much eating, but, as it seemed more meet to her, reviewing, in her humble way, the blessings she enjoyed. The children and the grandchildren—what if there were turmoil betwixt one and the other, constantly? wasn't she grateful for that, too? for didn't it show they could buffet the hard world if need be? And surely, wasn't it a blessing they'd a cabin little enough to keep them all close together, after all? And wasn't there a spell about that same house, too, that keep Want and Starvation away, and the chills out of the rooms through the long wintry nights? Grateful, indeed, she ought to be if only for the bits of chambers overhead, pitch-dark as they were, (and who would need a window just to sleep by?) for didn't the sweet sleep that crept into them, night after night, come straight from Heaven? Little they'd had of worldly wealth to burthen their shoulders, for which, sure, gratitude was due, for now they'd vigor left to bear whatever store the saints might load them with hereafter.
>
> Surely, very beautiful was the medium through which the humble creature looked forth on the world in her festivities; very, very beautiful, as though what met the outward eye were mere appearance, and angels had instructed her to gaze beyond and trace out spiritual realities.

Footnotes

1) Kennedy, William Sloane, "John G. Whittier. The Poet of Freedom," 1892, page 24.

2) Stephen Jarvis subsequently published a novel on this subject entitled "Death and Mr. Pickwick," in 2015.

3) Davis, Andrew Jackson, "Events in the Life of a Seer," 1868, page 274.

4) Bowen, John, "Madness and the Dickens Marriage: A New Source," *The Dickensian*, Spring 2019, No. 507, Vol. 115, Part 1.

5) Payne, Edward P., "Dickens Days in Boston," 1927, p. 84.; quoted excerpt of a letter from Charles Dickens to Cornelius Conway Felton, dated Jan. 2, 1844. That Forster could have suggested Dickens' explanation as to how he came to write "A Christmas Carol" in such a brief period of time, is made more plausible by the fact that Dickens' "American Notes" was derived from correspondence between the two men in 1842, the year before the "Carol" was published. Robert L. Patten, in "Charles Dickens and His Publishers," has written that Forster became Dickens' "unofficial literary agent from the days of Pickwick onward."

6) Forster, John, "The Life of Charles Dickens," 1874, pp. 325-326.

7) Boston "Weekly Museum," Dec. 1, 1849.

8) I did find a "Sir Edward Wolstenholme Ward," who lived from 1823 to 1890, and who was living in Australia during the period in question. This is not to say the Ward mentioned in the letters didn't exist, only to suggest that if he did, he doesn't seem to have been prominent enough to match Dickens' description of the mystery "gentleman" from whom he claims to have obtained the manuscript. We are therefore forced to posit a third person aside from Ward and Bulwer-Lytton.

9) "The Pilgrim Edition: The Letters of Charles Dickens," Volume Three 1842-1843, ed. Madeline House Graham Storey, Kathleen Tillotson, assoc. ed. Noel C. Peyrouton, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1974, pg. 76.

10) McKnight, Natalie and Bray, Chelsea (Eds.), *Dickens, the Lowell Girls, and the Making of "A Christmas Carol*," in "Dickens and Massachusetts: The Lasting Legacy of the Commonwealth Visits," 2015, page 99. I established, in personal correspondence with Dr. McKnight, that I had publicly announced my theory concerning "A Christmas Carol" prior to her first public presentation of her theory. She wrote me on Oct. 1, 2015 that she did not see the need for either of us to cite the other's work, because "our approaches are so widely different" and "we are saying two very different things." She wrote, in the same e-mail, that her first public statements about the Lowell mill girls influencing Dickens were made in 2012, as part of a presentation at the Lowell National Park. My first book, "Mathew Franklin Whittier in his own words" is copyrighted year 2011, and I had publicly blogged about my theory well before then, as for example in my entry of Nov. 30, 2007, and again on May 26, 2009. I do not, however, have any reason to believe that Dr. McKnight had seen my information prior to her first presentation in 2012. I only feel that she should be citing my work subsequent to our first correspondence because, in my opinion, it obviously *is* relevant, and because my work was publicly presented first.

11) Historians mistakenly attribute the travelogue appearing in the 1849-1852 Boston "Weekly Museum" signed "Quails," to Ossian Dodge, but I have proven conclusively that the author was Mathew Franklin Whittier. See my e-book, "Mathew Franklin Whittier in his own words."

12) Boston "Weekly Museum," Sept. 22, 1849. The first in this series, entitled "Mary Mahoney," was signed with Abby's maiden initials, "A.P.," in the July 14, 1849 edition. All subsequent pieces were styled as "by the author of Mary Mahoney." Abby had signed her poetry, at age 14, with the same initials, but at that time her work was falsely claimed by her classroom teacher, Albert Pike. One poem by Pike does appear in the Dec. 2, 1848 "Museum," but there he signs his full name.

13) The second poem, entitled "From A Sentimental Swain to a Fickle Mistress," appears immediately below the first. It is unsigned, but this was apparently a convention of the newspapers at this time, that where two poems by the same author were presented, the signature was only given once, and they were merely separated by a horizontal line. The second poem begins, "Oh do not turn thy face away, Sweet lady, dear from me." By 1857, based on Mathew's travelogue signed "J.O.B." in the Portland "Transcript," he, himself, would become a vegetarian. The reason this poem would have upset Abby, I feel, is not merely that Mathew disagreed with

her, but that she would only give herself in marriage to a spiritual man. His attitude toward vegetarianism frightened her that perhaps he was not as spiritual as she had taken him to be. In reality, he was deeply concerned with animal welfare, but his social conditioning had prevented him from taking the step of giving up meat. It was simply a "disconnect" in his personality for many years, as it is for many people.

14) "The Debtors' Prison: A Tale of a Revolutionary Soldier," published anonymously in 1834, has been erroneously attributed by scholars, on scant evidence, to Asa Greene. Greene had been Mathew's editor-in-chief when Mathew edited the New York "Constellation" for him from 1830 to 1832. He is only listed in the statement of registration, which simply means that he registered the book for Mathew. The other four books published in 1833/34, which are also attributed to Greene, contain evidence which clearly points to Mathew as the author. Mathew published two more social reform novels. "The Rag-Picker: Or, Bound and Free" was published anonymously in 1855, receiving a glowing review from William Lloyd Garrison. It has been erroneously attributed by librarians to Mathew's long-time plagiarist George P. Burnham, who unsuccessfully attempted to associate his name with it in the Boston papers two months after its publication. Also, in 1863, Mathew published—this time under his own initials, "M.F.W."—a boys' novel of Christian moral instruction entitled "Harrie Lee: Or, The Tempter and The Tempted."

*I am admittedly not a deep scholar of Dickens' works, and at the time of writing this article I was unaware that the themes of debtors' prison and prison conditions are addressed in the "Pickwick Papers." However, the same caveat applies as with "Oliver Twist," that these were not originally Dickens' ideas, but rather those of his illustrator. It should also be remembered that Dickens had been traumatized by this issue as a child, so that his concern with it may have been as much personal as philanthropic.

†Not long after this paper was published, I learned that in his later years, Dickens allegedly became obsessed with re-enacting the scene from "Oliver Twist" featuring the murder of Nancy by Bill Sikes, to the point that it caused him a minor stroke on stage, and may even have led to his death. Most telling, in my opinion, is the detail that he persisted in privately re-enacting the scene in his garden, even after he had been ordered by his physician to stop performing it. Aside from whatever this tells us about his personal character, it clearly confirms Andrew Jackson Davis' stated opinion, that as an author Dickens was primarily a *sensationalist*, and thus could not have originated a work of such spiritual sensitivity and power as "A Christmas Carol." See "Secret Agonies, Hidden Wolves, Leper-Sins: The Personal Pains and Prostitutes of Dickens, Trollope, and Gaskel," a Ph.D. dissertation by Claire Ilene Carly-Miles, 2008, Texas A&M University (and the references given therein).

Images from Charles Dickens' original handwritten draft of "A Christmas Carol" used by permission of The Morgan Library and Museum.