DICKENS' CHRISTMAS STORY.

What Christmas is to the Company of John Doe.

BY CHARLES DICKENS.

I have kept (amongst a score of jovial, genial, heartstirring returns of the season) some very dismal Christmasses. I have kept Christmas in Constantinople, at a horrible Pera hotel, where I attempted the manufacture of a plum-pudding from the macaroni-soup they served me for dinner, mingled with some Zante currants, and a box of figs I had brought from Smyrna; and where I sat, until very late at night, endeavoring to persuade myself that it was cold and "Christmassy," (though it was warm,) drinking Levant wine, and listening to the howling of the dogs outside, mingled with the clank of a portable fire-engine, which some soldiers were carrying to one of those excessive conflagrations which never happen in Constantinople oftener than three times a day. I have kept Christmas on board a Boulogne packet, in company with a basin, several despair-stricken females, and a damp steward; who, to our inquiries whether we should be "in soon," had the one unvarying answer of "pretty near" to give. I have kept Christmas, when a boy, at a French boarding-school, where they gave me nothing but lentils and *boudin* for dinner, on the bedside of a sick friend, and wished him the compliments of the season in his physic bottles (had they contained another six months' life, poor soul!). I have kept Christmas at rich men's tables, where I have been uncomfortable; and once in a cobbler's shop, where I was excessively convivial. I have spent one Christmas in prison. "Start not, urbane reader! I was not sent there for larceny, nor for misdemeanor; but for debt.

It was Christmas; and I—my name is Prupper—was taking my walks abroad. I walked through the crowded Strand, elate, hilarious, benignant, for the feast was prepared, and the guests were bidden. Such a turkey I had ordered, such cloth would relinquish his grasp; and that two pounds two and a half-penny, and a gold watch, on which a relation of mine was to be able by advance four pounds more. So I fell to writing letters, Mr. Aminidab sipping the wine and playing with one of his watch-chains in the meanwhile. I wrote to Jones, Brown and Robinson—to Thompson and to Jackson likewise. I wrote to my surly uncle in Pudding lane. Now was the time to put the disinterested friendship to the test; to avail myself of the repeated offers of service from Jones; to ask for the loan of that sixpence which Robinson had repeatedly declared was at my command as long as he had a shilling. I sealed the letters with an unsteady hand, and consulted Mr. Aminidab as to their despatch. That gentleman, by some fat of legerdemain, called up from the bowels of the earth, or from one of those mysterious localities known as "round the corner," two sprits; one his immediate assistant; seedier, however, and not jewelled, who carried a nobby stick, and not jewelled, who carried a nobby stick, and not jewelled, who carried a nobby stick