



It is Christmas Eve, in Britain, and the sky is gloomy.

Despite the gloom, people seem cheerful. Why is that? It seems to be something in the atmosphere, beyond the weather, which is impacting them for the better.

In his famous story, *A Christmas Carol*, Charles Dickens comments about the weather in Stave Three, "The Second of the Three Spirits." It is that part of the text which Arthur Rackman illustrates for a 1915 edition of the book (printed in Britain and published by J.B. Lippincott Company Philadelphia and New York).

The caption of this Rackman illustration is:

*There was nothing very cheerful in the climate.*

That description comes from this part of the text:

*The sky was gloomy, and the shortest streets were choked up with a dingy mist, half thawed, half frozen, whose heavier particles descended in a shower of sooty atoms, as if all the chimneys in Great Britain had, by one consent, caught fire, and were blazing away to their dear heart's content.*

*There was nothing very cheerful in the climate or the town, and yet was there an air of cheerfulness abroad that the clearest summer air and brightest summer sun might have endeavoured to diffuse in vain.*

The "air of cheerfulness" abounds because it's Christmas Eve.

To Ebenezer, however, it's a night like all other nights of his miserable existence. But *this* night ... with the help of the Spirit of Christmas Present ... he is going to learn a few things he has previously ignored.

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