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The Chimes: A Goblin Story of Some Bells that Rang an Old Year Out and a New Year In (Illustrated)

Charles Dickens

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The Chimes: A Goblin Story of Some Bells that Rang an Old Year Out and a New Year In, a short novel by Charles Dickens, was written and published in 1844, one year after A Christmas Carol and one year before The Cricket on the Hearth. It is the second in his series of "Christmas books": five short books with strong social and moral messages that he published during the 1840s.

The chimes are old bells in the church on whose steps Trotty Veck plies his trade. The book is divided into four parts named "quarters", after the quarter chimes of a striking clock. (This parallels Dickens naming the parts of A Christmas Carol "staves" – that is "stanzas" – and dividing The Cricket on the Hearth into "chirps".)

A Christmas Carol had been extremely well received the previous year, and The Chimes aroused public interest and anticipation. Five different stage productions of the book were running within weeks of publication and nearly 20,000 copies were sold in the first three months. It had a high media profile, and was widely reviewed and discussed. Critical opinion was divided; those sympathetic to its social and political message liked the book, but others thought it dangerously radical. The Northern Star reviewer called Dickens "the champion of the poor"; John Bull rejected his unflattering caricatures of philanthropy. It was certainly a financial success for Dickens, and remained popular for many years, although in the long term its fame was eclipsed by that of A Christmas Carol.

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