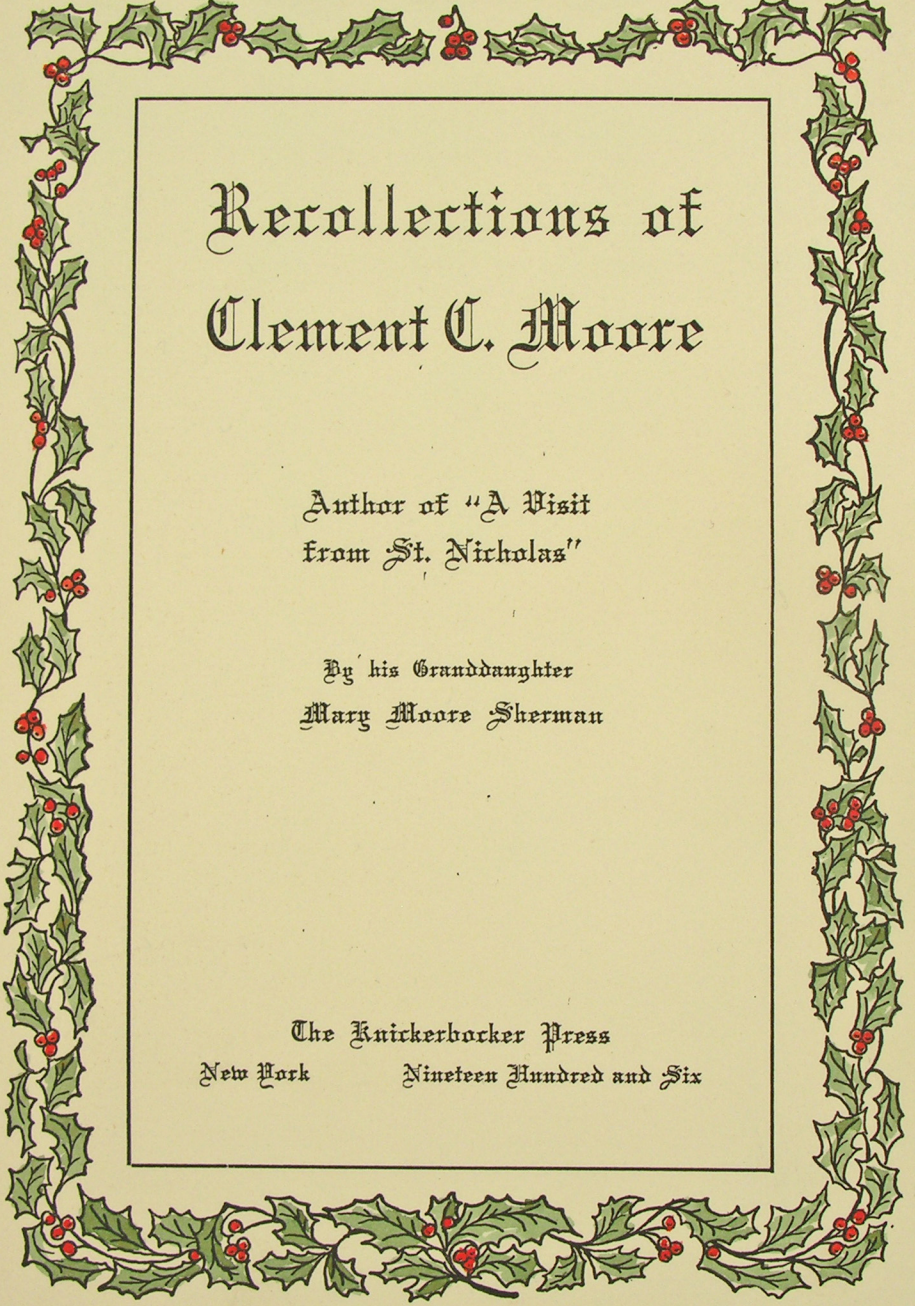


RECOLLECTIONS
OF
CLEMENT C. MOORE
AUTHOR OF
"A VISIT FROM ST. NICHOLAS."





Recollections of
Clement C. Moore

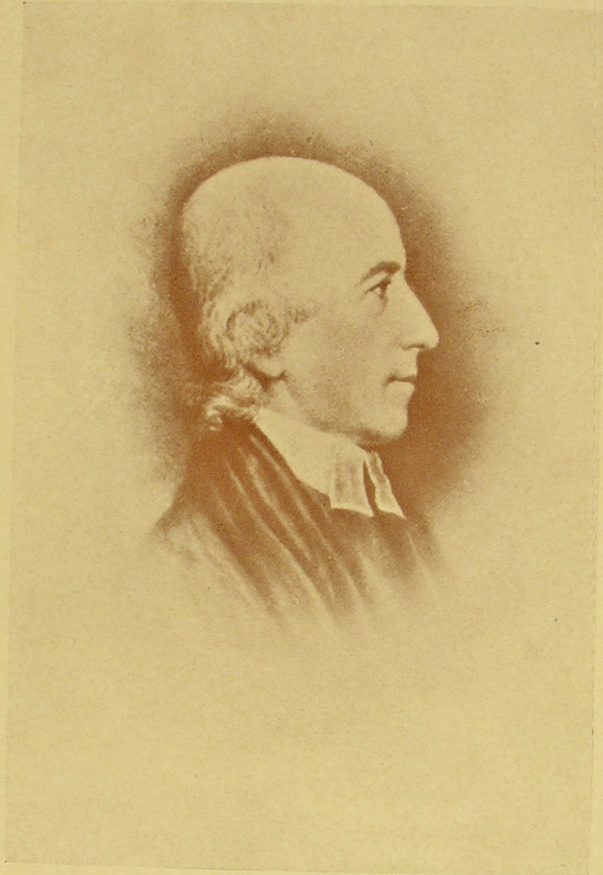
Author of "A Visit
from St. Nicholas"

By his Granddaughter
Mary Moore Sherman

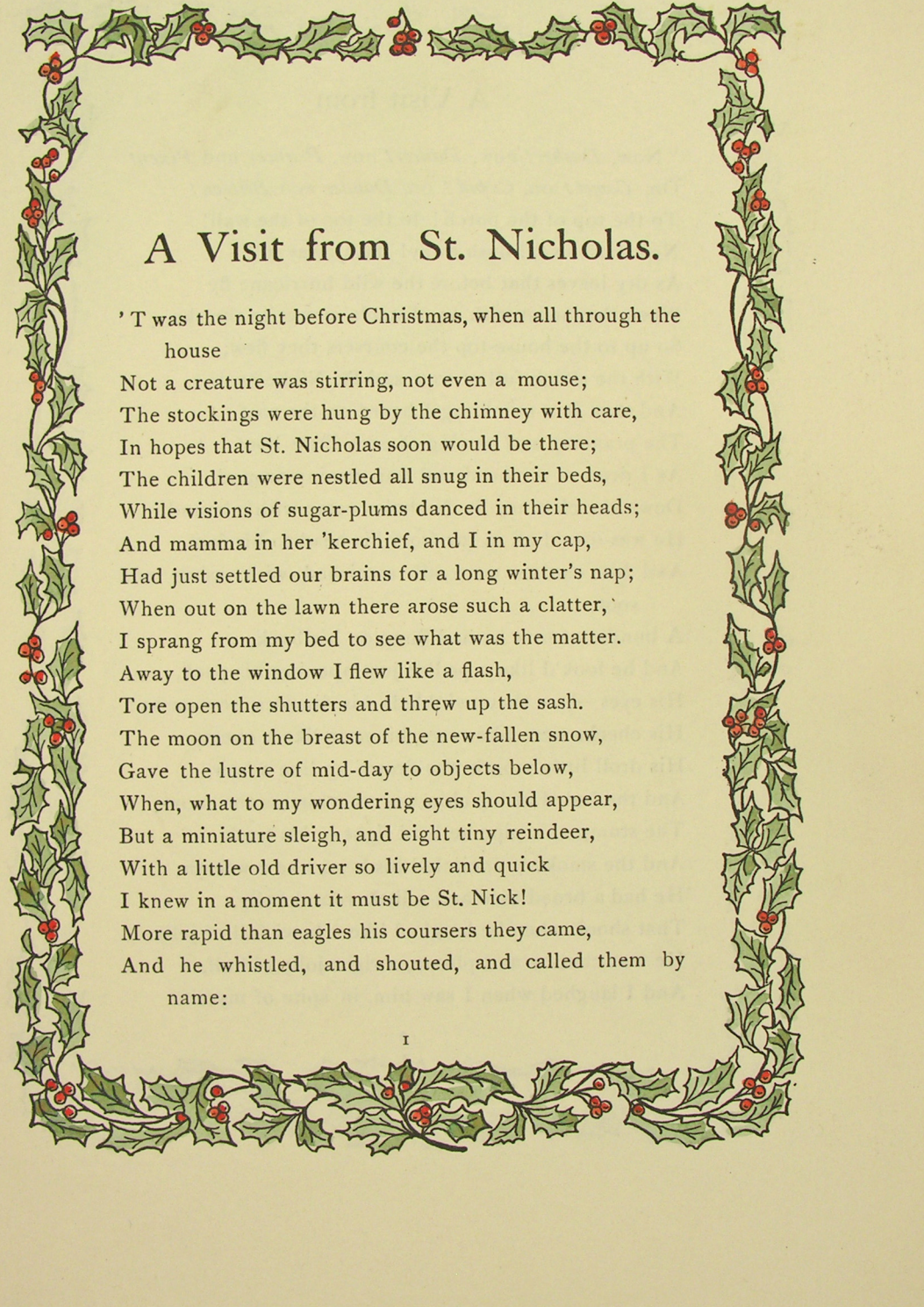
The Knickerbocker Press
New York Nineteen Hundred and Six



CHELSEA.—RESIDENCE OF CLEMENT C. MOORE
(From a sketch by Mrs. J. D. Ogden)



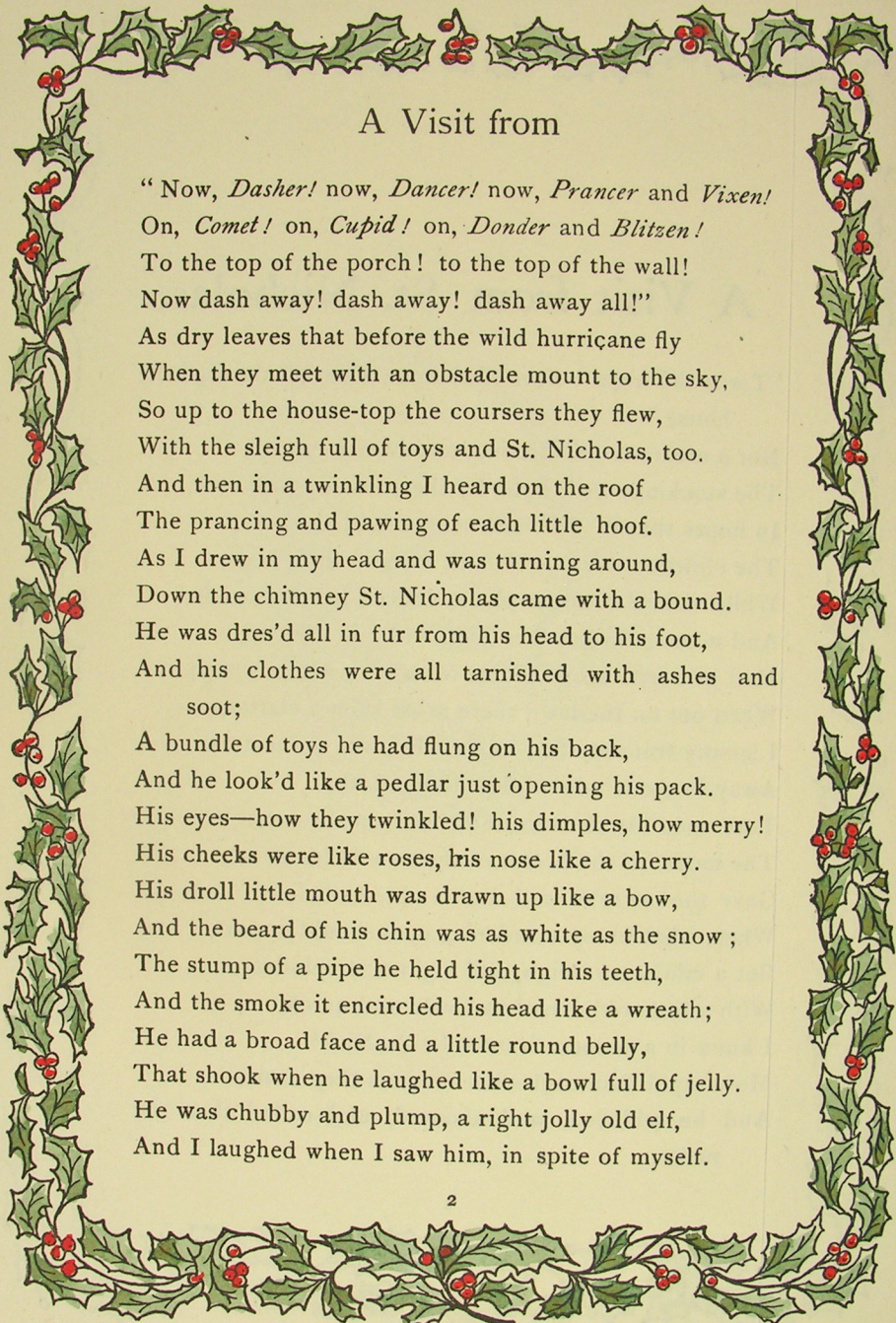
BISHOP BENJAMIN MOORE



A Visit from St. Nicholas.

'T was the night before Christmas, when all through the house

Not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse;
The stockings were hung by the chimney with care,
In hopes that St. Nicholas soon would be there;
The children were nestled all snug in their beds,
While visions of sugar-plums danced in their heads;
And mamma in her 'kerchief, and I in my cap,
Had just settled our brains for a long winter's nap;
When out on the lawn there arose such a clatter,
I sprang from my bed to see what was the matter.
Away to the window I flew like a flash,
Tore open the shutters and threw up the sash.
The moon on the breast of the new-fallen snow,
Gave the lustre of mid-day to objects below,
When, what to my wondering eyes should appear,
But a miniature sleigh, and eight tiny reindeer,
With a little old driver so lively and quick
I knew in a moment it must be St. Nick!
More rapid than eagles his coursers they came,
And he whistled, and shouted, and called them by name:

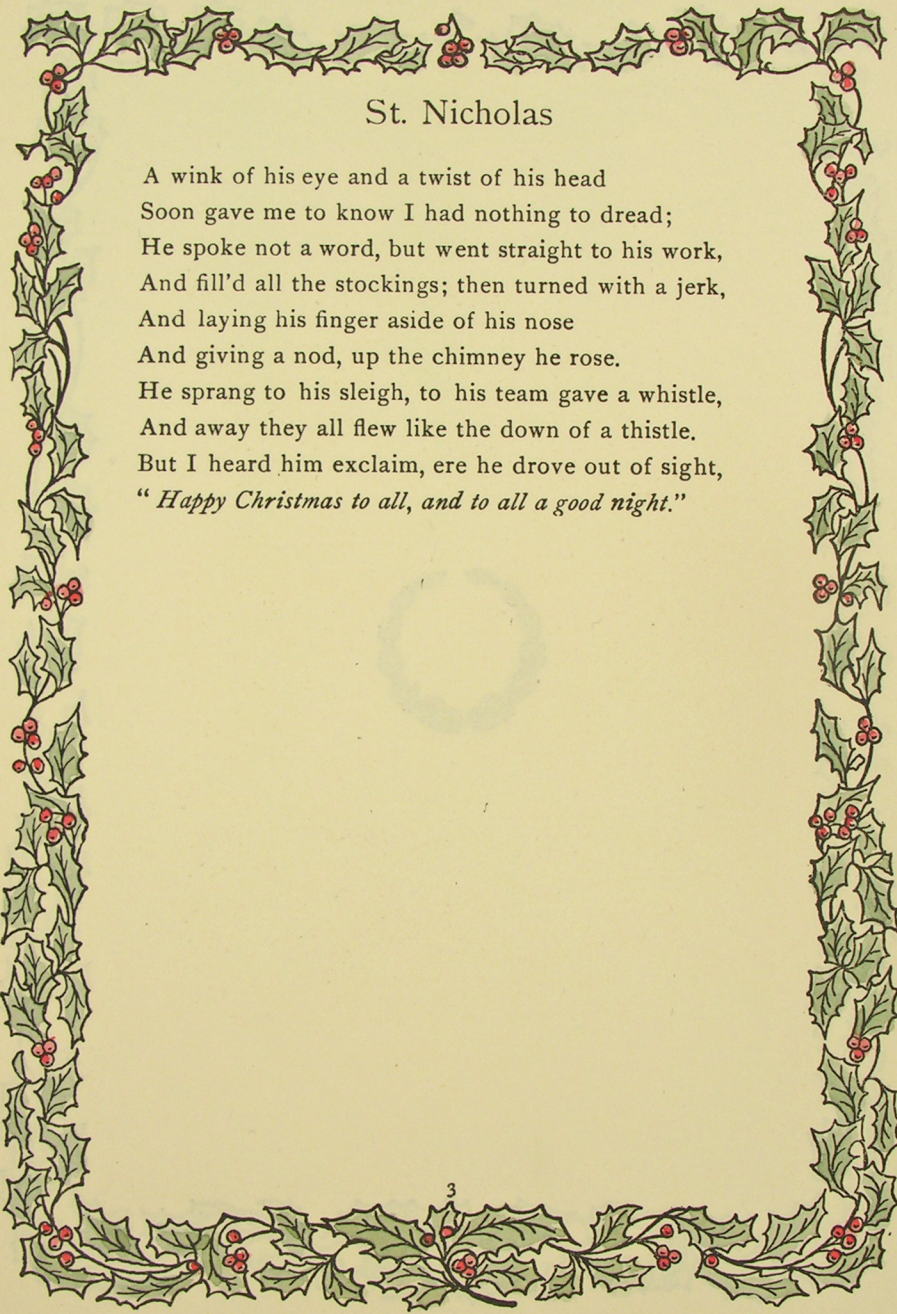


A Visit from

"Now, *Dasher!* now, *Dancer!* now, *Prancer* and *Vixen!*
On, *Comet!* on, *Cupid!* on, *Donder* and *Blitzen!*
To the top of the porch! to the top of the wall!
Now dash away! dash away! dash away all!"
As dry leaves that before the wild hurricane fly
When they meet with an obstacle mount to the sky,
So up to the house-top the coursers they flew,
With the sleigh full of toys and St. Nicholas, too.
And then in a twinkling I heard on the roof
The prancing and pawing of each little hoof.
As I drew in my head and was turning around,
Down the chimney St. Nicholas came with a bound.
He was dres'd all in fur from his head to his foot,
And his clothes were all tarnished with ashes and
soot;
A bundle of toys he had flung on his back,
And he look'd like a pedlar just opening his pack.
His eyes—how they twinkled! his dimples, how merry!
His cheeks were like roses, his nose like a cherry.
His droll little mouth was drawn up like a bow,
And the beard of his chin was as white as the snow ;
The stump of a pipe he held tight in his teeth,
And the smoke it encircled his head like a wreath;
He had a broad face and a little round belly,
That shook when he laughed like a bowl full of jelly.
He was chubby and plump, a right jolly old elf,
And I laughed when I saw him, in spite of myself.

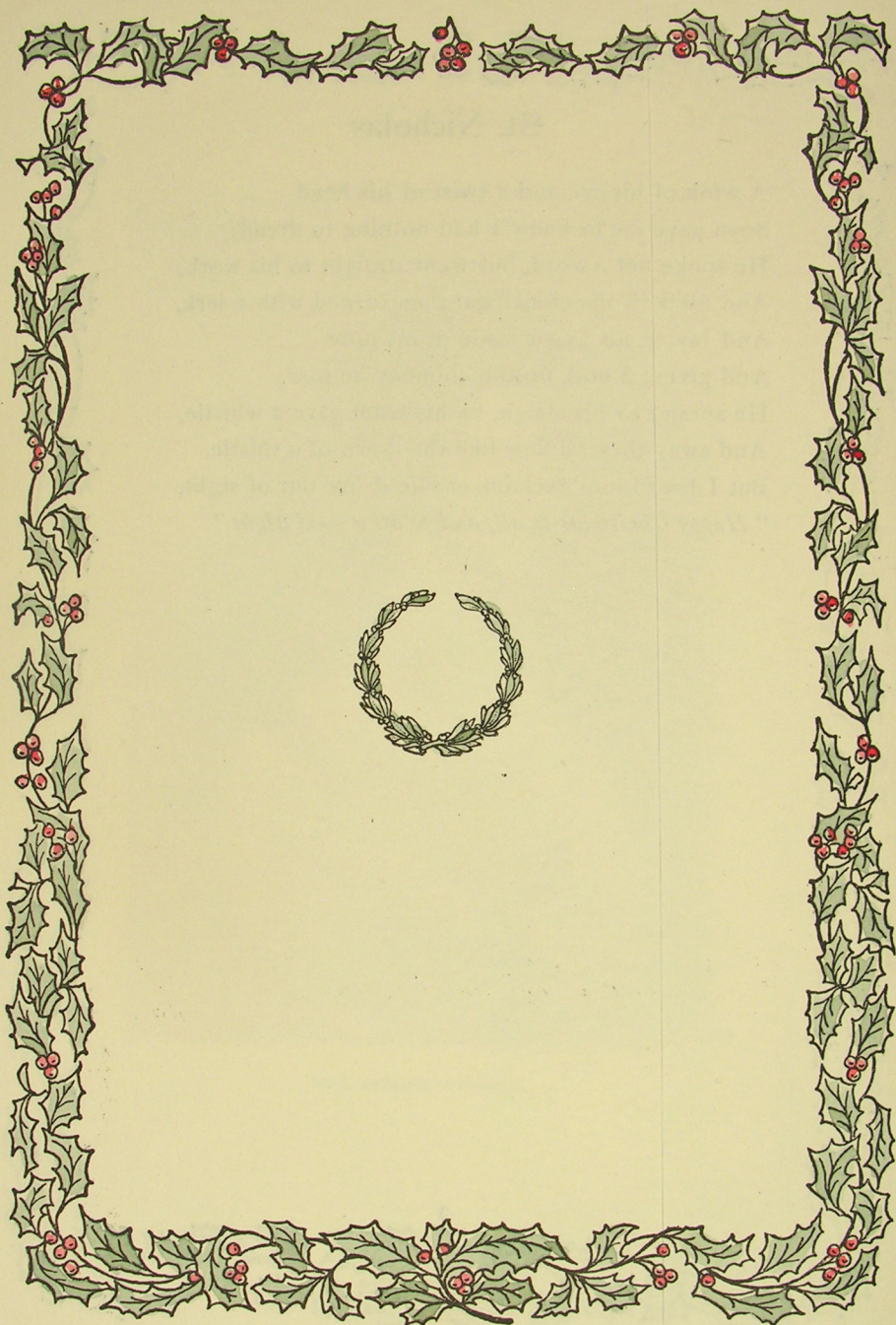


MRS. BENJAMIN MOORE



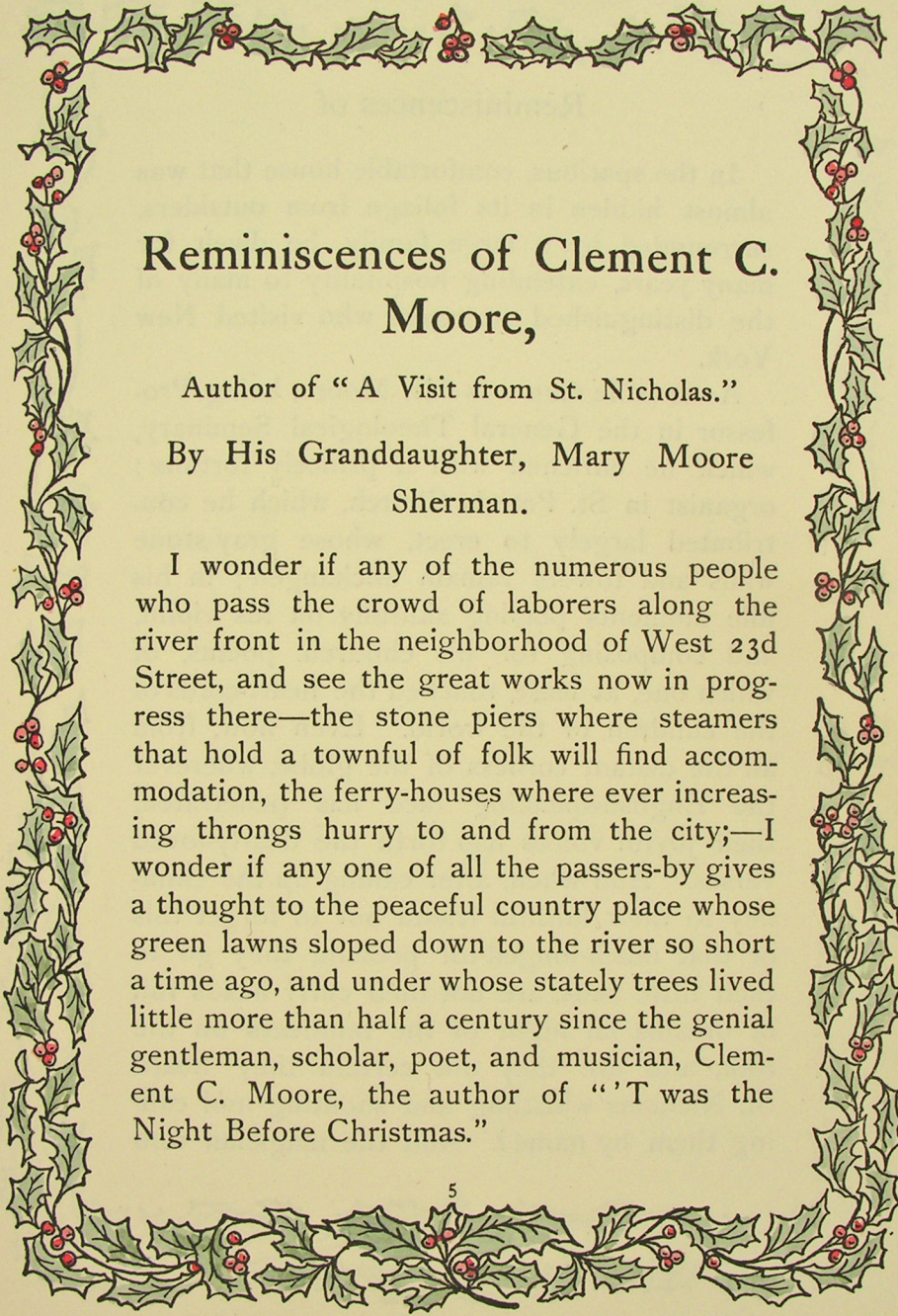
St. Nicholas

A wink of his eye and a twist of his head
Soon gave me to know I had nothing to dread;
He spoke not a word, but went straight to his work,
And fill'd all the stockings; then turned with a jerk,
And laying his finger aside of his nose
And giving a nod, up the chimney he rose.
He sprang to his sleigh, to his team gave a whistle,
And away they all flew like the down of a thistle.
But I heard him exclaim, ere he drove out of sight,
"Happy Christmas to all, and to all a good night."





CLEMENT C. MOORE

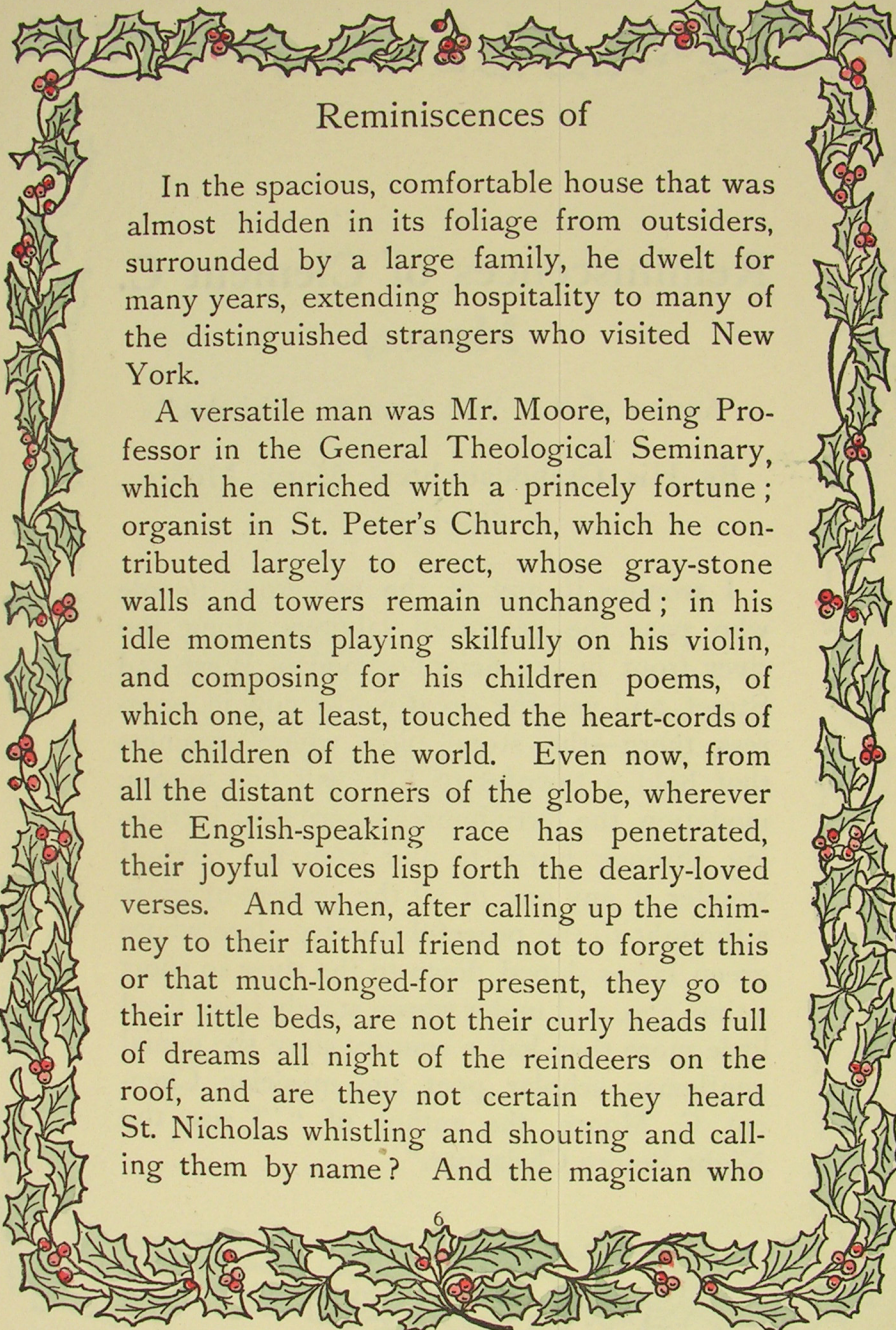


Reminiscences of Clement C. Moore,

Author of "A Visit from St. Nicholas."

By His Granddaughter, Mary Moore
Sherman.

I wonder if any of the numerous people who pass the crowd of laborers along the river front in the neighborhood of West 23d Street, and see the great works now in progress there—the stone piers where steamers that hold a townful of folk will find accommodation, the ferry-houses where ever increasing throngs hurry to and from the city;—I wonder if any one of all the passers-by gives a thought to the peaceful country place whose green lawns sloped down to the river so short a time ago, and under whose stately trees lived little more than half a century since the genial gentleman, scholar, poet, and musician, Clement C. Moore, the author of "'T was the Night Before Christmas."



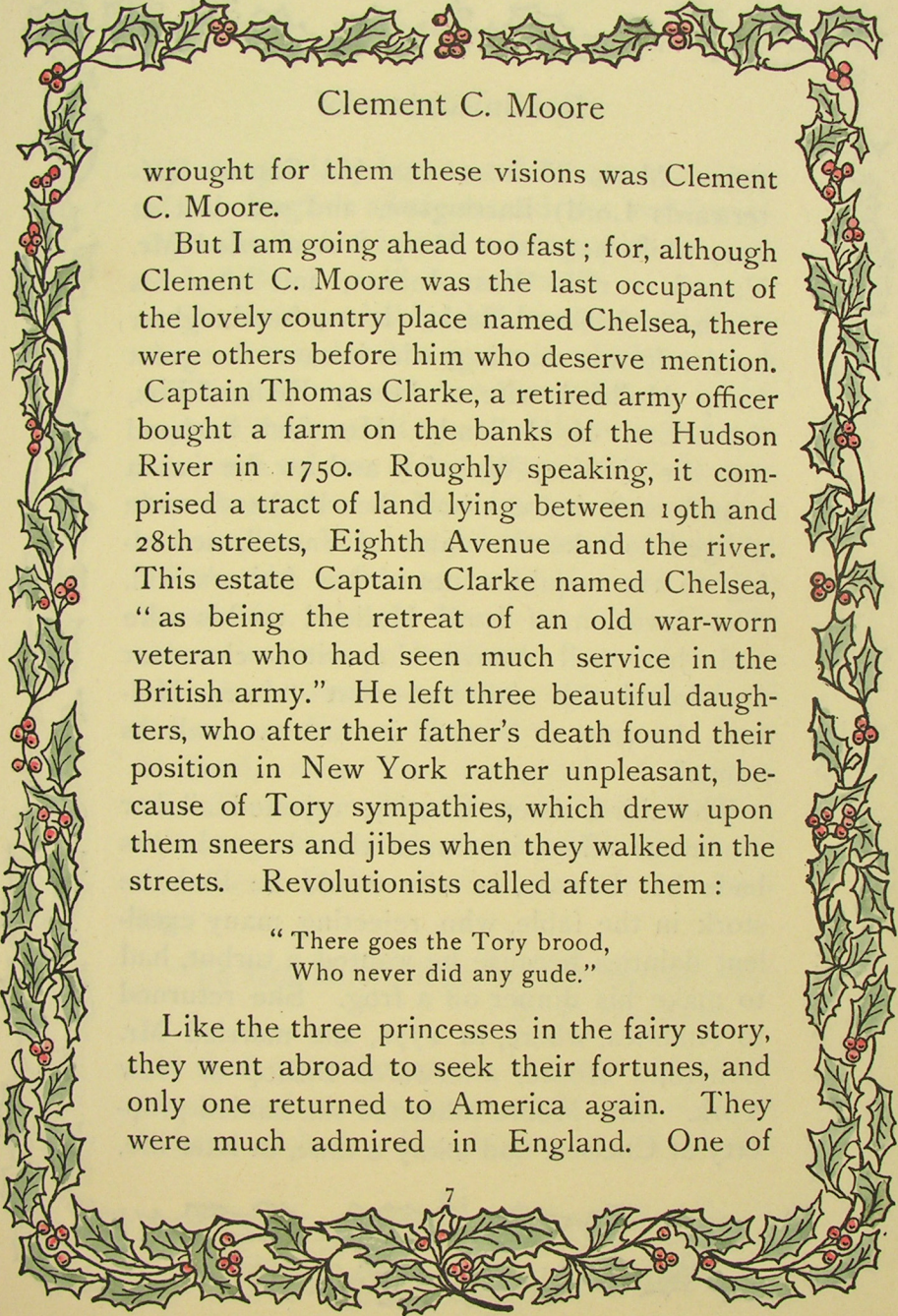
Reminiscences of

In the spacious, comfortable house that was almost hidden in its foliage from outsiders, surrounded by a large family, he dwelt for many years, extending hospitality to many of the distinguished strangers who visited New York.

A versatile man was Mr. Moore, being Professor in the General Theological Seminary, which he enriched with a princely fortune; organist in St. Peter's Church, which he contributed largely to erect, whose gray-stone walls and towers remain unchanged; in his idle moments playing skilfully on his violin, and composing for his children poems, of which one, at least, touched the heart-cords of the children of the world. Even now, from all the distant corners of the globe, wherever the English-speaking race has penetrated, their joyful voices lisp forth the dearly-loved verses. And when, after calling up the chimney to their faithful friend not to forget this or that much-longed-for present, they go to their little beds, are not their curly heads full of dreams all night of the reindeers on the roof, and are they not certain they heard St. Nicholas whistling and shouting and calling them by name? And the magician who



MRS. CLEMENT C. MOORE



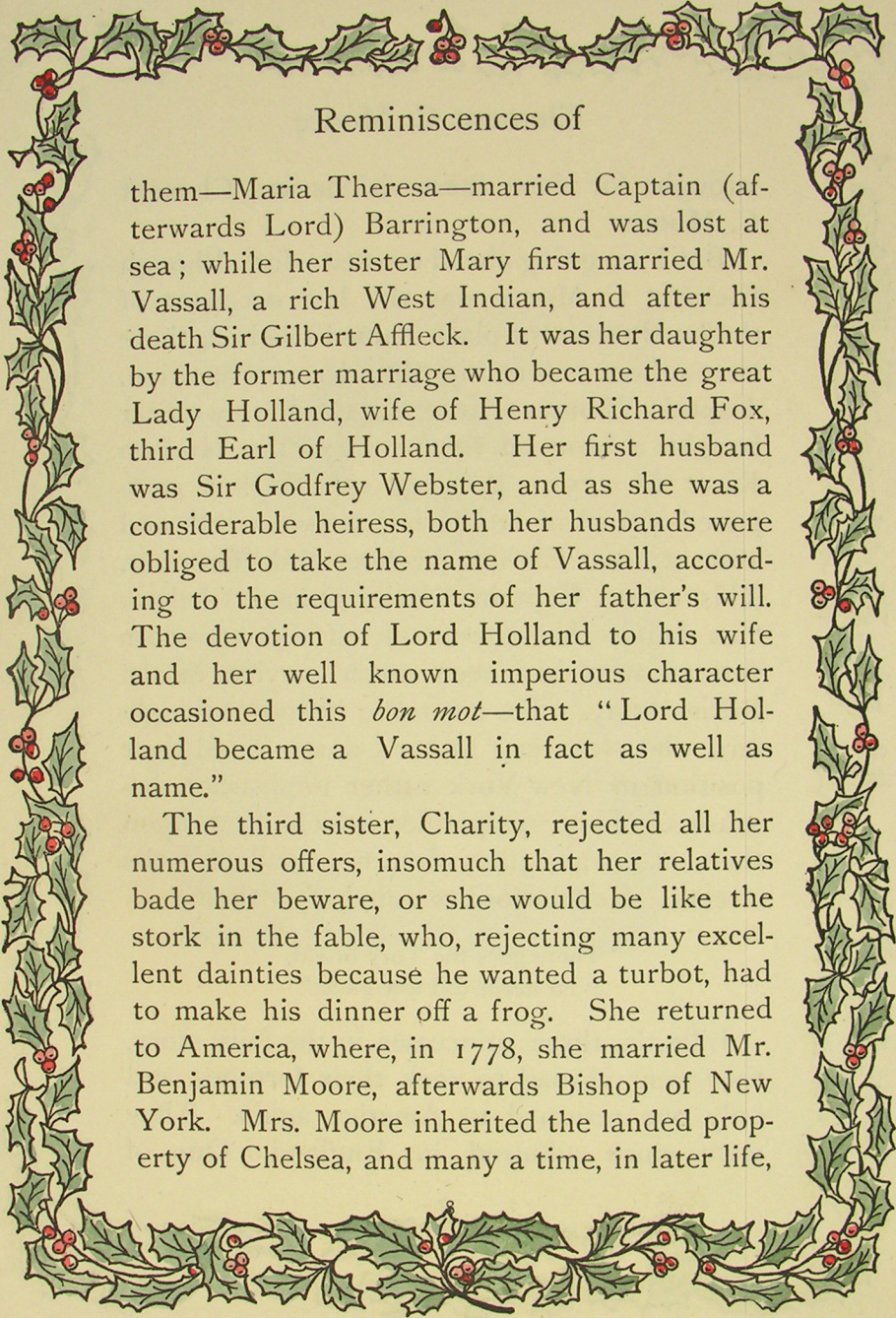
Clement C. Moore

wrought for them these visions was Clement C. Moore.

But I am going ahead too fast ; for, although Clement C. Moore was the last occupant of the lovely country place named Chelsea, there were others before him who deserve mention. Captain Thomas Clarke, a retired army officer bought a farm on the banks of the Hudson River in 1750. Roughly speaking, it comprised a tract of land lying between 19th and 28th streets, Eighth Avenue and the river. This estate Captain Clarke named Chelsea, "as being the retreat of an old war-worn veteran who had seen much service in the British army." He left three beautiful daughters, who after their father's death found their position in New York rather unpleasant, because of Tory sympathies, which drew upon them sneers and jibes when they walked in the streets. Revolutionists called after them :

" There goes the Tory brood,
Who never did any gude."

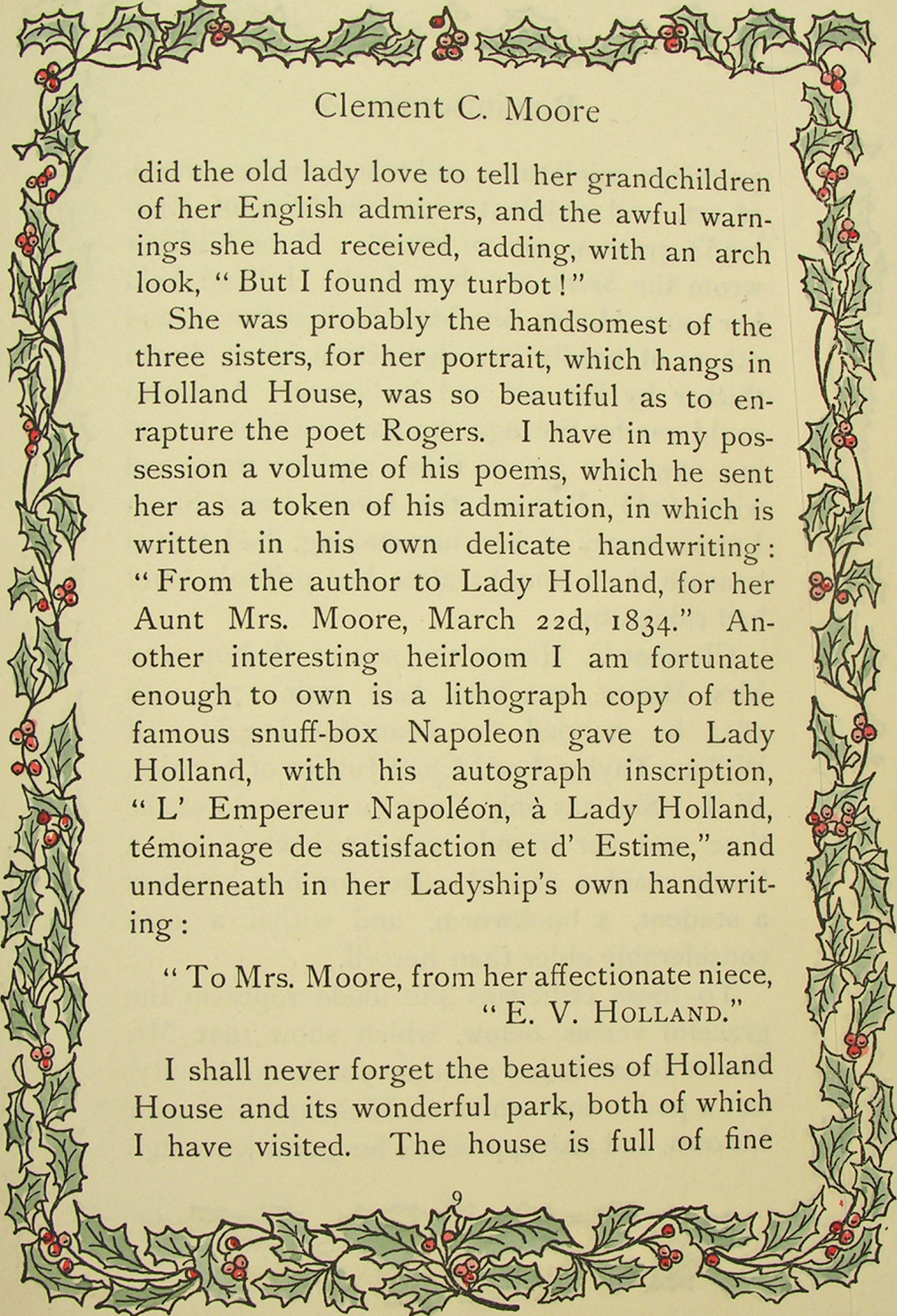
Like the three princesses in the fairy story, they went abroad to seek their fortunes, and only one returned to America again. They were much admired in England. One of



Reminiscences of

them—Maria Theresa—married Captain (afterwards Lord) Barrington, and was lost at sea; while her sister Mary first married Mr. Vassall, a rich West Indian, and after his death Sir Gilbert Affleck. It was her daughter by the former marriage who became the great Lady Holland, wife of Henry Richard Fox, third Earl of Holland. Her first husband was Sir Godfrey Webster, and as she was a considerable heiress, both her husbands were obliged to take the name of Vassall, according to the requirements of her father's will. The devotion of Lord Holland to his wife and her well known imperious character occasioned this *bon mot*—that "Lord Holland became a Vassall in fact as well as name."

The third sister, Charity, rejected all her numerous offers, insomuch that her relatives bade her beware, or she would be like the stork in the fable, who, rejecting many excellent dainties because he wanted a turbot, had to make his dinner off a frog. She returned to America, where, in 1778, she married Mr. Benjamin Moore, afterwards Bishop of New York. Mrs. Moore inherited the landed property of Chelsea, and many a time, in later life,



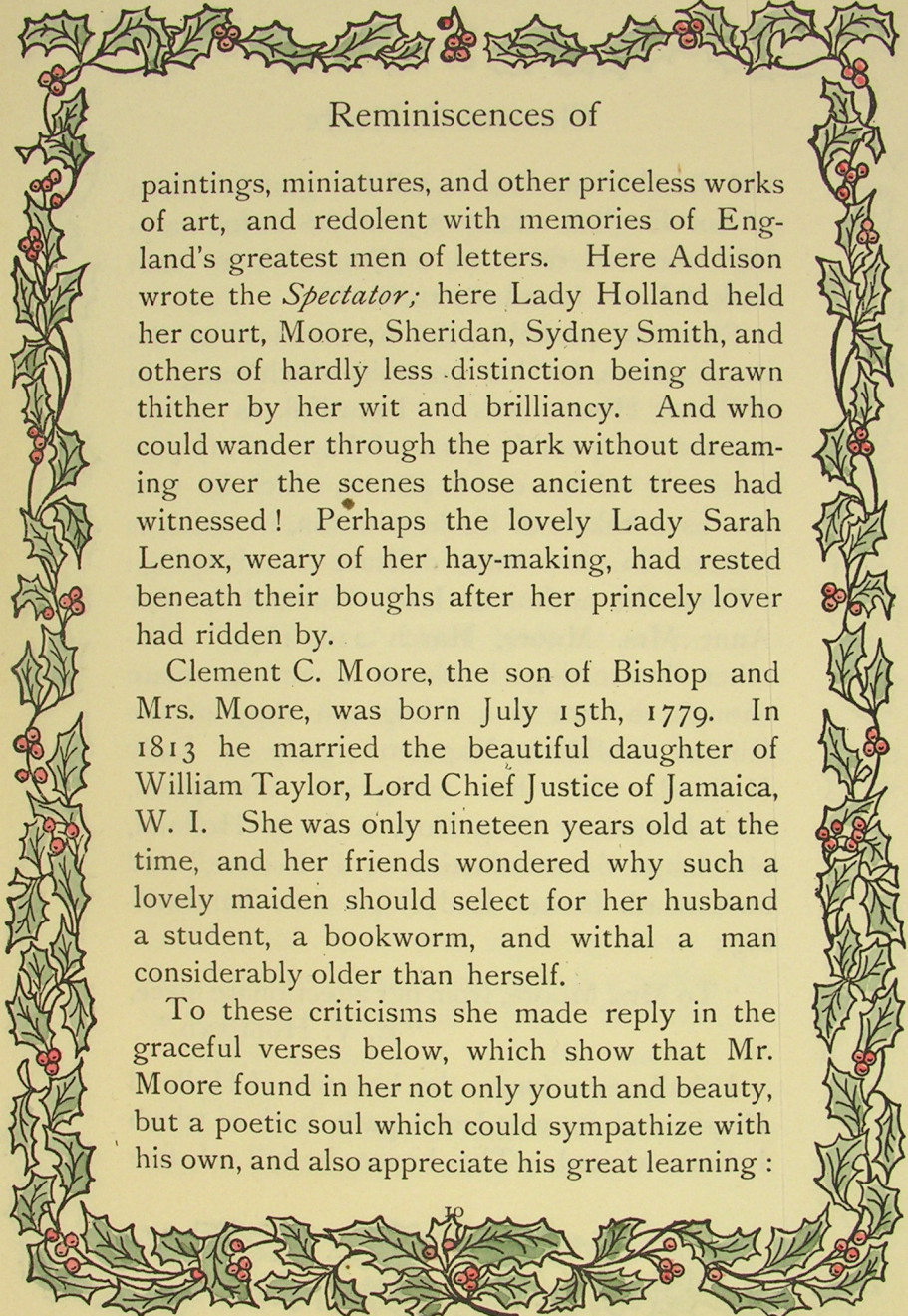
Clement C. Moore

did the old lady love to tell her grandchildren of her English admirers, and the awful warnings she had received, adding, with an arch look, "But I found my turbot!"

She was probably the handsomest of the three sisters, for her portrait, which hangs in Holland House, was so beautiful as to enrapture the poet Rogers. I have in my possession a volume of his poems, which he sent her as a token of his admiration, in which is written in his own delicate handwriting: "From the author to Lady Holland, for her Aunt Mrs. Moore, March 22d, 1834." Another interesting heirloom I am fortunate enough to own is a lithograph copy of the famous snuff-box Napoleon gave to Lady Holland, with his autograph inscription, "L' Empereur Napoléon, à Lady Holland, témoignage de satisfaction et d' Estime," and underneath in her Ladyship's own handwriting:

"To Mrs. Moore, from her affectionate niece,
"E. V. HOLLAND."

I shall never forget the beauties of Holland House and its wonderful park, both of which I have visited. The house is full of fine



Reminiscences of

paintings, miniatures, and other priceless works of art, and redolent with memories of England's greatest men of letters. Here Addison wrote the *Spectator*; here Lady Holland held her court, Moore, Sheridan, Sydney Smith, and others of hardly less distinction being drawn thither by her wit and brilliancy. And who could wander through the park without dreaming over the scenes those ancient trees had witnessed! Perhaps the lovely Lady Sarah Lenox, weary of her hay-making, had rested beneath their boughs after her princely lover had ridden by.

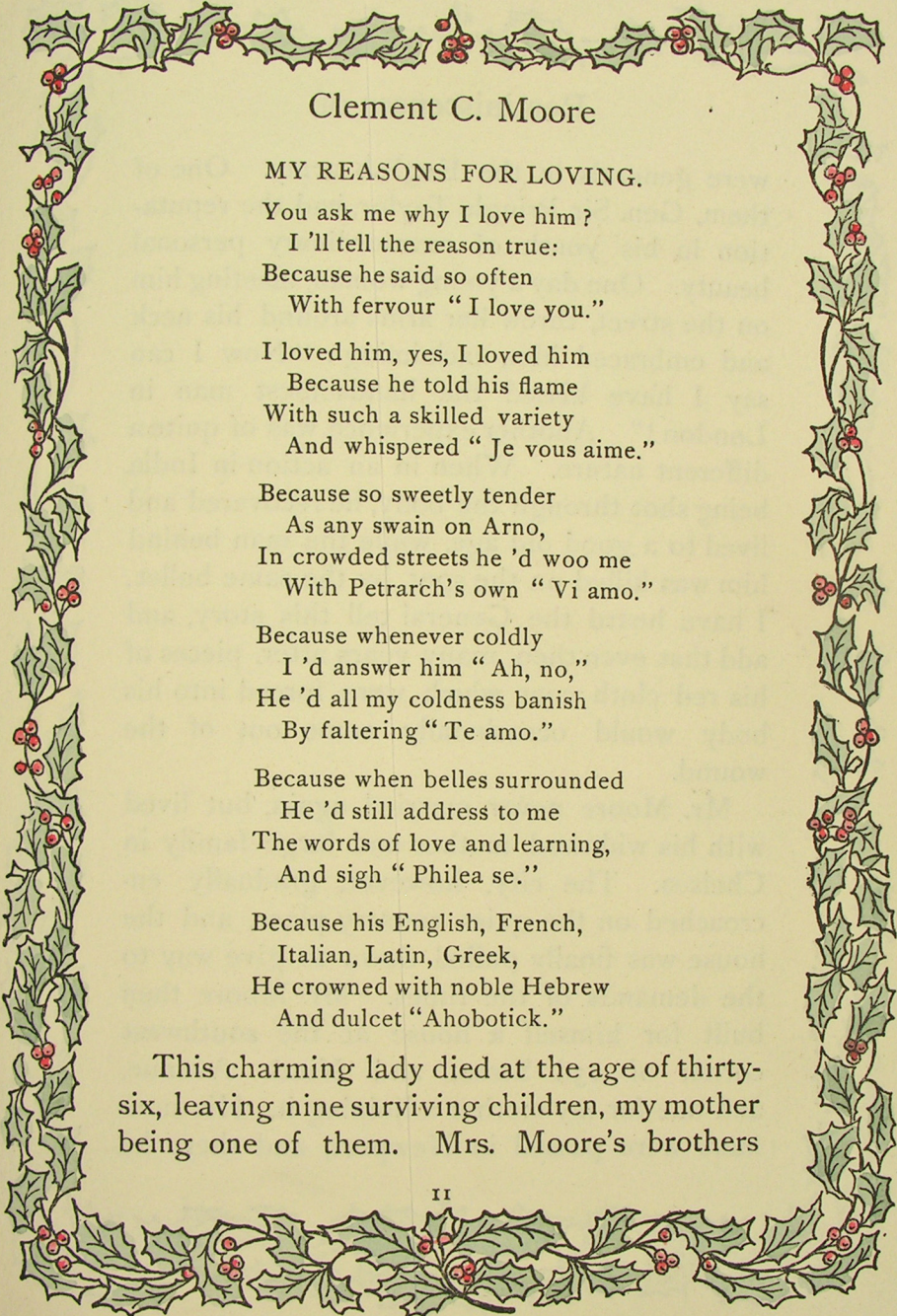
Clement C. Moore, the son of Bishop and Mrs. Moore, was born July 15th, 1779. In 1813 he married the beautiful daughter of William Taylor, Lord Chief Justice of Jamaica, W. I. She was only nineteen years old at the time, and her friends wondered why such a lovely maiden should select for her husband a student, a bookworm, and withal a man considerably older than herself.

To these criticisms she made reply in the graceful verses below, which show that Mr. Moore found in her not only youth and beauty, but a poetic soul which could sympathize with his own, and also appreciate his great learning :



HOLLAND HOUSE

(From an old print)



Clement C. Moore

MY REASONS FOR LOVING.

You ask me why I love him ?

I 'll tell the reason true:

Because he said so often

With fervour " I love you."

I loved him, yes, I loved him

Because he told his flame

With such a skilled variety

And whispered " Je vous aime."

Because so sweetly tender

As any swain on Arno,

In crowded streets he 'd woo me

With Petrarch's own " Vi amo."

Because whenever coldly

I 'd answer him " Ah, no,"

He 'd all my coldness banish

By faltering " Te amo."

Because when belles surrounded

He 'd still address to me

The words of love and learning,

And sigh " Philea se."

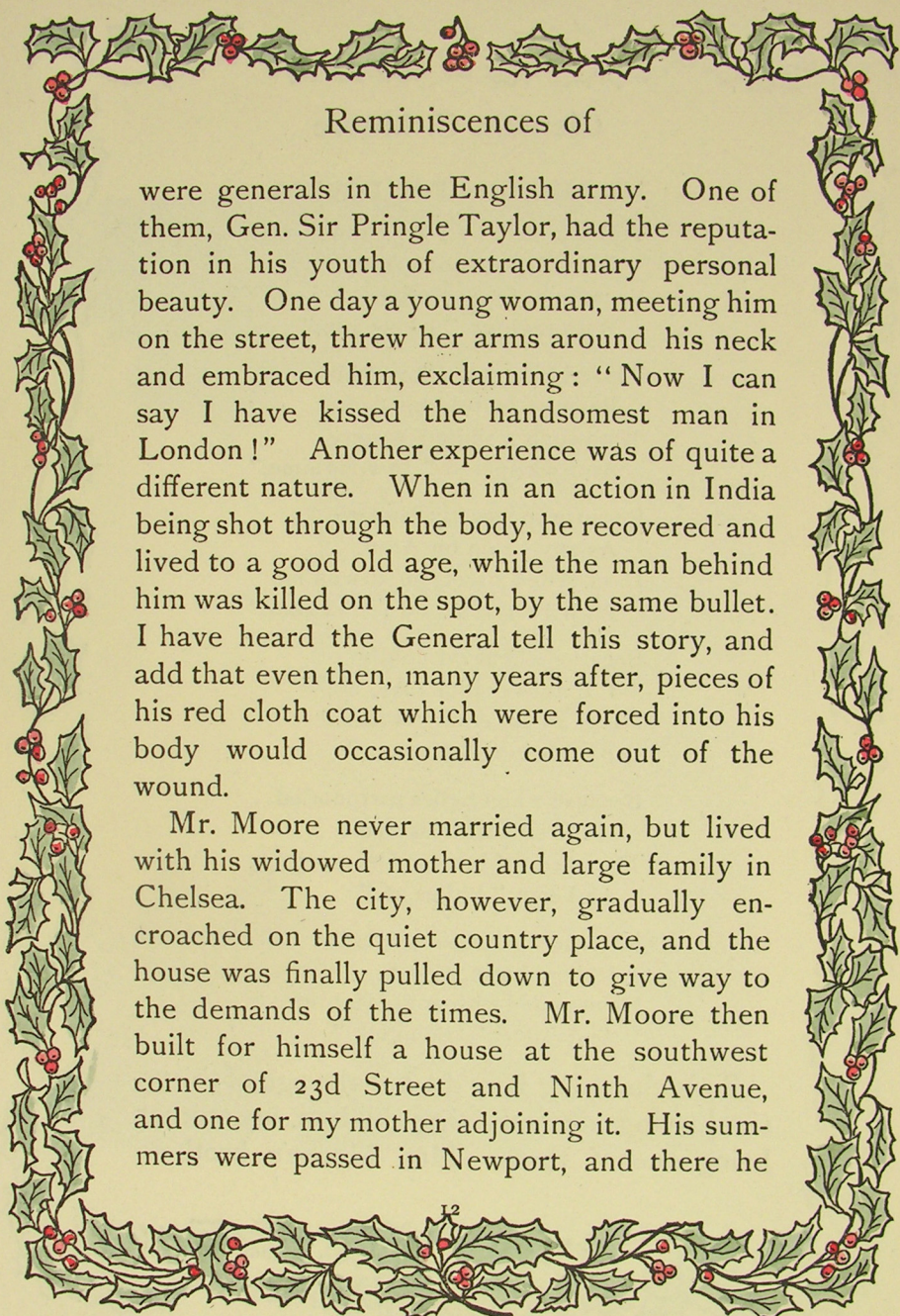
Because his English, French,

Italian, Latin, Greek,

He crowned with noble Hebrew

And dulcet " Ahobotick."

This charming lady died at the age of thirty-six, leaving nine surviving children, my mother being one of them. Mrs. Moore's brothers



Reminiscences of

were generals in the English army. One of them, Gen. Sir Pringle Taylor, had the reputation in his youth of extraordinary personal beauty. One day a young woman, meeting him on the street, threw her arms around his neck and embraced him, exclaiming: "Now I can say I have kissed the handsomest man in London!" Another experience was of quite a different nature. When in an action in India being shot through the body, he recovered and lived to a good old age, while the man behind him was killed on the spot, by the same bullet. I have heard the General tell this story, and add that even then, many years after, pieces of his red cloth coat which were forced into his body would occasionally come out of the wound.

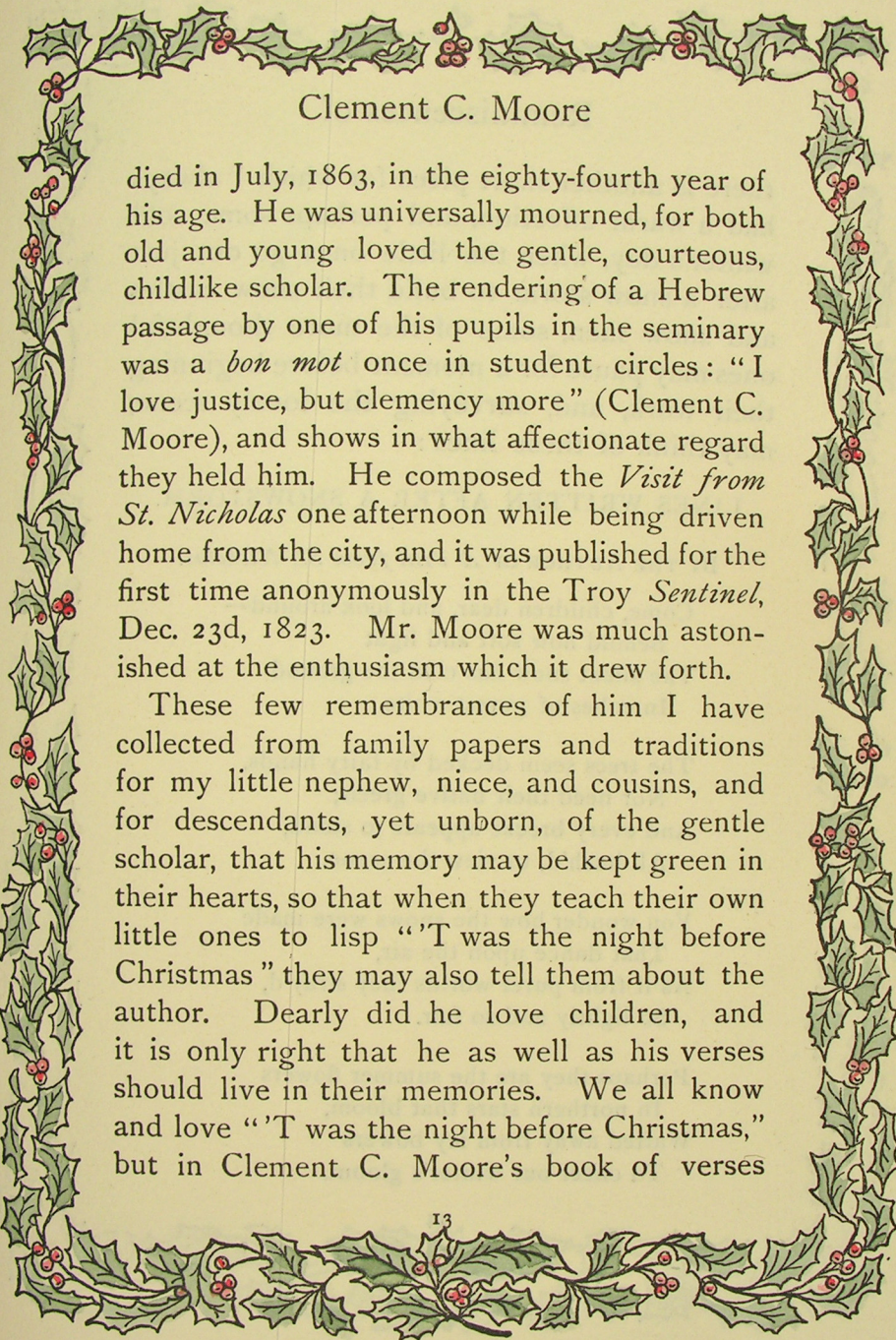
Mr. Moore never married again, but lived with his widowed mother and large family in Chelsea. The city, however, gradually encroached on the quiet country place, and the house was finally pulled down to give way to the demands of the times. Mr. Moore then built for himself a house at the southwest corner of 23d Street and Ninth Avenue, and one for my mother adjoining it. His summers were passed in Newport, and there he

L'empereur Napoleon
a lady Holland
tremisage de sa
factum: et destine



To Mrs. Masson from her
affectionate Niece
E. M. Holland

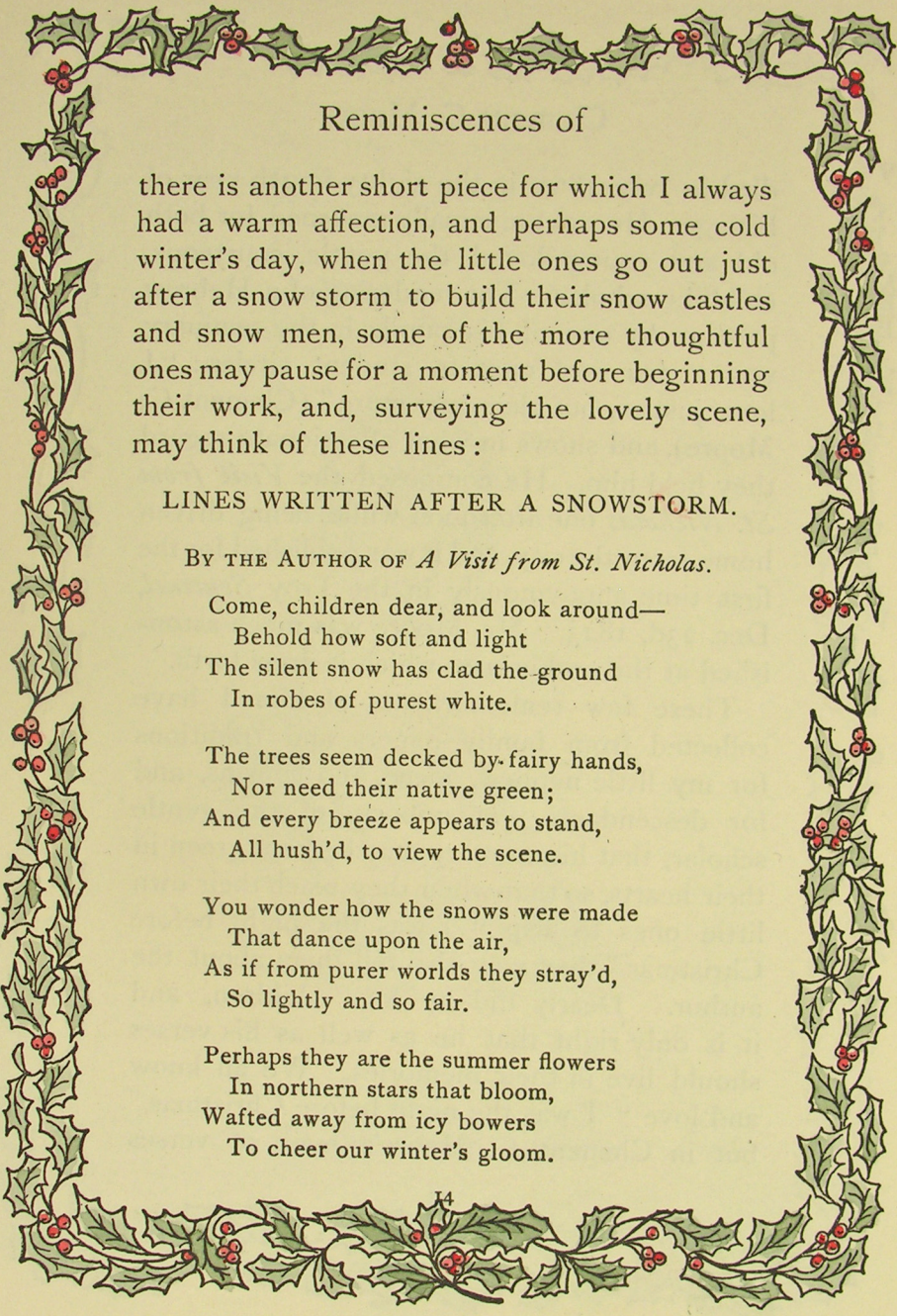
THE SNUFF-BOX



Clement C. Moore

died in July, 1863, in the eighty-fourth year of his age. He was universally mourned, for both old and young loved the gentle, courteous, childlike scholar. The rendering of a Hebrew passage by one of his pupils in the seminary was a *bon mot* once in student circles: "I love justice, but clemency more" (Clement C. Moore), and shows in what affectionate regard they held him. He composed the *Visit from St. Nicholas* one afternoon while being driven home from the city, and it was published for the first time anonymously in the *Troy Sentinel*, Dec. 23d, 1823. Mr. Moore was much astonished at the enthusiasm which it drew forth.

These few remembrances of him I have collected from family papers and traditions for my little nephew, niece, and cousins, and for descendants, yet unborn, of the gentle scholar, that his memory may be kept green in their hearts, so that when they teach their own little ones to lisp "'T was the night before Christmas" they may also tell them about the author. Dearly did he love children, and it is only right that he as well as his verses should live in their memories. We all know and love "'T was the night before Christmas," but in Clement C. Moore's book of verses



Reminiscences of

there is another short piece for which I always had a warm affection, and perhaps some cold winter's day, when the little ones go out just after a snow storm to build their snow castles and snow men, some of the more thoughtful ones may pause for a moment before beginning their work, and, surveying the lovely scene, may think of these lines :

LINES WRITTEN AFTER A SNOWSTORM.

BY THE AUTHOR OF *A Visit from St. Nicholas.*

Come, children dear, and look around—
Behold how soft and light
The silent snow has clad the ground
In robes of purest white.

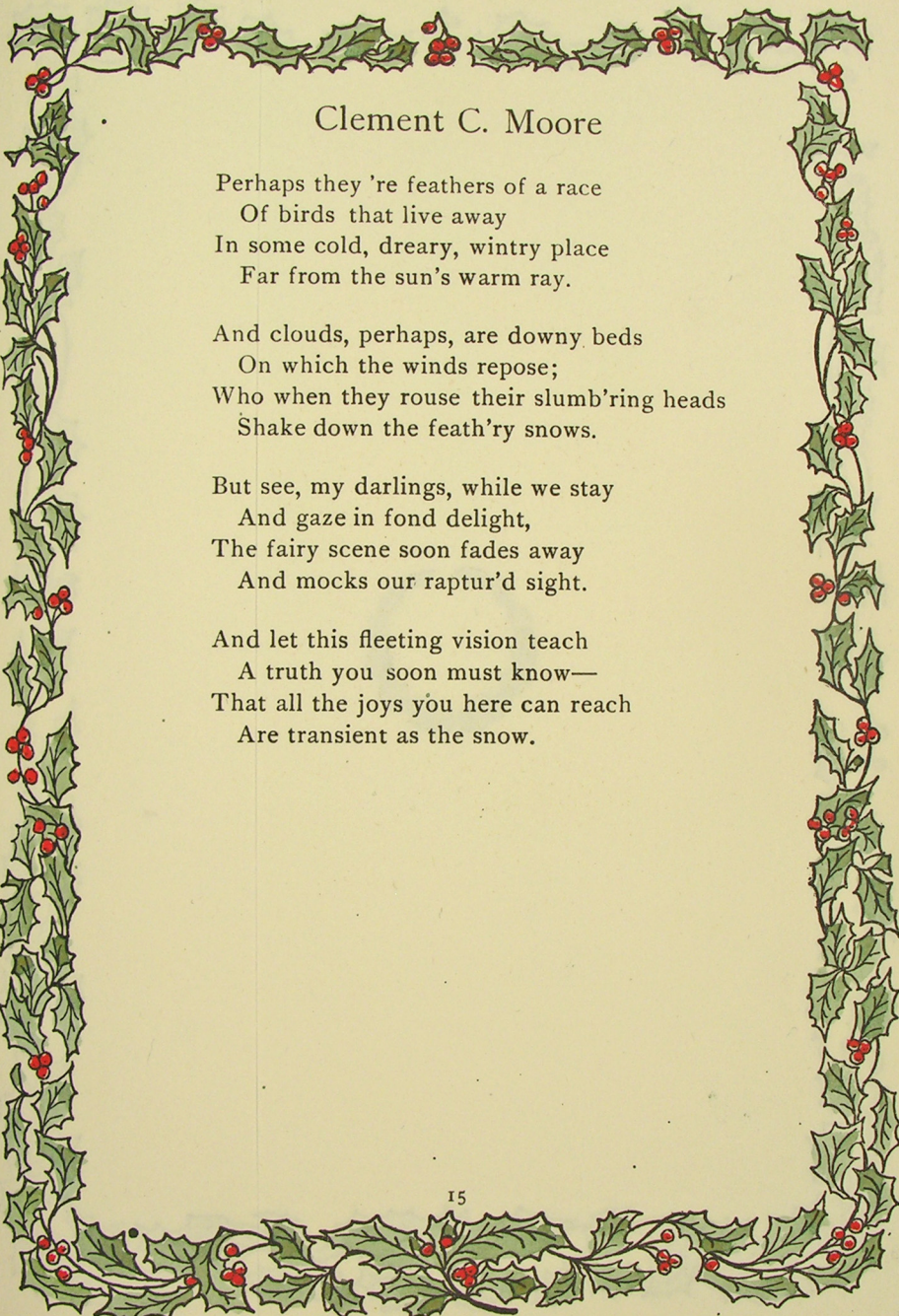
The trees seem decked by fairy hands,
Nor need their native green;
And every breeze appears to stand,
All hush'd, to view the scene.

You wonder how the snows were made
That dance upon the air,
As if from purer worlds they stray'd,
So lightly and so fair.

Perhaps they are the summer flowers
In northern stars that bloom,
Wafted away from icy bowers
To cheer our winter's gloom.



CLEMENT C. MOORE



Clement C. Moore

Perhaps they 're feathers of a race
Of birds that live away
In some cold, dreary, wintry place
Far from the sun's warm ray.

And clouds, perhaps, are downy beds
On which the winds repose;
Who when they rouse their slumb'ring heads
Shake down the feath'ry snows.

But see, my darlings, while we stay
And gaze in fond delight,
The fairy scene soon fades away
And mocks our raptur'd sight.

And let this fleeting vision teach
A truth you soon must know—
That all the joys you here can reach
Are transient as the snow.

