

A Visit from St. Nicholas

(direct transcription from Odell Papers copy, *The Loyalist Collection*)

'Twas 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 plumbs danced thro their heads,  
And mama in her kerchief, and I in my cap,  
Had just settled our brains for a long winter nap;  
When out on the lawn there arose such a clatter,  
I sprang from the 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 ~~tiny~~ 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  
"Now Dancer and Prancer—now Dasher and Vixen  
"On Comet, on Cupid—on Donder and Blixen—  
"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 his coursers they flew

With the sleigh full of toys & St. Nicholas too;  
And then in a twinkling I heard on the roof  
The pawing and prancing 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 dressed all in fur from his head to his foot  
And his clothes were all tarnished with ashes & soot.  
A bundle of toys was slung on his back  
And he looked like a pedler, 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 in a wreath.  
He had a broad face and a little round belly  
That shook when he laughed like a bowlful of jelly  
He was chubby and plump, a right jolly old elf,  
And I laughed when I saw him in spite of myself.  
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 filled all the stockings—then turned with a [jerk],  
And laying his finger aside of his nose,  
And giving a nod, up the Chimney he ~~goes~~-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, as he drove out of sight,  
Happy Christmas to all—and to all a good night—