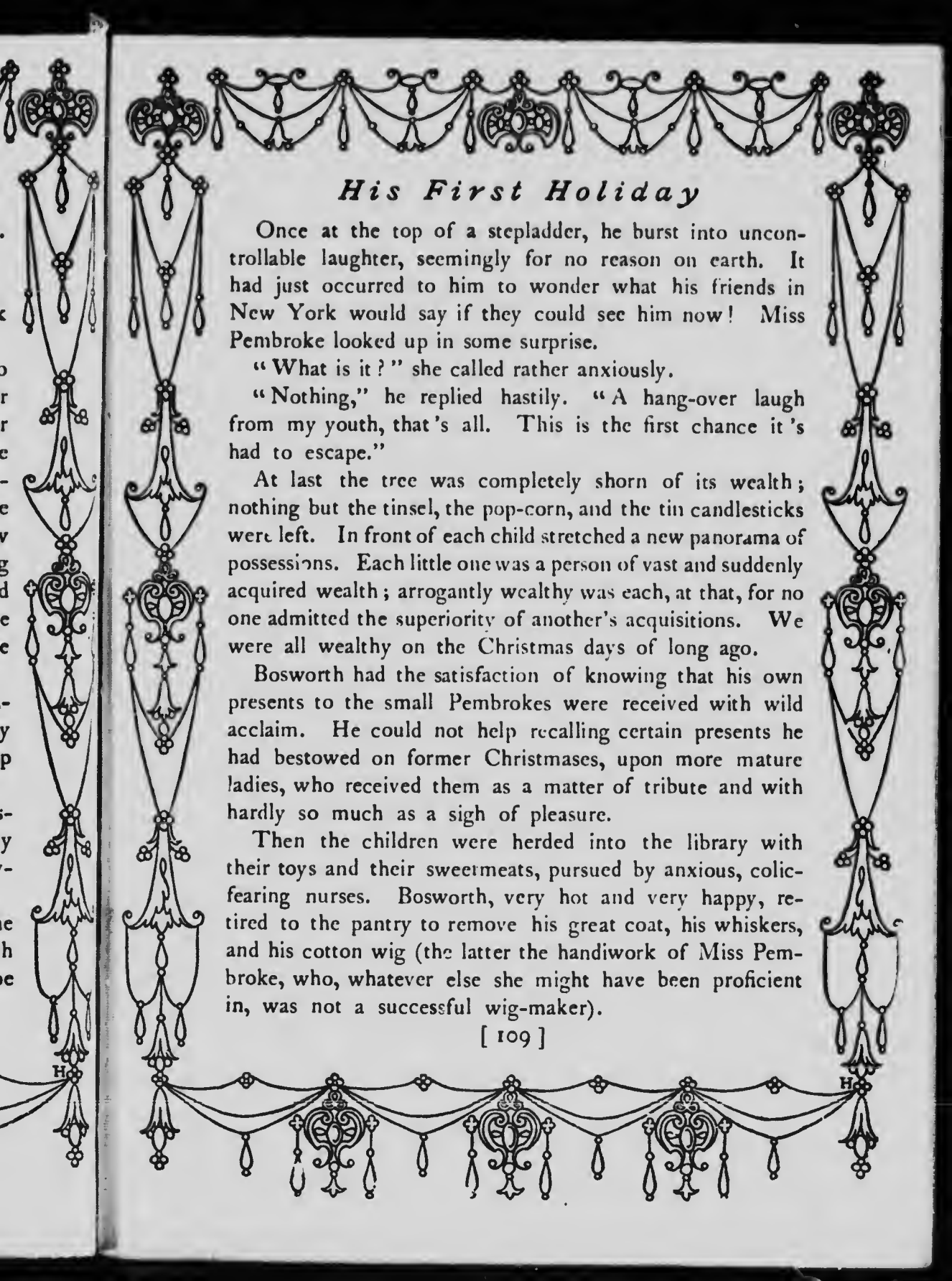




His First Holiday

Once at the top of a stepladder, he burst into uncontrollable laughter, seemingly for no reason on earth. It had just occurred to him to wonder what his friends in New York would say if they could see him now! Miss Pembroke looked up in some surprise.

"What is it?" she called rather anxiously.

"Nothing," he replied hastily. "A hang-over laugh from my youth, that's all. This is the first chance it's had to escape."

At last the tree was completely shorn of its wealth; nothing but the tinsel, the pop-corn, and the tin candlesticks were left. In front of each child stretched a new panorama of possessions. Each little one was a person of vast and suddenly acquired wealth; arrogantly wealthy was each, at that, for no one admitted the superiority of another's acquisitions. We were all wealthy on the Christmas days of long ago.

Bosworth had the satisfaction of knowing that his own presents to the small Pembrokes were received with wild acclaim. He could not help recalling certain presents he had bestowed on former Christmases, upon more mature ladies, who received them as a matter of tribute and with hardly so much as a sigh of pleasure.

Then the children were herded into the library with their toys and their sweetmeats, pursued by anxious, colic-fearing nurses. Bosworth, very hot and very happy, retired to the pantry to remove his great coat, his whiskers, and his cotton wig (the latter the handiwork of Miss Pembroke, who, whatever else she might have been proficient in, was not a successful wig-maker).