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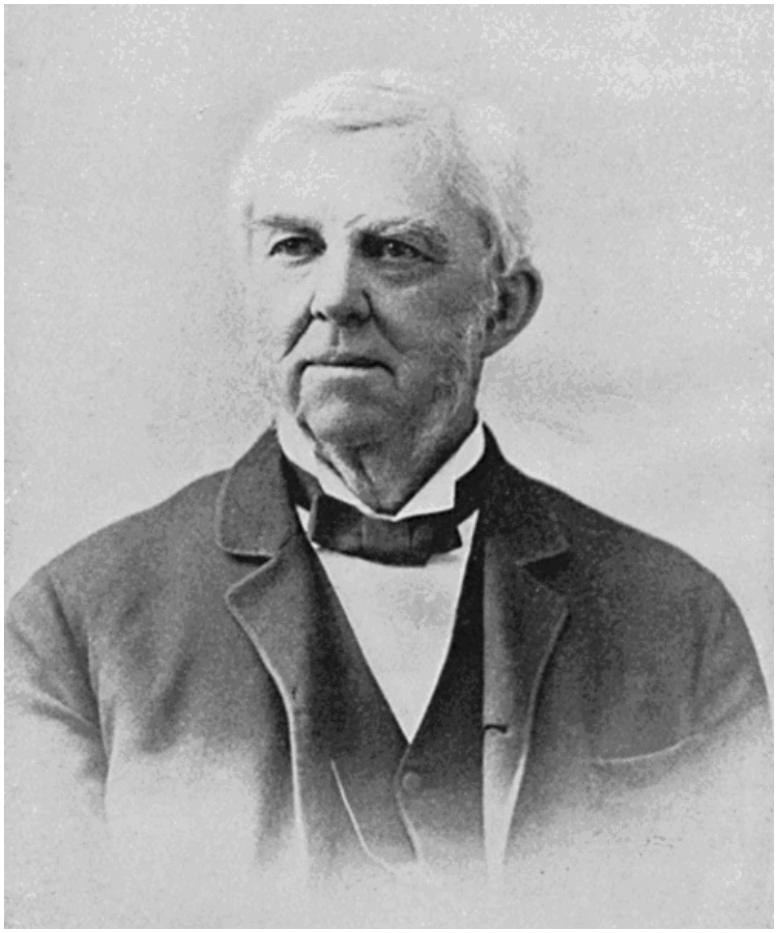

OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES.

LIFE OF
OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES

BY
E.E. BROWN

Author of "LIFE OF GARFIELD," "LIFE OF WASHINGTON,"
"FROM NIGHT TO LIGHT," ETC., ETC.

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Holmes

OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES

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CHAPTER I.

ANCESTRY.

IN a quaint old gambrel-roofed house that once stood on Cambridge Common, Oliver Wendell Holmes—poet, professor, "beloved physician"—was born, on the twenty-ninth of August, 1809.

His father, the Rev. Abiel Holmes, was the pastor of the "First Church" in Cambridge—

That ancient church whose lofty
tower,
Beneath the loftier spire,
Is shadowed when the sunset
hour
Clothes the tall shaft in fire.

Here, in Revolutionary times, General Washington frequently worshiped, and the old homestead itself was the headquarters of the American army during the siege of Boston.

[10] "It was a great happiness," writes the *Poet at the Breakfast-Table*, "to have been born in an old house haunted by such recollections, with harmless ghosts walking its corridors, with fields of waving grass and trees and singing birds, and that vast territory of four or five acres around it, to give a child the sense that he was born to a noble principality....

"The gambrel-roofed house was not one of those old Tory, Episcopal church-goer's strongholds. One of its doors opens directly upon the Green, always called the Common; the other faces the south, a few steps from it, over a paved foot-walk on the other side of which is the miniature front yard, bordered with lilacs and syringas.

"The honest mansion makes no pretensions. Accessible, companionable, holding its hand out to all—comfortable, respectable, and even in its way dignified, but not imposing; not a house for his Majesty's Counsellor, or the Right Reverend successor of Him who had not where to lay his head, for something like a hundred and fifty years it has stood in its lot, and seen the generations of men come and go like the leaves of the forest."

[11] The house was not originally built for a parsonage. It was first the residence of a well-to-do tailor, who sold it to Jonathan Hastings, a prosperous farmer whom the college students used to call "Yankee Jont.," and whose son was the college steward in 1775. It was long known in Cambridge as the "Hastings House," but about the year 1792 it was sold to Eliphalet Pearson, the Hebrew Professor at Harvard, and in 1807 it passed into the hands of the Rev. Abiel Holmes.

For forty years the father of Oliver Wendell Holmes ministered to his Cambridge parish, revered and loved by all who knew him. He was a man of marked literary ability, as his *Annals of America* shows—"full of learning," as some one has said, "but never distressing others by showing how learned he was."

Said T.W. Higginson, at the Holmes Breakfast:

"I should like to speak of that most delightful of sunny old men, the father of Doctor Holmes, whom I knew and loved when I was a child. ... I was brought up in Cambridge, my father's house
[12] being next door to that of Doctor Holmes' gambrel-roofed house, and the library I most enjoyed tumbling about in was the same in which his infant gambols had first disturbed the repose of the books. I shall always remember a certain winter evening, when we boys were playing before the fire, how the old man—gray, and gentle, and kindly as any old German professor, and never complaining of our loudest gambols—going to the frost-covered window, sketched with his pen-knife what seemed a cluster of brambles and a galaxy of glittering stars, and above that he wrote, *Per aspera ad astra*: 'Through difficulties to the stars.' He explained to us what it meant, and I have never forgotten that quiet winter evening and the sweet talk of that old man."

The good pastor was a graduate of Yale College, and before coming to Cambridge had taught at his *Alma Mater*, and preached in Georgia. He was the son of Doctor David Holmes, a physician of Woodstock, Ct., who had served as captain in the French and Indian wars, and afterward as surgeon in the Revolutionary army. The grandfather of Doctor David Holmes was one of the original settlers of Woodstock.[1]

[13] The genealogy of the Holmes family of Woodstock dates from Thomas Holmes, a lawyer of Gray's Inn, London. In 1686, John Holmes, one of his descendants, joined a colony from Roxbury, Mass., and settled in Woodstock, Conn. His son David married a certain "Bathsheba," who had a remarkable reputation as nurse and doctress.

In the great storm of 1717, when the settlers' houses were almost buried in the snow, it is said that she climbed out of an upper-story window and travelled on snow-shoes through almost impassable drifts to Dudley, Mass., to visit a sick woman. The son of this noble Bathsheba was "Dr. David," the grandfather of Oliver Wendell Holmes.

In 1790, Abiel Holmes was married to the daughter of President Stiles of Yale, who died without children. His second wife, and the mother of Oliver Wendell Holmes, was a daughter of Hon. Oliver Wendell, an eminent lawyer. He was descended from various Wendells, Olivers, Quinceys, and Bradstreets—names that belonged to the best blue blood of New England—and his
[14] wife was Mary Jackson, a daughter of Dorothy Quincy, the "Dorothy Q." whom Doctor Holmes has immortalized in his poem. And just here, lest some of my readers may have forgotten some parts of this delicious bit of family portraiture, I am tempted to give the entire poem:

Grandmother's mother, her age I guess,
Thirteen summers or something less;
Girlish bust, but womanly air,

Smooth square forehead, with uprolled
hair,
Lips that lover has never kissed,
Taper fingers and slender wrist,
Hanging sleeves of stiff brocade—
So they painted the little maid.

On her hand a parrot green
Sits unmoving and broods serene;
Hold up the canvas full in view—
Look, there's a rent the light shines
through.
Dark with a century's fringe of dust,
That was a Redcoat's rapier thrust!
Such is the tale the lady old,
Dorothy's daughter's daughter told.

Who the painter was none may tell—
One whose best was not over well;
Hard and dry, it must be confessed,
Flat as a rose that has long been pressed;
Yet in her cheek the hues are bright,
Dainty colors of red and white;
And in her slender shape are seen
Hint and promise of stately mien.

[15]

Look not on her with eyes of scorn—
Dorothy Q. was a lady born!
Ay, since the galloping Normans came,
England's annals have known her name;
And still to the three-hilled rebel town
Dear is that ancient name's renown,
For many a civic wreath they won,
The youthful sire and the gray-haired son.

O damsel Dorothy! Dorothy Q.,
Strange is the gift that I owe to you;
Such a gift as never a king
Save to daughter or son might bring—
All my tenure of heart and hand,
All my title to house and land;
Mother and sister, and child and wife,
And joy and sorrow, and death and life.

What if a hundred years ago
Those close-shut lips had answered, no,
When forth the tremulous question came
That cost the maiden her Norman name;
And under the folds that look so still
The bodice swelled with the bosom's thrill
Should I be I, or would it be
One tenth another to nine tenths me?

Soft is the breath of a maiden's yes;
Not the light gossamer stirs with less;
But never a cable that holds so fast,
Through all the battles of wave and blast,
And never an echo of speech or song
That lives in the babbling air so long!
[16] There were tones in the voice that
whispered then
You may hear to-day in a hundred men.

O lady and lover, how faint and far
Your images hover, and here we are,
Solid and stirring in flesh and bone,
Edward's and Dorothy's—all their own—
A goodly record for time to show
Of a syllable spoken so long ago!
Shall I bless you, Dorothy, or forgive,
For the tender whisper that bade me live?

It shall be a blessing, my little maid,
I will heal the stab of the Redcoat's blade,
And freshen the gold of the tarnished
frame,

And gild with a rhyme your household
name,
So you shall smile on us, brave and bright,
As first you greeted the morning's light,
And live untroubled by woes and fears,
Through a second youth of a hundred
years.

This Dorothy Quincy, it is interesting to note, was the aunt of a second Dorothy Quincy, who married Governor Hancock. The Wendells were of Dutch descent.

Evert Jansen Wendell, who came from East Friesland in 1645, was the original settler in Albany. From the church records, we find that he was the *Regerendo Dijaken* in 1656, and upon
[17] one of the windows of the old Dutch church in Albany, the arms of the Wendells—a ship riding at two anchors—were represented in stained glass. Very little is known of these early ancestors, but the name is still an influential one among the old Knickerbocker families.

Early in the eighteenth century, Abraham and Jacob Wendell left their Albany home and came to Boston. It is said that Jacob (the great-grandfather of Oliver Wendell Holmes) fell in love with his future wife, the daughter of Doctor James Oliver, when she was only nine years of age. Seeing her at play, he was so impressed by her beauty and grace that, like the Jacob of old, he willingly waited the flight of years. Twelve children blessed this happy union, and the youngest daughter married William Phillips, the first mayor of Boston, and the father of Wendell Phillips.

Fair cousin, Wendell P.,

says Doctor Holmes in his Phi Beta Kappa poem of 1881:

Our ancestors were dwellers beside the
Zuyder Zee;
Both Grotius and Erasmus were countrymen
of we,
And Vondel was our namesake, though he
spelt it with a v.

[18] Jacob Wendell became, eventually, one of the richest merchants of Boston; was a member of the City Council and colonel of the Boston regiment. His son, Oliver (the grandfather of Doctor Holmes), was born in 1733, and after his graduation at Harvard, in 1753, he went into business with his father. He still continued his studies, however, and preferring a professional life to that of a business man, he afterwards graduated at the Law School, was admitted to the bar, and soon after appointed Judge of Probate for Suffolk County. In Drake's *Old Landmarks of Boston*, we find that Judge Wendell was a selectman during the siege of Boston, and was commissioned by General Washington to raise a company of men to watch the British after the evacuation, so that no spies might pass between the two armies.

[19] The original Bradstreet was Simon, the old Charter Governor, who married Governor Dudley's daughter Anne.[2] This accomplished lady, the first New England poetess, and frequently called by her contemporaries "The Tenth Muse," was Doctor Holmes' grandmother's great-great-grandmother.[3]

With such an ancestry, Oliver Wendell Holmes surely fulfils all the conditions of "a man of family," and who will not readily agree with the *Autocrat of the Breakfast-Table*, when he writes as follows:

"I go for the man with the family portraits against the one with the twenty-five cent daguerreotype, unless I find out that the last is the better of the two. I go for the man that inherits family traditions and the cumulative humanities of at least four or five generations. Above all things, as a child, he should have tumbled about in a library. All men are afraid of books that have not handled them from infancy."

[20]

CHAPTER II.

BOYHOOD.

IN a curious little almanac for 1809 may still be seen against the date of August 29, the simple record, "Son b." Twice before had good Parson Holmes recorded in similar manner the births of his children, for Oliver Wendell, who bore his grandfather's name, was his third child; but this was the first time he could write "son."

A few years later another son came—the "brother John" whose wit and talents have gladdened so many hearts—and, last of all, another daughter came to brighten the family circle for a few brief years.

The little Oliver was a bright, sunny-tempered child, highly imaginative and extremely sensitive. Speaking of his childhood in after years, and of certain superstitious fancies that always clung to him, he says:

[21] "I tell you it was not so pleasant for a little boy of impressible nature to go up to bed in an old gambrel-roofed house, with untenanted, locked upper chambers, and a most ghostly garret; ... There was a dark store-room, too, on looking through the keyhole of which I could dimly see a heap of chairs and tables and other four-footed things, which seemed to me to have rushed in there frightened, and in their fright to have huddled together and climbed up on each other's backs—as the people did in that awful crush where so many were killed at the execution of Holloway and Haggerty. Then the lady's portrait up-stairs with the sword-thrusts through it—marks of the British officers' rapiers—and the tall mirror in which they used to look at their red coats—confound them for smashing its mate!—and the deep, cunningly-wrought arm-chair in which Lord Percy used to sit while his hair was dressing; he was a gentleman, and always had it covered with a large *peignoir* to save the silk covering my grandmother embroidered. Then the little room down-stairs from which went the orders to throw up a bank of earth on the hill yonder
[22] where you may now observe a granite obelisk, the study in my father's time, but in those days the council-chamber of armed men, sometimes filled with soldiers. Come with me, and I will show you the 'dents' left by the butts of their muskets all over the floor. With all these suggestive objects round me, aided by the wild stories those awful country boys that came to live in our service brought with them—of contracts written in blood and left out over night not to be found the next morning (removed by the Evil One who takes his nightly round among our dwellings, and filed away for future use), of dreams coming true, of death-signs, of apparitions, no wonder that my imagination got excited, and I was liable to superstitious fancies."

What some of these fancies were, he tells us elsewhere:

"I was afraid of ships. Why, I could never tell. The masts looked frightfully tall, but they were not so tall as the steeple of our old yellow meeting-house. At any rate, I used to hide my eyes from the sloops and schooners that were wont to lie at the end of the bridge, and I confess that traces of this undefined terror lasted very long. One other source of alarm had a still more fearful
[23] significance. There was a great wooden hand, a glovemaker's sign, which used to swing and creak in the blast as it hung from a pillar before a certain shop a mile or two outside of the city. Oh, the dreadful hand! Always hanging there ready to catch up a little boy who would come home to supper no more, nor yet to bed, whose porringer would be laid away empty thenceforth, and his half-worn shoes wait until his small brother grew to fit them.

"As for all manner of superstitious observances, I used once to think I must have been peculiar in having such a list of them, but I now believe that half the children of the same age go through the same experiences. No Roman soothsayer ever had such a catalogue of omens as I found in the sibylline leaves of my childhood. That trick of throwing a stone at a tree and attaching some mighty issue to hitting or missing, which you will find mentioned in one or more biographies, I well remember. Stepping on or over certain particular things or spots—Doctor Johnson's special weakness—I got the habit of at a very early age.

[24] "With these follies mingled sweet delusions which I loved so well I would not outgrow them, even when it required a voluntary effort to put a momentary trust in them. Here is one which I cannot help telling you.

"The firing of the great guns at the Navy Yard is easily heard at the place where I was born and lived. 'There is a ship of war come in,' they used to say, when they heard them. Of course I supposed that such vessels came in unexpectedly, after indefinite years of absence, suddenly as falling stones, and that the great guns roared in their astonishment and delight at the sight of the old war-ship splitting the bay with her cut-water. Now, the sloop-of-war the *Wasp*, Captain Blakely, after gloriously capturing the *Reindeer* and the *Avon*, had disappeared from the face of the ocean, and was supposed to be lost. But there was no proof of it, and of course for a time, hopes were entertained that she might be heard from. Long after the last real chance had utterly vanished, I pleased myself with the fond illusion that somewhere on the waste of waters she was still floating, and there were *years* during which I never heard the sound of the great guns
[25] booming inland from the Navy Yard without saying to myself, 'the *Wasp* has come!' and almost thinking I could see her as she rolled in, crumpling the waters before her, weather-beaten, barnacled, with shattered spars and threadbare canvas, welcomed by the shouts and tears of thousands. This was one of those dreams that I mused and never told. Let me make a clean breast of it now, and say, that, so late as to have outgrown childhood, perhaps to have got far on towards manhood, when the roar of the cannon has struck suddenly on my ear, I have started with a thrill of vague expectation and tremulous delight, and the long unspoken words have articulated themselves in the mind's dumb whisper, *The Wasp has come!*

"Yes; children believe plenty of queer things. I suppose all of you have had the pocket-book fever when you were little? What do I mean? Why, ripping up old pocket-books in the firm belief that bank-bills to an immense amount were hidden in them. So, too, you must all remember some splendid unfulfilled promise of somebody or other, which fed you with hopes perhaps for years, and which left a blank in your life which nothing has ever filled up. O.T. quitted our household
[26] carrying with him the passionate regrets of the more youthful members. He was an ingenious youngster; wrote wonderful copies, and carved the two initials given above with great skill on all available surfaces. I thought, by the way, they were all gone, but the other day, I found them on a certain door. How it surprised me to find them so near the ground! I had thought the boy of no

trivial dimensions. Well, O.T., when he went, made a solemn promise to two of us. I was to have a ship, and the other a martin house (last syllable pronounced as in the word *tin*). Neither ever came; but oh! how many and many a time I have stolen to the corner—the cars pass close by it at this time—and looked up that long avenue, thinking that he must be coming now, almost sure as I turned to look northward that there he would be, trudging toward me, the ship in one hand and the mar*tin* house in the other!"

At an early age the merry, restless little fellow was sent to a neighboring school, kept by Ma'am Prentiss, a good, motherly old dame, who ruled her little flock, not with a scourge of birches, but
[27] with a long willow rod that reached quite across the schoolroom, "reminding,[4] rather than chastening." Among her pupils was Alfred Lee, afterwards the beloved Bishop of Delaware.

"It is by little things," says the Autocrat, "that we know ourselves; a soul would very probably mistake itself for another, when once disembodied, were it not for individual experiences which differ from those of others only in details seemingly trivial. All of us have been thirsty thousands of times, and felt with Pindar, that water was the best of things. I alone, as I think, of all mankind, remember one particular pailful of water, flavored with the white-pine of which the pail was made, and the brown mug out of which one Edmund, a red-faced and curly-haired boy, was averred to have bitten a fragment in his haste to drink; it being then high summer, and little full-blooded boys feeling very warm and porous in the low studded schoolroom where Dame Prentiss, dead and gone, ruled over young children. Thirst belongs to humanity everywhere, in all ages, but that white-pine pail and that brown mug belong to me in particular."

[28] The next school to which the Cambridge pastor sent his little son was kept by William Biglow, a man of considerable scholarship and much native wit. Five years were spent at a school in Cambridgeport, which was kept by several successive teachers, and it was here, as schoolmates, that Oliver Wendell Holmes first met Margaret Fuller and Richard Henry Dana.

"I was moderately studious," says Doctor Holmes, "and very fond of reading stories, which I sometimes did in school hours. I was fond also of whispering, and my desk bore sad witness to my passion for whittling. For these misdemeanors I sometimes had a visitation from the ferule, and once when a Gunter's scale was used for this purpose, it flew to pieces as it came down on my palm."[5]

It was about this time, doubtless, that the *Autocrat* learned that important fact about the "hat."

"I was once equipped," he says, "in a hat of Leghorn straw, having a brim of much wider dimensions than were usual at that time, and sent to school in that portion of my native town which lies nearest to the metropolis. On my way I was met by a 'Port-Chuck,' as we used to call the young gentlemen of that locality, and the following dialogue ensued:

[29] "*The Port-Chuck*: 'Hullo, you sir, joo know th' wus goin' to be a race to-morrah?'

"*Myself*: 'No. Who's goin' to run, 'n' wher' 's't goin' to be?'

"*The Port-Chuck*: 'Squire Mico 'n' Doctor Williams, round the brim o' your hat.'

"These two much-respected gentlemen being the oldest inhabitants at that time, and the alleged race-course being out of the question, the Port-Chuck also winking and thrusting his tongue into his cheek, I perceived that I had been trifled with, and the effect has been to make me sensitive and observant respecting this article ever since. The hat is the vulnerable point of the artificial integument."

[30]

CHAPTER III.

EARLY RECOLLECTIONS.

OF the boyhood of Doctor Holmes we have many delightful glimpses.

"Like other boys in the country," he tells us, "I had my patch of ground to which in the springtime I intrusted the seeds furnished me with a confident trust in their resurrection and glorification in the better world of summer. But I soon found that my lines had fallen in a place where a vegetable growth had to run the gauntlet of as many foes and trials as a Christian pilgrim. Flowers would not blow; daffodils perished like criminals in their condemned caps, without their petals ever seeing daylight; roses were disfigured with monstrous protrusions through their very centres, something that looked like a second bud pushing through the middle
[31] of the corolla; lettuces and cabbages would not head; radishes knotted themselves until they looked like centenarians' fringes; and on every stem, on every leaf, and both sides of it, and at the root of everything that grew, was a professional specialist in the shape of grub, caterpillar, aphis, or other expert, whose business it was to devour that particular part, and help murder the whole attempt at vegetation.... Yet Nature is never wholly unkind. Economical as she was in my unparadised Eden, hard as it was to make some of my floral houris unveil, still the damask roses sweetened the June breezes, the bladed and plumed flower-de-luces unfolded their close-wrapped

cones, and larkspurs, and lupins, lady's delights—plebeian manifestations of the pansy—self-sowing marigolds, hollyhocks; the forest flowers of two seasons, and the perennial lilacs and syringas, all whispered to the winds blowing over them that some caressing presence was around me.

"Beyond the garden was the field, a vast domain of four acres or thereabouts by the measurement of after years, bordered to the north by a fathomless chasm—the ditch the base-
[32] ball players of the present era jump over; on the east by unexplored territory; on the south by a barren enclosure, where the red sorrel proclaimed liberty and equality under its *drapeau rouge*, and succeeded in establishing a vegetable commune where all were alike, poor, mean, sour, and uninteresting; and on the west by the Common, not then disgraced by jealous enclosures which make it look like a cattle-market.

"Beyond, as I looked round, were the colleges, the meeting-house, the little square market-house, long vanished, the burial ground where the dead presidents stretched their weary bones under epitaphs stretched out at as full length as their subjects; the pretty church where the gouty Tories used to kneel on their hassocks, the district schoolhouse, and hard by it Ma'am Hancock's cottage, never so called in those days, but rather 'ten-footer'; then houses scattered near and far, open spaces, the shadowy elms, round hilltops in the distance, and over all the great bowl of the sky. Mind you, this was the WORLD, as I first knew it; *terra veteribus cognita*, as Mr. Arrowsmith would have called it, if he had mapped the universe of my infancy."

[33] "When I was of smallest dimensions," he says at another time, "and wont to ride impacted between the knees of fond parental pair, we would sometimes cross the bridge to the next village town and stop opposite a low, brown, gambrel-roofed cottage. Out of it would come one Sally, sister of its swarthy tenant, swarthy herself, shady-lipped, sad-voiced, and bending over her flower bed, would gather a 'posy,' as she called it, for the little boy. Sally lies in the churchyard, with a slab of blue slate at her head, lichen-crusted, and leaning a little within the last few years. Cottage, garden-bed, posies, grenadier-like rows of seeding-onions—stateliest of vegetables—all are gone, but the breath of a marigold brings them all back to me."

Of Cambridge at this time, James Russell Lowell, in his *Fireside Travels*, tells us: "It was still a country village with its own habits and traditions, not yet feeling too strongly the force of suburban gravitation. Approaching it from the west, by what was then called the New Road, you would pause on the brow of Symond's Hill to enjoy a view singularly soothing and placid. In front of you lay the town, tufted with elms, lindens, and horse-chestnuts, which had seen
[34] Massachusetts a colony, and were fortunately unable to emigrate with the Tories by whom, or by whose fathers they were planted. Over it rose the noisy belfry of the College, the square, brown tower of the Episcopal Church, and the slim yellow spire of the parish meeting-house. On your right the Charles slipped smoothly through green and purple salt meadows, darkened here and there with the blossoming black grass as with a stranded cloud-shadow. To your left upon the Old Road you saw some half-dozen dignified old houses of the colonial time, all comfortably fronting southward.... We called it 'the Village' then, and it was essentially an English village—quiet, unspeculative, without enterprise, sufficing to itself, and only showing such differences from the original type as the public school and the system of town government might superinduce. A few houses, chiefly old, stood around the bare common, with ample elbow-room, and old women, capped and spectacled, still peered through the same windows from which they had watched Lord Percy's artillery rumble by to Lexington, or caught a glimpse of the handsome Virginia
[35] general who had come to wield our homespun Saxon chivalry. The hooks were to be seen from which had swung the hammocks of Burgoyne's captive red-coats. If memory does not deceive me, women still washed clothes in the town spring, clear as that of Bandusia. One coach sufficed for all the travel to the metropolis. Commencement had not ceased to be the great holiday of the Boston commonwealth, and a fitting one it was. The students (scholars they were called then) wore their sober uniform, not ostentatiously distinctive, or capable of rousing democratic envy; and the old lines of caste were blurred rather than rubbed out, as servitor was softened into beneficiary. Was it possible for us in those days to conceive of a greater potentate than the president of the University, in his square doctor's cap, that still filially recalled Oxford and Cambridge?"

The father of Oliver Wendell Holmes was a Calvanist, not indeed of the severest cast, but still strictly "orthodox" in all his religious views, and when Oliver, his elder son, was fifteen years of age, he sent him to the Phillips Academy in Andover, thinking that the religious atmosphere there
[36] was less heretical than at Phillips Academy, Exeter, where Arminian tendencies were just beginning to show themselves.

"I have some recollections of Andover, pleasant and other," says Doctor Holmes. "I wonder if the old Seminary clock strikes as slowly as it used to. My room-mate thought, when he first came, it was the bell tolling deaths, and people's ages, as they do in the country. He swore (ministers' sons get so familiar with good words that they are apt to handle them carelessly), that the children were dying by the dozen of all ages, from one to twelve, and ran off next day in recess when it began to strike eleven, but was caught before the clock got through striking. At the foot of the hill, down in town, is, or was, a tidy old elm, which was said to have been hooped with iron to protect it from Indian tomahawks (*Credab Hahnucmannus*), and to have grown round its hoops and buried them in its wood."

The extreme conscientiousness of the boy is strikingly depicted in the following revelation:

"The first unequivocal act of wrong that has left its trace in my memory was this: refusing a

[37] small favor asked of me—nothing more than telling what had happened at school one morning. No matter who asked it; but there were circumstances which saddened and awed me. I had no heart to speak; I faltered some miserable, perhaps petulant excuse, stole away, and the first battle of life was lost.

"What remorse followed I need not tell. Then and there to the best of my knowledge, I first consciously took Sin by the hand and turned my back on Duty. Time has led me to look upon my offence more leniently; I do not believe it or any other childish wrong is infinite, as some have pretended, but infinitely finite. Yet, if I had but won that first battle!"

And what a charming picture he gives us of the peaceful, hallowing influences about him in that quiet old parsonage!

"The Puritan 'Sabbath,' as everybody knows, began at 'sundown' on Saturday evening. To such observances of it I was born and bred. As the large, round disk of day declined, a stillness, a solemnity, a somewhat melancholy hush came over us all. It was time for work to cease, and for playthings to be put away. The world of active life passed into the shadow of an eclipse, not to emerge until the sun should sink again beneath the horizon.

[38] "It was in the stillness of the world without and of the soul within that the pulsating lullaby of the evening crickets used to make itself most distinctly heard—so that I well remember I used to think that the purring of these little creatures, which mingled with the batrachian hymns from the neighboring swamps, *was peculiar to Saturday evenings*. I don't know that anything could give a clearer idea of the quieting and subduing effect of the old habit of observance of what was considered holy time, than this strange, childish fancy."

Had all the clergymen who visited the parsonage been as true to their profession as his own dear father, the thoughtful, impressible boy might, very possibly, have devoted his brilliant talents to the ministry. "It was a real delight," he says, "to have one of those good, hearty, happy, benignant old clergymen pass the Sunday with us, and I can remember one whose advent made the day feel almost like 'Thanksgiving.' But now and then would come along a clerical visitor with a sad face and a wailing voice, which sounded exactly as if somebody must be lying dead up-
[39] stairs, who took no interest in us children, except a painful one, as being in a bad way with our cheery looks, and did more to unchristianize us with his woebegone ways than all his sermons were like to accomplish in the other direction. I remember one in particular who twitted me so with my blessings as a Christian child, and whined so to me about the naked black children, that he did more in that one day to make me a heathen than he had ever done in a month to make a Christian out of an infant Hottentot. I might have been a minister myself for aught I know, if this clergyman had not looked and talked so like an undertaker."

An exercise written while at Andover, shows at what an early age he attempted versification. It is a translation from the first book of Virgil's Æneid, and reads as smoothly as any lines of Pope. The following extract shows the angry god giving his orders to Zephyrus and Eurus:

Is this your glory in a noble line,
To leave your confines and to ravage
mine?
Whom I—but let these troubled waves
subside—
Another tempest and I'll quell your
pride!
Go bear our message to your master's
ear,
That wide as ocean I am despot here;
Let him sit monarch in his barren
caves!
I wield the trident and control the
waves.

[40]

CHAPTER IV.

OTHER REMINISCENCES.

IN his vacations the inquiring mind of the young student had made "strange acquaintances" in a certain book infirmary up in the attic of the gambrel-roofed house.

"*The Negro Plot at New York*," he says, "helped to implant a feeling in me which it took Mr. Garrison a good many years to root out. *Thinks I to myself*, an old novel which has been attributed to a famous statesman, introduced me to a world of fiction which was not represented on the shelves of the library proper, unless perhaps by *Caelebs in search of a Wife*, or allegories of the bitter tonic class."

Then there was an old, old Latin alchemy book, with the manuscript annotations of some

ancient Rosicrucian, "In the pages of which," he says, "I had a vague notion that I might find the
[41] mighty secret of the *Lapis Philosophorum*, otherwise called Chaos, the Dragon, the Green Lion, the *Quinta Essentia*, the Soap of Sages, the vinegar of Heavenly Grace, the Egg, the Old Man, the Sun, the Moon, and by all manner of odd *aliases*, as I am assured by the plethoric little book before me, in parchment covers browned like a meerschaum with the smoke of furnaces, and the thumbing of dead gold-seekers, and the fingering of bony-handed book-misers, and the long intervals of dusty slumber on the shelves of the *bonquiniste*."

"I have never lost my taste for alchemy," he adds, "since I first got hold of the *Palladium Spagyricum* of Peter John Faber, and sought—in vain, it is true—through its pages for a clear, intelligible, and practical statement of how I could turn my lead sinkers and the weights of the tall kitchen clock into good yellow gold specific gravity, 19.2, and exchangeable for whatever I then wanted, and for many more things than I was then aware of.

"One of the greatest pleasures of childhood is found in the mysteries which it hides from the scepticism of the elders, and works up into small mythologies of its own. I have seen all this
[42] played over again in adult life, the same delightful bewilderment of semi-emotional belief in listening to the gaseous promises of this or that fantastic system, that I found in the pleasing mirages conjured up for me by the ragged old volume I used to pore over in the southeast attic chamber."

There are other reminiscences of these days that show us not only the outward surroundings, but the inner workings of the boy's mind.

"The great Destroyer," he says, "had come near me, but never so as to be distinctly seen and remembered during my tender years. There flits dimly before me the image of a little girl whose name even I have forgotten, a schoolmate whom we missed one day, and were told that she had died. But what death was I never had any very distinct idea until one day I climbed the low stone-wall of the old burial ground and mingled with a group that were looking into a very deep, long, narrow hole, dug down through the green sod, down through the brown loam, down through the yellow gravel, and there at the bottom was an oblong red box, and a still, sharp, white face of a young man seen through an opening at one end of it.

[43] "When the lid was closed, and the gravel and stones rattled down pell-mell, and the woman in black who was crying and wringing her hands went off with the other mourners, and left him, then I felt that I had seen Death, and should never forget him."

There were certain sounds too, he tells us, that had "a mysterious suggestiveness" to him. One was the "creaking of the woodsleds, bringing their loads of oak and walnut from the country, as the slow-swinging oxen trailed them along over the complaining snow in the cold, brown light of early morning. Lying in bed and listening to their dreary music had a pleasure in it akin to the Lucretian luxury, or that which Byron speaks of as to be enjoyed in looking on at a battle by one 'who hath no friend, no brother there.'

"Yes, and there was still another sound which mingled its solemn cadences with the waking and sleeping dreams of my boyhood. It was heard only at times, a deep, muffled roar, which rose and fell, not loud, but vast; a whistling boy would have drowned it for his next neighbor, but it must have been heard over the space of a hundred square miles. I used to wonder what this might be.
[44] Could it be the roar of the thousand wheels and the ten thousand footsteps jarring and trampling along the stones of the neighboring city? That would be continuous; but this, as I have said, rose and fell in regular rhythm. I remember being told, and I suppose this to have been the true solution, that it was the sound of the waves after a high wind breaking on the long beaches many miles distant."

After a year's study at Andover, he was fully prepared to enter Harvard University.

In the Charlestown Navy Yard, at this time, was the old frigate *Constitution*, which the government purposed to break up as unfit for service, thoughtless of the desecration:

There was an hour when patriots dared
profane
The mast that Britain strove to bow in
vain,
And one, who listened to the tale of shame,
Whose heart still answered to that sacred
name,
Whose eye still followed o'er his country's
tides
Thy glorious flag, our brave *Old Ironsides!*
yon lone attic, on a summer's morn,
Thus mocked the spoilers with his
schoolboy scorn:

Ay, tear her tattered ensign down!
Long has it waved on high,
And many an eye has danced to see
That banner in the sky;
[45] Beneath it rung the battle shout,

And burst the cannon's roar;
The meteor of the ocean air
Shall sweep the clouds no more!

Her deck, once red with heroes' blood,
Where knelt the vanquished foe,
When winds were hurrying o'er the
flood,
And waves were white below,
No more shall feel the victor's tread,
Or know the conquered knee;
The harpies of the shore shall pluck
The eagle of the sea.

Oh, better that her shattered hulk
Should sink beneath the wave;
Her thunders shook the mighty deep,
And there should be her grave;
Nail to the mast her holy flag,
Set every thread-bare sail,
And give her to the god of storms
The lightning and the gale!

This stirring poem—the first to make him known—was written by Oliver Wendell Holmes in 1830, "with a pencil in the White Chamber *Stans pede in uno*, pretty nearly," and was published in the Boston *Advertiser*. From these columns it was extensively copied by other newspapers
[46] throughout the country, and handbills containing the verses were circulated in Washington. The eloquent, patriotic outburst not only brought instant fame to the young poet, but so thoroughly aroused the heart of the people that the grand old vessel was saved from destruction.

The "schoolboy" had already entered Harvard College, and among his classmates in that famous class of 1829, were Benjamin R. Curtis, afterwards Judge of the Supreme Court, James Freeman Clarke, Chandler Robbins, Samuel F. Smith (the author of "My country, 'tis of thee"), G.T. Bigelow (Judge of the Supreme Court of Massachusetts), G.T. Davis, and Benjamin Pierce.

In the class just below him (1830) was Charles Sumner; and his cousin, Wendell Phillips, with John Lothrop Motley, entered Harvard during his Junior year. George Ticknor was one of his instructors, and Josiah Quincy became president of the college before he graduated.

Throughout his whole college course Oliver Wendell Holmes maintained an excellent rank in scholarship. He was a frequent contributor to the college periodicals, and delivered several
[47] poems upon a variety of subjects. One of these was given before the "Hasty Pudding Club," and another entitled "Forgotten Days," at an "Exhibition." He was the class poet; was called upon to write the poem at Commencement, and was one of the sixteen chosen into the Phi Beta Kappa Society.[6]

After his graduation, he studied law one year in the Dane Law School of Harvard College. It was at this time that *The Collegian*, a periodical published by a number of the Harvard undergraduates, was started at Cambridge. To this paper the young law student sent numerous anonymous contributions, among them "Evening, by a Tailor," "The Height of the Ridiculous," "The Meeting of the Dryads," and "The Spectre Pig." A brilliant little journal it must have been with Holmes' inimitable outbursts of wit, "Lochfast's" (William H. Simmons) translations from Schiller, and the numerous pen thrusts from John O. Sargent, Robert Habersham and Theodore William Snow, who wrote under the respective signatures of "Charles Sherry," "Mr. Airy" and "Geoffery La Touche." Young Motley, too, was an occasional contributor to *The Collegian*, and his
[48] brother-in-law, Park Benjamin, joined Holmes and Epes Sargent, in 1833, in writing a gift book called "The Harbinger," the profits of which were given to Dr. Howe's Asylum for the blind.

[49]

CHAPTER V.

ABROAD.

AFTER a year's study of law, during which time the Muses were constantly tempting him to "pen a stanza when he should engross," young Holmes determined to take up the study of medicine, which was much more congenial to his tastes than the formulas of Coke and Blackstone. Doctor James Jackson and his associates were his instructors for the following two years and a half; and then before taking his degree of M.D., he spent three years in Europe, perfecting his studies in the hospitals and lecture-rooms of Paris and Edinburgh.

Of this European tour, we find occasional allusions scattered throughout his writings. Listen, for instance, to this grand description of Salisbury Cathedral:

[50] "It was the first cathedral we ever saw, and none has ever so impressed us since. Vast, simple, awful in dimensions and height, just beginning to grow tall at the point where our proudest steeples taper out, it fills the whole soul, pervades the vast landscape over which it reigns, and, like Niagara and the Alps, abolishes that five or six foot personality in the beholder which is fostered by keeping company with the little life of the day in its little dwellings. In the Alps your voice is as the piping of a cricket. Under the sheet of Niagara the beating of your heart seems too trivial a movement to take reckoning of. In the buttressed hollow of one of these paleozoic cathedrals you are ashamed of your ribs, and blush for the exiguous pillars of bone on which your breathing structure reposes.... These old cathedrals are beyond all comparison, what are best worth seeing of man's handiwork in Europe."

"Lively emotions very commonly do not strike us full in front, but obliquely from the side," he says at another time. "A scene or incident in *undress* often affects us more than one in full costume."

Is this the mighty ocean?—is this all?

[51] Says the Princess in Gebir. The rush that should have flooded my soul in the Coliseum did not come. But walking one day in the fields about the city, I stumbled over a fragment of broken masonry, and lo! the World's Mistress in her stone girdle—*alta mænia Romæ*—rose before me, and whitened my cheek with her pale shadow, as never before or since.

"I used very often, when coming home from my morning's work at one of the public institutions of Paris, to stop in at the dear old church of St. Etienne du Mont. The tomb of St. Genevieve, surrounded by burning candles and votive tablets was there; there was a noble organ with carved figures; the pulpit was borne on the oaken shoulders of a stooping Samson; and there was a marvellous staircase, like a coil of lace. These things I mention from memory, but not all of them together impressed me so much as an inscription on a small slab of marble fixed in one of the walls. It told how this Church of St. Stephen was repaired and beautified in the 16**, and how
[52] during the celebration of its re-opening, two girls of the parish (*filles de la paroisse*), fell from the gallery, carrying a part of the balustrade with them, to the pavement, but by miracle escaped uninjured. Two young girls, nameless, but real presences to my imagination, as much as when they came fluttering down on the tiles with a cry that outscreamed the sharpest treble in the *Te Deum*. All the crowd gone but these two *filles de la paroisse*—gone as utterly as the dresses they wore, as the shoes that were on their feet, as the bread and meat that were in the market on that day.

"Not the great historical events, but the personal incidents that call up single sharp pictures of some human being in its pang of struggle, reach us most nearly. I remember the platform at Berne, over the parapet of which Theobald Weinzäpfli's restive horse sprang with him and landed him more than a hundred feet beneath in the lower town, not dead, but sorely broken, and no longer a wild youth, but God's servant from that day forward. I have forgotten the famous bears and all else. I remember the Percy lion on the bridge over the little river at Alnwick—the leaden
[53] lion with his tail stretched out straight like a pump-handle—and why? Because of the story of the village boy who must fain bestride the leaden tail, standing out over the water—which breaking, he dropped into the stream far below, and was taken out an idiot for the rest of his life."

Again he says: "I once ascended the spire of Strasburg Cathedral, which is the highest, I think, in Europe. It is a shaft of stone filigree-work, frightfully open, so that the guide puts his arms behind you to keep you from falling. To climb it is a noonday nightmare, and to think of having climbed it crisps all the fifty-six joints of one's twenty digits. While I was on it, 'pinnacled dim in the intense inane,' a strong wind was blowing, and I felt sure that the spire was rocking. It swayed back and forward like a stalk of rye, or a cat-o'-nine tails (bulrush) with a bobolink on it. I mentioned it to the guide, and he said that the spire did really swing back and forward, I think he said some feet.

"Keep any line of knowledge ten years and some other line will intersect it. Long after I was hunting out a paper of Dumeril's in an old journal—the '*Magazin Encyclopédique*'—for *l'an*
[54] *troiséme* (1795), when I stumbled upon a brief article on the vibrations of the spire of Strasburg Cathedral. A man can shake it so the movement shall be shown in a vessel of water nearly seventy feet below the summit, and higher up the vibration is like that of an earthquake. I have seen one of those wretched wooden spires with which we very shabbily finish some of our stone churches (thinking that the lidless blue eye of heaven cannot tell the counterfeit we try to pass on it), swinging like a reed in a wind, but one would hardly think of such a thing happening in a stone spire."

Nor does he forget that dear little child he saw and heard in a French hospital. "Between two and three years old. Fell out of her chair and snapped both thigh-bones. Lying in bed, patient, gentle. Rough students round her, some in white aprons, looking fearfully businesslike; but the child placid, perfectly still. I spoke to her, and the blessed little creature answered me in a voice of such heavenly sweetness, with that reedy thrill in it which you have heard in the thrush's even-song, that I hear it at this moment. '*C'est tout comme unserin*,' said the French student at my side."

The Birthplace of Oliver Wendell Holmes.

[55]

The ruins of a Roman aqueduct he describes in another place, and now and then some incident that happened in England or Scotland, may be found among his writings; but when, after three years' absence, he returns to Cambridge and delivers his poem before the "Phi Beta Kappa Society," he begs his classmates to—

Ask no garlands sought beyond
the tide,
But take the leaflets gathered at
your side.

How affectionately his thoughts turned homeward is strikingly shown in the very first lines of the poem:

Scenes of my youth! awake its
slumbering fire!
Ye winds of memory, sweep the silent
lyre!
Ray of the past, if yet thou canst
appear,
Break through the clouds of Fancy's
waning year;
Chase from her breast the thin
autumnal snow,
If leaf or blossom still is fresh below!
Long have I wandered; the returning
tide
Brought back an exile to his cradle's
side;
And as my bark her time-worn flag
unrolled
To greet the land-breeze with its faded
fold,
So, in remembrance of my boyhood's
time,
I lift these ensigns of neglected rhyme;
O more than blest, that all my
wanderings through,
My anchor falls where first my
pennons flew!

And read yet again in another place this loving tribute to the home of his childhood:

[56]

"To what small things our memory and our affections attach themselves! I remember when I was a child that one of the girls planted some Star of Bethlehem bulbs in the southwest corner of our front yard. Well, I left the paternal roof and wandered in other lands, and learned to think in the words of strange people. But after many years, as I looked in the little front yard again, it occurred to me that there used to be some Stars of Bethlehem in the southwest corner. The grass was tall there, and the blade of the plant is very much like grass, only thicker and glossier.

"Even as Tully parted the briers and brambles when he hunted for the sphere-containing cylinder that marked the grave of Archimedes, so did I comb the grass with my fingers for my

monumental memorial flower. Nature had stored my keepsake tenderly in her bosom. The glossy, faintly-streaked blades were there; they are there still, though they never flower, darkened as they are by the shade of the elms and rooted in the matted turf.

"Our hearts are held down to our homes by innumerable fibres, trivial as that I have just
[57] recalled; but Gulliver was fixed to the soil, you remember, by pinning his head a hair at a time. Even a stone, with a whitish band crossing it, belonging to the pavement of the back yard, insisted on becoming one of the talismans of memory.

"This intersusception of the ideas of inanimate objects, and their faithful storing away among the sentiments, are curiously prefigured in the material structure of the thinking centre itself. In the very core of the brain, in the part where Des Cartes placed the soul, is a small mineral deposit of grape-like masses of crystalline matter.

"But the plants that come up every year in the same place, like the Stars of Bethlehem, of all the lesser objects, give me the liveliest home-feeling."

To return to the Phi Beta Kappa poem, modestly termed by the author "A Metrical Essay," it is interesting to note Lowell's hearty appreciation of it in his *Fable for Critics*:

There's *Holmes*, who is matchless among you
for wit,
A Leyden jar always full-charged, from which
flit
The electrical tingles of hit after hit.
In long poems 'tis painful sometimes, and
invites
A thought of the way the new telegraph
writes,
Which pricks down its little sharp sentences
spitefully,
[58] As if you got more than you'd title to
rightfully.
And you find yourself hoping its wild father
Lightning
Would flame in for a second and give you a
fright'ning.
He has perfect sway of what I call a sham
metre,
But many admire it, the English pentameter,
And Campbell, I think, wrote most commonly
worse.
With less nerve, swing and fire, in the same
kind of verse.
Nor e'er achieved aught in 't so worthy of
praise
As the tribute of Holmes to the grand
Marseillaise.
You went crazy last year over Bulwer's *New
Simon*;
Why, if B., to the day of his dying should
rhyme on,
Heaping verses on verses and tomes upon
tomes,
He could ne'er reach the best point and vigor
of Holmes!
His are just the fine hands, too, to weave you
a lyric
Full of fancy, fun, feeling, or spiced with
satyric
In a measure so kindly, you doubt if the toes
That are trodden upon, are your own or your
foes.

This tribute of Holmes to the grand Marseillaise is indeed one of the finest passages in a poem abounding in point and vigor, as well as in fancy and feeling. Who can read these stirring lines without a sympathetic thrill for the watching, weeping Rouget de l'Isle, composing in one night both music and words of the nameless song?

The city slept beneath the moonbeam's glance,
Her white walls gleaming through the vines of
France,
And all was hushed save where the footsteps
fell
On some high tower, of midnight sentinel.
[59] But one still watched; no self-encircled woes
Chased from his lids the angel of repose;

He watched, he wept, for thoughts of bitter
years
Bowed his dark lashes, wet with burning tears;
His country's sufferings and her children's
shame
Streamed o'er his memory like a forest's flame,
Each treasured insult, each remembered
wrong,
Rolled through his heart and kindled into song;
His taper faded; and the morning gales
Swept through the world the war song of
Marseilles!

In this same Phi Beta Kappa poem may be found that beautiful pastoral, *The Cambridge Churchyard*, and

Since the lyric dress
Relieves the statelier with its
sprightliness,

the stirring verses on *Old Ironsides* are here repeated. Said one who heard young Holmes deliver this poem in the college church:

"Extremely youthful in his appearance, bubbling over with the mingled humor and pathos that have always marked his poetry, and sparkling with the coruscations of his peculiar genius, he delivered the poem with a clear, ringing enunciation which imparted to the hearers his own enjoyment of his thoughts and expressions."

[60]

CHAPTER VI.

CHANGE IN THE HOME.

IN 1836, Oliver Wendell Holmes took his degree of M.D. The following year was made sadly memorable to the happy family at the parsonage by the death of the beloved father. He had reached his threescore years and ten, but still seemed so vigorous in mind and body that neither his family nor the parish were prepared for the sad event. Mary and Ann, the two eldest daughters, were already married; the one to Usher Parson, M.D., the other to Honorable Charles Wentworth Upham. Sarah, the youngest, had died in early childhood, and only Oliver Wendell and his brother John remained of the once large family at the parsonage. Mrs. Holmes still continued to reside with her two sons in the old gambrel-roofed house which her father, Judge Oliver Wendell, had bought for her at the time of her marriage.

[61] The *Poet at the Breakfast-Table* thus describes the delightful old dwelling now used as one of the College buildings:

"The worst of a modern stylish mansion is, that it has no place for ghosts.... Now the old house had wainscots behind which the mice were always scampering, and squeaking, and rattling down the plaster, and enacting family scenes and parlor theatricals. It had a cellar where the cold slug clung to the walls and the misanthropic spider withdrew from the garish day; where the green mould loved to grow, and the long, white, potato-shoots went feeling along the floor if happily they might find the daylight; it had great brick pillars, always in a cold sweat with holding up the burden they had been aching under day and night for a century and more; it had sepulchral arches closed by rough doors that hung on hinges rotten with rust, behind which doors, if there was not a heap of bones connected with a mysterious disappearance of long ago, there well might have been, for it was just the place to look for them.

[62] "Let us look at the garret as I can reproduce it from memory. It has a flooring of lath, with ridges of mortar squeezed up between them, which if you tread on you will go to—the Lord have mercy on you! where will you go to?—the same being crossed by narrow bridges of boards, on which you may put your feet, but with fear and trembling.

"Above you and around you are beams and joists, on some of which you may see, when the light is let in, the marks of the conchoidal clippings of the broadaxes, showing the rude way in which the timber was shaped, as it came, full of sap, from the neighboring forest. It is a realm of darkness and thick dust, and shroudlike cobwebs and dead things they wrap in their gray folds. For a garret is like a seashore, where wrecks are thrown up and slowly go to pieces. There is the cradle which the old man you just remember was rocked in; there is the ruin of the bedstead he died on; that ugly slanting contrivance used to be put under his pillow in the days when his breath came hard; there is his old chair with both arms gone, symbol of the desolate time when he had nothing earthly left to lean on; there is the large wooden reel which the blear-eyed old
[63] deacon sent the minister's lady, who thanked him graciously, and twirled it smilingly, and in fitting season bowed it out decently to the limbo of troublesome conveniences. And there are old

leather portmanteaus, like stranded porpoises, their mouths gaping in gaunt hunger for the food with which they used to be gorged to bulging repletion; and the empty churn with its idle dasher which the Nancys and Phebes, who have left their comfortable places to the Bridgets and Norahs, used to handle to good purpose; and the brown, shaky old spinningwheel, which was running, it may be, in the days when they were hanging the Salem witches.

"Under the dark and haunted garret were attic chambers which themselves had histories.... The rooms of the second story, the chambers of birth and death, are sacred to silent memories.

"Let us go down to the ground floor. I retain my doubts about those dents on the floor of the right-hand room, the study of successive occupants, said to have been made by the butts of the Continental militia's firelocks, but this was the cause the story told me in childhood, laid them to.
[64] That military consultations were held in that room when the house was General Ward's headquarters, that the Provincial generals and colonels and other men of war there planned the movement which ended in the fortifying of Bunker's Hill, that Warren slept in the house the night before the battle, that President Langdon went forth from the western door and prayed for God's blessing on the men just setting forth on their bloody expedition—all these things have been told, and perhaps none of them need be doubted....

"In the days of my earliest remembrance, a row of tall Lombardy poplars mounted guard on the western side of the old mansion. Whether like the cypress, these trees suggest the idea of the funeral torch or the monumental spire, whether their tremulous leaves make us afraid by sympathy with their nervous thrills, whether the faint balsamic smell of their leaves and their closely swathed limbs have in them vague hints of dead Pharaohs stiffened in their cerements, I will not guess; but they always seemed to me to give an air of sepulchral sadness to the house before which they stood sentries.

[65] "Not so with the row of elms you may see leading up towards the western entrance. I think the patriarch of them all went over in the great gale of 1815; I know I used to shake the youngest of them with my hands, stout as it is now, with a trunk that would defy the bully of Crotona, or the strong man whose *liaison* with the Lady Delilah proved so disastrous.

"The College plain would be nothing without its elms. As the long hair of a woman is a glory to her, so are these green tresses that bank themselves against the sky in thick clustered masses, the ornament and the pride of the classic green....

"There is a row of elms just in front of the old house on the south. When I was a child the one at the southwest corner was struck by lightning, and one of its limbs and a long ribbon of bark torn away. The tree never fully recovered its symmetry and vigor, and forty years and more afterwards a second thunderbolt crashed upon it and set its heart on fire, like those of the lost souls in the Hall of Eblis. Heaven had twice blasted it, and the axe finished what the lightning had begun."

[66] "Ah me!" he exclaims at another time, "what strains of unwritten verse pulsate through my soul when I open a certain closet in the ancient house where I was born! On its shelves used to lie bundles of sweet marjoram and pennyroyal and lavender and mint and3 catnip; there apples were stored until their seeds should grow black, which happy period there were sharp little milk teeth always ready to anticipate; there peaches lay in the dark, thinking of the sunshine they had lost, until, like the hearts of saints that dream of heaven in their sorrow, they grew fragrant as the breath of angels. The odorous echo of a score of dead summers lingers yet in those dim recesses."

[67]

CHAPTER VII.

THE PROFESSOR.

IN 1839, Doctor Holmes was appointed Professor of Anatomy and Physiology in Dartmouth College, and pleasantly describes in *The Professor*, his "Autumnal sojourn by the Connecticut, where it comes loitering down from its mountain fastnesses like a great lord swallowing up the small proprietary rivulets very quietly as it goes." The little country tavern where he stayed while delivering his lectures, he calls "that caravansary on the banks of the stream where Ledyard launched his log canoe, and the jovial old Colonel used to lead the Commencement processions." And what a charming description this of the little town of Hanover, "where blue Ascutney looked down from the far distance and the 'hills of Beulah' rolled up the opposite horizon in soft,
[68] climbing masses, so suggestive of the Pilgrim's Heavenward Path that he (the Professor) used to look through his old 'Dollond' to see if the Shining Ones were not within range of sight—sweet visions, sweetest in those Sunday walks which carried him by the peaceful common, through the solemn village lying in cataleptic stillness under the shadow of the rod of Moses, to the terminus of his harmless stroll, the spreading beech-tree."

In 1840, Doctor Holmes was married to Amelia Lee Jackson, a daughter of Hon. Charles Jackson, formerly judge of the Supreme Court of Massachusetts. The first home of the young

couple was at No. 8, Montgomery Place, the house at the left-hand side of the court, and next the farther corner. Here Doctor Holmes resided for about eighteen years,[7] and here all his children were born.

"When he entered that door, two shadows glided over the threshold; five lingered in the doorway when he passed through it for the last time, and one of the shadows was claimed by its owner to be longer than his own. What changes he saw in that quiet place! Death rained through
[69] every roof but his; children came into life, grew to maturity, wedded, faded away, threw themselves away; the whole drama of life was played in that stock company's theatre of a dozen houses, one of which was his, and no deep sorrow or severe calamity ever entered his dwelling in that little court where he lived in gay loneliness so long."

In order to devote himself more strictly to his practice in Boston, Doctor Holmes resigned his professorship at Dartmouth College soon after his marriage. During the summer months, however, he delivered lectures before the Berkshire Medical School at Pittsfield, Mass., and established his summer residence "up among those hills that shut in the amber-flowing Housatonic, in the home overlooking the winding stream and the smooth, flat meadow; looked down upon by wild hills where the tracks of bears and catamounts may yet sometimes be seen upon the winter snow—a home," he adds, "where seven blessed summers were passed which stand in memory like the seven golden candlesticks in the beatific vision of the holy dreamer."

The township of Pontoosuc, now Pittsfield, including some twenty-four thousand acres, was
[70] bought by Doctor Holmes' great-grandfather, Jacob Wendell, about the year 1734. It was on a small part of this large possession that "Canoe Place," the pleasant summer home of Doctor Holmes, was built.

Hawthorne was then living at Lenox, which is only a few miles from Pittsfield, and in his contribution to Lowell's magazine, *The Pioneer*, in 1843, he describes in his *Hall of Fantasy*, the poets he saw "talking in groups, with a liveliness of expression, or ready smile, and a light, intellectual laughter which showed how rapidly the shafts of wit were glancing to and fro among them. In the most vivacious of these," he adds, "I recognized Holmes."

Beside Hawthorne, there was Herman Melville, Miss Sedgwick and Fanny Kemble near by on those "maple-shadowed plains of Berkshire," while Bryant and Ellery Channing not unfrequently joined the brilliant circle in their summer trips to the Stockbridge hills.

In the Boston home of Doctor Holmes, John Lothrop Motley was a welcome visitor—a man whose "generous sympathies with popular liberty no homage paid to his genius by the class whose admiring welcome is most seductive to scholars could ever spoil." Both young men were
[71] members of the Massachusetts Historical Society, and after the death of Motley, Holmes became his biographer.

Charles Sumner formed another of this pleasant literary coterie, and is described by Doctor Holmes, after a short acquaintance, as "an amiable, blameless young man; pleasant, affable and cheerful." Years after, when Sumner was assaulted in the Senate, Doctor Holmes, at a public dinner in Boston, denounced in strong language, the shameful outrage as an assault not only upon the man, but upon the Union.

At the Berkshire festivals, the poet was often called upon to furnish a song, and brimful of wit and wisdom they always were, though often composed upon the spur of the moment. Here is a part of one of them:

Come back to your mother, ye children, for
shame,
Who have wandered like truants, for riches
or fame!
With a smile on her face, and a sprig in her
cap,
She calls you to feast from her bountiful lap.

Come out from your alleys, your courts, and
your lanes,
And breathe, like young eagles, the air of our
plains,
Take a whiff from our fields, and your
excellent wives
Will declare it's all nonsense insuring your
lives.

[72]

Come you of the law, who can talk, if you
please,
Till the Man in the Moon will declare it's a
cheese,
And leave 'the old lady that never tell lies,'
To sleep with her handkerchief over her
eyes.

Ye healers of men, for a moment decline

Your feats in the rhubarb and ipecac line;
While you shut up your turnpike, your
neighbors can go
The old roundabout road, to the regions
below.

You clerk, on whose ears are a couple of
pens,
And whose head is an anthill of units and
tens,
Though Plato denies you, we welcome you
still
As a featherless biped, in spite of your quill.

Poor drudge of the city! how happy he feels
With the burrs on his legs and the grass at
his heels!
No *dodger* behind, his bandannas to share,
No constable grumbling "You mustn't walk
there!"

In yonder green meadow, to memory dear,
He slaps a mosquito and brushes a tear;
The dewdrops hang round him on blossoms
and shoots,
He breathes but one sigh for his youth and
his boots.

There stands the old schoolhouse, hard by
the old church
That tree at its side had the flavor of birch;
O sweet were the days of his juvenile tricks,
Though the prairie of youth had so many "big
licks."

By the side of yon river he weeps and he
slumps,
The boots fill with water as if they were
pumps;
Till, sated with rapture, he steals to his bed,
With a glow in his heart, and a cold in his
head.

[73]

At the annual dinner of the Phi Beta Kappa Society, in 1843, Doctor Holmes read the fine poem entitled *Terpsichore*.

Three years later he delivered *Urania, A Rhyme Lesson* before the Boston Mercantile Library Association. "To save a question that is sometimes put," remarks the poet, "it is proper to say that in naming these two poems after two of the Muses, nothing more was intended than a suggestion of their general character and aim."

[74]

CHAPTER VIII.

THE LECTURER.

WHEN Doctor Warren gave up the Parkman professorship at Harvard, in 1847, Doctor Holmes was appointed to take his place as Professor of Anatomy and Physiology. For eight months of the year, four lectures are delivered each week in this department of the college, and yet Doctor Holmes still found time "between whiles," to attend to his Boston practice, and to write many charming poems and essays. He also entered the lyceum arena, "an original American contrivance," as Theodore Parker describes it in 1857, "for educating the people. The world has nothing like it. In it are combined the best things of the Church: i.e., the preaching; and of the College: i.e., the informing thought, with some of the fun of the theatre. Besides, it gives the rural
[75] districts a chance to see the men they read about—to see the lions—for the lecturer is also a show to the eyes. For ten years past six or eight of the most progressive minds in America have been lecturing fifty or a hundred times a year."

Among the many subjects that Doctor Holmes touched upon in these lyceum lectures was a fine, witty, and remarkably just criticism on the *English Poets of the Nineteenth Century*. What a pity that Oscar Wilde and his brother poets of this later day could not have the benefit of just such a clear, microscopic analysis! What the Autocrat himself thought of these lecturing tours

through the country we have in his own words:

"I have played the part of 'Poor Gentleman' before many audiences," he says; "more, I trust, than I shall ever face again. I did not wear a stage costume, nor a wig, nor mustaches of burnt cork; but I was placarded and announced as a public performer, and at the proper hour I came forward with the ballet-dancer's smile upon my countenance, and made my bow and acted my part. I have seen my name stuck up in letters so big that I was ashamed to show myself in the
[76] place by daylight. I have gone to a town with a sober literary essay in my pocket, and seen myself everywhere announced as the most desperate of *buffos*. I have been through as many hardships as Ulysses in the exercise of my histrionic vocation. I have sometimes felt as if I were a wandering spirit, and this great, unchanging multivertebrate which I faced night after night was one ever-listening animal, which writhed along after me wherever I fled, and coiled at my feet every evening turning up to me the same sleepless eyes which I thought I had closed with my last drowsy incantation."

Of his audiences he writes again as follows:

"Two lyceum assemblies, of five hundred each, are so nearly alike, that they are absolutely undistinguishable in many cases by any definite mark, and there is nothing but the place and time by which one can tell the 'remarkably intelligent audience' of a town in New York or Ohio from one in any New England town of similar size. Of course, if any principle of selection has come in, as in those special associations of young men which are common in cities, it deranges the uniformity of the assemblage. But let there be no such interfering circumstances, and one
[77] knows pretty well even the look the audience will have, before he goes in. Front seats, a few old folks—shiny-headed—slant up best ear toward the speaker—drop off asleep after a while, when the air begins to get a little narcotic with carbonic acid. Bright women's faces, young and middle-aged, a little behind these, but toward the front—(pick out the best, and lecture mainly to that). Here and there a countenance, sharp and scholarlike, and a dozen pretty female ones sprinkled about. An indefinite number of pairs of young people—happy, but not always very attentive. Boys in the background more or less quiet. Dull faces here, there—in how many places! I don't say dull *people*, but faces without a ray of sympathy or a movement of expression. They are what kill the lecturer. These negative faces with their vacuous eyes and stony lineaments pump and suck the warm soul out of him;—that is the chief reason why lecturers grow so pale before the season is over.

"Out of all these inevitable elements the audience is generated—a great compound vertebrate, as much like fifty others you have seen as any two mammals of the same species are like each other."

[78] "Pretty nigh killed himself," says the good landlady, "goin' about lecterin' two or three winters, talking in cold country lyceums—as he used to say—goin' home to cold parlors and bein' treated to cold apples and cold water, and then goin' up into a cold bed in a cold chamber, and comin' home next mornin' with a cold in his head as bad as the horse distemper. Then he'd look kind of sorry for havin' said it, and tell how kind some of the good women was to him; how one spread an eiderdown comforter for him, and another fixed up somethin' hot for him after the lectur, and another one said, 'There now, you smoke that cigar of yours after the lectur, jest as if you was at home,' and if they'd all been like that, he'd have gone on lecturing forever, but, as it was, he had got pooty nigh enough of it, and preferred a nateral death to puttin' himself out of the world by such violent means as lecturin'."

To these graphic pictures of the "lyceum lecturer" we would add one more which was given by Mr. J.W. Harper, at the Holmes Breakfast.

[79] "I well remember," he said, "the first time I saw Doctor Holmes. It was long ago; not as our Autocrat expresses it, 'in the year eighteen hundred and ever so few;' nor, as Thackeray has it, 'when the present century was in its teens.' It was just after the close of the last half century, and on a cold winter's afternoon, when the sun was fast setting behind the then ungilded dome of the State House, and it was in old Bromfield street. It was not in the Bromfield Street Methodist Church, nor in the contiguous Methodist inn, known as the Bromfield House, which, for many years, might have been the convenient resort of good Methodist elders, and of the peripatetic presiding elders, who were called by the genial Bishop Wainwright, the 'bob-tailed bishops' of their flocks and districts.... I was in the large stable adjoining the Bromfield House, endeavoring to secure a sleigh, when there entered a gentleman apparently of my own age. He came in quickly, and with impatience demanded the immediate production of a team and sleigh, which, though ordered for him, had somehow been forgotten. The new-comer, it was evident, was not to
[80] be trifled with. There was no nonsense about him, and I was not surprised, when, a few years later, I learned that he had become an Autocrat.

"On that particular night he had a long drive before him, for he was to lecture at Newburyport, or Nantasket, or Nantucket, or some other then unannexed suburb of Boston. I doubt if the horse survived the drive, and I am quite sure he is not now living. But the driver lives, and the young New Yorker who then admired him, and would fain have driven with him on that cold winter night, has since, in common with thousands of other New Yorkers, been filled with grateful admiration for what that driver has done for literature, and for the happiness and improvement of the world."

In 1838 Doctor Holmes wrote the *Boylston Prize Dissertation*, and in 1842, *Homœopothy and its kindred Delusions*. The Boylston prizes were established in 1803, by Ward Nicholas Boylston.

Doctor Holmes gained three of these prizes, and the *Dissertations*, one of which was upon Intermittent Fever, were published together in book form in 1838.

When, in February of the same year (1842), the young men of Boston gave a dinner to Charles
[81] Dickens, Doctor Holmes welcomed the distinguished visitor in the following beautiful song:

The stars their early vigils keep,
  The silent hours are near,
When drooping eyes forget to weep
    —
  Yet still we linger here;
And what—the passing churl may
    ask—
  Can claim such wondrous power,
That Toil forgets his wonted task,
  And Love his promised hour?

The Irish harp no longer thrills,
  Or breathes a fainter tone;
The clarion blast from Scotland's
    hills
  Alas! no more is blown.
And Passion's burning lip bewails
  Her Harold's wasted fire,
Still lingering o'er the dust that veils
  The Lord of England's lyre.

But grieve not o'er its broken
    strings,
  Nor think its soul hath died,
While yet the lark at heaven's gate
    sings,
  As once o'er Avon's side;—
While gentle summer sheds her
    bloom,
  And dewy blossoms wave,
Alike o'er Juliet's storied tomb
  And Nelly's nameless grave.

Thou glorious island of the sea!
  Though wide the wasting flood
That parts our distant land from
    thee,
  We claim thy generous blood.
Nor o'er thy far horizon springs
  One hallowed star of fame.
But kindles, like an angel's wings,
  Our western skies in flame!

[83]

CHAPTER IX.

NAMING THE NEW MAGAZINE.

IN the year 1857, Mr. Phillips, of the firm of Phillips & Sampson, undertook the publication in Boston, of a new literary magazine. They were fortunate in securing James Russell Lowell as editor, and one condition he made upon accepting the office was, that his friend, Doctor Holmes, should be one of the chief contributors.

It was the latter, also, who was called upon to name the new magazine. Thus was the *Atlantic Monthly* launched upon the great sea of literature—a periodical that has never lost its first high prestige.

When Doctor Holmes sat down to write his first article for the new magazine, he remembered that some twenty-five years before, he had begun a series of papers for a certain *New England*
[84] *Magazine*, published in Boston, by J. T. & E. Buckingham, with the title of *Autocrat of the Breakfast-Table*. Curious, as he says, to try the experiment of shaking the same bough again and finding out if the ripe fruit were better or worse than the early wind-falls, he took the same title for his new articles.

"The man is father to the boy that was," he adds, "and I am my own son, as it seems to me, in those papers of the *New England Magazine*."

To show the reader some family traits of this "young autocrat," we quote from these earlier articles the following fine extracts:

"When I feel inclined to read poetry, I take down my dictionary. The poetry of words is quite as beautiful as that of sentences. The author may arrange the gems effectively, but their shape and lustre have been given by the attrition of ages. Bring me the finest simile from the whole range of imaginative writing, and I will show you a single word which conveys a more profound, a more accurate, and a more eloquent analogy.

"Once on a time, a notion was started that if all the people in the world would shout at once, it
[85] might be heard in the moon. So the projectors agreed it should be done in just ten years. Some thousand shiploads of chronometers were distributed to the selectmen and other great folks of all the different nations. For a year beforehand, nothing else was talked about but the awful noise that was to be made on the great occasion. When the time came everybody had their ears so wide open to hear the universal ejaculation of boo—the word agreed upon—that nobody spoke except a deaf man in one of the Fejee Islands, and a woman in Pekin, so that the world was never so still since the creation."

At the close of the year when the twelve numbers of *The Autocrat of the Breakfast-Table* were completed in the *Atlantic Monthly* and published in book form, the *British Review* wrote of the illustrious author as follows:

"Oliver Wendell Holmes has been long known in this country as the author of some poems written in stately classic verse, abounding in happy thoughts and bright bird-peeps of fancy, such as this, for example:

The punch-bowl's sounding depths were
stirred,
Its silver cherubs smiling as they heard.

[86] And this first glint of spring—

The spendthrift Crocus, bursting
through the mould,
Naked and shivering with his cup of
gold.

He is also known as the writer of many pieces which wear a serious look until they break out into a laugh at the end, perhaps in the last line, as with those on *Lending a Punch Bowl*, a cunning way of the writer's; just as the knot is tied in the whip cord at the end of the lash to enhance the smack.

"But neither of these kinds of verse prepared us for anything so good, so sustained, so national, and yet so akin to our finest humorists, as *The Autocrat of the Breakfast-Table*; a very delightful book—a handy book for the breakfast table. A book to conjure up a cosey winter picture of a ruddy fire and singing kettle, soft hearth-rug, warm slippers, and easy chair; a musical chime of cups and saucers, fragrance of tea and toast within, and those flowers of frost fading on the windows without as though old Winter just looked in, but his cold breath was melted, and so he passed by. A book to possess two copies of; one to be read and marked, thumbed and dog-eared;
[87] and one to stand up in its pride of place with the rest on the shelves, all ranged in shining rows, as dear old friends, and not merely as nodding acquaintances.

"Not at all like that ponderous and overbearing autocrat, Doctor Johnson, is our Yankee friend. He has more of Goldsmith's sweetness and lovability. He is as true a lover of elegance and high bred grace, dainty fancies, and all pleasurable things, as was Leigh Hunt; he has more wordly sense without the moral languor; but there is the same boy-heart beating in a manly breast, beneath the poet's singing robe. For he is a poet as well as a humorist. Indeed, although this book is written in prose, it is full of poetry, with the 'beaded bubbles' of humor dancing up through the true hippocrene and 'winking at the brim' with a winning look of invitation shining in their merry eyes.

"The humor and the poetry of the book do not lie in tangible nuggets for extraction, but they are there; they pervade it from beginning to end. We cannot spoon out the sparkles of sunshine as they shimmer on the wavelets of water; but they are there, moving in all their golden life and evanescent grace.

[88] "Holmes may not be so recognizably national as Lowell; his prominent characteristics are not so exceptionally Yankee; the traits are not so peculiar as those delineated in the *Biglow Papers*. But he is national. One of the most hopeful literary signs of this book is its quiet nationality. The writer has made no straining and gasping efforts after that which is striking and peculiar, which has always been the bane of youth, whether in nations or individuals. He has been content to take the common, homespun, everyday humanity that he found ready to hand—people who do congregate around the breakfast table of an American boarding-house; and out of this material he has wrought with a vivid touch and truth of portraiture, and won the most legitimate triumph of a genuine book....

"Holmes has the pleasantest possible way of saying things that many people don't like to hear. His tonics are bitter and bland. He does not spare the various foibles and vices of his countrymen and women. But it is done so good-naturedly, or with a sly puff of diamond dust in the eyes of the

victims, who don't see the joke which is so apparent to us. As good old Isaak Walton advises
[89] respecting the worm, he impales them tenderly as though he loved them."

How vividly every personage around that delightful "Breakfast-Table" is photographed upon the reader's mind! Can you not see the dear "Old Gentleman" just opposite the "Autocrat," as he suddenly surprises the company by repeating a beautiful hymn he learned in childhood? And the pale sweet "Schoolmistress" in her modest mourning dress? no wonder the eyes of the Autocrat frequently wandered to that part of the table and certain remarks are addressed to her alone! To tell the truth, we can't help falling in love with her ourselves! What a fine foil to this "soft-voiced little woman," is the landlady's daughter—that "tender-eyed blonde, with her long ringlets, cameo pin, gold pencil-case on a chain, locket, bracelet, album, autograph book, and accordion—who says 'Yes?' when you tell her anything, and reads Byron, Tupper, and Sylvanus Cobb Junior, while her mother makes the puddings!" Then there is the "poor relation" from the country—"a
[90] somewhat more than middle-aged female, with parchment forehead and a dry little frizette shingling it, a sallow neck with a necklace of gold beads, and a black dress too rusty for recent grief." Can you not hear the very tones of her high-pitched voice as she remarks that "Buckwheat is skerce and high."

"The Professor" under chloroform—"the young man whom they call John," appropriating the three peaches in illustration of the Autocrat's metaphysics—the boy, Benjamin Franklin, poring over his French exercises—the Poet, who had to leave town when the anniversaries came round—and the divinity student whose head the Autocrat tries occasionally, "as housewives try eggs," all these are so real to the reader that he can but feel they were something more than imaginary characters to the writer.

Among the poems that close each number of the *Autocrat*, are some of the finest in our language. *The Chambered Nautilus*, *The Living Temple*, *The Voiceless*, and *The Two Armies*, are full of inspiring thought and deep pathos, while *The Deacon's Masterpiece*, *Parson Turell's Legacy*, *The Old Man's Dream*, and *Contentment*, sparkle with the Autocrat's own peculiar humor.

[91] "When we think of the familiar confidences of the Autocrat," says Underwood, "we might liken him to Montaigne. But when the parallel is being considered, we come upon passages so full of tingling hits or of rollicking fun, that we are sure we are mistaken, and that he resembles no one so much as Sidney Smith. But presently he sounds the depths of our consciousness, explores the concealed channels of feeling, flashes the light of genius upon our half-acknowledged thoughts, and we see that this is what neither the great Gascon nor the hearty and jovial Englishman could have attempted, ... when the world forgets the sallies that have set tables in a roar, and even the lyrics that have set a nation's heart on fire, Holmes' picture of the ship of pearl will preserve his name forever."

[92]

CHAPTER X.

ELSIE VENNER.

THE *Autocrat of the Breakfast-Table* was followed in 1859 by *The Professor*, a series of similar essays, in which we are introduced to "Iris" and "Little Boston," and begin to realize Doctor Holmes' inimitable skill in dramatic effect as well as in character painting. *The Story of Iris* has been printed by itself in Rossiter Johnson's *Little Classics*, and reads like an exquisite prose poem; but after all, we like best to follow the delicate thread of narrative just as the professor himself has introduced it—a dainty aria whose harmony runs under and over and all through the deep philosophy and sparkling table talk of the book.

It prepares us, too, for *Elsie Venner*, the "Professor's Story"—a novel whose weird conception
[93] holds us spell-bound from beginning to end, in spite of the sadness—"the pity of it." At the very first introduction to Elsie we have a hint of the strange hereditary curse that throws its blight over her whole nature:

"Who and what is that," asks the new master, "sitting a little apart there—that strange, wild-looking girl?"

The lady teacher's face changed; one would have said she was frightened or troubled. She looked at the girl doubtfully, as if she might hear the master's question and its answer. But the girl did not look up; she was winding a gold chain about her wrist, and then uncoiling it, as if in a kind of reverie.

Miss Dailey drew close to the master and placed her hand so as to hide her lips.

"Don't look at her as if we were talking about her," she whispered softly, "that is Elsie Venner."

The more we read of her, the more her sad beauty fascinates us.

"She looked as if she might hate, but could not love. She hardly smiled at anything, spoke
[94] rarely, but seemed to feel that her natural power of expression lay all in her bright eyes, the force of which so many had felt, but none perhaps had tried to explain to themselves. A person accustomed to watch the faces of those who were ailing in body or mind, and to search in every line and tint for some underlying source of disorder, could hardly help analyzing the impression such a face produced upon him. The light of those beautiful eyes was like the lustre of ice; in all her features there was nothing of that human warmth which shows that sympathy has reached the soul beneath the mask of flesh it wears. The look was that of remoteness, of utter isolation. There was in its stony apathy the pathos which we find in the blind who show no film or speck over the organs of sight; for Nature had meant her to be lovely, and left out nothing but love."

The mother of Elsie, some months before the birth of her child, had been bitten by a rattlesnake. The instant use of powerful antidotes seemed to arrest the fatal poison, but death ensued a few weeks after the birth of her little girl.

[95] "There was something not human looking out of Elsie's eyes.... There were two warring principles in that superb organization and proud soul. One made her a woman, with all a woman's powers and longings. The other chilled all the currents of outlets for her emotions. It made her tearless and mute, when another woman would have wept and pleaded. And it infused into her soul something—it was cruel to call it malice—which was still and watchful and dangerous—which waited its opportunity, and then shot like an arrow from its bow out of the coil of brooding premeditation."

But the cloud—"the ante-natal impression which had mingled an alien element in Elsie's nature"—is mercifully lifted just before her death.

She had fallen into a light slumber, and when she awoke and looked up into her father's face, she seemed to realize his tenderness and affection as never before.

"Elsie dear," he said, "we were thinking how much your expression was, sometimes, like that of your sweet mother. If you could but have seen her so as to remember her!"

[96] The tender look and tone, the yearning of the daughter's heart for the mother she had never seen, save only with the unfixed, undistinguishable eyes of earliest infancy, perhaps the understanding that she might soon rejoin her in another state of being,—all came upon her with a sudden overflow of feeling which broke through all the barriers between her heart and her eyes, and Elsie wept. It seemed to her father as if the malign influence—evil spirit it might almost be called—which had pervaded her being, had at least been driven forth or exorcised, and that these tears were at once the sign and pledge of her redeemed nature. But now she was to be soothed and not excited. After her tears she slept again, and the look her face wore was peaceful as never before.

While "Elsie Venner" is a purely imaginary conception, the author tells us that after beginning the story he received the most striking confirmation of the possibility of the existence of such a character. The reader is awakened to new views of human responsibility in the perusal of Elsie's life, and with good old pastor Honeywood learns a lesson of patience with his fellow creatures in
[97] their inborn peculiarities and of charity in judging what seem to him wilful faults of character.

The Professor's story while centring the interest upon Elsie, gives numerous side glances of New England village life; and old Sophy, Helen Darley, Silas Peckham, Bernard Langdon, Dick Venner, and the good Doctor are portrayed in vivid colors. There is a deal of psychology throughout the book, and not a little theology—good wholesome theology too, as the following brief extract shows:

"The good minister was as kind-hearted as if he had never groped in the dust and ashes of those cruel old abstractions which have killed out so much of the world's life and happiness. 'With the heart man believeth unto righteousness;' a man's love is the measure of his fitness for good or bad company here or elsewhere. Men are tattooed with their special beliefs like so many South Sea Islanders; but a real human heart, with divine love in it, beats with the same glow under all the patterns of all earth's thousand tribes!"

The pathos of poor Elsie's story is relieved now and then by humorous descriptions of country
[98] manners and customs. The Sprowles' party and the Widow Rowen's "tea-fight" give a vein of light comedy that rests the sympathetic reader as a sudden merry smile upon a grave and troubled face.

The Guardian Angel, the second novel of Doctor Holmes, was not published until 1867, but it is interesting to compare the two stories, for there is a strong family likeness between them. Both show the power of inherited tendencies, though Myrtle Hazard, the heroine of *The Guardian Angel*, has no alien element in her blood like that which tormented poor Elsie. With Myrtle "it was as when several grafts, bearing fruit that ripens at different times, are growing upon the same stock. Her earlier impulses may have been derived directly from her father and mother, but various ancestors came uppermost in their time before the absolute and total result of their several forces had found its equilibrium in the character by which she was to be known as an individual. These inherited impulses were therefore many, conflicting, some of them dangerous. The World, the Flesh, and the Devil held mortgages on her life before its deed was put in her
[99] hands; but sweet and gracious influences were also born with her; and the battle of life was to be fought between them, God helping her in her need, and her own free choice siding with one or the other."

The scene opens in a quiet New England village which is roused from its usual lethargy by the startling announcement in the weekly paper of a lost child. This is none other than the little orphan, Myrtle Hazard, who after a few dreary years in the dismal Wither's homestead, escapes by night in her little boat, is rescued by a young student from a frightful death at the rapids, and brought back to her distressed Aunt Silence by good old Byles Gridley—the true "Guardian Angel" of her life.

When old Doctor Hurlbut "ninety-two, very deaf, very feeble, yet a wise counsellor in doubtful and difficult cases," comes to prescribe for the young girl, he says to his son:

"I've seen that look on another face of the same blood—it's a great many years ago, and she was dead before you were born, my boy,—but I've seen that look, and it meant trouble then, and
[100] I'm afraid it means trouble now. I see some danger of a brain fever. And if she doesn't have that, then look out for some hysteric fits that will make mischief.... I've been through it all before in that same house. Live folks are only dead folks warmed over. I can see 'em all in that girl's face.—Handsome Judith to begin with. And that queer woman, the Deacon's mother—there's where she gets that hystericky look. Yes, and the black-eyed woman with the Indian blood in her—look out for that—look out for that.

... Four generations—four generations, man and wife—yes, five generations before this Hazard child I've looked on with these old eyes. And it seems to me that I can see something of almost every one of 'em in this child's face—it's the forehead of this one, and it's the eyes of that one, and it's that other's mouth, and the look that I remember in another, and when she speaks, why, I've heard that same voice before—yes, yes—as long ago as when I was first married."

Aside from the interest of the story there is a strange fascination in tracing the development of these various ancestral traits.

[101] "This body in which we journey across the isthmus between the two oceans is not a private carriage, but an omnibus," says old Byles Gridley in his *Thoughts on the Universe*—dead book that was destined to so grand a resurrection! Surely no one can deny the successive development of inherited bodily aspects and habitudes, and the same thing happens, the author avers, "in the mental and moral nature, though the latter may be less obvious to common observation."

The Guardian Angel while a deep study of the Reflex Function in its higher sphere, is not without its lighter, more mirthful side. Says *The London News*, "the story is exceedingly humorous and comic in the less serious chapters. There is no such minor poet in the whole range of fiction as the immortal Gifted Hopkins. In the character of Hopkins all the foibles and vanities of the literary nature are exemplified in the most mirthful manner. If Doctor Holmes has more characters like Gifted Hopkins in his mind, the hilarity of two continents is not in much danger of being extinguished."

Here is a glimpse of the young poet when racked with jealousy:

[102] "He retired pensive from the interview, and flinging himself at his desk, attempted wreaking his thoughts upon expression, to borrow the language of one of his brother bards, in a passionate lyric which he began thus:

Another's!
Another's! O the pang, the
smart!
Fate owes to Love a deathless
grudge—
The barbed fang has rent a heart
Which—which—

judge—judge—no, not judge. Budge, drudge, fudge—what a disgusting language English is! Nothing fit to couple with such a word as grudge! And an impassioned moment arrested in full flow, stopped short, corked up, for want of a paltry rhyme! Judge—budge—drudge nudge—oh!—smudge—misery!—fudge. In vain—futile—no use—all up for to-night!'"

The next day the dejected poet "wandered about with a dreadfully disconsolate look upon his countenance. He showed a falling-off in his appetite at tea-time, which surprised and disturbed his mother.... The most touching evidence of his unhappiness—whether intentional on the result of accident was not evident—was a *broken heart*, which he left upon his plate, the meaning of
[103] which was as plain as anything in the language of flowers. His thoughts were gloomy, running a good deal on the more picturesque and impressive methods of bidding a voluntary farewell to a world which had allured him with visions of beauty only to snatch them from his impassioned gaze. His mother saw something of this, and got from him a few disjointed words, which led her to lock up the clothes-line and hide her late husband's razors—an affectionate, yet perhaps unnecessary precaution, for self-elimination contemplated from this point of view by those who have the natural outlet of verse to relieve them is rarely followed by a casualty. It may be considered as implying a more than average chance for longevity; as those who meditate an imposing finish naturally save themselves for it, and are therefore careful of their health until the time comes, and this is apt to be indefinitely postponed so long as there is a poem to write or a proof to be corrected."

Gifted Hopkins survives the ordeal, and completes his volume of poems, *Blossoms of the Soul*. Good old master Gridley, who foresees what the end will be, offers to accompany the young poet

[104] in his visit to the city publisher. What a world of pathos there is in the fond mother's preparations for the momentous journey: She brings down from the garret "a capacious trunk, of solid wood, but covered with leather, and adorned with brass-headed nails, by the cunning disposition of which, also, the paternal initials stood out on the rounded lid, in the most conspicuous manner. It was his father's trunk, and the first thing that went into it, as the widow lifted the cover, and the smothering shut-up smell struck an old chord of associations, was a single tear-drop. How well she remembered the time when she first unpacked it for her young husband, and the white shirt bosoms showed their snowy plaits! O dear, dear!

"But women decant their affections, sweet and sound, out of the old bottles into the new ones—off from the lees of the past generation, clear and bright, into the clean vessels just made ready to receive it. Gifted Hopkins was his mother's idol, and no wonder. She had not only the common attachment of a parent for him, as her offspring, but she felt that her race was to be rendered
[105] illustrious by his genius, and thought proudly of the time when some future biographer would mention her own humble name, to be held in lasting remembrance as that of the mother of Hopkins."

The description of the various articles that went into the trunk is humorous enough.

"Best clothes and common clothes, thick clothes and thin clothes, flannels and linens, socks and collars, with handkerchiefs enough to keep the pickpockets busy for a week, with a paper of gingerbread and some lozenges for gastralgia, and 'hot drops,' and ruled paper to write letters on, and a little Bible and a phial with *hiera piera*, and another with paregoric, and another with 'camphire' for sprains and bruises. Gifted went forth equipped for every climate from the tropic to the pole, and armed against every malady from ague to zoster."

The poet's interview with the publisher is one of the best things in the book, but to be thoroughly enjoyed, it must be read entire.

The genial, kindly nature of Doctor Holmes is strikingly shown throughout the whole volume. Good, quaint Byles Gridley endears himself more and more to the reader, Gifted Hopkins finds in
[106] his heart's choice an appreciative, admiring audience of at least one, Cyprian Eveleth and young Doctor Hurlbut are most happily disposed of, Clement Lindsay receives his reward, Myrtle Hazard emerges from the conflict of mingled lives in her blood with the dross of her nature burned away, aunt Silence throws off her melancholy, Miss Cynthia Badlam repents of her evil manœuvrings and dies "with the comfortable assurance that she is going to a better world," the Rev. Joseph Bellamy Stoker learns to appreciate his patient wife—even Murray Bradshaw, the acknowledged villain of the book, is not without a few redeeming traits, and we close the volume with a sense of hearty goodwill and fervent charity toward all mankind.

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CHAPTER XI.

FURTHER ACQUAINTANCE.

BETWEEN the writing of *Elsie Venner* and *The Guardian Angel*, Doctor Holmes wrote a number of essays for the *Atlantic Monthly*, some of which were afterwards collected in the volume entitled *Soundings from the Atlantic*.

Currents and Counter-currents was published in 1861, and *Border-lines of Knowledge* in 1862. The two latter books deal with scientific subjects, but are written in such an attractive style that they have been extremely popular not only with students but with the whole reading public. *Songs in many Keys*, a volume of poems dedicated to his mother, was published by Doctor Holmes in 1862. *Mechanism in Thoughts and Morals* appeared in 1871, the same year that *The*
[108] *Poet at the Breakfast-Table* was running as a serial in the *Atlantic Monthly*, and numerous stray poems were also written in this prolific decade. In 1872 the poet's breakfast talk was published in book form. It is interesting to compare these three volumes—The Autocrat, the Professor, and the Poet. As a series they are as necessary to one another as the three strands of a cable, and yet each volume is, in a certain way, completed in itself. Where in the whole range of the English language, or indeed, of any language, will you find such an overflow of spontaneous wit and humor? While in no sense a story or even a narrative, the breakfast talk is enlivened by wonderfully life-like characters. We can easily imagine ourselves sitting beside them at the social table, and just as it is in real life, these chance acquaintances touch us at different points, awaken various degrees of interest, and are at all times quite distinct from the observer's own individuality.

There is not a page without its sparkle of humor, and nugget of sound philosophy beneath, which the reader appropriates to himself in a delightfully unconscious manner—for the time
[109] being, it is he who is the Autocrat, the Professor, the Poet! As some one has truly said, "It is our thoughts which Doctor Holmes speaks; it is our humor to which he gives expression; it is the pictures of our own fancy that he clothes in words, and shows us what we ourselves thought, and only lacked the means of expressing. We never realized until he taught us by his magic power over us, how much each of us had of genius and invention and expression."

Each book has its little romance, and the "Poet" introduces a poor gentlewoman whose story interests us quite as much as does that of the two lovers.

"In a little chamber," he says, "into which a small thread of sunshine finds its way for half an hour or so every day during a month or six weeks of the spring or autumn, at all other times obliged to content itself with ungilded daylight, lives this boarder, whom, without wronging any others of our company, I may call, as she is very generally called in the household, the Lady....

[110] "From an aspect of dignified but undisguised economy which showed itself in her dress as well as in her limited quarters, I suspected a story of shipwrecked fortune, and determined to question our Landlady. That worthy woman was delighted to tell the history of her most distinguished boarder. She was, as I had supposed, a gentlewoman whom a change of circumstances had brought down from her high estate.—Did I know the Goldenrod family?—Of course I did.—Well, the lady was first cousin to Mrs. Midas Goldenrod. She had been here in her carriage to call upon her—not very often.—Were her rich relations kind and helpful to her?—Well, yes; at least they made her presents now and then. Three or four years ago they sent her a silver waiter, and every Christmas they sent her a bouquet—it must cost as much as five dollars, the Landlady thought.

"And how did the Lady receive these valuable and useful things?

"Every Christmas she got out the silver waiter and borrowed a glass tumbler and filled it with water, and put the bouquet in it and set it on the waiter. It smelt sweet enough and looked pretty for a day or two, but the Landlady thought it wouldn't have hurt 'em if they'd sent a piece of
[111] goods for a dress, or at least a pocket handkercher or two, or something or other that she could 'a' made use of....

"What did she do?—Why, she read, and she drew pictures, and she did needlework patterns, and played on an old harp she had; the gilt was mostly off, but it sounded very sweet, and she sung to it, sometimes, those old songs that used to be in fashion twenty or thirty years ago, with words to 'em that folks could understand....

"Poor Lady! She seems to me like a picture that has fallen face downward on the dusty floor. The picture never was as needful as a window or a door, but it was pleasant to see it in its place, and it would be pleasant to see it there again, and I for one, should be thankful to have the Lady restored by some turn of fortune to the position from which she has been so cruelly cast down."

Before the Poet closes his breakfast talk, the poor Lady has, through the efforts of another boarder, the Register of Deeds, recovered her property. Mrs. Midas Goldenrod makes frequent and longer calls—"the very moment her relative, the Lady of our breakfast table, began to find
[112] herself in a streak of sunshine she came forward with a lighted candle to show her which way her path lay before her.

"The Lady saw all this, how plainly, how painfully! yet she exercised a true charity for the weakness of her relative. Sensible people have as much consideration for the frailties of the rich as for those of the poor.

"The Lady that's been so long with me is going to a house of her own," said the Landlady, "one she has bought back again, for it used to belong to her folks. It's a beautiful house, and the sun shines in at the front windows all day long. She's going to be wealthy again, but it doesn't make any difference in her ways. I've had boarders complain when I was doing as well as I knowed how for them, but I never heerd a word from her that wasn't as pleasant as if she'd been talking to the Governor's lady."

The strange little man, denominated "Scarabee," who had grown to look so much like the beetles he studied; the "Member of the House" with his Down East phrases; the little "Scheherazade" who furnishes a new story each week for the newspapers;—the good looking,
[113] rosy-cheeked salesman "of very polite manners, only a little more brisk than the approved style of carriage permits, as one in the habit of springing with a certain alacrity at the call of a customer;" the good old Master of Arts who makes so many sage remarks;—the young Astronomer with his heart confessions in the *Wind-clouds and Star-drifts*—all these are new acquaintances whom we are loth to part with, when the Landlady announces her intention of giving up the famous boarding-house, and the Poet drops the curtain. Would that the Old Master could yet be induced to give to the public those "notes and reflections and new suggestions" of his marvellous "interleaved volume!"

[114]

CHAPTER XII.

FAVORITES OF SONG.

WHEN we come to consider Doctor Holmes on the poet side of his many-sided nature, his own words at the famous Breakfast-Table are vividly brought to mind:

"The works of other men live, but their personality dies out of their labors; the poet, who

reproduces himself in his creation, as no other artist does or can, goes down to posterity with all his personality blended with whatever is imperishable in his song.... A single lyric is enough, if one can only find in his soul and finish in his intellect one of those jewels fit to sparkle on the stretched forefinger of all time."

In the poems of Doctor Holmes we are quite sure there are many just such lyrics that the world
[115] will not willingly let die. *The Last Leaf, The Voiceless, The Chambered Nautilus, The Two Armies, The Old Man's Dream, Under the Violets, Dorothy Q.*—but where shall we stop in the long enumeration of popular favorites like these?

Oliver Wendell Holmes touches the heart as well as the intellect, and that aside from his power as a humorist, is one great secret of his success.

Listen, for instance, to this exquisite bit:

Yes, dear departed, cherished days
Could Memory's hand restore
Your Morning light, your evening rays
From Time's gray urn once more,—
Then might this restless heart be still,
This straining eye might close,
And Hope her fainting pinions fold,
While the fair phantoms rose.

But, like a child in ocean's arms,
We strive against the stream,
Each moment farther from the shore
Where life's young fountains gleam;
—
Each moment fainter wave the fields,
And wider rolls the sea;
The mist grows dark,—the sun goes
down,—
Day breaks,—and where are we?

[116] And what a dainty touch is given to this *Song of the Sun-Worshipper's Daughter*!

Kiss mine eyelids, beauteous Morn
Blushing into life new born!
Send me violets for my hair
And thy russet robe to wear,
And thy ring of rosiest hue
Set in drops of diamond dew!

* * * * * * *

Kiss my lips, thou Lord of light,
Kiss my lips a soft good-night!
Westward sinks thy golden car;
Leave me but the evening star
And my solace that shall be
Borrowing all its light from thee.

And where will you find a more pathetic picture than that of the old musician in *The Silent Melody*?

Bring me my broken harp, he said;
We both are wrecks—but as ye
will—
Though all its ringing tones have
fled,
Their echoes linger round it still;
It had some golden strings, I
know,
But that was long—how long!—
ago.

I cannot see its tarnished gold;
I cannot hear its vanished tone;
Scarce can my trembling fingers
hold
The pillared frame so long their
own;
We both are wrecks—a while
ago
It had some silver strings, I
know.

[117]

But on them Time too long has
played
The solemn strain that knows no
change,
And where of old my fingers strayed
The chords they find are new and
strange—
Yes; iron strings—I know—I
know—
We both are wrecks of long ago.

With pitying smiles the broken harp is brought to him. Not a single string remains.

But see! like children overjoyed,
His fingers rambling through the
void!

They gather softly around the old musician.

Rapt in his tuneful trance he seems;
His fingers move; but not a sound!
A silence like the song of dreams....
"There! ye have heard the air," he
cries,
"That brought the tears from
Marian's eyes!"

The poem closes with these fine stanzas:

Ah, smile not at his fond conceit,
Nor deem his fancy wrought in
vain;
To him the unreal sounds are sweet,
No discord mars the silent strain
Scored on life's latest, starlit
page
The voiceless melody of age.

Sweet are the lips of all that sing,
When Nature's music breathes
unsought,
[118] But never yet could voice or string
So truly shape our tenderest
thought,
As when by life's decaying fire
Our fingers sweep the stringless
lyre!

Though entirely different in style, *Bill and Joe* is another of those heart-reaching, tear-starting poems.

Listen, for instance, to these few verses:

Come, dear old comrade, you and I
Will steal an hour from days gone
by;
The shining days when life was
new,
And all was bright with morning
dew,
The lusty days of long ago
When you were Bill and I was Joe.

* * * * * * *

You've won the judge's ermined
robe,
You've taught your name to half
the globe,
You've sung mankind a deathless
strain;
You've made the dead past live
again;
The world may call you what it
will,
But you and I are Joe and Bill.

* * * * * * *

How Bill forgets his hour of pride,
While Joe sits smiling at his side;
How Joe, in spite of time's disguise
Finds the old schoolmate in his eyes,—
Those calm, stern eyes that melt and fill,
As Joe looks fondly up at Bill.

[119]

Ah, pensive scholar, what is fame?
A fitful tongue of leaping flame;
A giddy whirlwind's fickle gust
That lifts a pinch of mortal dust;
A few swift years and who can show
Which dust was Bill, and which was Joe?

The weary idol takes his stand,
Holds out his bruised and aching hand,
While gaping thousands come and go,—
How vain it seems, his empty show!
Till all at once his pulses thrill:
'Tis poor old Joe's God bless you, Bill!

The earlier poems of Doctor Holmes are frequently written in the favorite measures of Pope and Hood. This is not at all strange when we remember that in the boyhood of Doctor Holmes these two poets were the most popular of all the English bards. In his later poems, however, we find an endless variety of rhythms, and the careful reader will notice in every instance, a wonderful adaptation of the various poetical forms to the particular thought the poet wishes to convey.

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How well Doctor Holmes understands the "mechanism" of verse may be seen from his *Physiology of Versification and the Harmonies of Organic and Animal Life*, a valuable article published in the *Boston Medical and Surgical Journal* of January 7, 1875.

"Respiration," he says, "has an intimate relation to the structure of metrical compositions, and the reason why octosyllabic verse is so easy to read aloud is because it follows more exactly than any other measure the natural rhythm of the respiration....

"The ten syllable, or heroic line has a peculiar majesty from the very fact that its pronunciation requires a longer respiration than is ordinary.

"The cæsura, it is true, comes in at irregular intervals and serves as a breathing place, but its management requires care in reading, and entirely breaks up the natural rhythm of breathing. The reason why the 'common metre' of our hymn books and the fourteen syllable line of Chapman's Homer is such easy reading is because of the short alternate lines of six and eight syllables. One of the most irksome of all measures is the twelve-syllable line in which Drayton's Polyolbion is written. While the fourteen syllable line can be easily divided in half in reading, the twelve syllable one is too much for one expiration and not enough for two, and for this reason has been avoided by poets.

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"There is, however, the personal equation to be taken into account. A person of quiet temperament and ample chest may habitually breathe but fourteen times in a minute, and the heroic measure will therefore be very easy reading to him; a narrow-chested, nervous person, on the contrary, who breathes oftener than twenty times a minute, may prefer the seven-syllable verse, like that of Dyer's *Grongar Hill*, to the heroic measure, and quick-breathing children will recite Mother Goose melodies with delight, when long metres would weary and distract them.

"Nothing in poetry or in vocal music is widely popular that is not calculated with strict reference to the respiratory function. All the early ballad poetry shows how instinctively the reciters accommodated their rhythm to their breathing: *Chevy Chace*, or *The Babes in the Wood* may be taken as an example for verse. *God save the King*, which has a compass of some half a dozen notes, and takes one expiration, economically used, to each line, may be referred to as the musical illustration.

"The unconscious adaptation of voluntary life to the organic rhythm is perhaps a more pervading fact than we have been in the habit of considering it. One can hardly doubt that

[122]

Spenser breathed habitually more slowly than Prior, and that Anacreon had a quicker respiration than Homer. And this difference, which we conjecture from their rhythmical instincts, if our conjecture is true, probably, almost certainly, characterized all their vital movements."

So much for the bare *vehicle* of verse, but the poet himself, as Doctor Holmes says in his review of "Exotics," is a medium, a clairvoyant. "The will is first called in requisition to exclude

interfering outward impressions and alien trains of thought. After a certain time the second state or adjustment of the poet's double consciousness (for he has two states, just as the somnambulists have) sets up its own automatic movement, with its special trains of ideas and feelings in the thinking and emotional centres. As soon as the fine frenzy, or *quasi* trance-state, is fairly established, the consciousness watches the torrent of thoughts and arrests the ones wanted, singly with their fitting expression, or in groups of fortunate sequences which he cannot better by after treatment. As the poetical vocabulary is limited, and its plasticity lends itself only to certain moulds, the mind works under great difficulty, at least until it has acquired by practice
[123] such handling of language that every possibility of rhythm or rhyme offers itself actually or potentially to the clairvoyant perception simultaneously with the thought it is to embody. Thus poetical composition is the most intense, the most exciting, and therefore the most exhausting of mental exercises. It is exciting because its mental states are a series of revelations and surprises; intense on account of the double strain upon the attention. The poet is not the same man who seated himself an hour ago at his desk with the dust-cart and the gutter, or the duck-pond and the hay-stack, and the barnyard fowls beneath his window. He is in the forest with the song-birds; he is on the mountain-top with the eagles. He sat down in rusty broadcloth, he is arrayed in the imperial purple of his singing robes. Let him alone, now, if you are wise, for you might as well have pushed the arm that was finishing the smile of a Madonna, or laid a veil before a train that had a queen on board, as thrust your untimely question on this half-cataleptic child of the Muse, who hardly knows whether he is in the body or out of the body. And do not wonder if, when the fit is over, he is in some respects like one who is recovering after an excess of the baser stimulants."

[124] As a writer of humorous poetry, it is safe to say that Oliver Wendell Holmes is without a peer.

The Height of the Ridiculous, *The September Gale*, *The Hot Season*, *The Deacon's Masterpiece*, *Nux Postcoenatica*, *The Stethoscope Song*, how many a "cobweb" have they shaken from the tired brain!

And where in the whole range of humorous literature will you find a more delightful morsel than the "*Parting Word*," that follows?—

I must leave thee, lady sweet!
Months shall waste before we
meet;
Winds are fair and sails are
spread,
Anchors leave their ocean bed;
Ere this shining day grows dark,
Skies shall guide my shoreless
bark;
Through thy tears, O lady mine,
Read thy lover's parting line.

When the first sad sun shall set,
Thou shalt tear thy locks of jet;
When the morning star shall rise
Thou shalt wake with weeping
eyes;
When the second sun goes down
Thou more tranquil shalt be
grown,
Taught too well that wild despair
Dims thine eyes, and spoils thy
hair.

All the first unquiet week
Thou shalt wear a smileless cheek;
In the first month's second half
[125] Thou shalt once attempt to laugh;
Then in *Pickwick* thou shalt dip,
Lightly puckering round the lip,
Till at last, in sorrow's spite,
Samuel makes thee laugh outright.

While the first seven mornings
last,
Round thy chamber bolted fast
Many a youth shall fume and pout,
"Hang the girl, she's always out!"
While the second week goes
round,
Vainly shall they sing and pound;
When the third week shall begin,
"Martha, let the creature in!"

Now once more the flattering
throng

Round thee flock with smile and
song,
But thy lips unweaned as yet,
Lisp, "O, how can I forget!"
Men and devils both contrive
Traps for catching girls alive;
Eve was duped, and Helen kissed,
How, O how can you resist?

First, be careful of your fan,
Trust it not to youth or man;
Love has filled a pirate's sail
Often with its perfumed gale.
Mind your kerchief most of all,
Fingers touch when kerchiefs fall;
Shorter ell than mercers clip
Is the space from hand to lip.

[126]

Trust not such as talk in tropes
Full of pistols, daggers, ropes;
All the hemp that Russia bears
Scarce would answer lovers'
prayers;
Never thread was spun so fine,
Never spider stretched the line,
Would not hold the lovers true
That would really swing for you.

Fiercely some shall storm and
swear,
Beating breasts in black despair;
Others murmur with a sigh
You must melt or they will die;
Painted words on empty lies,
Grubs with wings like butterflies;
Let them die, and welcome, too;
Pray what better could they do?

Fare thee well, if years efface
From thy heart love's burning
trace,
Keep, O keep that hallowed seat
From the tread of vulgar feet;
If the blue lips of the sea
Wait with icy kiss for me,
Let not thine forget that vow,
Sealed how often, love, as now!

In his *Mechanism in Thought and Morals*, Doctor Holmes reveals one of the secrets of humorous writing. "The poet," he says, "sits down to his desk with an odd conceit in his brain;
[127] and presently his eyes filled with tears, his thought slides into the minor key, and his heart is full of sad and plaintive melodies. Or he goes to his work, saying—

"'To-night I would have tears;' and before he rises from his table he has written a burlesque, such as he might think fit to send to one of the comic papers, if these were not so commonly cemeteries of hilarity interspersed with cenotaphs of wit and humor. These strange hysterics of the intelligence which make us pass from weeping to laughter, and from laughter back again to weeping, must be familiar to every impressible nature; and all this is as automatic, involuntary, as entirely self-evolved by a hidden, organic process, as are the changing moods of the laughing and crying woman. The poet always recognizes a dictation *ab extra*; and we hardly think it a figure of speech when we talk of his inspiration."

Of Doctor Holmes' inimitable *vers d'occasion* we select the following:

At the reception given to Harriet Beecher Stowe on her seventieth birthday, at Governor Claflin's beautiful summer residence in Newtonville, Doctor Holmes read the following witty and characteristic poem:

[128]

If every tongue that speaks her
praise
For whom I shape my tinkling
phrase
Were summoned to the table,
The vocal chorus that would meet
Of mingling accents harsh or
sweet
From every land and tribe would

beat
The polyglots of Babel.

Briton and Frenchman, Swede and
Dane,
Turk, Spaniard, Tartar of Ukraine,
Hidalgo, Cossack, Cadi,
High Dutchman and Low
Dutchman, too,
The Russian serf, the Polish Jew,
Arab, Armenian and Mantchoo
Would shout, "We know the
lady."

Know her! Who knows not Uncle
Tom
And her he learned his gospel
from
Has never heard of Moses;
Full well the brave black hand we
know
That gave to freedom's grasp the
hoe
That killed the weed that used to
grow
Among the Southern roses.

When Archimedes, long ago,
Spoke out so grandly "*dos pou sto*,
—
Give me a place to stand on,
I'll move your planet for you,
now,"
He little dreamed or fancied how
The *sto* at last should find its *pou*
For woman's faith to land on.

[129]

Her lever was the wand of art,
Her fulcrum was the human heart
Whence all unfailing aid is;
She moved the earth! its thunders
pealed,
Its mountains shook, its temples
reeled,
The blood-red fountains were
unsealed,
And Moloch sunk to Hades.

All through the conflict, up and
down
Marched Uncle Tom and Old John
Brown,
One ghost, one form ideal,
And which was false and which
was true.
And which was mightier of the
two,
The wisest sibyl never knew,
For both alike were real.

Sister, the holy maid does well
Who counts her beads in convent
cell,
Where pale devotion lingers;
But she who serves the sufferer's
needs,
Whose prayers are spelt in loving
deeds
May trust the Lord will count her
beads
As well as human fingers.

When Truth herself was Slavery's
slave
Thy hand the prisoned suppliant
gave

The rainbow wings of fiction.
And Truth who soared descends
to-day
Bearing an angel's wreath away,
Its lilies at thy feet to lay
With heaven's own benediction.

[130] The following poem was read by Doctor Holmes at the Unitarian Festival, June 2, 1882.

The waves upbuild the wasting shore:
Where mountains towered the billows
sweep:
Yet still their borrowed spoils restore
And raise new empires from the deep.
So, while the floods of thought lay waste
The old domain of chartered creeds,
The heaven-appointed tides will haste
To shape new homes for human needs.
Be ours to mark with hearts unchilled
The change an outworn age deplores;
The legend sinks, but Faith shall build
A fairer throne on new-found shores,
The star shall glow in western skies,
That shone o'er Bethlehem's hallowed
shrine,
And once again the temple rise
That crowned the rock of Palestine.
Not when the wondering shepherds
bowed
Did angels sing their latest song,
Nor yet to Israel's kneeling crowd
Did heaven's one sacred dome belong
—
Let priest and prophet have their dues,
The Levite counts but half a man,
Whose proud "salvation of the Jews"
Shuts out the good Samaritan!
Though scattered far the flock may
stray,
His own the shepherd still shall claim,
—
The saints who never learned to pray,—
The friends who never spoke his name.
[131] Dear Master, while we hear thy voice,
That says, "The truth shall make you
free,"
Thy servant still, by loving choice,
O keep us faithful unto Thee!

Doctor Holmes being unable to attend the annual reunion of the Harvard Club in New York City, February 21, 1882, sent the following letter and sonnet which were read at the banquet:

DEAR BROTHERS ALUMNI:

As I am obliged to deny myself the pleasure of being with you, I do not feel at liberty to ask many minutes of your time and attention. I have compressed into the limits of a sonnet the feelings I am sure we all share that, besides the roof that shelters us we have need of some wider house where we can visit and find ourselves in a more extended circle of sympathy than the narrow ring of a family, and nowhere can we seek a truer and purer bond of fellowship than under the benignant smile of our *Alma Mater*. Let me thank you for the kindness which has signified to me that I should be welcome at your festival.

[132] In all the rewards of a literary life none is more precious than the kindly recognition of those who have clung to the heart of the same nursing mother, and will always flee to each other in the widest distances of space, and let us hope in those unbounded realms in which we may not utterly forget our earthly pilgrimage and its dear companions.

Very sincerely yours,
OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES.

SONNET.

Yes, home is sweet! and yet we needs

must sigh,
Restless until our longing souls have found
Some realm beyond the fireside's narrow bound,
Where slippered ease and sleepy comfort lie,
Some fair ideal form that cannot die,
By age dismantled and by change uncrowned,
Else life creeps circling in the self-same round,
And the low ceiling hides the lofty sky.
Ah, then to thee our truant hearts return,
Dear mother, Alma, Casta—spotless, kind!
Thy sacred walls a larger home we find,
And still for thee thy wandering children yearn,
While with undying fires thine altars burn,
Where all our holiest memories rest enshrined.

[133]

POEM READ BY DOCTOR HOLMES AT THE WHITTIER CELEBRATION.

I believe that the copies of verses I've spun,
Like Scheherazade's tales, are a thousand and one,
You remember the story—those mornings in bed—
'Twas the turn of a copper—a tale or a head.

A doom like Scheherazade's falls upon me
In a mandate as stern as the Sultan's decree;
I'm a florist in verse, and what *would* people say
If I came to a banquet without my bouquet?

It is trying, no doubt, when the company knows
Just the look and the smell of each lily and rose,
The green of each leaf in the sprigs that I bring,
And the shape of the bunch and the knot of the string.

Yes, 'the style is the man,' and the nib of one's pen
Makes the same mark at twenty, and threescore and ten;
It is so in all matters, if truth may be told;
Let one look at the cast he can tell you the mould.

How we all know each other! No use in disguise;
Through the holes in the mask comes the flash of the eyes;
We can tell by his—somewhat—each one of our tribe,
As we know the old hat which we cannot describe.

Though in Hebrew, in Sanscrit, in Choctaw, you write,
Sweet singer who gave us the Voices of Night,
Though in buskin or slipper your song may be shod,
Or the velvety verse that Evangeline trod.

[134]

We shall say, 'You can't cheat us—we know it
is you—
There is one voice like that, but there cannot
be two.
Maëstro, whose chant like the dulcimer rings;
And the woods will be hushed when the
nightingale sings.

And he, so serene, so majestic, so true,
Whose temple hypæthral the planets shine
through,
Let us catch but five words from that mystical
pen
We should know our one sage from all children
of men.

And he whose bright image no distance can
dim,
Through a hundred disguises we can't mistake
him,
Whose play is all earnest, whose wit is the
edge
(With a beetle behind) of a sham-splitting
wedge.

Do you know whom we send you, Hidalgos of
Spain?
Do you know your old friends when you see
them again?
Hosea was Sancho! you Dons of Madrid,
But Sancho that wielded the lance of the Cid!

And the wood-thrush of Essex—you know
whom I mean,
Whose song echoes round us when he sits
unseen,
Whose heart-throbs of verse through our
memories thrill
Like a breath from the wood, like a breeze
from the hill.

So fervid, so simple, so loving, so pure,
We hear but one strain and our verdict is sure
—
Thee cannot elude us—no further we search—
'Tis Holy George Herbert cut loose from his
church!

We think it the voice of a cherub that sings—
Alas! we remember that angels have wings—
[135] What story is this of the day of his birth?
Let him live to a hundred! we want him on
earth!

One life has been paid him (in gold) by the sun;
One account has been squared and another
begun;
But he never will die if he lingers below
Till we've paid him in love half the balance we
owe!

[136]

CHAPTER XIII.

THE MAN OF SCIENCE.

"WHAT decided me," says Doctor Holmes, "to give up Law and apply myself to Medicine, I can hardly say, but I had from the first looked upon my law studies as an experiment. At any rate, I made the change, and soon found myself introduced to new scenes and new companionships.

"I can scarcely credit my memory when I recall the first impressions produced upon me by sights afterwards become so familiar that they could no more disturb a pulse-beat than the

commonest of every-day experiences. The skeleton, hung aloft like a gibbeted criminal, looked grimly at me as I entered the room devoted to the students of the school I had joined, just as the fleshless figure of Time, with the hour-glass and scythe, used to glare upon me in my childhood from the *New England Primer*. The white faces in the beds at the Hospital found their reflection
[137] in my own cheeks which lost their color as I looked upon them. All this had to pass away in a little time; I had chosen my profession, and must meet all its aspects until they lost their power over my sensibility....

"After attending two courses of lectures in the School of the University, I went to Europe to continue my studies. I can hardly believe my own memory when I recall the old practitioners and professors who were still going round the hospitals when I mingled with the train of students in the École de Médicine."

Of the famous Baron Boyer, author of a nine-volumed book on surgery, Doctor Holmes says, "I never saw him do more than look as if he wanted to cut a good collop out of a patient he was examining." Baron Larrey, the favorite surgeon of Napoleon, he describes as a short, square, substantial man, with iron-gray hair, red face, and white apron. To go round the Hotel des Invalides with Larrey was to live over the campaign of Napoleon, to look on the sun of Austerlitz, to hear the cannon of Marengo, to struggle through the icy waters of the Beresina, to shiver in the snows of the Russian retreat, and to gaze through the battle smoke upon the last charge of the red lancers on the redder field of Waterloo.

[138] Then there was Baron Dupuytren, "*ce grand homme de lautre côté de la rivièrè*,—with his high, full-doomed head and oracular utterances; Lisfrance, the great drawer of blood and hewer of members; Velpeau, who, coming to Paris in wooden shoes, and starving, almost, at first, raised himself to great eminence as surgeon and author; Broussais, the knotty-featured, savage old man who reminded one of a volcano, which had well-nigh used up its fire and brimstone, and Gabriel Audral, the rapid, fluent, fervid and imaginative speaker.

"The object of our reverence, however, I might almost say idolatry," adds Doctor Holmes, "was Pierre Charles Alexandre Louis, a tall, rather spare, dignified personage, of serene and grave aspect, but with a pleasant smile and kindly voice for the student with whom he came into personal relations.

"If I summed up the lessons of Louis in two expressions, they would be these: First, always make sure that you form a distinct and clear idea of the matter you are considering. Second, always avoid vague approximations where exact estimates are possible....

[139] "Yes, as I say, I look back on the long hours of the many days I spent in the wards and in the autopsy room of La Pitié, where Louis was one of the attending physicians—yes, Louis did a great work for practical medicine. Modest in the presence of nature, fearless in the face of authority, unwearying in the pursuit of truth, he was a man whom any student might be happy and proud to claim as his teacher and his friend. And yet, as I look back on the days when I followed his teachings, I feel that I gave myself up too exclusively to his methods of thought and study. There is one part of their business that certain medical practitioners are too apt to forget; namely, that what they should most of all try to do is to ward off disease, to alleviate suffering, to preserve life, or at least to prolong it if possible. It is not of the slightest interest to the patient to know whether three or three and a quarter inches of his lungs are hepatized. His mind is not occupied with thinking of the curious problems which are to be solved by his own autopsy, whether this or that strand of the spinal marrow is the seat of this or that form of degeneration. He wants something to relieve his pain, to mitigate the anguish of dyspnæa, to bring back motion and
[140] sensibility to the dead limb, to still the tortures of neuralgia. What is it to him that you can localize and name by some uncouth term, the disease which you could not prevent and which you can not cure? an old woman who knows how to make a poultice and how to put it on, and does it *tuto*, *cito*, *jucunde*, just when and where it is wanted, is better—a thousand times better in many cases—than a staring pathologist who explores and thumps and doubts and guesses and tells his patient he will be better to-morrow, and so goes home to tumble his books over and make out a diagnosis.

"But in those days I, like most of my fellow students, was thinking much more of 'science' than of practical medicine, and I believe if we had not clung so closely to the skirts of Louis, and had followed some of the courses of men like Rousseau,—therapeutists, who gave special attention to curative methods, and not chiefly to diagnosis—it would have been better for me and others. One thing, at any rate, we did learn in the wards of Louis. We learned that a very large proportion of diseases get well of themselves, without any special medication—the great fact formulated, enforced and popularized by Doctor Jacob Bigelow."

[141] It is well known that Doctor Holmes detests the habit of drugging practised by so many physicians of the "old school," and in his address before the Massachusetts Medical Society, entitled Currents and Counter Currents in Medical Science, he makes a severe attack upon the inordinate use of medicines.

"What is the honest truth," he says at another time, "about the medical art? By far the largest number of diseases which physicians are called to treat will get well at any rate, even in spite of reasonably bad treatment. Of the other fraction, a certain number will inevitably die, whatever is done: there remains a small margin of cases where the life of the patient depends on the skill of the physician. Drugs now and then save life; they often shorten disease and remove symptoms; but they are second in importance to food, air, temperature, and the other hygienic influences.

That was a shrewd trick of Alexander's physician on the occasion of his attack after bathing. He asked three days to prepare his medicine. Time is the great physician as well as the great consoler. Sensible men in all ages have trusted most to nature."

Of quacks and other humbugs, Doctor Holmes had an undisguised, wholesome contempt.

[142] "Shall we try," he says, "the medicines advertised with the certificates of justices of the peace, of clergymen, or even members of Congress? Certainly, it may be answered, any one of them which makes a good case for itself. But the difficulty is, that the whole class of commercial remedies are shown by long experience, with the rarest exceptions, to be very sovereign cures for empty pockets, and of no peculiar efficacy for anything else. You may be well assured that if any really convincing evidence was brought forward in behalf of the most vulgar nostrum, the chemists would go at once to work to analyze it, the physiologists to experiment with it, and the young doctors would all be trying it on their own bodies, if not on their patients. But we do not think it worth while, as a general rule, to send a Cheap Jack's gilt chains and lockets to be tested for gold. We know they are made to sell, and so with the pills and potions.... Think how rapidly any real discovery is appropriated and comes into universal use. Take anæsthetics, take the use of bromide of potassium, and see how easily they obtained acceptance. If you are disposed to think any of the fancy systems has brought forward any new remedy of value which the medical
[143] profession has been slow to accept, ask any fancy practitioner to name it. Let him name one,—the best his system claims,—not a hundred, but one. A single new, efficient, trustworthy remedy which the medical profession can test as they are ready to test before any scientific tribunal, opium, quinine, ether, the bromide of potassium. There is no such remedy on which any of the fancy practitioners dare stake his reputation. If there were, it would long ago have been accepted, though it had been flowers of brimstone from the borders of Styx or Cocytus."

Homœopathy is classed by Doctor Holmes among such "Kindred Delusions" as the Royal Cure for the King's Evil, the Weapon Ointment, the Sympathetic Powder, the Tar-water mania of Bishop Berkeley, and the Metallic Tractors, or Perkinsism.

In making a direct attack upon the pretentions of Homœopathy, Doctor Holmes declares at the outset that he shall treat it not by ridicule, but by argument; with great freedom, but with good temper and in peaceable language.

Similia similibus curantur. Like cures like, is one of the fundamental principles of
[144] Homœopathy, and "improbable though it may seem to some," says Doctor Holmes with his usual impartial fairness, "there is no essential absurdity involved in the proposition that diseases yield to remedies capable of producing like symptoms. There are, on the other hand, some analogies which lend a degree of plausibility to the statement. There are well-ascertained facts, known from the earliest periods of medicine, showing that under certain circumstances, the very medicine which from its known effects, one would expect to aggravate the disease, may contribute to its relief. I may be permitted to allude, in the most general way, to the case in which the spontaneous efforts of an over-tasked stomach are quieted by the agency of a drug which that organ refuses to entertain upon any terms. But that *every* cure ever performed by medicine should have been founded upon this principle, although without the knowledge of a physician, that the Homœopathy axiom is, as Hahnemann asserts, "the *sole* law of nature in therapeutics," a law of which nothing more than a transient glimpse ever presented itself to the innumerable host
[145] of medical observers, is a dogma of such sweeping extent and pregnant novelty, that it demands a corresponding breath and depth of unquestionable facts to cover its vast pretensions."

Among the many facts of which great use has been made by the Homœopathists, is that found in the precept given for the treatment of parts which have been frozen, by friction with snow, etc.

"But," says Doctor Holmes, "we deceive ourselves by names, if we suppose the frozen part to be treated by cold, and not by heat. The snow may even be actually *warmer* than the part to which it is applied. But even if it were at the same temperature when applied, it never did and never could do the least good to a frozen part, except as a mode of regulating the application of what? of *heat*. But the heat must be applied *gradually*, just as food must be given a little at a time to those perishing with hunger. If the patient were brought into a warm room, heat would be applied *very rapidly*, were not something interposed to prevent this, and allow its gradual admission. Snow or iced water is exactly what is wanted; it is not cold to the part; it is very possibly warm, on the
[146] contrary, for these terms are relative, and if it does not melt and let the heat in, or is not taken away, the part will remain frozen up until doomsday. Now the treatment of a frozen limb by heat, in large or small quantities, is not Homœopathy."

Another supposed illustration of the Homœopathic law is the alleged successful management of burns, by holding them to the fire. "This is a popular mode of treating those burns which are of too little consequence to require any more efficacious remedy, and would inevitably get well of themselves, without any trouble being bestowed upon them. It produces a most acute pain in the part, which is followed by some loss of sensibility, as happens with the eye after exposure to strong light, and the ear after being subjected to very intense sounds. This is all it is capable of doing, and all further notions of its efficacy must be attributed merely to the vulgar love of paradox. If this example affords any comfort to the Homœopathist, it seems as cruel to deprive him of it as it would be to convince the mistress of the smoke-jack or the flatiron that the fire does not literally draw the fire out, which is her hypothesis.

[147] "But if it were true that frost-bites were cured by cold and burns by heat, it would be subversive, so far as it went, of the great principle of Homœopathy. For you will remember that

this principle is that *Like* cures *Like*, and not that *Same* cures *Same*; that there is *resemblance* and not *identity* between the symptoms of the disease and those produced by the drug which cures it, and none have been readier to insist upon this distinction than the Homœopathists themselves. For if *Same* cures *Same*, then every poison must be its own antidote,—which is neither a part of their theory nor their so-called experience. They have been asked often enough, why it was that arsenic could not cure the mischief which arsenic had caused, and why the infectious cause of small-pox did not remedy the disease it had produced, and then they were ready enough to see the distinction I have pointed out. "O no! it was not the hair of the same dog, but only of one very much like him!"

[148] The belief in and employment of the "Infinitesimal doses," Doctor Holmes handles with the same fairness and acumen; but the absurd idea affirmed by Hahnemann that Psora is the cause of the great majority of chronic diseases, he treats as it deserves, with unqualified contempt.

In conclusion, he says, "As one humble member of a profession which for more than two thousand years has devoted itself to the pursuit of the best earthly interests of mankind always assailed and insulted from without by such as are ignorant of its infinite perplexities and labors, always striving in unequal contest with the hundred armed giants who walk in the noonday and sleep not in the midnight, yet still toiling not merely for itself and the present moment, but for the race and the future, I have lifted up my voice against this lifeless delusion, rolling its shapeless bulk into the path of a noble science it is too weak to strike or to injure."

Upon the contagiousness of Puerperal Fever, Doctor Holmes wrote an able treatise some forty years ago. This was reprinted with some additions, in 1855, and in an introductory note which accompanies the still later addition (1883), Doctor Holmes says, "The subject of this Paper has [149] the same profound interest for me at the present moment as it had when I was first collecting the terrible evidence out of which, as it seems to me, the commonest exercise of reason could not help shaping the truth it involved. It is not merely on account of the bearing of the question—if there is a question—on all that is most sacred in human life and happiness that the subject cannot lose its interest. It is because it seems evident that a fair statement of the facts must produce its proportion of well-constituted and unprejudiced minds."

The essay, a most valuable one, is republished without the change of a word or syllable, as the author upon reviewing finds that it anticipates and eliminates those secondary questions which cannot be for a moment entertained until the one great point of fact is peremptorily settled.

There are but very few subjects, indeed, in medical science, that Doctor Holmes has not investigated, and investigated, too, most thoroughly....

[150] In his article on "Reflex Vision," published in Volume IV. of the Proceedings of the American Academy, will be found a very interesting account of his experiments in optics. One, indeed, that will both interest and instruct.

To him, as is well known, we are indebted for numerous improvements in the stereoscope; and in microscopes also, he has done some original and important work.

Said an admirer of Doctor Holmes in referring to his career as a medical professor:

"He always makes people attentive, and I have been told that there is no professor whom the students so much like to listen to. In one of his books he says that every one of us is three persons, and I think that if the statement is true in regard to ordinary men and women, Doctor Holmes himself is at least half a dozen persons. He lectures so well on anatomy that his students never suspect him to be a poet, and he writes verses so well that most people do not suspect him of being an authority among scientific men. Though he illustrates his medical lectures by quotations of the most appropriate and interesting sort, from a wonderful variety of authors, he has never been known to refer to his own writings in that way."

[151] In celebrating the silver anniversary year of his wedding with the Muse of the monthlies—meaning his reappearance in the *Atlantic*—he observed that during the larger part of his absence, his time had been in a great measure occupied with other duties. "I never forgot the advice of Coleridge," he said, "that a literary man should have a regular calling. I may say, in passing, that I have often given the advice to others, and too often wished that I could supplement it with the words, "And confine himself to it.'"

[152]

CHAPTER XIV.

THE HOLMES BREAKFAST.

AS the seventieth birthday of Doctor Holmes drew near, the publishers of the *Atlantic Monthly* resolved to give a "Breakfast" in his honor. The twenty-ninth of August, 1879, was, of course, the true anniversary, but knowing it would be difficult to bring together at that season of the year the friends and literary associates of Doctor Holmes, Mr. Houghton decided to postpone the invitations until the thirteenth of November. Upon that day a brilliant company assembled at

noon in the spacious parlors of the Hotel Brunswick, in Boston.

Doctor Holmes and his daughter, Mrs. Sargent, received the guests, who numbered in all about one hundred. Mrs. Harriet Beecher Stowe, Mrs. Julia Ward Howe, Ralph Waldo Emerson and
[153] John G. Whittier assisted in this ceremony, and after a couple of hours spent in sparkling converse, the company adjourned to the dining-room, where a sumptuous "Breakfast" was served to the "Autocrat" and his friends.

At the six tables were seated writers of eminence in every department of literature. Grace was said by the Rev. Phillips Brooks, D.D., and after the cloth was removed, Mr. H.O. Houghton introduced the guest of the day in a few happily-chosen words.

The company then rose and drank the health of the poet, after which Doctor Holmes read the following beautiful poem:

THE IRON GATE.

Where is the patriarch you are kindly greeting?
Not unfamiliar to my ear his name,
Not yet unknown to many a joyous meeting
In days long vanished,—is he still the same,

Or changed by years forgotten and forgetting,
Dull-eared, dim-sighted, slow of speech and thought,
Still o'er the sad, degenerate present fretting,
Where all goes wrong and nothing as it ought?

Old age, the gray-beard! Well, indeed, I know him,—
Shrunk, tottering, bent, of aches and ills the prey;
[154] In sermon, story, fable, picture, poem,
Oft have I met him from my earliest day.

In my old Æsop, toiling with his bundle,—
His load of sticks,—politely asking Death,
Who comes when called for,—would he lug or trundle
His fagot for him?—he was scant of breath.

And sad "Ecclesiastes, or the Preacher,"
Has he not stamped the image on my soul,
In that last chapter, where the worn-out Teacher
Sighs o'er the loosened cord, the broken bowl?

Yes, long, indeed, I've known him at a distance,
And now my lifted door-latch shows him here;
I take his shrivelled hand without resistance,
And find him smiling as his step draws near.

What though of gilded baubles he bereaves us,
Dear to the heart of youth, to manhood's prime,
Think of the calm he brings, the wealth he leaves us,
The hoarded spoils, the legacies of time!

Altars once flaming, still with incense fragrant,
Passion's uneasy nurslings rocked asleep,
Hope's anchor faster, wild desire less vagrant,
Life's flow less noisy, but the stream how deep!

Still as the silver cord gets worn and slender,
Its lightened task-work tugs with lessening strain,
Hands get more helpful, voices grown more tender,
Soothe with their softened tones the slumberous brain.

[155]

Youth longs and manhood strives, but age remembers,
Sits by the raked-up ashes of the past,
Spreads its thin hands above the whitening embers
That warm its creeping life-blood till the last.

Dear to its heart is every loving token
That comes unbidden ere its pulse grows cold,
Ere the last lingering ties of life are broken,
Its labors ended, and its story told.

Ah, while around us rosy youth rejoices,
For us the sorrow-laden breezes sigh,
And through the chorus of its jocund voices
Throbs the sharp note of misery's hopeless cry.

As on the gauzy wings of fancy flying
From some far orb I track our watery sphere,
Home of the struggling, suffering, doubting, dying,
The silvered globule seems a glistening tear.

But Nature lends her mirror of illusion
To win from saddening scenes our age-dimmed eyes,
And misty day-dreams blend in sweet confusion
The wintery landscape and the summer skies.

So when the iron portal shuts behind us,
And life forgets us in its noise and whirl,
Visions that shunned the glaring noonday find us,
And glimmering starlight shows the gates of pearl.

I come not here your morning hour to sadden
[156] A limping pilgrim leaning on his staff,—
I, who have never deemed it sin to gladden
This vale of sorrows with a wholesome laugh.

If word of mine another's gloom has brightened,
Through my dumb lips the heaven-sent message came;
If hand of mine another's task has lightened,
It felt the guidance that it dares not claim.

But, O my gentle sisters, O my brothers,
These thick-sown snow-flakes hint of toil's release;
These feebler pulses bid me leave to others
The tasks once welcome; evening asks for peace.

Time claims his tribute; silence now is golden;
Let me not vex the too long suffering lyre;
Though to your love untiring still beholden,
The curfew tells me—cover up the fire.

And now with grateful smile and accents cheerful,
And warmer heart than look or word can tell,
In simplest phrase—these traitorous eyes are tearful—
Thanks, Brothers, Sisters,—Children, and farewell!

After the reading of the poem, the following reminiscence from Doctor Holmes' pen, was read by Mr. Houghton:—

"The establishment of the *Atlantic Monthly* was due to the liberal enterprise of the then flourishing firm of Phillips & Sampson. Mr. Phillips, more especially, was most active and

[157] sanguine. The publishers were fortunate enough to secure the services of Mr. Lowell as editor. Mr. Lowell had a fancy that I could be useful as a contributor, and woke me from a kind of literary lethargy in which I was half slumbering, to call me to active service. Remembering some crude contributions of mine to an old magazine, it occurred to me that their title might serve for some fresh papers, and so I sat down and wrote off what came into my head under the title *The Autocrat of the Breakfast-Table*. This series of papers was not the result of an express premeditation, but was, as I may say, dipped from the running stream of my thoughts. Its very kind reception encouraged me, and you know the consequences, which have lasted from that day to this.

"But what I want especially to say here is, that I owe the impulse which started my second growth, to the urgent hint of my friend Mr. Lowell, and that you have him to thank, not only for his own noble contributions to our literature, but for the spur which moved me to action, to which you owe any pleasure I may have given, and I am indebted for the crowning happiness of this
[158] occasion. His absence I most deeply regret for your and my own sake, while I congratulate the country to which in his eminent station he is devoting his services."

As Mr. Whittier had been obliged to leave the company before this, Mr. James T. Fields read his fine poem entitled "Our Autocrat," from which we quote the last verses:

What shapes and fancies, grave or gay,
  Before us at his bidding come!
The Treadmill tramp, the "One Hoss
      Shay,"
  The dumb despair of Elsie's doom!

The tale of Aris and the Maid,
  The plea for lips that cannot speak,
The holy kiss that Iris laid
  On Little Boston's pallid cheek!

Long may he live to sing for us
  His sweetest songs at evening time,
And like his Chambered Nautilus
  To holier heights of beauty climb!

Though now unnumbered guests
      surround
  The table that he rules at will,
Its Autocrat, however crowned,
  Is but our friend and comrade still.

The world may keep his honored name,
  The wealth of all his varied powers;
A stronger claim has love than fame
  And he himself is only ours!

[159] Mr W.D. Howells then took the chair and was introduced to the company as the representative of the "mythical editor."

In his remarks, Mr. Howells paid the following tribute to the Autocrat:

"The fact is known to you all, and I will not insist upon it, but it was Oliver Wendell Holmes who not only named, but who made the *Atlantic*. How did he do this? Oh, very simply! He merely invented a new kind of literature, something so beautiful and rare and fine that while you were trying to determine its character as monologue or colloquy, prose or poetry, philosophy or humor, it was gradually penetrating your consciousness with a sense that the best of all these had been fused in one—a perfect form, an exquisite wisdom, an unsurpassable grace. This, and much more than any poor words of mine can say, was the Autocrat, followed by the Professor, and then by the Poet, at the same Breakfast-Table. We pledge him by all these names to-day, not only with the wine in our cups, but with the pride and love in our hearts, where we have
[160] enshrined him immortally young, in spite of the birthdays that come and go, and where we defy the future that lies in wait for our precious things, to know his quality better, or value his genius more highly than we."

Mrs. Julia Ward Howe was then called upon to respond to the toast, "The girls we have *not* left behind us," and after a few words in reply, she read a fine poem in honor of the illustrious guest.

Charles Dudley Warner was then introduced, and after a short speech, read a poem by H. H., "To Oliver Wendell Holmes, on his seventieth birthday." In these charming lines almost every poem of Doctor Holmes is mentioned with rare tact and skill.

At the close of the poem, President Eliot of Harvard, rose and said:

"It seems to me that it is my duty to remind all these poets, essayists and story-tellers who are gathered here, that the main work of our friend's life has been of an altogether different nature. I know him as the professor of anatomy and physiology in the Medical School of Harvard University for the last thirty-two years, and I know him to-day as one of the most active and hard-
[161] working of our lecturers. Some of you gentlemen, I observe, are lecturers by profession, at least

during the winter months. Doctor Holmes delivers four lectures every week for eight months of the year. I am sure the lecturers by profession will understand that this task requires an extraordinary amount of mental and physical vigor. And I congratulate our friend on the weekly demonstration of that vigor which he gives in our medical school. Most of you have perhaps the impression that Doctor Holmes chiefly enjoys a pretty couplet, a beautiful verse, an elegant sentence. It has fallen to me to observe that he has other great enjoyments. I never heard any other mortal exhibit such enthusiasm over an elegant dissection. And perhaps you think it is the pen with which Doctor Holmes is chiefly skilful. I assure you that he is equally skilful with scalpel and with microscope. And I think that none of us can understand the meaning and scope of Doctor Holmes' writing, unless we have observed that the daily work of his life has been to study and teach a natural science, the noble science of anatomy. It is his to know with absolute exactness the form of every bone in this wonderful body of ours, the course of every artery, and
[162] vein, and nerve, the form and function of every muscle, and not only to know it, but to describe it with a fascinating precision and enthusiasm. When I read his writings I find the traces of this life-work of his on every page. There are three thousand men scattered through New England at this moment who will remember Doctor Holmes through their lives, and transmit to their children the memory of him, as student and teacher of exact science. And let us honor him to-day, not forgetting—they can never be forgotten—his poems and essays, as a noble representative of the profession of the scientific student and teacher."

Mr. S.L. Clemens (Mark Twain) followed President Eliot.

"I would have travelled," he began, "a much greater distance than I have come to witness the paying of honors to Doctor Holmes, for my feeling toward him has always been one of peculiar warmth. When one receives a letter from a great man for the first time in his life, it is a large event to him, as all of you know by your own experience. Well, the first great man who ever wrote
[163] me a letter was our guest—Oliver Wendell Holmes. He was also the first great literary man I ever stole anything from, and that is how I came to write to him and he to me. When my first book was new, a friend of mine said, 'The dedication is very neat.' 'Yes,' I said, 'I thought it was.' My friend said, 'I always admired it even before I saw it in *The Innocents Abroad*.' I naturally said, 'What do you mean? Where did you ever see it before?' 'Well, I saw it some years ago, as Doctor Holmes' dedication to his *Songs in Many Keys*.' Of course my first impulse was to prepare this man's remains for burial, but upon reflection I said I would reprieve him for a moment or two and give him a chance to prove his assertion if he could. We stepped into a bookstore and he did prove it. I had really stolen that dedication almost word for word. I could not imagine how this curious thing happened, for I knew one thing for a dead certainty—that a certain amount of pride always goes along with a teaspoonful of brains, and that this pride protects a man from deliberately stealing other people's ideas. That is what a teaspoonful of brains will do for a man, and admirers had
[164] often told me I had nearly a basketful, though they were rather reserved as to the size of the basket. However, I thought the thing out and solved the mystery. Two years before I had been laid up a couple of weeks in the Sandwich Islands, and had read and re-read Doctor Holmes's poems till my mental reservoir was filled with them to the brim. The dedication lay on top and handy, so by and by I unconsciously stole it. Perhaps I unconsciously stole the rest of the volume, too, for many people have told me that my book was pretty poetical in one way or another. Well, of course I wrote Doctor Holmes and told him I hadn't meant to steal, and he wrote back and said in the kindest way that it was all right and no harm done; and added that he believed we all unconsciously worked over ideas gathered in reading and hearing, imagining they were original with ourselves. He stated a truth and did it in such a pleasant way, and salved over my sore spot so gently and so healingly that I was rather glad I had committed the crime, for the sake of the letter. I afterward called on him and told him to make perfectly free with any ideas of mine that
[165] struck him as being good protoplasm for poetry. He could see by that that there wasn't anything mean about me; so we got along right from the start.

"I have met Doctor Holmes many times since; and lately he said—however, I am wandering away from the one thing which I got on my feet to do, that is, to make my compliments to you, my fellow-teachers of the great public, and likewise to say I am right glad to see that Doctor Holmes is still in his prime and full of generous life; and as age is not determined by years, but by trouble and by infirmities of mind and body, I hope it may be a very long time yet before any one can truthfully say, 'He is growing old.'"

Mr. Howells then introduced Mr. J.W. Harper of New York, who gave in his remarks a delightful pen portrait of Doctor Holmes, the lyceum lecturer, which we have elsewhere quoted. Mr. E.C. Stedman followed Mr. Harper with a brief speech and graceful poem. Mr. T.B. Aldrich spoke of the "inexhaustible kindness of Doctor Holmes to his younger brothers in literature," and
[166] Mr. William Winter paid his tribute to the honored guest by "The Chieftain," a poem which he named for the occasion *Hearts and Holmes*.

Mr. J.T. Trowbridge then read a poem entitled "Filling an Order," in which Nature compounds for Miss Columbia "three geniuses A 1.," to grace her favorite city. She concludes her mixture as follows:

Says she, "The fault I'm well aware, with genius is
the presence
Of altogether too much clay with quite too little
essence,
And sluggish atoms that obstruct the spiritual
solution;

So now instead of spoiling these by over-much
dilution
With their fine elements I'll make a single rare
phenomenon,
And of three common geniuses concoct a most
uncommon one,
So that the world shall smile to see a soul so
universal,
Such poesy and pleasantry, packed in so small a
parcel.

So said, so done; the three in one she wrapped, and
stuck the label
*Poet, Professor, Autocrat of Wit's own Breakfast-
Table.*"

C.P. Cranch then read a fine sonnet, and Colonel T.W. Higginson followed with felicitous remarks, a portion of which referring to the father of Doctor Holmes we have quoted elsewhere in the book.

[167] Letters of regrets were then read from R. B. Hayes, John Holmes, the poet's brother, George William Curtis and George Bancroft.

Among others unable to be present, but who sent regrets, were Rebecca Harding Davis, Carl Schurz, Edwin P. Whipple, Noah Porter, George Ripley, Henry Watterson, George H. Boker, Frances Hodgson Burnett, L. Maria Child, Gail Hamilton, Parke Godwin, Donald G. Mitchell, John J. Piatt, Richard Grant White, D.C. Gilman, J.W. DeForest, Frederick Douglass, J.G. Holland, George W. Childs, John Hay and W.W. Story.

Mr. James T. Fields was obliged to fulfil a lecture engagement soon after the speaking began, else he would have read the following fairy tale:—

Once upon a time a company of good-natured fairies assembled for a summer moonlight dance on a green lawn in front of a certain picturesque old house in Cambridge. They had come out for a midnight lark, and as their twinkling feet flew about among the musical dewdrops they were
[168] suddenly interrupted by the well-known figure of the village doctor, which, emerging from the old mansion, rapidly made its way homeward.

"Another new mortal has alighted on our happy planet," whispered a fairy gossip to her near companion.

"Evidently so," replied the tiny creature, smiling good-naturedly on the doctor's footprints in the grass.

"That is the minister's house," said another small personage, with a wink of satisfaction.

"Perhaps it is a boy," ejaculated Fairy Number One.

"I *know* it is a boy!" said Fairy Number Two. I read it in the Doctor's face when the moon lighted up his countenance as he shut the door so softly behind him.

"It *is* a boy!" responded the Fairy Queen, who always knew everything, and that settled the question.

"If that is the case," cried all the fairies at once, "let us try what magic still remains to us in this busy, bustling New England. Let us make that child's life a happy and a famous one if we can."

[169] "Agreed," replied the queen; "and I will lead off with a substantial gift to the little new-comer. I will crown him with Cheerfulness, a sunny temperament, brimming over with mirth and happiness."

"And I will second your Majesty's gift to the little man," said a sweet-voiced creature, "and tender him the ever-abiding gift of Song. He shall be a perpetual minstrel to gladden the hearts of all his fellow-mortals."

"And I," said another, "will shower upon him the subtle power of Pathos and Romance, and he shall take unto himself the spell of a sorcerer whenever he chooses to scatter abroad his wise and beautiful fancies."

"And I," said a very astute-looking fairy, "will touch his lips with Persuasion; he shall be a teacher of knowledge, and the divine gift of eloquence shall be at his command, to uplift and instruct the people."

"And I," said a quaint, energetic little body, "will endow him with a passionate desire to help forward the less favored sons and daughters of earth, who are struggling for recognition and success in their various avocations."

"And I," said a motherly-looking, amiable fairy, "will see that in due time he finds the best
[170] among women for his companionship, a helpmeet indeed, whose life shall be happily bound up in

his life."

"Do give me a chance," cried a beautiful young fairy "and I will answer for his children, that they may be worthy of their father, and all a mother's heart may pray that Heaven will vouchsafe to her."

And after seventy years have rolled away into space, the same fairies assembled on the same lawn at the same season of the year, to compare notes with reference to their now famous *protégé*. And they declared that their magic had been thoroughly successful, and that their charms had all worked without a single flaw.

Then they took hands, and dancing slowly around the time-honored mansion, sang this roundelay, framed in the words of their own beloved poet:—

Strength to his hours of manly toil!
  Peace to his star-lit dreams!
He loves alike the furrowed soil,
  The music-haunted streams!

Sweet smiles to keep forever
      bright
  The sunshine on his lips,
And faith that sees the ring of light
  Round Nature's last eclipse!

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CHAPTER XV.

ORATIONS AND ESSAYS.

IN *Pages from an old Volume of Life*, one of the latest books published by Doctor Holmes, we have a collection of most delightful orations and essays. Some of them we recognize as old, familiar friends. "Bread and the Newspaper," for instance, recalls vividly those sad, terribly earnest days when the civil war was rending not only our land but our hearts. Something to eat, and the daily papers to read—these we must have, no matter what else we had to give up!

War taught us, as nothing else could, what we really were. It exalted our manhood and our womanhood, and showed us our substantial human qualities for a long time kept out of sight, it may be, by the spirit of commerce, the love of art, science, or literature. Those who had called
[172] Doctor Holmes "an aristocrat," "a Tory," forgot all their bitter feelings when he said, "We are finding out that not only 'patriotism is eloquence,' but that heroism is gentility. All ranks are wonderfully equalized under the fire of a masked battery. The plain artisan, or the rough fireman, who faces the lead and iron like a man, is the truest representative we can show of the heroes of Crécy and Agincourt. And if one of our fine gentlemen puts off his straw-colored kids and stands by the other, shoulder to shoulder, or leads him on to the attack, he is as honorable in our eyes and in theirs as if he were ill-dressed and his hands were soiled with labor.

In *The Inevitable Trial*, an oration delivered on the 4th of July, 1863, before the City Authorities of Boston, Doctor Holmes who had been falsely classed among the enemies of the Anti-slavery movement, spoke as follows:—

"Long before the accents of our famous statesmen resounded in the halls of the Capitol, long before the *Liberator* opened its batteries, the controversy now working itself out by trial of battle
[173] was foreseen and predicted. Washington warned his countrymen of the danger of sectional divisions, well knowing the line of clearage that ran through the seemingly solid fabric. Jefferson foreshadowed the judgment to fall upon the land for its sins against a just God. Andrew Jackson announced a quarter of a century beforehand that the next pretext of revolution would be slavery. De Tocqueville recognized with that penetrating insight which analyzed our institutions and conditions so keenly, that the Union was to be endangered by slavery not through its interests, but through the change of character it was bringing about in the people of the two sections, the same fatal change which George Mason, more than half a century before, had declared to be the most pernicious effect of the system, adding the solemn warning, now fearfully justifying itself in the sight of his descendants, that 'by an inevitable chain of causes and effects, Providence punishes national sins by national calamities.'

"The Virginian romancer pictured the far-off scenes of the conflict which he saw approaching as the prophets of Israel painted the coming woes of Jerusalem, and the strong iconoclast of
[174] Boston announced the very year when the curtain should rise on the yet unopened drama.

"The wise men of the past, and the shrewd men of our own time, who warned us of the calamities in store for our nation, never doubted what was the cause which was to produce first alienation and finally rupture. The descendants of the men, 'daily exercised in tyranny,' the 'petty tyrants,' as their own leading statesmen called them long ago, came at length to love the institution which their fathers had condemned while they tolerated. It is the fearful realization of

that vision of the poet where the lost angels snuff up with eager nostrils the sulphurous emanations of the bottomless abyss,—so have their natures become changed by long breathing the atmosphere of the realm of darkness."

In this same grand oration occur also these eloquent words:—

"Whether we know it or not, whether we mean it or not, we cannot help fighting against the system that has proved the source of all those miseries which the author of the Declaration of Independence trembled to anticipate. And this ought to make us willing to do and to suffer
[175] cheerfully. There were Holy Wars of old, in which it was glory enough to die; wars in which the one aim was to rescue the sepulchre of Christ from the hands of infidels. The sepulchre of Christ is not in Palestine! He rose from that burial-place more than eighteen hundred years ago. He is crucified wherever his brothers are slain without cause; he lies buried wherever man, made in his Maker's image, is entombed in ignorance lest he should learn the rights which his Divine Master gave him! This is our Holy War, and we must bring to it all the power with which he fought against the Almighty before he was cast from heaven."

In his *Hunt after the Captain*, we realize how near the "dull dead ghastliness of War" came to the fond father's heart as he sought his wounded hero through those dreary hospital wards! He knew of what he spake when appealing so eloquently to his fellow-patriots:—

"Sons and daughters of New England, men and women of the North, brothers and sisters in the bond of the American Union, you have among you the scarred and wasted soldiers who have shed
[176] their blood for your temporal salvation. They bore your nation's emblems bravely through the fire and smoke of the battle-field; nay, their own bodies are starred with bullet-wounds and striped with sabre-cuts, as if to mark them as belonging to their country until their dust becomes a portion of the soil which they defended. In every Northern graveyard slumber the victims of this destroying struggle. Many whom you remember playing as children amidst the clover blossoms of our Northern fields, sleep under nameless mounds with strange Southern wild flowers blooming over them. By those wounds of living heroes, by those graves of fallen martyrs, by the hopes of your children, and the claims of your children's children yet unborn, in the name of outraged honor, in the interest of violated sovereignty, for the life of an imperilled nation, for the sake of men everywhere, and of our common humanity, for the glory of God and the advancement of his kingdom on earth, your country calls upon you to stand by her through good report and through evil report, in triumph and in defeat, until she emerges from the great war of Western civilization, Queen of the broad continent, Arbitress in the councils of earth's emancipated peoples."

[177] It will be remembered that this heart-stirring oration, *The Inevitable Trial*, from which the above is quoted, was delivered at one of the most discouraging periods of the war; when Lee was in Pennsylvania, and just before the capture of Vicksburg.

Among the other essays and orations in *Pages from an old Volume of Life*, we find the *Physiology of Walking*, which contains many interesting facts concerning the human wheel, with its spokes and felloes.

"Walking," says Doctor Holmes, "is a perpetual falling with a perpetual self-recovery. It is a most complex, violent, and perilous operation, which we divest of its extreme danger only by continual practice from a very early period of life. We find how complex it is when we attempt to analyze it, and we see that we never understood it thoroughly until the time of the instantaneous photograph. We learn how violent it is, when we walk against a post or a door in the dark. We discover how dangerous it is when we slip or trip and come down, perhaps breaking or
[178] dislocating our limbs, or overlook the last step of a flight of stairs, and discover with what headlong violence we have been hurling ourselves forward.

"Two curious facts are easily proved. First, a man is shorter when he is walking than when at rest. We have found a very simple way of showing this by having a rod or stick placed horizontally, so as to touch the top of the head forcibly, as we stand under it. In walking rapidly beneath it, even if the eyes are shut, the top of the head will not even graze the rod. The other fact is, that one side of a man always tends to outwalk the other side, so that no person can walk far in a straight line, if he is blindfolded. *The Seasons*, and *The Human Body and its Management*, were originally published in the Atlantic Almanac. *Cinders from the Ashes* gives some exceedingly interesting reminiscences.

Richard Henry Dana, the schoolboy, is described by Doctor Holmes as ruddy, sturdy, quiet and reserved; and of Margaret Fuller he says, "Sitting on the girls' benches, conspicuous among the schoolgirls of unlettered origin, by that look which rarely fails to betray hereditary and congenital
[179] culture, was a young person very nearly of my own age. She came with the reputation of being 'smart,' as we should have called it; clever, as we say nowadays. Her air to her schoolmates was marked by a certain stateliness and distance; as if she had other thoughts than theirs, and was not of them. She was a great student and a great reader of what she used to call 'náw-véls;' I remember her so well as she appeared at school and later, that I regret that she had not been faithfully given to canvas or marble in the day of her best looks. None know her aspect who have not seen her living. Margaret, as I remember her at school and afterwards, was tall, fair complexioned, with a watery, aquamarine lustre in her light eyes, which she used to make small, as one does who looks at the sunshine.

"A remarkable point about her was that long, flexile neck, arching and undulating in strange,

sinuous movements, which one who loved her would compare to those of a swan, and one who loved her not, to those of the ophidian who tempted our common mother. Her talk was affluent, magisterial, *de haut en bas*, some would say euphuistic, but surpassing the talk of women in
[180] breadth and audacity. Her face kindled and reddened and dilated in every feature as she spoke, and, as I once saw her in a fine storm of indignation at the supposed ill treatment of a relative, showed itself capable of something resembling what Milton calls the Viraginian aspect."

A composition of Margaret's was one day taken up by the boy Oliver.

"It is a trite remark," she began.

Alas! the embryo-poet did not know the meaning of the word trite.

"How could I ever judge Margaret fairly," he exclaims, "after such a crushing discovery of her superiority?"

Of his instructors and schoolmates at Andover, Doctor Holmes has given us numerous pen portraits. The old Academy building had a dreary look to the homesick boy, but he soon recovered from his "slightly nostalgic" state, and found not a few congenial spirits in his new surroundings.

One fine, rosy-faced boy with whom he had a school discussion upon Mary, Queen of Scots, and for whom he has always cherished a lasting friendship, is now the well-known Phinehas Barnes.
[181] Another little fellow, with black hair and very black eyes, studying with head between his hands, and eyes fastened to his book as if reading a will that made him heir to a million, was the future professor, Greek scholar and Bible Commentator, Horatio Balch Hackett. One of the masters was the late Rev. Samuel Horatio Stearns, "an excellent and lovable man," says Doctor Holmes, "who looked kindly on me, and for whom I always cherished a sincere regard." Professor Moses Stuart he describes as "tall, lean, with strong, bold features, a keen, scholarly, accipitrine nose, thin, expressive lips, and great solemnity and impressiveness of voice and manner. His air was Roman, his neck long and bare, like Cicero's, and his toga,—that is, his broadcloth cloak,—was carried on his arm, whatever might have been the weather, with such a statue-like, rigid grace that he might have been turned into marble as he stood, and looked noble by the side of the antiques of the Vatican." Then, there was Doctor Porter, an invalid, with the prophetic handkerchief bundling his throat; and Doctor Woods, who looked his creed decidedly, and had the firm fibre of a theological
[182] athlete. But none of the preceptors, it may be presumed, was so closely watched as the one to whom a dream had come that he should drop dead when praying. "More than one boy kept his eye on him during his public devotions, possessed by the same feeling the man had who followed Van Amburgh about, with the expectation, let us not say hope, of seeing the lion bite his head off sooner or later."

In *Mechanism in Thought and Morals*, we find a deal of psychology as well as science.

"It is in the moral world," says Doctor Holmes, "that materialism has worked the strangest confusion. In various forms, under imposing names and aspects, it has thrust itself into the moral relations, until one hardly knows where to look for any first principles without upsetting everything in searching for them.

"The moral universe includes nothing but the exercise of choice: all else is machinery. What we can help and what we cannot help are on two sides of a line which separates the sphere of human responsibility from that of the Being who has arranged and controls the order of things.

[183] "The question of the freedom of the will has been an open one, from the days of Milton's demons in conclave to the noteworthy essay of Mr. Hazard, our Rhode Island neighbor. It still hangs suspended between the seemingly exhaustive strongest motive argument and certain residual convictions. The sense that we are, to a limited extent, self-determining; the sense of effort in willing; the sense of responsibility in view of the future, and the verdict of conscience in review of the past,—all of these are open to the accusation of fallacy; but they all leave a certain undischarged balance in most minds. We can invoke the strong arm of the *Deus in machina*, as Mr. Hazard, and Kant and others, before him have done. Our will may be a primary initiating cause or force, as unexplainable, as unreducible, as indecomposable, as impossible if you choose, but as real to our belief as the *œternitas a parte ante*. The divine foreknowledge is no more in the way of delegated choice than the divine omnipotence is in the way of delegated power. The Infinite can surely slip the cable of the finite if it choose so to do."

With outspoken braveness Doctor Holmes rejects "the mechanical doctrine which makes me,"
[184] he says, "the slave of outside influences, whether it work with the logic of Edwards, or the averages of Buckle; whether it come in the shape of the Greek's destiny, or the Mahometan's fatalism."

But he claims, too, the right to eliminate all mechanical ideas which have crowded into the sphere of intelligent choice between right and wrong. "The pound of flesh," he declares, "I will grant to Nemesis; but in the name of human nature, not one drop of blood,—not one drop."

And this leads us to speak of Doctor Holmes' religious views. He attended King's Chapel, and is classed among the most liberal-minded of the Unitarian creed.

When chairman of the Boston Unitarian Festival, in 1877, he gave the following list of certain theological beliefs that he has always delighted to combat.

"May I," he begins, "without committing any one but myself, enumerate a few of the stumbling blocks which still stand in the way of some who have many sympathies with what is called the liberal school of thinkers?

[185] "The notion of sin as a transferable object. As philanthropy has ridded us of chattel slavery, so philosophy must rid us of chattel sin and all its logical consequences.

"The notion that what we call sin is anything else than inevitable, unless the Deity had seen fit to give every human being a perfect nature, and develop it by a perfect education.

"The oversight of the fact that all moral relations between man and his Maker are reciprocal, and must meet the approval of man's enlightened conscience before he can render true and heartfelt homage to the power that called him into being, and is not the greatest obligation to all eternity on the side of the greatest wisdom and the greatest power?

"The notion that the Father of mankind is subject to the absolute control of a certain malignant entity known under the false name of justice, or subject to any law such as would have made the father of the prodigal son meet him with an account-book and pack him off to jail, instead of welcoming him back and treating him to the fatted calf.

"The notion that useless suffering is in any sense a satisfaction for sin, and not simply an evil added to a previous one."

[186] In reviewing the life and the writings of Jonathan Edwards, Doctor Holmes with his usual fairness and kindly spirit toward all mankind, declares that the spiritual nature seems to be a natural endowment, like a musical ear.

"Those who have no ear for music must be very careful how they speak about that mysterious world of thrilling vibrations which are idle noises to them. And so the true saint can be appreciated only by saintly natures. Yet the least spiritual man can hardly read the remarkable 'Resolutions' of Edwards without a reverence akin to awe for his purity and elevation. His beliefs and his conduct we need not hesitate to handle freely. The spiritual nature is no safeguard against error of doctrine or practice; indeed it may be doubted whether a majority of all the spiritual natures in the world would be found in Christian countries. Edwards' system seems, in the light of to-day, to the last degree barbaric, mechanical, materialistic, pessimistic. If he had lived a hundred years later, and breathed the air of freedom, he could not have written with such old-world barbarism as we find in his volcanic sermons....

[187] "There is no sufficient reason for attacking the motives of a man so saintly in life, so holy in aspirations, so patient, so meek, so laborious, so thoroughly in earnest in the work to which his life was given. But after long smothering in the sulphurous atmosphere of his thought, one cannot help asking, is this,—or anything like this,—the accepted belief of any considerable part of Protestantism? If so, we must say with Bacon, 'It were better to have no opinion of God than such an opinion as is unworthy of him.'"

In speaking of the old reproach against physicians, that where there were three of them together there were two atheists, Doctor Holmes pertinently remarks: "There is, undoubtedly, a strong tendency in the pursuits of the medical profession to produce disbelief in that figment of tradition and diseased human imagination which has been installed in the seat of divinity by the priesthood of cruel and ignorant ages. It is impossible, or, at least, very difficult, for a physician who has seen the perpetual efforts of Nature—whose diary is the book he reads oftenest—to heal
[188] wounds, to expel poisons, to do the best that can be done under the given conditions,—it is very difficult for him to believe in a world where wounds cannot heal, where opiates cannot give a respite from pain, where sleep never comes with its sweet oblivion of suffering, where the art of torture is the only faculty which remains to the children of that same Father who cares for the falling sparrow. The Deity has often been pictured as Moloch, and the physician has, no doubt, frequently repudiated him as a monstrosity.

"On the other hand, the physician has often been renounced for piety as well as for his peculiarly professional virtue of charity, led upward by what he sees the source of all the daily marvels wrought before his own eyes. So it was that Galen gave utterance to that song of praise which the sweet singer of Israel need not have been ashamed of; and if this heathen could be lifted into such a strain of devotion, we need not be surprised to find so many devout Christian worshippers among the crowd of medical 'atheists.'"

In coming back again as a regular contributor to the magazine which Doctor Holmes was so
[189] prominently identified with a quarter of a century ago, he indulges in a few entertaining reflections. "When I sat down to write the first paper I sent to the *Atlantic Monthly*," he says, "I felt somewhat as a maiden of more than mature effloresence may be supposed to feel as she passes down the broad aisle in her bridal veil and wealth of orange blossoms. I had written little of late years. I was at that time older than Goldsmith was when he died, and Goldsmith, as Doctor Johnson says, was a plant that flowered late. A new generation had grown up since I had written the verses by which, if remembered at all, I was best known. I honestly feared that I might prove the superfluous veteran who has no business behind the footlights. I can as honestly say that it turned out otherwise. I was most kindly welcomed, and now I am looking back on that far-off time as the period—I will not say of youth—for I was close upon the five-barred gate of the *cinquantaine*, though I had not yet taken the leap—but of marrowy and vigorous manhood. Those were the days of unaided vision, of acute hearing, of alert movements, of feelings almost boyish in their vivacity. It is a long cry from the end of a second quarter of a century in a man's life to

[190] the end of the third quarter. His companions have fallen all around him, and he finds himself in a newly peopled world. His mental furnishing looks old-fashioned and faded to the generation which is crowding about him with its new patterns and fresh colors. Shall he throw open his apartments to visitors, or is it not wiser to live on his memories in a decorous privacy, and not risk himself before the keen young eyes and relentless judgment of the new-comers, who have grown up in strength and self-reliance while he has been losing force and confidence. If that feeling came over me a quarter of a century ago, it is not strange that it comes back upon me now. Having laid down the burden, which for more than thirty-five years I have carried cheerfully, I might naturally seek the quiet of my chimney corner, and purr away the twilight of my life, unheard beyond the circle of my own fireplace. But when I see what my living contemporaries are doing, I am shamed out of absolute inertness and silence. The men of my birth year are so painfully industrious at this very time that one of the same date hardly dares to
[191] be idle. I look across the Atlantic and see Mr. Gladstone, only four months younger than myself, and standing erect with patriots' grievances on one shoulder, and Pharaoh's pyramids on the other—an Atlas whose intervals of repose are paroxysms of learned labor; I listen to Tennyson, another birth of the same year, filling the air with melody long after the singing months of life are over; I come nearer home, and here is my very dear friend and college classmate, so certain to be in every good movement with voice or pen, or both, that, where two or three are gathered together for useful ends, if James Freeman Clarke is not with them, it is because he is busy with a book or a discourse meant for a larger audience; I glance at the placards on the blank walls that I am passing, and there I see the colossal head of Barnum, the untiring, inexhaustible, insuperable, ever-triumphant and jubilant Barnum, who came to his atmospheric life less than a year before I began to breathe the fatal mixture, and still wages his Titanic battle with his own past superlatives. How can one dare to sit down inactive with such examples before him? One must do
[192] something, were it nothing more profitable than the work of that dear old Penelope, of almost ninety years, whom I so well remember hemming over and over again the same piece of linen, her attendant scissors removing each day's work at evening; herself meantime being kindly nursed in the illusion that she was still the useful martyr of the household."

An author, in Doctor Holmes' opinion, should know that the very characteristics which make him the object of admiration to many, and endear him to some among them, will render him an object of dislike to a certain number of individuals of equal, it may be of superior, intelligence. The converse of all this is very true.

"There will be individuals—they may be few, they may be many—who will so instantly recognize, so eagerly accept, so warmly adopt, even so devoutly idolize, the writer in question, that self-love itself, dulled as its palate is by the hot spices of praise, draws back overcome by the burning stimulants of adoration. I was told, not long since, by one of our most justly admired
[193] authoresses, that a correspondent wrote to her that she had read one of her stories fourteen times in succession."

There is a deep meaning in these elective affinities. Each personality is more or less completely the complement of some other. Doctor Holmes thinks it should never be forgotten by the critic that "every grade of mental development demands a literature of its own; a little above its level, that it may be lifted to a higher grade, but not too much above it, so that it requires too long a stride—a stairway, not a steep wall to climb. The true critic is not the sharp *captator verborum*; not the brisk epigrammatist, showing off his own cleverness, always trying to outflank the author against whom he has arrayed his wits and his learning. He is a man who knows the real wants of the reading world, and can prize at their just value the writings which meet those wants."

There is also another side of the picture. Doctor Holmes does not forget the trials of authorship. The writer who attains a certain measure of popularity "will be startled to find
[194] himself the object of an embarrassing devotion, and almost appropriation, by some of his parish of readers. He will blush at his lonely desk, as he reads the extravagances of expression which pour over him like the oil which ran down upon the beard of Aaron, and even down to the skirts of his garments—an extreme unction which seems hardly desirable. We ought to have his photograph as he reads one of those frequent missives, oftenest traced, we may guess, in the delicate, slanting hand which betrays the slender fingers of the sympathetic sisterhood.

"A slight sense of the ridiculous at being made so much of qualifies the placid tolerance with which the rhymester or the essayist sees himself preferred to the great masters in prose and verse, and reads his name glowing in a halo of epithets which might belong to Bacon or Milton. We need not grudge him such pleasure as he may derive from the illusion of a momentary revery, in which he dreams of himself as clad in royal robes and exalted among the immortals. The next post will probably bring him some slip from a newspaper or critical journal, which will strip him
[195] of his regalia, as Thackeray, in one of his illustrations, has disrobed and denuded the grand monarque. He saw himself but a moment ago a colossal figure in a drapery of rhetorical purple, ample enough for an Emperor, as Bernini would clothe him. The image breaker has passed by, belittling him by comparison, jostling him off his pedestal, levelling his most prominent feature, or even breaking a whole ink bottle against him as the indignant moralist did on the figure in the vestibule of the opera house—the shortest and most effective satire that ever came from that fountain of approval and commendation. Such are some of the varied experiences of authorship."

Out of his literary career as a successful writer, Doctor Holmes was able to formulate many rules for the self-protection of authors, which were adopted unanimously at an authors' association which was held in Washington last September, and the remainder of his "talk" is devoted to extracts from their proceedings. Appended are a few of them:

Of visits of strangers to authors. These are not always distinguishable from each other, and
[196] may justly be considered together. The stranger should send up his card if he has one; if he has none, he should, if admitted, at once announce himself and his object, without circumlocution, as thus; "My name is M. or N., from X. or Y. I wish to see and take the hand of a writer whom I have long admired for his," etc., etc. Here the author should extend his hand, and reply in substance as follows: "I am pleased to see you, my dear sir, and very glad that anything I have written has been a source of pleasure or profit to you." The visitor has now had what he says he came for, and, after making a brief polite acknowledgment, should retire, unless, for special reasons, he is urged to stay longer.

Of autograph-seekers. The increase in the number of applicants for autographs is so great that it has become necessary to adopt positive regulations to protect the author from the exorbitant claims of this class of virtuosos. The following propositions were adopted without discussion:

No author is under any obligation to answer any letter from an unknown person applying for his autograph. If he sees fit to do so, it is a gratuitous concession on his part.

[197] No stranger should ask for more than one autograph.

No stranger should request an author to copy a poem, or even a verse. He should remember that he is one of many thousands; that one thousand fleas are worse than one hornet, and that a mob of mosquitoes will draw more blood than a single horse leech.

Every correspondent applying for an autograph should send a card or blank paper, in a stamped envelope, directed to himself (or herself). If he will not take the trouble to attend to all this, which he can just as well as to make the author do it, he must not expect the author to make good his deficiencies. [Accepted by acclamation].

Sending a stamp does not constitute a claim on an author for answer. [Received with loud applause]. The stamp may be retained by the author, or, what is better, devoted to the use of some appropriate charity, as for instance, the asylum for idiots and feeble-minded persons.

Albums. An album of decent external aspect may, without impropriety, be offered to an author,
[198] with the request that he will write his name therein. It is not proper, as a general rule, to ask for anything more than the name. The author may, of course, add a quotation from his writings, or a sentiment, if so disposed; but this must be considered as a work of supererogation, and an exceptional manifestation of courtesy.

Bed-quilt autographs. It should be a source of gratification to an author to contribute to the soundness of his reader's slumbers, if he cannot keep him awake by his writings. He should therefore cheerfully inscribe his name on the scrap of satin or other stuff (provided always that it be sent him in a stamped and directed envelope), that it may take its place in the patchwork mosaic for which it is intended.

Letters of admiration. These may be accepted as genuine, unless they contain specimens of the writer's own composition, upon which a critical opinion is requested, in which case they are to be regarded in the same light as medicated sweetmeats, namely, as meaning more than their looks
[199] imply. Genuine letters of admiration, being usually considered by the recipient as proofs of good taste and sound judgment on the part of his unknown correspondent, may be safely left to his decision as to whether they shall be answered or not.

The author of *Elsie Venner* thus excuses himself for opening the budget of the grievances of authors. "In obtaining and giving to the public this abstract of the proceedings of the association, I have been impelled by the same feelings of humanity which led me to join the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, believing that the sufferings of authors are as much entitled to sympathy and relief as those of the brute creation."

The birthday of the Emperor of Japan is the principal holiday of the year among his subjects, and as Saturday, November 3d, 1883, was the thirty-third anniversary of the birthday of Mutsuhito Tenno, the reigning Emperor, it was appropriately celebrated by the Japanese gentlemen in Boston. The Japanese department at the Foreign Exhibition was closed, and in the evening a banquet was given at the Parker House, about sixty gentlemen assembling in response
[200] to the invitation of Mr. S.R. Takahashi, chief of the imperial Japanese commission to the Boston Foreign Exhibition. The entrance to the banquet rooms was decorated with the Japanese and American colors, and at the head of the hall were portraits of the Emperor and Empress of Japan, with the colors of that country between them. The occasion was a very enjoyable one, and was especially interesting as it was a departure from the custom at ordinary dinners here, several gentlemen dividing with the presiding officer the duty of proposing the toasts. One of the most delightful orations of the evening given by Oliver Wendell Holmes, was as follows:

"I have heard of 'English' as she is spoke," being taught in ten lessons, but I never heard that a nation's literature could have justice done to it in ten minutes. An ancestress of mine—one of my thirty-two great-great-great-great-grandmothers—a noted poetess in her day, thus addressed her little brood of children:

Alas! my birds, you wisdom want
Of perils you are ignorant;
Ofttimes in grass, on trees, in
flight,

Sore accidents on you may light;
Oh, to your safety have an eye,
So happy may you live and die.

[201] "In accepting your kind invitation, I confess that I was ignorant of my perils. I did not follow the counsel of my grandmamma with the four g's in having an eye to my own safety. For I fear that if I had dreamed of being called on to answer for American literature, one of those 'previous engagements,' which crop out so opportunely, would have stood between me and my present trying position. I had meant, if called upon, to say a few words about a Japanese youth who studied law in Boston, a very cultivated and singularly charming young person, who died not very long after his return to his native country. Some of you may remember young Enouie—I am not sure that I spell it rightly, and I know that I cannot pronounce it properly; for from his own lips it was as soft as an angel's whisper. His intelligence, his delicate breeding, the loveliness of his character, captivated all who knew him. We loved him, and we mourned for him as if he had been a child of our own soil. But of him I must say no more.

"In speaking of American literature we naturally think first of our historical efforts. We see that
[202] books hold but a small part of American history. The axe and the ploughshare are the two pens with which our New World annals have been principally written, with schoolhouses as notes of interrogation, and steeples as exclamation points of pious adoration and gratitude. Within half a century the railroad has ruled our broad page all over, and rewritten the story, with States for new chapters and cities for paragraphs. This is the kind of history which he who runs may read, and he must run fast and far if he means to read any considerable part of it.

"But we must not forget our political history, perishable in great measure as to its form, long enduring in its results. This literature is the index of our progress—in both directions—forward and the contrary. From the days of Washington and Franklin to the times still fresh in our memory, from the Declaration of Independence to the proclamation which enfranchised the colored race, our political literature, with all its terrible blunders and short-comings, has been, after all, the fairest expression the world has yet seen of what a free people and a free press have to say and to show for themselves.

[203] "But besides 'Congressional Documents' and the like, the terror of librarians and the delight of paper-makers, we do a good deal of other printing. We make some books, a good many books, a great many books, so many that the hyperbole at the end of St. John's gospel would hardly be an extravagance in speaking of them. And among these are a number of histories which hold an honorable place on the shelves of all the great libraries of Christendom. Why should I enumerate them? For history is a Boston specialty. From the days of Prescott and Ticknor to those of Motley and Parkman, we have always had an historian or two on hand, as they used always to have a lion or two in the Tower of London.

"Next to the historians naturally come the story-tellers and romancers. The essential difference is—I would not apply the rough side of the remark to historians like the best of our own, but it is very often the fact—that history tells lies about real persons and fiction tells truth through the mouths of unreal ones. England threw open the side doors of its library to Irving. The continent
[204] flung wide its folding doors to Cooper. Laplace was once asked who was the greatest mathematician of Germany. 'Pfaff is the greatest,' he answered. 'I thought Gauss was,' the questioner said. 'You asked me,' rejoined Laplace, 'who was the greatest mathematician of Germany. Gauss was the greatest mathematician of Europe.' So, I suppose we might say *The Pilot* is or was the most popular book ever written in America, but *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is the most popular story ever published in the world. And if *The Heart of Mid Lothian* added a new glory of romance to the traditions of Auld Reekie, *The Scarlet Letter* did as much for the memories of our own New England. I need not speak of the living writers, some of whom are among us, who have changed the old scornful question into 'Who *does not* read an American book?'

"As to poetical literature, I must confess that, except a line or two of Philip Freneau's, I know little worthy of special remembrance before the beginning of this century, always excepting, as in
[205] duty bound, the verses of my manifold grandmother. The conditions of the country were unfavorable to the poetical habit of mind. The voice that broke the silence was that of Bryant, a clear and smooth baritone, if I may borrow a musical term, with a gamut of a few notes of a grave and manly quality. Then came Longfellow, the poet of the fireside, of the library, of all gentle souls and cultivated tastes, whose Muse breathed a soft contralto that was melody itself, and Emerson, with notes that reached an octave higher than any American poet—a singer whose

Voice fell like a falling star.

Like that of the bird addressed by Wordsworth—

At once far off and near,

it was a

Cry
Which made [us] look a thousand ways,
In bush and tree and sky;

for whether it soared from the earth or dropped from heaven, it was next to impossible to divine.

[206] "I will not speak of the living poets of the old or the new generation. It belongs to the young to give the heartiest welcome to the new brood of singers. Samuel Rogers said that when he heard a new book praised, he read an old one. Mr. Emerson, in one of his later essays, advises us never to read a book that is not a year old. This I will say, that every month shows us in the magazines, and even in the newspapers, verse that would have made a reputation in the early days of the *North American Review*, but which attracts little more notice than a breaking bubble.

"A great improvement is noticeable in the character of criticism, which is leaving the hands of the 'general utility' writers and passing into the hands of experts. The true critic is the last product of literary civilization. It costs as great an effort to humanize the being known by that name as it does to make a good church-member of a scalping savage. Criticism is a noble function, but only so in noble hands. We have just welcomed Mr. Arnold as its worthy English representative; we could not secure our creditors more handsomely than we have done by leaving Mr. Lowell in pledge for our visitor's safe return.

[207] "One more hopeful mark of literary progress is seen in our cyclopædias, our periodicals, our newspapers, and I may add our indexes. I would commend to the attention of our enlightened friends such works as Mr. Pool's great *Index to Periodical Literature*, Mr. Alibone's *Dictionary of Authors*, and the *Index Medicus*, now publishing at Washington—a wonderful achievement of organized industry, still carried on under the superintendence of Doctor Billings, and well deserving examination by all scholars, whatever their calling.

"We have learned so much from our Japanese friends, that we should be thankful to pay them back something in return. With art such as they have, they must also have a literature showing the same originality, grace, facility and simple effectiveness. Let us hope they will carry away something of our intellectual products, as well as those good wishes which follow them wherever they show their beautiful works of art and their pleasant and always welcome faces."

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CHAPTER XVI.

THE HOME CIRCLE.

DOCTOR Holmes has two sons and one daughter. Oliver Wendell Holmes Junior, his eldest child, was born in 1841. When a young lad, he attended the school of Mr. E.S. Dixwell, in Boston, and it was here that he met his future wife, Miss Fannie Dixwell. In his graduating year at Harvard College (1861), he joined the Fourth Battalion of Infantry, commanded by Major Thomas G. Stevenson. The company was at that time stationed at Fort Independence, Boston Harbor, and it was there that young Holmes wrote his poem for Class Day. He served three years in the war, and was wounded first in the breast at Ball's Bluff, and then in the neck at the Battle of Antietam.

[209] In Doctor Holmes' *Hunt after the Captain*, we have not only a vivid picture of war times, but a most touching revelation of fatherly love and solicitude. The young captain was wounded yet again at Sharpsburgh, and was afterwards brevetted as Lieutenant-Colonel. During General Grant's campaign of 1864 he served as aide-de-camp to Brigadier-General H.G. Wright. After the war he entered the Harvard Law School, and in 1866 received the degree of LL. B. Since then he has practised law in Boston, and has written many valuable articles upon legal subjects.

His edition of Kent's *Commentaries on American Law*, to which he devoted three years of careful labor, has received the highest encomiums, and his volume on *The Common Law* forms an indispensable part of every law student's library.

In 1882, he was appointed Professor in the Harvard Law School, and a few weeks later was elected Justice in the Supreme Court of Massachusetts.

At the Lawyers' Banquet, given January 30th, 1883, at the Hotel Vendome, Honorable William G. Russell thus introduced the father of the newly-appointed judge:

[210] "We come now to a many-sided subject, and I know not on which side to attack him with any hope of capturing him. I might hail him as our poet, for he was born a poet; they are all born so. If he didn't lisp in numbers, it was because he spoke plainly at a very early age. I might hail him as physician, and a long and well-spent life in that profession would justify it; but I don't believe it will ever be known whether he has cured more cases of dyspepsia and blues by his poems or his powders and his pills. I might hail him as professor, and as professor *emeritus* he has added a new wreath to his brow. I might hail him as Autocrat of the Breakfast-Table, for there he had a long reign. He will defend himself with courage, for he never showed the white feather but once, and that is, that he does not dare to be as funny as he can. A tough subject, surely, and I must try him on the tender side, the paternal. I give you the father who went in search of a captain, and, finding him, presents to us now his son, the judge."

[211] On rising, Doctor Holmes held up a sheet of paper, and said, "You see before you" (referring to the paper) "all that you have to fear or hope. For thirty-five years I have taught anatomy. I have often heard of the roots of the tongue, but I never found them. The danger of a tongue let loose you have had opportunity to know before, but the danger of a scrap of paper like this is so trivial

that I hardly need to apologize for it."

His Honor's father yet remains,
  His proud paternal posture firm in;
But, while his right he still maintains
To wield the household rod and reins,
  He bows before the filial ermine.

What curious tales has life in store,
  With all its must-bes and its may-bes!
The sage of eighty years and more
Once crept a nursling on the floor,—
  Kings, conquerors, judges, all were
    babies.

The fearless soldier, who has faced
  The serried bayonets' gleam appalling,
For nothing save a pin misplaced
The peaceful nursery has disgraced
  With hours of unheroic bawling.

The mighty monarch, whose renown
  Fills up the stately page historic,
Has howled to waken half the town,
And finished off by gulping down
  His castor oil or paregoric.

[212]

The justice, who, in gown and cap,
  Condemns a wretch to strangulation,
Has scratched his nurse and spilled his
    pap,
And sprawled across his mother's lap
  For wholesome law's administration.

Ah, life has many a reef to shun
  Before in port we drop our anchor,
But when its course is nobly run
Look aft! for there the work was done.
  Life owes its headway to the spanker!

Yon seat of justice well might awe
  The fairest manhood's half-blown
    summer;
There Parsons scourged the laggard law,
There reigned and ruled majestic Shaw,
    —
  What ghosts to hail the last new-
    comer!

One cause of fear I faintly name,—
  The dread lest duty's dereliction
Shall give so rarely cause for blame
Our guileless voters will exclaim,
  "No need of human jurisdiction!"

What keeps the doctor's trade alive?
  Bad air, bad water; more's the pity!
But lawyers walk where doctors drive,
And starve in streets where surgeons
    thrive,
  Our Boston is so pure a city.

What call for judge or court, indeed,
  When righteousness prevails so
    through it
Our virtuous car-conductors need
Only a card whereon they read
  "Do right; it's naughty not to do it!"

[213]

The whirligig of time goes round,
  And changes all things but affection;
One blessed comfort may be found
In heaven's broad statute which has
    bound
  Each household to its head's
    protection.

If e'er aggrieved, attacked, accused,
  A sire may claim a son's devotion
To shield his innocence abused,
As old Anchises freely used
  His offspring's legs for locomotion.

You smile. You did not come to weep,
  Nor I my weakness to be showing;
And these gay stanzas, slight and cheap,
Have served their simple use,—to keep
  A father's eyes from overflowing.

Doctor Holmes' daughter, who bore her mother's name, Amelia Jackson, married the late John Turner Sargent. In her *Sketches and Reminiscences of the Radical Club*, we have some pithy remarks of Doctor Holmes'. To speak without premeditation, he says, on a carefully written essay, made him feel as he should if, at a chemical lecture, somebody should pass around a precipitate, and when the mixture had become turbid should request him to give his opinion
[214] concerning it. The fallacies continually rising in such a discussion from the want of a proper understanding of terms, always made him feel as if quicksilver had been substituted for the ordinary silver of speech. The only true way to criticize such an essay was to take it home, slowly assimilate it, and not talk about it until it had become a part of one's self.

Edward, the youngest son of Doctor Holmes, had chosen the same profession as his brother.

It was at Mrs. Sargent's home, at Beverly Farms, that Doctor Holmes passed most of his summers. The pretty, cream-colored house, with its broad veranda in front, can be easily seen from the station; but to appreciate the charms of this pleasant country home, one should catch a glimpse of the cosey interior.

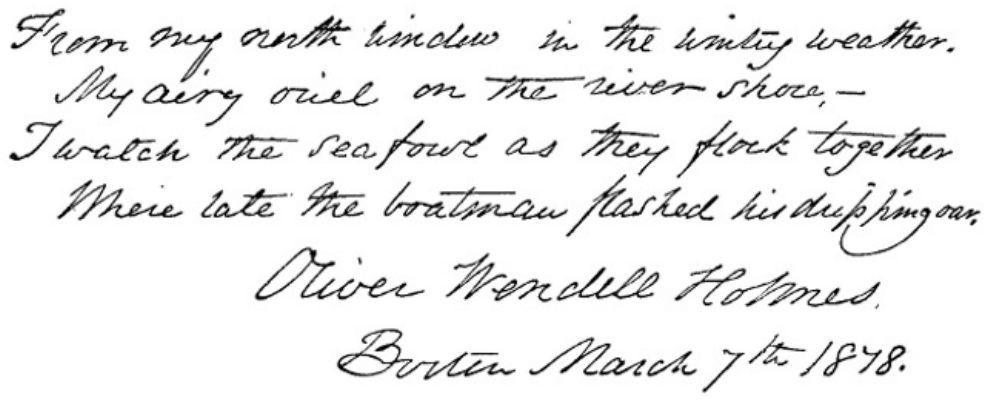
Robert Rantoul, John T. Morse and Henry Lee were neighbors of Doctor Holmes at Beverly Farms, and Lucy Larcom's home was not far distant.

After eighteen years' residence at No. 8 Montgomery Place, Doctor Holmes moved to 164 Charles street, where he lived about twelve years. His home in Boston was at No. 296 Beacon street.

[215] "We die out of houses," says the poet, "just as we die out of our bodies.... The body has been called the house we live in; the house is quite as much the body we live in.... The soul of a man has a series of concentric envelopes around it, like the core of an onion, or the innermost of a nest of boxes. First, he has his natural garment of flesh and blood. Then his artificial integuments, with their true skin of solid stuffs, their cuticle of lighter tissues, and their variously-tinted pigments. Thirdly, his domicile, be it a single chamber or a stately mansion. And then the whole visible world, in which Time buttons him up as in a loose, outside wrapper.... Our houses shape themselves palpably on our inner and outer nature. See a householder breaking up and you will be sure of it. There is a shell fish which builds all manner of smaller shells into the walls of its own. A house is never a home until we have crusted it with the spoils of a hundred lives besides those of our own past. See what these are and you can tell what the occupant is."

[216] The poet's home on Beacon street well illustrates the above extract. I shall not soon forget the charming picture that greeted me, one gray winter day, as I was ushered into the poet's cheerful study. A blazing wood fire was crackling on the hearth, and the ruddy glow was reflected now on the stately features of "Dorothy Q.," now on the Copley portrait of old Doctor Cooper, and now with a peculiar Rembrandt effect upon the low rows of books, the orderly desk, and the kind, cordial face of the poet himself. An "Emerson Calendar" was hanging over the mantel, and after calling my attention to the excellent picture upon it of the old home at Concord, Doctor Holmes began to talk of his brother poet in terms of warmest affection.

As he afterwards remarked at the Nineteenth Century Club, the difference between Emerson's poetry and that of others with whom he might naturally be compared, was that of algebra and arithmetic. The fascination of his poems was in their spiritual depth and sincerity and their all pervading symbolism. Emerson's writings in prose and verse were worthy of all honor and admiration, but his manhood was the noblest of all his high endowments. A bigot here and there might have avoided meeting him, but if He who knew what was in men had wandered from door to door in New England, as of old in Palestine, one of the thresholds which "those blessed feet" would have crossed would have been that of the lovely and quiet home of Emerson.



Hand written Poem signed by Oliver Wendell Holmes

[217]

The view from the broad bay window in Doctor Holmes' study, recalled his own description:

Through my north window, in the wintry
weather,
My airy oriel on the river shore,
I watch the sea-fowl as they flock
together,
Where late the boatman flashed his
dripping oar.

The gull, high floating, like a sloop
unladen,
Lets the loose water waft him as it
will;
The duck, round-breasted as a rustic
maiden,
Paddles and plunges, busy, busy still.

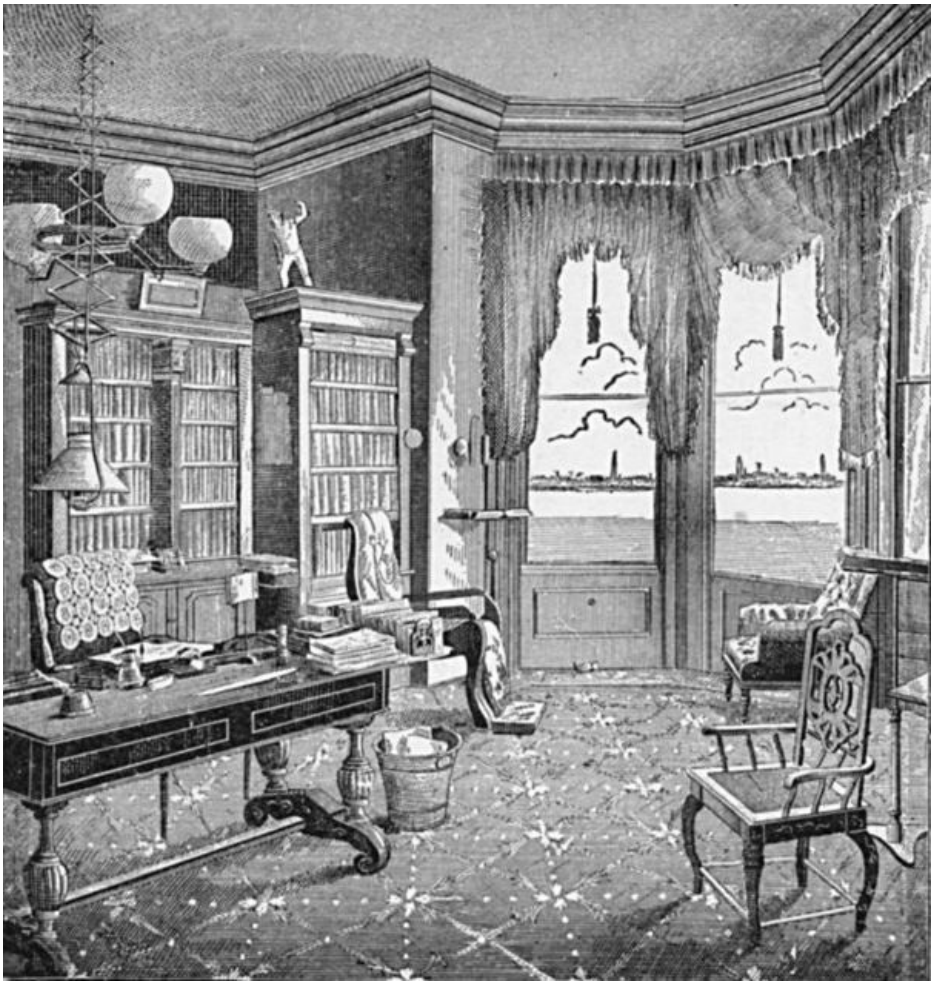
A microscopical apparatus placed under another window in the study, reminds the visitor of the "man of science," while the books—

A mingled race, the wreck of chance and
time
That talk all tongues and breathe of
every clime—

speak in eloquent numbers of the "man of letters."

[218]

There is the Plato on the lower shelf, with the inscription, Ezra Stiles, 1766, to which Doctor Holmes alludes in his tribute to the New England clergy. Here is the hand-lens imported by the Reverend John Prince, of Salem, and just before us, in the "unpretending row of local historians," is Jeremy Belknap's *History of New Hampshire*, "in the pages of which," says Doctor Holmes, "may be found a chapter contributed in part by the most remarkable man in many respects, among all the older clergymen,—preacher, lawyer, physician, astronomer, botanist, entomologist, explorer, colonist, legislator in State and national governments, and only not seated on the bench of the Supreme Court of a Territory because he declined the office when Washington offered it to him. This manifold individual," adds Doctor Holmes, "was the minister of Hamilton, a pleasant little town in Essex County, Massachusetts, the Reverend Manasseh Cutler."



Dr. Holmes' Library, Beacon St.

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Here is the *Aëtius* found one never-to-be-forgotten rainy day, in that dingy bookshop in Lyons, and here the vellum-bound *Tulpius*, "my only reading," says Doctor Holmes, "when imprisoned in quarantine at Marseilles, so that the two hundred and twenty-eight cases he has recorded are, many of them, to this day still fresh in my memory." Here, too, is the *Schenckius*,—"the folio filled with *casus rariores*, which had strayed in among the rubbish of the bookstall on the boulevard—and here the noble old *Vesalius*, with its grand frontispiece not unworthy of Titian, and the fine old *Ambroise Parié*, long waited for even in Paris and long ago, and the colossal Spigelius, with his eviscerated beauties, and Dutch Bidloo with its miracles of fine engraving and bad dissection, and Italian Mascagni, the despair of all would-be imitators, and pre-Adamite John de Ketam, and antediluvian *Berengarius Carpensis*," and many other rare volumes, dear to the heart of every bibliophile.

Glancing again from the window, I catch a glimpse of the West Boston Bridge, and recall the poet's description of the "crunching of ice at the edges of the river as the tide rises and falls, the little cluster of tent-like screens on the frozen desert, the excitement of watching the springy hoops, the mystery of drawing up life from silent, unseen depths." With his opera glass he watches the boys and men, black and white, fishing over the rails of the bridge "as hopefully as if
[220] the river were full of salmon." At certain seasons, he observes, there will now and then be captured a youthful and inexperienced codfish, always, however, of quite trivial dimensions. The fame of the exploit has no sooner gone abroad than the enthusiasts of the art come flocking down to the river and cast their lines in side by side, until they look like a row of harp-strings for number. "That a codfish is once in a while caught," says Doctor Holmes, "I have asserted to be a fact; but I have often watched the anglers, and do not remember ever seeing one drawn from the water, or even any unequivocal symptom of a bite. The spring sculpin and the flabby, muddy flounder are the common rewards of the angler's toil.

The silhouette figures on the white background enliven the winter landscape, but now the blazing log on the hearthstone rolls over and the whole study is aglow with light! Truly "winter *is* a cheerful season to people who have open fireplaces;" and who will not agree with our poet-philosopher when he says, "A house without these is like a face without eyes, and that never smiles. I have seen respectability and amiability grouped over the air-tight stove; I have seen
[221] virtue and intelligence hovering over the register; but I have never seen true happiness in a family circle where the faces were not illuminated by the blaze of an open fireplace."

A well-known journalist writes as follows of Doctor Holmes "at home."

"All who pay their respects to the distinguished Autocrat will find the genial, merry gentleman whose form and kindly greeting all admirers have anticipated while reading his sparkling poems. He is the perfect essence of wit and hospitality—courteous, amiable and entertaining to a degree which is more easily remembered than imparted or described. If the caller expects to find blue-

blood snobbishness at 296 Beacon street, he will be disappointed. It is one of the most elegant and charming residences on that broad and fashionable thoroughfare, but far less pretentious, both inwardly and outwardly, than many of the others. For an uninterrupted period of forty-seven years, Doctor Holmes has lived in Boston, and for the last dozen years he has occupied his present residence on Beacon street.

[222] "The chief point of attraction in the present residence—for the visitor as well as the host—is the magnificent and spacious library, which may be more aptly termed the Autocrat's workshop. It is up one flight, and seemingly occupies the entire rear half of the whole building on this floor. It is a very inviting room in every respect, and from the spacious windows overlooking the broad expanse of the Charles River, there can be had an extensive view of the surrounding suburbs in the northerly, eastern and western directions. On a clear day there can be more or less distinctly described the cities and towns of Cambridge, Arlington, Medford, Somerville, Malden, Revere, Everett, Chelsea, Charlestown and East Boston. Even in the picture can be recognized the lofty tower of the Harvard Memorial Hall, which is but a few steps from the doctor's birthplace and first home. Arthur Gilman, in his admirable pen and pencil sketches of the homes of the American poets, makes a happy and appropriate allusion to the Autocrat's library. 'The ancient Hebrew,' he says, 'always had a window open toward Jerusalem, the city about which his most cherished
[223] hopes and memories clustered, and this window gives its owner the pleasure of looking straight to the place of his birth, and thus of freshening all the happy memories of a successful life.'

"In renewing his old-time acquaintance with the *Atlantic* family circle, the Autocrat recognized the modern invention of the journalistic interviewer, and submitted some plans for his regulation, to be considered by the various local governments. His idea is that the interviewer is a product of our civilization, one who does for the living what the undertaker does for the dead, taking such liberties as he chooses with the subject of his mental and conversational manipulations, whom he is to arrange for public inspection. 'The interview system has its legitimate use,' says Doctor Holmes, 'and is often a convenience to politicians, and may even gratify the vanity and serve the interests of an author.' He very properly believes, however, that in its abuse it is an infringement of the liberty of the private citizen to be ranked with the edicts of the council of ten, the decrees of the star chamber, the *lettres de cachet*, and the visits of the Inquisition. The interviewer, if
[224] excluded, becomes an enemy, and has the columns of a newspaper at his service in which to revenge himself. If admitted, the interviewed is at the mercy of the interviewer's memory, if he is the best meaning of men; of his accuracy, if he is careless; of his malevolence, if he is ill-disposed; of his prejudices, if he has any, and of his sense of propriety, at any rate.

"Doctor Holmes humorously suggests the following restrictions: 'A licensed corps of interviewers, to be appointed by the municipal authorities, each interviewer to wear, in a conspicuous position, a number and a badge, for which the following emblems and inscriptions are suggested: Zephyrus, with his lips at the ear of Boreas, who holds a speaking trumpet, signifying that what is said by the interviewed in a whisper will be shouted to the world by the interviewer through that brazen instrument. For mottoes, either of the following: *Fænum halct in cornu*; *Hunc tu Romane caveto*. No person to be admitted to the corps of interviewers without a strict preliminary examination. The candidate to be proved free from color blindness and
[225] amblyopia, ocular and mental strabismus, double refraction of memory, kleptomania, mendacity of more than average dimensions, and tendency to alcholic endosmosis. His moral and religious character to be vouched for by three orthodox clergymen of the same belief, and as many deacons who agree with them and each other. All reports to be submitted to the interviewed, and the proofs thereof to be corrected and sanctioned by him before being given to the public. Until the above provisions are carried out no record of an alleged interview to be considered as anything more than the untrustworthy gossip of an irresponsible impersonality.'"

"What business have young scribblers to send me their verses and ask my opinion of the stuff?" said Doctor Holmes one day, annoyed by the officiousness of certain would-be aspirants to literary fame. "They have no more right to ask than they have to stop me on the street, run out their tongues, and ask what the matter is with their stomachs, and what they shall take as a remedy." At another time he made the remark: "Everybody that writes a book must needs send
[226] me a copy. It's very good of them, of course, but they're not all successful attempts at bookmaking, and most of them are relegated to my hospital for sick books up-stairs."

But once a young writer sent from California a sample of his poetry, and asked Holmes if it was worth while for him to keep on writing. It was evident that the doctor was impressed by something decidedly original in the style of the writer, for he wrote back that he should keep on, by all means.

Some time afterward a gentleman called at the home of Professor Holmes in Boston and asked him if he remembered the incident. "I do, indeed," replied Holmes. "Well," said his visitor, who was none other than Bret Harte, "I am the man."

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CHAPTER XVII.

LOVE OF NATURE.

IT is city-life, Boston-life, in fact, that forms the fitting frame of any pen-picture one might draw of Oliver Wendell Holmes, and yet even his prose writings are full of all a poet's love for country sights and sounds. Listen, for instance, to this rich word-picture of the opening spring: "A flock of wild geese wedging their way northward, with strange, far-off clamor, are the heralds of April; the flowers are opening fast; the leaves are springing bright green upon the currant bushes; dark, almost livid, upon the lilacs; the grass is growing apace, the plants are coming up in the garden beds, and the children are thinking of May-day....

"The birds come pouring in with May. Wrens, brown thrushes, the various kinds of swallows,
[228] orioles, cat-birds, golden robins, bobo'links, whippoorwills, cuckoos, yellow-birds, hummingbirds, are busy in establishing their new households. The bumble-bee comes in with his 'mellow, breezy bass,' to swell the song of the busy minstrels.

"And now June comes in with roses in her hand ... the azalea—wild honeysuckle—is sweetening the road-sides; the laurels are beginning to blow, the white lilies are getting ready to open, the fireflies are seen now and then flitting across the darkness; the katydids, the grasshoppers, the crickets, make themselves heard; the bull-frogs utter their tremendous voices, and the full chorus of birds makes the air vocal with melody."

How like Thoreau the following passage reads:

"O, for a huckleberry pasture to wander in, with labyrinths of taller bushes, with bayberry leaves at hand to pluck and press and smell of, and sweet fern, its fragrant rival, growing near!... I wonder if others have noticed what an imitative fruit the blackberry is. I have tasted the strawberry, the pine-apple, and I do not know how many other flavors in it—if you think a little,
[229] and have read Darwin, and Huxley, perhaps you will believe that it, and all the fruits it tastes of, may have come from a common progenitor."

And there is the poet's beautiful picture of Indian summer.

"It is the time to be in the woods or on the seashore,—a sweet season that should be given to lonely walks, to stumbling about in old churchyards, plucking on the way the aromatic silvery herb everlasting, and smelling at its dry flower until it etherizes the soul into aimless reveries outside of space and time. There is little need of painting the still, warm, misty, dreamy Indian summer in words; there are many states that have no articulate vocabulary, and are only to be reproduced by music, and the mood this season produces is of that nature. By and by, when the white man is thoroughly Indianized (if he can bear the process), some native Hayden will perhaps turn the Indian summer into the loveliest *andante* of the new 'Creation.'"

And again: "To those who know the Indian summer of our Northern States, it is needless to describe the influence it exerts on the senses and the soul. The stillness of the landscape in that
[230] beautiful time is as if the planet were *sleeping* like a top, before it begins to rock with the storms of autumn. All natures seem to find themselves more truly in its light; love grows more tender, religion more spiritual, memory sees farther back into the past, grief revisits its mossy marbles, the poet harvests the ripe thoughts which he will tie in sheaves of verse by his winter fireside."

At another time, when revisiting the scenes of his old schooldays at Andover, he gives us the following vivid description of mountain scenery:

"Far to the north and west the mountains of New Hampshire lifted their summits in a long encircling ridge of pale-blue waves. The day was clear, and every mound and peak traced its outline with perfect definition against the sky.

I have been by the seaside now and then, but the sea is constantly busy with its own affairs, running here and there, listening to what the winds have to say, and getting angry with them, always indifferent, often insolent, and ready to do a mischief to those who seek its companionship. But these still, serene, unchanging mountains,—Monadnock, Kearsarge,—what memories that name recalls! and the others, the dateless Pyramids of New England, the eternal
[231] monuments of her ancient race, around which cluster the homes of so many of her bravest and hardiest children, I can never look at them without feeling that, vast and remote and awful as they are, there is a kind of inward heat and muffled throb in their stony cores, that brings them into a vague sort of sympathy with human hearts. How delightful all those reminiscences, as he wanders, "the ghost of a boy" by his side, now by the old elm that held, buried in it by growth, iron rings to keep the Indians from destroying it with their tomahawks; and now through the old playground sown with memories of the time when he was young.

"A kind of romance gilds for me," he says, "the sober tableland of that cold New England hill where I came a slight, immature boy, in contact with a world so strange to me, and destined to leave such mingled and lasting impressions. I looked across the valley to the hillside where Methuen hung suspended, and dreamed of its wooded seclusion as a village paradise. I tripped lightly down the long northern slope with *facilis descensus* on my lips, and toiled up again, repeating *sed revocare gradum*. I wandered in the autumnal woods that crown the 'Indian Ridge,'
[232] much wondering at that vast embankment, which we young philosophers believed with the vulgar to be of aboriginal workmanship, not less curious, perhaps, since we call it an escar, and refer it to alluvial agencies. The little Shawsheen was our swimming-school, and the great Merrimac, the right arm of four toiling cities, was within reach of a morning stroll."

Nor does he forget to recall a visit to Haverhill with his room-mate, when he saw the mighty bridge over the Merrimac that defied the ice-rafts of the river, and the old meeting-house door

with the bullet-hole in it, through which the minister, Benjamin Rolfe, was shot by the Indians. "What a vision it was," he exclaims, "when I awoke in the morning to see the fog on the river seeming as if it wrapped the towers and spires of a great city! for such was my fancy, and whether it was a mirage of youth, or a fantastic natural effect, I hate to inquire too nicely."

Like all poets, Doctor Holmes had a passionate love for flowers, and with a delight that is most heartily shared by the sympathetic reader, he thus recalls the old garden belonging to the gambrel-roofed house in Cambridge.

[233] "There were old lilac bushes, at the right of the entrance, and in the corner at the left that remarkable moral pear-tree, which gave me one of my first lessons in life. Its fruit never ripened but always rotted at the core just before it began to grow mellow. It was a vulgar plebeian specimen, at best, and was set there, no doubt, only to preach its annual sermon, a sort of 'Dudleian Lecture' by a country preacher of small parts. But in the northern border was a high-bred Saint Michael pear-tree, which taught a lesson that all of gentle blood might take to heart; for its fruit used to get hard and dark, and break into unseemly cracks, so that when the lord of the harvest came for it, it was like those rich men's sons we see too often, who have never ripened, but only rusted, hardened and shrunken. We had peaches, lovely nectarines, and sweet, white grapes, growing and coming to kindly maturity in those days; we should hardly expect them now, and yet there is no obvious change of climate. As for the garden-beds, they were cared for by the Jonathan or Ephraim of the household, sometimes assisted by one Rule, a little old Scotch gardener, with a stippled face and a lively temper. Nothing but old-fashioned flowers in
[234] them—hyacinths, pushing their green beaks through as soon as the snow was gone, or earlier tulips, coming up in the shape of sugar 'cockles,' or cornucopiæ, one was almost tempted to look to see whether nature had not packed one of those two-line 'sentiments,' we remember so well in each of them; peonies, butting their way bluntly through the loosened earth; flower-de-luces (so I will call them, not otherwise); lilies; roses, damask, white, blush, cinnamon (these names served us then); larkspurs, lupins, and gorgeous holyhocks.

"With these upper-class plants were blended, in republican fellowship, the useful vegetables of the working sort;—beets, handsome with dark-red leaves; carrots, with their elegant filigree foliage, parsnips that cling to the earth like mandrakes; radishes, illustrations of total depravity, a prey to every evil underground emissary of the powers of darkness; onions, never easy until they are out of bed, so to speak, a communicative and companionable vegetable, with a real genius for soups; squash vines with their generous fruits, the winter ones that will hang up 'ag'in the chimbly' by and by—the summer ones, vase like, as Hawthorne described them, with skins so
[235] white and delicate, when they are yet new-born, that one thinks of little sucking pigs turned vegetables, like Daphne into a laurel, and then of tender human infancy, which Charles Lamb's favorite so calls to mind;—these, with melons, promising as 'first scholars,' but apt to put off ripening until the frost came and blasted their vines and leaves, as if it had been a shower of boiling water, were among the customary growths of the Garden."

Then follows, in these charming reminiscences, an account of the reconstruction of the dear old Garden.

"Consuls Madisonius and Monrovious left the seat of office, and Consuls Johannes Quincius, and Andreas, and Martinus, and the rest, followed in their turn, until the good Abraham sat in the curule chair. In the meantime changes had been going on under our old gambrel roof, and the Garden had been suffered to relapse slowly into a state of wild nature. The haughty flower-de-luces, the curled hyacinths, the perfumed roses, had yielded their place to suckers from locust-trees, to milkweed, burdock, plantain, sorrel, purslane; the gravel walks, which were to nature as
[236] rents in her green garment, had been gradually darned over with the million threaded needles of her grasses until nothing was left to show that a garden had been there.

"But the Garden still existed in my memory; the walks were all mapped out there, and the place of every herb and flower was laid down as if on a chart.

"By that pattern I reconstructed the Garden, lost for a whole generation as much as Pompeii was lost, and in the consulate of our good Abraham it was once more as it had been in the days of my childhood. It was not much to look upon for a stranger; but when the flowers came up in their old places, the effect on me was something like what the widow of Nain may have felt when her dead son rose on his bier and smiled upon her.

"Nature behaved admirably, and sent me back all the little tokens of her affection she had kept so long. The same delegates from the underground fauna ate up my early radishes; I think I should have been disappointed if they had not. The same buff-colored bugs devoured my roses
[237] that I remembered of old. The aphids and the caterpillar and the squash-bug were cordial as ever; just as if nothing had happened to produce a coolness or entire forgetfulness between us. But the butterflies came back too, and the bees and the birds."

Says a well-known writer:

"Though born and reared beneath the shadow of the great city, yet Doctor Holmes has ever found great delight in spending a portion of each year in the country. The last few summers he has made his home at Beverly Farms, but from 1849 to 1856, inclusive, his summer home was in Pittsfield, in Berkshire County. His recollections of the scenes and people in that charming town are pleasant and abundant. The villa which he built was upon a round knoll, commanding a fine view of the whole circle of Berkshire mountains, and of the Housatonic, winding in its serpentine

way through the fertile meadows and valleys to the sound of Long Island. Yielding to his own good nature and the soft persuasion of a committee of Pittsfield ladies, Doctor Holmes once
[238] contributed a couple of poems to a fancy fair which was being held in the town during his residence there. They do not appear in any of the published collections, which is the one reason, above all others, why we print them now. Each of the poems was inclosed in an envelope bearing a motto; and the right to a second choice, guided by these, was disposed of in a raffle, to the no small emolument of the objects of the fair. The two pieces are even to this day represented by at least a square yard of the quaint ecclesiastical heraldry which illuminates the gorgeous chancel window of the St. Stephen's church in Pittsfield. The motto of the first envelope ran thus:

Faith is the conquering angels'
crown;
Who hopes for grace must ask it;
Look shrewdly ere you lay me
down;
I'm Portia's leaden casket.

The following verses were found within:

Fair lady, whosoe'er thou art,
Turn this poor leaf with tenderest
care,
And—hush, oh, hush thy beating heart;
The one thou lovest will be there.

Alas, not loved by thee alone,
Thine idol ever prone to range;
To-day all thine, to-morrow flown,
Frail thing, that every hour may
change.

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Yet, when that truant course is done,
If thy lost wanderer reappear,
Press to thy heart the only one
That nought can make more truly
dear.

Within this paper was a smaller envelope containing a one dollar bill, and this explanation of the poet's riddle:

Fair lady, lift thine eyes and tell
If this is not a truthful letter;
This is the (1) thou lovest well,
And nought (0) can make thee love it
better (10)

Though fickle, do not think it strange
That such a friend is worth possessing;
For one that gold can never change
Is Heaven's own dearest earthly
blessing.

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CHAPTER XVIII.

THE HARVARD MEDICAL SCHOOL.

UPON the seventeenth of October, 1883, the centennial anniversary of the Harvard Medical School, the new building upon the Back Bay was dedicated. The fine, commodious structure is situated upon the corner of Boylston and Exeter streets, and is at nearly equal distances from the Massachusetts General Hospital, the City Hospital, the Boston Dispensary and the Children's Hospital with their stores of clinical material, available for the purposes of teaching. Close by, also, are the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, the museums of the Society of Natural History and of Fine Arts, and the Medical Library Association. The building has a frontage of one hundred and twenty-two feet toward the north on Boylston street, and of ninety feet toward the
[241] west on Exeter street, and its corner position, together with the reservation of a large open area on the east, will always insure good light and good air.

The dedication exercises were divided into two parts, the opening addresses being given in Huntington Hall, at the Institute of Technology, and the remainder of the programme in the new building. Upon the platform, in Huntington Hall, were seated President Eliot, of Harvard University, the faculty of the Medical School, and numerous invited guests. Upon the walls just

back of the platform, against a background of maroon-colored drapery, and directly over the head of the original, hung a portrait of Professor Oliver Wendell Holmes. Beneath this portrait was a fine marble bust of Professor Henry J. Bigelow, who was seated beside Doctor Holmes.

President Eliot opened the exercises with the interesting address which follows:

"We are met to celebrate the beginning of the second century of the Medical School's existence, and the simultaneous completion of its new building. It is a hundred years since John
[242] Warren, Benjamin Waterhouse and Aaron Dexter were installed as professors of anatomy and surgery, theory and practice, and *materia medica* respectively, and without the aid of collections or hospitals began to lecture in some small, rough rooms in the basement of Harvard Hall, and in a part of little Holden Chapel, at Cambridge. From that modest beginning the school has gradually grown until it counts a staff of forty-seven teachers, ten professors, six assistant professors, nine instructors, thirteen clinical instructors, and nine assistants—working in the spacious and well-equipped building, which we are shortly to inspect, and commanding every means of instruction and research which laboratories, dispensaries and hospitals can supply. Out of our present strength and abundance we look back to the founding of the school and to its slow and painful development. We bear in our hearts the three generations of teachers who have served this school with disinterested diligence and zeal. We recall their unrequited labors, their frequent anxieties and conflicts and their unfulfilled hopes; we bring to mind the careful plantings and the tardy harvests, reaped at last, but not by them that sowed. We meet, indeed, to
[243] rejoice in present prosperity and fair prospects, but we would first salute our predecessors and think with reverence and gratitude of their toils and sacrifices, the best fruits of which our generation has inherited.

"The medical faculty of to-day have strong grounds for satisfaction in the present state of the school; for they have made great changes in its general plan and policy, run serious risks, received hearty support from the profession and the community, and now see their efforts crowned with substantial success. By doubling the required period of study in each year of the course, instituting an admission examination, strengthening the examinations at the end of each year, and establishing a voluntary fourth year of instruction, which clearly indicates that the real standard of the faculty cannot be reached in three years, they have taken step after step to increase their own labors, make the attainment of the degree more difficult, and diminish the resort of students to the school. They have deliberately sacrificed numbers in their determination
[244] to improve the quality of the graduates of the school. At the same time they have successfully carried out an improvement in medical education which required large expenditures. This improvement is the partial substitution, by every student, of personal practice in laboratories for work upon books, and attendance at lectures. The North Grove street building, erected in 1846-47, contained only one small laboratory for students, that of anatomy. The new building contains a students' laboratory for each of the five fundamental subjects—anatomy, physiology, chemistry, histology and pathology—and that a large part of the building is devoted to these working rooms. It was a grave question whether the profession, the community and the young men who year by year aspire to become physicians and surgeons would support the faculty in making these improvements. The answer can now be recorded.

"The school has received by gift and bequest three hundred and twenty thousand dollars in ten years; it has secured itself in the centre of the city for many years to come by the timely purchase of a large piece of land; it has paid about two hundred and twenty thousand dollars for a
[245] spacious, durable and well-arranged building; it has increased its annual expenditure for salaries of teachers from twenty thousand dollars in 1871-72, to thirty-six thousand dollars in 1882-83; its receipts have exceeded its expenses in every year since 1871-72, and its invested funds now exceed those of 1871 by more than one hundred thousand dollars. At the same time the school has become a centre of chemical, physiological, histological and sanitary research, as well as a place for thorough instruction; its students bring to the school a better education than ever before; they work longer and harder while in the school, and leave it prepared, so far as sound training can prepare them to enter, not the over-crowded lower ranks of the profession, but the higher, where there is always room.

"The faculty recognize that the generosity of the community and the confidence of the students impose upon them reciprocal obligations. They gladly acknowledge themselves bound to teach with candor and enthusiasm, to observe and study with diligence that they may teach always better and better, to illustrate before their students the pure scientific spirit, and to hold all their
[246] attainments and discoveries at the service of mankind. Certainly the medical faculty have good reason to ask to-day for the felicitations of the profession and the public.

"Nevertheless, the governors, teachers, graduates and friends of this school have no thought of resting contented with its present condition. Instructed by its past, they have faith in its future. They hope they know that the best fruits of their labors will be reaped by later generations. The medical profession is fortunate among the learned professions in that a fresh and boundless field of unimaginable fertility spreads out before it. Its conquests to come are infinitely greater than those already achieved. The great powers of chemistry and physics, themselves all new, have only just now been effectively employed in the service of medicine and surgery. The zoölogist, entomologist, veterinarian and sanitarian have just begun to contribute effectively to the progress of medicine.

"The great achievements of this century in medical science and the healing art are all
[247] prophetic. Thus, the measurable deliverance of mankind from small-pox is an earnest of

deliverance from measles, scarlatina, and typhoid fever. Within forty years anæsthetics and antiseptics have quadrupled the chances of success in grave surgical operations and have extended indefinitely the domain of warrantable surgery; but in value far beyond all the actual benefits which have thus far accrued to mankind from these discoveries is the clear prophecy they utter of greater blessing to come. A medical school must needs be always expecting new wonders.

"How is medical science to be advanced? First, by the devoted labors of men, young and old, who give their lives to medical observations, research and teaching; secondly, by the gradual aggregation in safe hands of permanent endowments for the promotion of medical science and of the sciences upon which medicine rests. Neither of these springs of progress is to fail us here. Modern society produces the devoted student of science as naturally and inevitably as mediæval society produced the monk. Enthusiastic devotion to unworldly ends has not diminished; it only
[248] manifests itself in new directions. So, too, benevolence and public spirit, when diverted by the teachings of both natural and political science from many of the ancient forms of benevolent activity, have simply found new and better modes of action.

"With thankfulness for the past, with reasonable satisfaction in the present, and with joyful hope in the future, the medical faculty celebrate this anniversary festival, welcoming their guests, thanking their benefactors, and exchanging with their colleagues, their students, and the governing boards mutual congratulations and good wishes as the school sets bravely out upon its second century."

At the close of his address President Eliot turned to the large audience, and said:

"I have now the pleasure of presenting to you our oldest professor and our youngest; our man of science, and our man of letters; our teacher and our friend, Doctor Holmes."

From the delightful and characteristic address of Doctor Holmes, we are permitted to give the following extracts:

"We are in the habit of counting a generation as completed in thirty years, but two lives cover a
[249] whole century by an easy act of memory. I, who am now addressing you, distinctly remember the Boston practitioner who walked among the dead after the battle of Bunker Hill, and pointed out the body of Joseph Warren among the heaps of the slain. Look forward a little while from that time to the period at which this medical school was founded. Eight years had passed since John Jeffries was treading the bloody turf on yonder hillside. The independence of the United States had just been recognized by Great Britain. The lessons of the war were fresh in the minds of those who had served as military surgeons. They knew what anatomical knowledge means to the man called upon to deal with every form of injury to every organ of the body. They knew what fever and dysentery are in the camp, and what skill is needed by those who have to treat the diseases more fatal than the conflicts of the battlefield. They know also, and too well, how imperfectly taught were most of those to whom the health of the whole community was entrusted....

"And now I will ask you to take a stride of half a century, from the year 1783 to the year 1833.
[250] Of this last date I can speak from my own recollection. In April, 1833, I had been more than two years a medical student attending the winter lectures of this school, and have therefore a vivid recollection of the professors of that day. I will only briefly characterize them by their various merits, not so much troubling myself about what may have been their short-comings. The shadowy procession moves almost visibly by me as I speak: John Collins Warren, a cool and skilful operator, a man of unshaken nerves, of determined purpose, of stern ambition, equipped with a fine library, but remarkable quite as much for knowledge of the world as for erudition, and keeping a steady eye on professional and social distinctions, which he attained and transmitted.

"James Jackson, a man of serene and clear intelligence, well instructed, not over book-fed, truthful to the centre, a candid listener to all opinions; a man who forgot himself in his care for others and his love for his profession; by common consent recognized as a model of the wise and good physician. Jacob Bigelow, more learned, far more various in gifts and acquirements than
[251] any of his colleagues; shrewd, inventive, constructive, questioning, patient in forming opinions, steadfast in maintaining them; a man of infinite good nature, of ready wit, of a keen sense of humor, and a fine literary taste; one of the most accomplished of American physicians; I do not recall the name of one who could be considered his equal in all respects. Walter Channing, meant by nature for a man of letters, like his brothers, William Ellery and Edward; vivacious, full of anecdote, ready to make trial of new remedies, with the open and receptive intelligence belonging to his name as a birthright; esteemed in his specialty by those who called on him in emergencies. The professor of chemistry of that day was pleasant in the lecture room; rather nervous and excitable, I should say, and judiciously self-conservative when an explosion was a part of the programme."

Speaking of the new building, Doctor Holmes said:

"You will enter or look into more amphitheatres and lecture-rooms than you might have thought were called for. But if you knew what it is to lecture and be lectured to, in a room just emptied of
[252] its preceding audience, you would be thankful that any arrangement should prevent such an evil. The experimental physiologists tell us that a bird will live under a bell glass until he has substituted a large amount of carbonic acid for oxygen in the air of the bell glass. But if another bird is taken from the open air and put in with the first, the new-comer speedily dies. So when

the class I was lecturing to, was sitting in an atmosphere once breathed already, after I have seen head after head gently declining, and one pair of eyes after another emptying themselves of intelligence, I have said, inaudibly, with the considerate self-restraint of Musidora's rural lover:

"'Sleep on, dear youth; this does not mean that you are indolent, or that I am dull; it is the partial coma of commencing asphyxia.'

"You will see extensive apartments destined for the practical study of chemistry and of physiology. But these branches are no longer studied as of old, by merely listening to lectures. The student must himself perform the analyses which he used to hear about. He must not be poisoned at his work, and therefore he will require a spacious and well-ventilated room to work
[253] in. You read but the other day of an esteemed fellow-citizen who died from inhaling the vapors of a broken demijohn of a corrosive acid. You will be glad to see that every precaution is taken to insure the safety and health of our students.

"Physiology, as now studied, involves the use of much delicate and complex machinery. You may remember the balance at which Sanctorius sat at his meals, so that when he had taken in a certain number of ounces the lightened table and more heavily weighted philosopher gently parted company. You have heard, perhaps, of Pettenkofer's chamber, by means of which all the living processes of a human body are made to declare the total consumption and product during a given period. Food and fuel supplied; work done. Never was the human body as a machine so understood, never did it give such an account of itself, as it now does in the legible handwriting of the cardiograph, the sphygmograph, the myograph, and other self-registering contrivances, with all of which the student of to-day is expected to be practically familiar.

[254] ... Among the various apartments destined to special uses one will be sure to rivet your attention; namely, the Anthropotomic Laboratory, known to plainer speech as the dissecting room. The most difficult work of a medical school is the proper teaching of practical anatomy. The pursuit of that vitally essential branch of professional knowledge has always been in the face of numerous obstacles. Superstition has arrayed all her hobgoblins against it. Popular prejudice has made the study embarrassing and even dangerous to those engaged in it. The surgical student was prohibited from obtaining the knowledge required in his profession, and the surgeon was visited with crushing penalties for want of that necessary knowledge. Nothing is easier than to excite the odium of the ignorant against this branch of instruction and those who are engaged in it. It is the duty and interest of all intelligent members of the community to defend the anatomist and his place of labor against such appeals to ignorant passion as will interfere with this part of medical education, above all, against such inflammatory representations as may be expected to lead to mid-day mobs or midnight incendiarism.

[255] "The enlightened legislation of Massachusetts has long sanctioned the practice of dissection, and provided means for supporting the needs of anatomical instruction, which managed with decent privacy and discretion, have served the beneficent purpose intended by the wise and humane law-givers, without doing wrong to those natural sensibilities which are always to be respected.

"During the long period in which I have been a professor of anatomy in this medical school, I have had abundant opportunities of knowing the zeal, the industry, the intelligence, the good order and propriety with which this practical department has been carried on. The labors superintended by the demonstrator and his assistants are in their nature repulsive, and not free from risk of diseases, though in both these respects modern chemistry has introduced great ameliorations. The student is breathing an air which unused senses would find insufferable. He has tasks to perform which the chambermaid and the stable-boy would shrink from undertaking. We cannot wonder that the sensitive Rousseau could not endure the atmosphere of the room in
[256] which he had began a course of anatomical study. But we know that the great painters, Michael Angelo, Leonardo and Raphael must have witnessed many careful dissections; and what they endured for art our students can endure for science and humanity.

"Among the large number of students who have worked in the department of which I am speaking during my long term of service—nearly two thousand are on the catalogue as students—there must have been some who were thoughtless, careless, unmindful of the proprieties. Something must be pardoned to the hardening effect of habit. Something must be forgiven to the light-heartedness of youth, which shows itself in scenes that would sadden and solemnize the unseasoned visitor. Even youthful womanhood has been known to forget itself in the midst of solemn surroundings. I well remember the complaint of Willis, a lover of the gentle sex, and not likely to have told a lie against a charming young person; I quote from my rusty memory, but I believe correctly:

She trifled! ay, that angel maid,
She trifled where the dead was laid.

[257] "Nor are older persons always so thoughtful and serious in the presence of mortality as it might be supposed they would show themselves. Some of us have encountered Congressional committees attending the remains of distinguished functionaries to their distant place of burial. They generally bore up well under their bereavement. One might have expected to find them gathered in silent groups in the parlors of the Continental Hotel or the Brevoort House; to meet the grief-stricken members of the party smileless and sobbing as they sadly paced the corridors of Parker's, before they set off in a mournful and weeping procession. It was not so; Candor

would have to confess that it was far otherwise; Charity would suggest that Curiosity should withdraw her eye from the key-hole; Humanity would try to excuse what she could not help witnessing; and a tear would fall from the blind eye of oblivion and blot out their hotel bills forever.

"You need not be surprised, then, if among this large number of young men there should have been now and then something to find fault with. Twice in the course of thirty-five years I have
[258] had occasion to rebuke the acts of individual students, once in the presence of the whole class on the human and manly sympathy of which I could always safely rely. I have been in the habit of considering myself at liberty to visit the department I am speaking of, though it had its own officers; I took a part in drawing up the original regulations which governed the methods of work; I have often found fault with individuals or small classes for a want of method and neatness which is too common in all such places. But in the face of all peccadilloes and of the idle and baseless stories which have been circulated, I will say, as if from the chair I no longer occupy, that the management of the difficult, delicate and all important branch committed to the care of a succession of laborious and conscientious demonstrators, as I have known it through more than the third of a century, has been discreet, humane, faithful, and that the record of that department is most honorable to them and to the classes they have instructed.

"But there are better things to think of and to speak of than the false and foolish stories to
[259] which we have been forced to listen. While the pitiable attempt has been making to excite the feelings of the ignorant against the school of the university, hundreds of sufferers throughout Christendom—throughout civilization—have been blessing the name of Boston and the Harvard Medical School as the source from which relief has reached them for one of the gravest injuries, and for one of the most distressing of human maladies. I witnessed many of the experiments by which the great surgeon who lately filled a chair in Harvard University, has made the world his debtor. Those poor remains of mortality of which we have heard so much, have been of more service to the human race than the souls once within them ever dreamed of conferring. Doctor Bigelow's repeated and searching investigations into the anatomy of the hip joint showed him the band which formed the chief difficulty in reducing dislocations of the thigh. What Sir Astley Cooper and all the surgeons after him had failed to see, Doctor Bigelow detected. New rules for reduction of the dislocation were the consequence, and the terrible pulleys disappeared from the operating amphitheatre.

[260] "Still more remarkable are the results obtained by Doctor Bigelow in the saving of life and the lessening of suffering in the new method of operation for calculus. By the testimony of those renowned surgeons, Sir Henry Thompson and Mr. Erichsen, by the award to Doctor Bigelow of a sexennial prize founded by the Marquis d' Argenteuil, and by general consent, this innovation is established as one of the great modern improvements in surgery. I saw the numerous and patient experiments by which that priceless improvement was effected, and I cannot stop to moan over a scrap of integument, said to have been made imperishable, when I remember that for every lifeless body which served for these experiments, a hundred died or a thousand living fellow creatures have been saved from unutterable anguish, and many of them from premature death.

"You will visit the noble hall soon to be filled with the collections left by the late Professor John Collins Warren, added to by other contributors, and to the care and increase of which the late Doctor John Jackson of precious memory gave many years of his always useful and laborious life. You may expect to find there a perfect Golgotha of skulls and a platoon of skeletons open to the
[261] sight of all comers. You will find portions of every human organ. You will see bones softened by acid and tied in bowknots; other bones burned until they are light as cork and whiter than ivory, yet still keeping their form; you will see sets of teeth from the stage of infancy to that of old age, and in every intermediate condition, exquisitely prepared and mounted; you will see preparations that once formed portions of living beings now carefully preserved to show their vessels and nerves; the organ of hearing exquisitely carved by French artists; you will find specimens of human integument, showing its constituent parts in different races; among the rest, that of the Ethiopian, with its cuticle or false skin turned back to show that God gave him a true skin beneath it as white as our own. Some of these specimens are injected to show their blood vessels; some are preserved in alcohol; some are dried. There was formerly a small scrap, said to be human skin, which had been subjected to the tanning process, and which was not the least interesting of the series. I have not seen it for a good while, and it may have disappeared as the
[262] cases might happen to be open while unscrupulous strangers were strolling through the museum. If it has, the curator will probably ask the next poor fellow who has his leg cut off, for permission to have a portion of its integument turned into leather. He would not object, in all probability, especially if he were promised that a wallet for his pocket or a slipper for his remaining foot, should be made from it.

"There is no use in quarrelling with the specimens in a museum because so many of them once formed a part of human beings. The British Government paid fifteen thousand pounds for the collection made by John Hunter, which is full of such relics. The Huntarian Museum is still a source of pride to every educated citizen in London. Our foreign visitors have already learned that the Warren Anatomical Museum is one of the sights worth seeing during their stay among us. Charles Dickens was greatly interested in looking through its treasures, and that intelligent and indefatigable hard worker, the Emperor of Brazil, inspected its wonders with as much curiosity as if he had been a professor of anatomy. May it ever remain sacred from harm in the
[263] noble hall of which it is about taking possession. If violence, excited by false outcries, shall ever assail the treasure-house of anthropology, we may tremble lest its next victim shall be the home

of art, and ignorant passions once aroused, the archives that hold the wealth of literature perish in a new Alexandrian conflagration. This is not a novel source of apprehension to the thoughtful. Education, religious, moral, intellectual, is the only safeguard against so fearful a future.

"To one of the great interests of society, the education of those who are to be the guardians of its health, the stately edifice which opens its doors to us for the first time to-day is devoted. It is a lasting record of the spirit and confidence of the young men of the medical profession, who led their elders in the brave enterprise, an enduring proof of the liberality of the citizens of Boston and of friends beyond our narrow boundaries, a monument to the memory of those who, a hundred years ago, added a school of medicine to our honored, cherished, revered university, and to all who have helped to sustain its usefulness and dignity through the century just completed.

[264] "It stands solid and four square among the structures which are the pride of our New England Venice—our beautiful metropolis, won by well-directed toil from the marshes and creeks and lagoons which were our inheritance from nature. The magnificent churches around it let in the sunshine through windows stained with the pictured legends of antiquity. The student of nature is content with the white rays that show her just as she is; and if ever a building was full of light —light from the north and the south; light from the east and the west; light from above, which the great concave mirror of sky pours down into it—this is such an edifice. The halls where Art teaches its lessons and those where the sister Sciences store their collections, the galleries that display the treasures of painting, and sculpture, are close enough for agreeable companionship. It is probable that in due time the Public Library, with its vast accumulations, will be next door neighbor to the new domicile of our old and venerated institution. And over all this region rise the tall landmarks which tell the dwellers in our streets and the traveller as he approaches that in
[265] the home of Science, Arts, and Letters, the God of our Fathers is never forgotten, but that high above these shrines of earthly knowledge and beauty, are lifted the towers and spires which are the symbols of human aspiration ever looking up to Him, the Eternal, Immortal, Invisible."

At the conclusion of this noble address, the portrait of Professor Oliver Wendell Holmes was presented to the Medical School by Doctor Minot, in the happily-chosen words that follow:

"Many alumni of the school, together with some of its present students, have desired that a permanent memorial of their beloved teacher, Professor Oliver Wendell Holmes, should be placed in the new college building, in token of their gratitude for the great services which he has rendered to many generations of his pupils. By his eminent scientific attainments, his sound method of teaching, his felicity of illustration, and his untiring devotion to all the duties of his chair, he inspired those who were so fortunate as to come under his instruction with the importance of a thorough knowledge of anatomy, the foundation of medical science. In the name of the alumni and students of this college, I have the pleasure of presenting to the medical faculty
[266] a portrait of Professor Holmes, painted by Mr. Alexander, to be placed in the college in remembrance of his invaluable services to Harvard University, to the medical profession and to the community."

The bust of Professor Bigelow was then presented to the school by Hon. Samuel Green, in the following words:

"The pleasant duty has been assigned me, Mr. President, to present to you, as the head of the corporation of Harvard College, in behalf of his many friends, this animated bust of Professor Henry J. Bigelow. The list of subscribers comprises about fifty names, and includes nearly all the surgeons of the two great hospitals in this city; several gentlemen not belonging to the medical profession, but warm personal friends of Doctor Bigelow; a few ladies who had been his patients; and all the surgical house pupils who had ever been connected with the Massachusetts General Hospital during his long term of service at that institution, so far as they could easily be reached by personal application. The bust is given on the condition that it shall be placed permanently in
[267] the new surgical lecture room, which corresponds to the scene of Doctor Bigelow's long labors in the old building. It has been made by the eminent sculptor, Launt Thompson of New York, and is a most faithful representation of the distinguished surgeon. It outlines with such accuracy and precision the features of his face and the pose of his head that nothing is wanted, in the opinion of his friends, to make it a correct likeness.

"I need not, in the presence of this audience, name the various steps by which Doctor Bigelow has reached the high position which is conceded to him as freely and fully in Europe as it is in America; but I cannot forbear an allusion to some of his original researches. His mechanism of the reduction of a dislocated femur by manipulation was a great discovery in surgical science, and follows as a simple corollary to the anatomical facts which he has so clearly and minutely demonstrated. His operation of rapid lithotrity has deprived a painful disease of much of its terror as well as of its danger. Nor should I overlook on this occasion his quick and ready discernment of the importance of Doctor Morton's demonstration of the use of ether as a safe
[268] anæsthetic, which took place at the Massachusetts General Hospital in the autumn of 1846. The discovery of this greatest boon to the human family since the invention of printing, was fraught with such immense possibilities that the world was slow to realize its magnitude; but by the clear foresight and prudent zeal of Doctor Bigelow, shown in many ways, the day was hastened when its use became well nigh universal.

"Doctor Bigelow has filled the chair of surgery in this medical school during thirty-three years, a period of professional instruction that rarely falls to the lot of any teacher; and he now leaves it with the honored title of professor emeritus. During this long term of service he has taught,

through his lectures, probably not fewer than one thousand eight hundred students, who have graduated at the Harvard Medical School, and perhaps seven thousand five hundred more who have taken their degrees elsewhere; and by these thousands of physicians now scattered throughout the land, those of them who survive, Doctor Bigelow is remembered as most eminently a practical teacher. Active in his profession, clear in his instruction, and enthusiastic in
[269] his investigations, he always had the happy faculty of imparting to his students a kindred spirit and zeal. *Haud inexpertus loquor.*"

The remainder of the exercises took place in the new building. The dedicatory prayer was offered by Rev. Doctor Peabody, who consecrated the building "to science, humanity and charity, to Christian tenderness and love, and to all the ministries that can enrich humanity."

President Eliot then said:

"In behalf of the President and Fellows of Harvard University, and of the Medical School, I declare this building to be devoted to medical science and the art of healing."

Professor Henry W. Williams, in behalf of the medical faculty, said:

"Friends of the Harvard Medical School: For a hundred years the medical faculty of Harvard College have earnestly sought to discover, and striven faithfully to teach, whatever might exalt the condition, relieve the woes and prolong the service of those minds and bodies through which man lives, and moves, and is. Year by year they have seen their horizon of knowledge extended
[270] and their sphere of duty enlarged. But, though zeal and self-sacrifice have not been wanting, their efforts to be useful have been continually hindered because of imperfect facilities and scanty resources. All is changed. In this more wonderful than Aladdin's palace, risen from the sea,[8] and which has already endured the wrath and mercy of the flames, we see a fulfilment of our hopes, and the means and assurance of success. Thanks to generous benefactors, there will no longer be a lack of room or of appliances for our needs; our work will go on under fairer auspices, and we can offer to disciples of the healing art fitter opportunities and ampler aid in their studies.

"As spokesman of the faculty on this occasion, so full of felicitation and of promise, I would I could give to their message a host of tongues, to adequately thank those whose great flood of bounty has thus favored and endowed us. In occupying this beautiful and convenient structure, we shall ever feel that the place is dignified by the givers' deed. And we rejoice the more, because we know that this gift of three hundred thousand dollars has been bestowed by those
[271] who are accustomed to use their own eyes in their estimation of desert, and that it signifies a hearty approval of our endeavors, and an intent that medical science, as it is to be here embodied and taught, shall have a warm and generous support.

"In accepting this more than princely gift as a token that the value and necessity of well-educated physicians to every community is felt and acknowledged, we hail the privilege of goodly fellowship in which the donors and ourselves have become co-workers, to the end that blessings to the whole land may arise and be memorized in this institution; and we trust that the efforts of the faculty to advance the knowledge, train the judgment and perfect the skill of those entering our profession will ever continue to deserve countenance and help.

Colonel Henry Lee's address was the next to follow:

Mr. President: Thanks for your invitation to be present on this interesting occasion—the hundredth anniversary of your medical school and the dedication of a new building of fair proportions, well adapted to your wants, as far as a non-professional can judge. You have
[272] assigned to me the honorable task of speaking for the contributors to the building fund. I little thought, as I used to gaze with awe at that prim, solitary, impenetrable little building in Mason Street, and with imaginative companions conjure up the mysteries within, that I should ever dare to enter and explore its interior; nor have I yet acquired that relish for morbid specimens which characterized my lamented kinsman, who devoted so many years to accumulating and illustrating your pathological collection. It is an ordeal to a layman, Mr. President, especially to one who has reached the sixth age, to be so forcibly reminded, as one is here, of the

> last scene of all
> That ends this strange, eventful
> history,
> *sans* eyes, *sans* taste, *sans*
> everything,

and it is a further ordeal to assume to speak for others, whose motives for aiding you I may not adequately set forth. This I can say, that we are citizens of no mean city; that private frugality and public liberality have distinguished the inhabitants of this 'Old Town of Boston,' from the
[273] days of the good and wise John Winthrop, whose own substance was consumed in founding this colony, to the present time. Down through these two centuries and a half the multiform and ever-increasing needs of the community have been discovered and supplied, not by Government, but by patriotic citizens, who have given of their time and substance to promote the common weal, remembering 'that the body is not one member, but many, and that the members should have the same care, one for another.' It is this public spirit, manifested in its heroic form in our civil war, that has made this dear old Commonwealth what we all know it to be, despite foul slanders. Far distant be the day when this sense of brotherhood shall be lost. Purple and fine linen are well, if

one can afford them; but let not Dives forget Lazarus at his gate.

Ill fares the land, to hastening ills a
prey,
Where wealth accumulates, and men
decay.

"Whatever doubts may arise as to some of our benevolent schemes, our safety and progress rest upon the advancement of sound learning, and we feel assured that the increased facilities
[274] furnished by this ample building, for acquiring and disseminating knowledge of our fearful and wonderful frame, will be improved by your brethren. Some of the papers read before the International Medical College, in London, two years ago, impressed me deeply with the many wants of the profession. And who are more likely to have their wants supplied? for the physician is not regarded here, as in some countries, as the successor to the barber surgeon, and his fees slipped into his upturned palm as if he were a mendicant or a menial. Dining with two Englishmen, one an Oxford professor, the other the brother of a lord, a few years since, I was surprised to hear their views of the social standing of the medical profession, and could not help contrasting their position here, where, if not all autocrats, they are all constitutional, and some of them hereditary, monarchs, accompanied by honor, love, obedience, troops of friends. But however ranked, physicians have the same attributes the world over. I have had occasion to see a good deal of English, French, German and Italian physicians under very trying circumstances,
[275] and have been touched by their affectionate devotion to their patients. The good physician is our earliest and our latest friend; he listens to our first and our last breath; in all times of bodily distress and danger we look up to him to relieve us. 'Neither the pestilence that walketh in darkness, nor the sickness that destroyeth in the noonday, deters him.'

Alike to him is time, or tide,
December's snow or July's pride;
Alike to him is tide, or time,
Moonless midnight, or matin prime.

"The faithful pursuit of any profession involves sacrifice of self; but the man who calls no hour his own, who consecrates his days and nights to suffering humanity, treads close in the footsteps of his Master. No wonder, then, that the bond between them and their patients is so strong; no wonder that we respond cheerfully to their call, in gratitude for what they have, and in sorrow for what they have not, been able to do to preserve the lives and to promote the health of those dear to us. And how could money be spent more economically than to promote the further
[276] enlightenment of the medical profession? What better legacy can we leave our children, and our children's children, than an illumined medical faculty?"

After these addresses a reception was given to the subscribers to the building fund by President Eliot and the faculty of the Medical School.

In referring to Doctor Holmes' brave, outspoken words, an eminent Boston clergyman wrote as follows:

"The only qualification which we have heard of the universal and enthusiastic appreciation of the sage, the vivacious and the rich utterance of our admired doctor and foremost man of letters on this occasion, was in a somewhat regretful feeling that he should have turned the full power of his humor and of his caustic satire upon the mean and contemptible effort of an unprincipled demagogue to defame the Harvard Medical School. We do not sympathize with even this qualified stricture on the remarks of Doctor Holmes here referred to. True, his address was an historical one, designed for an historical review of the past of the institution. But it is also to
[277] serve the uses of history for the future, especially as a record of the aspects of the institution and of the interest and confidence of our living community in it during the year marking such a conspicuous event for it as the inauguration of the new edifice prepared for it by the munificence of those who appreciate its almost divine offices of mercy and benevolence. And during this very year, an assault of the most dastardly character has been made upon it by one who, high in office and with vast power of influence over an ignorant and easily prejudiced constituency, knows as well as any one among us the utter and wicked falsity of his allegations.

"Doctor Holmes was forced to make some recognition of these slanders addressed to the uninformed, credulous and gullible portion of our community. He would have been generally censured if he had passed them by. The only question for him and for a critically judging community would concern the true spirit and way in which he should recognize them. We can conceive of no more fitting and effective course than that which the sagacious doctor followed. The occasion was one in which it was for him, in defining and greeting the steady advance made
[278] during a century in medical and surgical science among us, to remind his hearers that those to whom we are indebted for this advancement, have had, with their own noble, personal devotion and effort, to triumph over and fight their way against all the prejudices and obstructions which popular ignorance, prejudice and superstition have engaged to annoy and withstand them. In scarcely any one of the multiplied interests of average society have popular weaknesses and follies more mischievously asserted themselves than in opposition to hospitals and medical schools. When that noble institution, the Massachusetts General Hospital, was devised, about three quarters of a century ago, the most besotted folly and suspicion were engaged against those who planned and fostered it. It was charged that under the guise of benevolent service for homeless sufferers and for the victims of accident or special maladies, it was really to be artfully

used for the trial of new medicines and risky experiments on the poor and humble, that practitioners might have the benefit of the knowledge thus gained in dealing with their rich
[279] patients. Let any one visit the wards of that institution to-day, or read its annual reports, noting the thousands of cases of its work of mercy in restoration or relief of all classes of sufferers, and then recall the asinine abuse visited upon its projectors. The millions of money which have been poured into its treasury, mostly from the private benevolence of our own citizens, is the crown of glory for that institution. An appeal of the most artful and atrocious sort to this same popular ignorance and passion has been made this year for purposes which we need not search the dictionary to characterize with fitting epithets. How could Doctor Holmes on this great occasion pass it by? How could he have treated the offence and the offender with a more fitting combination of wit and scorn? Most happy also was his suggestive allusion to the self mastery by which practitioners at the dissecting table have to control, in the interest of their high service, revulsions and shrinkings incident to disgusting offices unknown even to chambermaids and stable boys.

"But as Doctor Holmes well said, there are more attractive and instructive matters to engage
[280] our most grateful interest in the occasion to which he gave such a grand interpretation. The century of medical history which he sketched with such a naïve and vigorous narrative has its most suggestive incidents lettered on the walls on the main stairway of the imposing edifice just opened for use. Little Holden Hall in Cambridge; the obscure structure on Mason street; the melancholy building on Grove street, with its tragic history, in which the donor of its site was turned to a use by no means serviceable to science, make up the genealogical, architectural ancestry of the new hall. The development in the material fabric is no inadequate symbol of the progress in every quality, accomplishment and attainment characteristic of the advance of the profession in the last hundred years."

The name of Doctor Holmes will always be so intimately connected with the Harvard Medical School that we give below a brief sketch of its past history.

In the year 1780, the Boston Medical Society voted "that Doctor John Warren be desired to demonstrate a course of anatomical lectures the ensuing winter." The course of lectures proved
[281] so popular that the corporation of the college asked Doctor Warren to draw up a plan for a Medical School in connection with Harvard College. At the commencement of the school, October 7th, 1783, there were three professors: Doctor John Warren, who lectured on anatomy and surgery; Doctor Aaron Dexter, who took the department of chemistry and materia medica; and Doctor Benjamin Waterhouse, instructor in the theory and practice of medicine. During the first year of its establishment the attendance was rather small, consisting of members of the senior class of the college and those students who could procure the consent of their parents. The name of the first graduate recorded was that of John Fleet, in 1788, and he seems to have been the only graduate of that class.

In 1806, Doctor John Collins Warren, son of Doctor John Warren, was appointed assistant professor of anatomy and surgery. He proved a most enthusiastic laborer in behalf of the school and to it he gave his large anatomical collection, which was considered the most complete in the country. In his will he bequeathed his body to the interest of science, and provided that his
[282] skeleton be prepared and mounted, to serve the uses of the demonstrators on anatomy. It was he, also, who took the first steps that led to the establishment of the Medical School in Boston. At 49 Marlborough street, he opened a room for the demonstration of practical anatomy, and here a course of lectures was started in the autumn of 1810 by Doctors Warren, Jackson, and Waterhouse.

In 1816, the "Massachusetts Medical College" was formally inaugurated in a building erected on Mason street by a special grant from the Commonwealth. At this time the faculty consisted of Doctors Jackson, Warren, Gorham, Jacob Bigelow and Walter Channing.

In 1821 the Massachusetts General Hospital on Allan street, was established; the two institutions have since been intimately connected as the resources afforded students by the Hospital are here given to members of the Medical School.

In 1836, Doctor Jackson resigned his position, and Doctor John Ware, the assistant professor of theory and practice was appointed in the chair. Eleven years later Doctor John Collins Warren resigned, having served the interests of the school for forty-one years.

In 1847, through the liberality of Doctor George C. Shattuck, Sr., a professorship of
[283] pathological anatomy was established, and Doctor John Barnard Swett Jackson was appointed to fill the chair. It was during this year that Doctor Oliver Wendell Holmes was chosen Parkman professor of anatomy and physiology.

In 1849 Doctor Henry J. Bigelow was appointed to the chair of surgery left vacant by the resignation of Doctor George Hayward, and in 1854, Doctor Walter Channing was succeeded by Doctor David Humphreys Storer. In 1855 Doctor Jacob Bigelow resigned, and was succeeded by Doctor Edward Hammond Clarke.

The building on North Grove street, erected by a grant of the State upon land donated by Doctor George Parkman, was first occupied by the school in 1846. In this building, which was considered amply commodious at that time, were stored the Warren Anatomical Museum, the physiological library founded by George Woodbury Swett, the gifts to the chemical department by Doctor John Bacon, and the collection of microscopes given by Doctor Ellis. Since then the

number of medical students has constantly increased and the accommodations becoming inadequate, steps were taken for the erection of the new building.

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CHAPTER XIX.

TOKENS OF ESTEEM.

SAID one of the medical students in Doctor Holmes' last class at Harvard:

"We always welcomed Professor Holmes with enthusiastic cheers when he came into the class room, and his lectures were so brimful of witty anecdotes that we sometimes forgot it was a lesson in anatomy we had come to learn. But the instruction—deep, sound and thorough—was there all the same, and we never left the room without feeling what a fund of knowledge and what a clear insight upon difficult points in medical science had been imparted to us through the sparkling medium!"

The position of Parkman Professor of Anatomy in Harvard University, was resigned by Doctor Holmes in the autumn of 1882, that he might give his time more exclusively to literary pursuits.
[285] He was immediately appointed Professor Emeritus by the college, and Doctor Thomas Dwight, a teacher in the Medical School, succeeded him in the active duties of the chair.

The last lecture of Doctor Holmes before his students, was delivered in the anatomical room, on the twenty-eighth of November. As he entered the room, a storm of applause greeted him, and then as it died away, one of the students came forward and presented him, in behalf of his last class, with an exquisite "Loving Cup." On one side of this beautiful souvenir was the happy quotation from his own writings: "Love bless thee, joy crown thee, God speed thy career."

Doctor Holmes was so deeply affected by this delicate token of esteem that, afterwards, in acknowledging the cup by letter, he said that the tribute was so unexpected it made him speechless. He was quite sure, however, that they did not mistake *aphasia* for *acardia*—his heart was in its right place, though his tongue forgot its office.

In the address to his class, the Professor gave an interesting review of his thirty-five years'
[286] connection with the school. Then he referred to his early college days, and to his studies in Paris, and added many delightful reminiscences of the famous French savants whose lectures he attended at that time. A full report of this address may be found in the *Boston Medical and Surgical Journal*, for December 7, 1882.

This, one of his most interesting essays, is also reprinted in one of Doctor Holmes' later volumes, entitled *Medical Essays*.

On the evening of April 12, 1883, a complimentary dinner was given Doctor Holmes at Delmonico's, by the medical profession of New York City. The reception opened at about half-past six, and soon after that hour Doctor Holmes entered the rooms with Doctor Fordyce Barker. The guests, numbering some two hundred and twenty-five in all, were seated at six tables, the table of honor occupying the upper end of the room, and decorated with banks of choice flowers.

The *menus* were cleverly arranged in the form of small books bound in various-colored plush. A dainty design in gilt, representing a scalpel and pen, surrounded by a laurel wreath, adorned the covers, and inside was the stanza:

[287]

A few can touch the magic string,
And noisy fame is proud to win them,
Alas, for those that never sing,
But die with all their music in them.

At the top of the leaf containing the bill of fare were the lines:

You know your own degree; sit down; at first and last a hearty welcome.

at the end:

Prithee, no more; thou dost talk nothing to me.

A few minutes before the coffee was brought in, each guest received what purported to be a telegram from Boston, dated April 1, 1883. The message read as follows:

The dinner bell, the dinner bell
Is ringing loud and clear,
Through hill and plain, through street and lane
It echoes far and near.

I hear the voice! I go, I go!
Prepare your meat and wine;
They little heed their future need
Who pay not when they dine.
—*O.W.H.*

[288] The back of the despatch was decorated with two pictures; one showing Doctor Fordyce Barker ringing a dinner bell and brandishing a knife and fork, the other Doctor Holmes hurrying to answer the bell, with a pile of books under one arm and a bundle of bones under the other.

Among the guests present were George William Curtis, Hon. William M. Evarts, Bishop Clark, Whitelaw Reid, Doctors Post, Emmett, Sayre, Billing, Vanderpoel Metcalfe, Detmoold Draper, Doremus, Hammond, St. J. Roosa, Flint, Dana, Peabody, Ranney, Jacobi, Austin, and many others.

The first toast was as follows:

The hour's now come;
The very minute bids thee ope thine ear
Obey, and be attentive.
—*The Tempest.*

After a few brief words of introduction, Doctor Barker called upon Doctor A.H. Smith to complete the greeting, which he did in the following happy lines:

You've heard of the deacon's one
hoss shay
Which, finished in Boston the self-
same day
That the City of Lisbon went to pot,
[289] Did a century's service, and then
was not.
But the record's at fault which says
that it burst
Into simply a heap of amorphous
dust,
For after the wreck of that
wonderful tub
Out of the ruins they saved a hub;
And the hub has since stood for
Boston town,
Hub of the universe, note that down.
But an orderly hub as all will own,
Must have something central to turn
upon,
And, rubber-cushioned, and true and
bright
We have the axle here to-night.
Thrice welcome then to our festal
board
The doctor-poet, so doubly stored
With science as well as with native
wit,
Poeta nascitur, you know, *non fit*,
led to dissect with knife or pen
His subjects dead or living men;
With thought sublime on every page
To swell the veins with virtuous
rage,
Or with a syringe to inject them
With sublimate to disinfect them;
To show with demonstrator's art
The complex chambers of the heart,
Or armed with a diviner skill
To make it pulsate at his will;
With generous verse to celebrate
The loaves and fishes of some giver;
And then proceed to demonstrate
The lobes and fissures of the liver;
To soothe the pulses of the brain
With poetry's enchanting strain.
Or to describe to class uproarious
[290] *Pes hippocampi accessorious*;
erve with fervor of appeal
The sluggish muscles into steel,
Or, pulling their attachments, show
Whence they arise and where they

go;
To fire the eye by wit consummate,
Or draw the aqueous humor from it;
In times of peril give the tone
To public feeling, called backbone,
Or to discuss that question solemn,
The muscles of the spinal column.
And now I close my artless ditty
As per agreement with committee,
And making place for those more
able
I leave the subject on the table.

The toast "Our Guest," was prefaced by the following quotation from Emerson:

"One would say here is a man with such an abundance of thought! He is never dull, never insincere, and has the genius to make the reader care for all that he cares for."

As Doctor Holmes rose, the room fairly shook with applause. Without any prefatory remarks, he then read the following poem:

Have I deserved your kindness? Nay, my
friends;
While the fair banquet its illusion lends,
Let me believe it, though the blood may
rush
And to my cheek recall the maiden blush
[291] That o'er it flamed with momentary blaze
When first I heard the honeyed words of
praise;
Let me believe it while the roses wear
Their bloom unwithering in the heated air;
Too soon, too soon their glowing leaves
must fall,
The laughing echoes leave the silent hall,
Joy drop his garland, turn his empty cup,
And weary labor take his burden up,—
How weigh that burden they can tell alone
Whose dial marks no moment as their own.

Am I your creditor? Too well I know
How Friendship pays the debt it does not
owe,
Shapes a poor semblance fondly to its
mind,
Adds all the virtues that it fails to find,
Adorns with graces to its heart's content,
Borrows from love what nature never lent,
Till what with halo, jewels, gilding, paint,
The veriest sinner deems himself a saint.
Thus while you pay these honors as my
due,
I owe my value's larger part to you;
And in the tribute of the hour I see
Not what I am, but what I ought to be.

Friends of the Muse, to you of right belong
The first staid footsteps of my square-toed
song;
Full well I know the strong heroic line
Has lost its fashion since I made it mine;
But there are tricks old singers will not
learn,
And this grave measure still must serve
my turn,
So the old bird resumes the self-same note
His first young summer wakened in his
throat;
[292] The self-same tune the old canary sings,
And all unchanged the bobolink's carol
rings;
When the tired songsters of the day are
still,
The thrush repeats his long-remembered
trill;
Age alters not the crow's persistent caw,

The Yankee's "Haow," the stammering
Briton's "Haw;"
And so the hand that takes the lyre for you
Plays the old tune on strings that once
were new,
Nor let the rhymester of the hour deride
The straight-backed measure with its
stately stride;
It gave the mighty voice of Dryden scope:
It sheathed the steel-bright epigrams of
Pope;
In Goldsmith's verse it learned a sweeter
strain,
Byron and Campbell wore its clanking
chain;
I smile to listen while the critic's scorn
Flouts the proud purple kings have nobly
worn;
Bid each new rhymer try his dainty skill
And mould his frozen phrases as he will;
We thank the artist for his neat device—
The shape is pleasing though the stuff is
ice.

Fashions will change—the new costume
allures—
Unfading still the better type endures;
While the slashed doublet of the cavalier
Gave the old knight the pomp of
chanticleer,
Our last-hatched dandy with his glass and
stick
Recalls the semblance of a new-born chick
(To match the model he is aiming at
He ought to wear an eggshell for a hat),
Which of these objects would a painter
choose,
And which Velasquez or Vandyke refuse?
[293] When your kind summons reached my
calm retreat,
Who are the friends, I questioned, I shall
meet?
Some in young manhood, shivering with
desire
To feel the genial warmth of Fortune's fire
—
Each with his bellows ready in his hand
To puff the flame just waiting to be
fanned;
Some heads half-silvered, some with snow-
white hair;
A crown ungarnished glistening here and
there,
The mimic moonlight gleaming on the
scalps
As evening's empress lights the shining
Alps.
But count the crowds that throng your
festal scenes—
How few that knew the century in its
teens!

Save for the lingering handful fate
befriends,
Life's busy day the Sabbath decade ends;
When that is over, how with what remains
Of Nature's outfit—muscle, nerve and
brains?

Were this a pulpit, I should doubtless
preach;
Were this a platform, I should gravely
teach;
But to no solemn duties I pretend
In my vocation at the table's end,

So as my answer let me tell instead
What Landlord Porter—rest his soul—once said.
A feast it was that none might scorn to share;
Cambridge and Concord demigods were there—
And who were they? You know as well as I
The stars long glittering in our Eastern sky —
The names that blazon our provincial scroll
Ring round the world with Britain's drumbeat roll!

Good was the dinner, better was the talk;
Some whispered, devious was the homeward walk;
[294] The story came from some reporting spy—
They lie, those fellows—Oh, how they do lie!
Not ours those foot tracks in the new fallen snow—
Poets and sages never zigzagged so!

Now Landlord Porter, grave, concise, severe,
Master, nay, monarch, in his proper sphere,
Though to belles-lettres he pretended not,
Lived close to Harvard, so knew what was what;
And having bards, philosophers and such
To eat his dinner, put the finest touch
His art could teach, those learned mouths to fill
With the best proofs of gustatory skill;
And finding wisdom plenty at his board,
Wit, science, learning, all his guests had stored,
By way of contrast, ventured to produce,
To please their palates, an inviting goose.

Better it were the company should starve
Than hands unskilled that goose attempt to carve;
None but the master artist shall assail
The bird that turns the mightiest surgeon pale.

One voice arises from the banquet hall,—
The landlord answers to the pleading call;
Of stature tall, sublime of port he stands,
His blade and trident gleaming in his hands;
Beneath his glance the strong-knit joints relax
As the weak knees before the headsman's axe.

And Landlord Porter lifts his glittering knife
As some stout warrior armed for bloody strife;
[295] All eyes are on him; some in whispers ask —
What man is he who dares this dangerous task?
When, lo! the triumph of consummate art,
With scarce a touch the creature drops apart!
As when the baby in his nurse's lap
Spills on the carpet a dissected map.

Then the calm sage, the monarch of the lyre,

Critics and men of science all admire,
And one whose wisdom I will not impeach,
Lively, not churlish, somewhat free of speech,
Speaks thus: "Say, master, what of worth is left
In birds like this, of breast and legs bereft?"

And Landlord Porter, with uplifted eyes,
Smiles on the simple querist, and replies—
"When from a goose you've taken legs and breast,
Wipe lips, thank God, and leave the poor the rest!"

Kind friends, sweet friends, I hold it hardly fair
With that same bird your minstrel to compare,
Yet in a certain likeness we agree—
No wrong to him, and no offence to me;
I take him for the moral he has lent,
My partner—to a limited extent.

When the stern landlord, whom we all obey,
Has carved from life its seventh great slice away,
Is the poor fragment left in blank collapse
A pauper remnant of unvalued scraps?
I care not much what Solomon has said,
Before his time to nobler pleasures dead;
Poor man! he needed half a hundred lives
With such a babbling wilderness of wives!
[296] But is there nothing that may well employ
Life's winter months—no sunny hour of joy?
While o'er the fields the howling tempests rage,
The prisoned linnet warbles in his cage;
When chill November through the forest blows
The greenhouse shelters the untroubled rose,
Round the high trellis creeping tendrils twine,
And the ripe clusters fill with blameless wine,
We make the vine forget the winter's cold,
But how shall age forget it's growing old?

Though doing right is better than deceit,
Time is a trickster it is fair to cheat;
The honest watches ticking in your fobs
Tell every minute how the rascal robs.
To clip his forelock and his scythe to hide,
To lay his hour-glass gently on its side,
To slip the cards he marked upon the shelf,
And deal him others you have marked yourself,
If not a virtue, cannot be a sin,
For the old rogue is sure at last to win.

What does he leave when life is well-nigh spent
To lap its evening in a calm content?
Art, Letters, Science, these at least befriend
Our day's brief remnant to its peaceful end—
Peaceful for him who shows the setting sun
A record worthy of his Lord's "well done!"

When he, the Master whom I will not
name,
Known to our calling, not unknown to
fame,
At life's extremest verge half-conscious
lay,
Helpless and sightless, dying day by day,

[297]

His brain, so long with varied wisdom
fraught,
Filled with the broken enginery of thought,
A flitting vision often would illume
His darkened world and cheer its
deepening gloom,—
A sunbeam struggling through the long
eclipse,—
And smiles of pleasure play around his
lips.
He loved the Art that shapes the dome and
spire;
The Roman's page, the ring of Byron's
lyre,
And oft, when fitful memory would return
To find some fragment in her broken urn,
Would wake to life some long-forgotten
hour,
And lead his thought to Pisa's terraced
tower,
Or trace in light before his rayless eye
The dome-crowned Pantheon printed on
the sky;
Then while the view his ravished soul
absorbs
And lends a glitter to the sightless orbs,
The patient watcher feels the stillness
stirred
By the faint murmur of some classic word,
Or the long roll of Harold's lofty rhyme,
"Simple, erect, severe, austere,
sublime,"—
Such were the dreams that soothed his
couch of pain,
The sweet nepenthe of the worn-out brain.

Brothers in art, who live for others' needs
In duty's bondage, mercy's gracious deeds,
Of all who toil beneath the circling sun
Whose evening rest than yours more fairly
won?
Though many a cloud your struggling
morn obscures,
What sunset brings a brighter sky than
yours?

I, who your labors for a while have shared,
New tasks have sought, with new
companions fared,
For Nature's servant far too often seen
[298]
A loiterer by the waves of Hippocrene;
Yet round the earlier friendship twines the
new;
My footsteps wander, but my heart is true,
Nor e'er forgets the living or the dead
Who trod with me the paths where science
led.

How can I tell you, O my loving friends,
What light, what warmth, your joyous
welcome lends
To life's late hour? Alas! my song is sung,
Its fading accents falter on my tongue.
Sweet friends, if shrinking in the banquet's
blaze,
Your blushing guest must face the breath
of praise,

Speak not too well of one who scarce will know
Himself transfigured in its roseate glow;
Say kindly of him what is—chiefly—true,
Remembering always he belongs to you;
Deal with him as a truant, if you will,
But claim him, keep him, call him brother still!

The next toast was to "The Clergy."

He was a scholar, and a ripe and good one, exceeding
wise, fair-spoken and persuading.
—*King Henry VIII.*

Bishop Clark of Rhode Island responded. "We honor," he said, "the high priesthood of science and art. We honor the man who has brought life and joy to many weary dwellings, and therefore
[299] we extend the right hand of fellowship to him." When after tracing the lineage of the guest, he reviewed his life, quoted from his writings, and said in conclusion, that he stood side by side with Oliver Goldsmith.

The toast to "The Bar"—

Why might that not be the skull
Of a lawyer? Where be his quidet's now?
—*Hamlet.*

was answered by Hon. Wm. M. Evarts, in a witty and characteristic address.

Doctor T. Gaillard Thomas responded to the toast, "The Medical Profession"—

She honors herself in honoring a favorite son,—

and George William Curtis followed in an address, answering to the toast "Literature"—

A kind of medicine in itself.
—*Measure for Measure.*

All factions, he declared, claimed Oliver Wendell Holmes, and all peoples spoke of him in praise. He then mentioned many of the poet's songs, reciting a stanza occasionally and
[300] commenting on them in a touching manner. The next toast was "The Press"—

But words are things, and a small drop of ink
Falling like dew upon a thought, produces
That which makes thousands, perhaps millions, think.
—*Byron.*

This was responded to by Whitelaw Reid in a humorous address in which he closely connected Doctor Holmes with the profession of journalism. It was a late hour when the company separated, and the last toast given, found a hearty, though silent response from all present—

Good-night, good-night! Parting is such sweet sorrow,
That I shall say good-night till it be to-morrow.
—*Romeo and Juliet.*

Before closing this long chapter of "honors to Doctor Holmes," we cannot refrain from giving the following cordial tribute from John Boyle O'Reilly:

"Oliver Wendell Holmes:—the wise, the witty, the many ideald, philosopher, poet, physician, novelist, essayist, professor, but, best of all, the kind, the warm heart. A man of unexpected
[301] tastes, ranging in all directions from song to science, and from theology to boatracing. Me met one day on Tremont street an acquaintance fond of athletic exercise, and he stopped himself with a pathetic little sigh.

"'Ah, you send me back fifty years,' he said. 'As you walked then with a swing, you reminded me of an old friend who was dead before you were born; and he was a good man with his hands, too.'

"Never was a more healthy, natural, lovable man than Doctor Holmes."

[302]

CHAPTER XX.

IN LATER YEARS.

IT was not until the spring of 1886 that Doctor Holmes made his second trip to Europe. A whole half century had elapsed since his return home from the three years spent abroad when he was completing his medical studies.

In this second European tour he was accompanied by his daughter, Mrs. Sargent; and he gives his own delightful account of it in "One Hundred Days in Europe," which first appeared as a serial in the *Atlantic Monthly*, and has since been published in book form, with a charming dedication to his daughter. "The Sailing of the Autocrat" was celebrated by T.B. Aldrich in a fine poem, from which we quote a few lines as embodying the tender love and ardent admiration of the whole
[303] American people:—

"O Wind and Wave, be kind to
him!
For him may radiant mornings
break
From out the bosom of the deep,
And golden noons above him
bend,
And fortunate constellations
keep
Bright vigils to his journey's end!

Take him, green Erin, to thy
breast!
Keep him, gray London—for a
while!
In him we send thee of our best,
Our wisest word, our blithest
smile—
Our epigram, alert and pat,
That kills with joy the folly hit—
Our Yankee Tzar, our Autocrat
Of all the happy realms of wit!
Take him and keep him—but
forbear
To keep him more than half a
year....
His presence will be sunshine
there,
His absence will be shadow
here!"

We delight to recall with what distinguished honors he was received abroad from the highest dignitaries of church and state, as well as from his own literary compeers. It was during this visit in England that the London *Spectator* wrote, "No literary American—unless it be Mr. Lowell, and we should not except even him—occupies precisely the same place as Doctor Holmes in
[304] Englishmen's regard. They have the feeling for him which they had for Charles Lamb, Charles Dickens, and John Leech, in which admiration somewhat blends into and is indistinguishable from affectionateness."

The Universities of Edinburgh, Oxford, and Cambridge all conferred their honorary degrees upon him, and he has given us his own inimitable description of the manner in which he was entertained by Carlyle and by Tennyson.

At a club dinner given to him in London, he said to the bishop of Gloucester:

"I think we are all unconsciously conscious of each other's brain waves at times. The fact is that words and even signs are a very poor sort of language, compared with the direct telegraphy between souls. The mistake we make is to suppose that the soul is circumscribed and imprisoned by the body. Now, the truth is, I believe I extend a good way outside my body. Well, I should say at least three or four feet all round, and so do you, and it is our extensions that meet. Before words pass or we shake hands, our souls have exchanged impressions, and they never lie."

In reply to a toast at the farewell banquet given him in Liverpool by the Medical Society of London, he said:

[305] "I cannot do justice to the manner in which I have been everywhere received. Any phrase of mine would be a most inadequate return for the months of loving and assiduous attentions through which I have been living. You need not ask me, therefore, the almost stereotyped question, how I like England and Scotland. I cannot help loving both, and I only regret I could not accept the welcome awaiting me from my friends in warmhearted Ireland."

Fresh in mind still is the enthusiastic ovation given to our beloved Autocrat when the hundred

days had passed, and "Wind and Wave" brought safely home again "our wisest word, our blithest smile."

But grim Death, that had "rained through every roof save his," was soon to send a cruel shaft into the poet's happy home. On the 6th of February, 1888, the dear companion and helpmeet of his life for nearly half a century—

"Stole with soft step the shining archway
through
And left the past years' dwelling for the
new."

Mrs. Holmes was a remarkably gifted woman, and singularly fitted to be the wife of a man of genius. She was devoted to her home and family, and the charm of her sweet womanliness will
[306] long be remembered by those who had the privilege of knowing her intimately. Doctor Holmes has himself told us that her simple, reticent "I think so," was valued by him as a far more encouraging sanction for action, than the dogmatic advice of a more arbitrary adviser. When the Civil War broke out, Mrs. Holmes was one of the first Boston women to enter actively into the work of the United States Sanitary Commission.

"She impressed us all," says one of her fellow workers, "as being so strong, steady, clear, and firm. There was not one among the whole body with whom we were so united as with her. And the strange thing about her was that she really had the executive ability and the clear mind, as well as the gentle and amiable spirit. She shirked no labor, even of the most menial, and was one of those who gave up almost all her time to the work. Her eldest son was at this time in the war, and went through six battles; and this, although she never complained, was a constantly harrowing pain to her."

The younger son of Doctor Holmes, Edward Jackson Holmes, died in 1884, leaving one son who
[307] bears the same name; and in 1889, his only daughter, Mrs. Sargent, passed away. The aching void left in heart and home by these sad bereavements was felt still more keenly as, one after another, the old friends of his youth were laid to rest.

"I do not think," he said upon one of his last birthdays, "that one of the companions of my early years, of my boyhood, is left. When a man reaches my age, and then looks back fifty years, why, even that distance into the past to such a man leaves a pretty good gap behind it. Half a century from eighty years leaves a 'gap' of thirty years, and thirty years are a good many to most men."

At one of the Saturday Club dinners, when fewer members than usual were present, Doctor Holmes remarked,

"This room is full of ghosts to me. I can see so many faces here that used to be here years ago, and that have since passed from this life. They are all real to me here, and I think if I were the only living person at one of these dinners, I could sit here and talk to those I see about me, and dine pleasantly, even alone."

Bryant, Longfellow, Emerson, Whittier and Lowell—all lifelong friends of Holmes—had already
[308] "passed on." To other dearly-loved comrades, also, the great last summons had come. Ticknor, Prescott, Fields, Benjamin Pierce, James Freeman Clarke, Francis Parkman—all were gone.

"I feel," he often said with a sigh, "that I am living in another age and generation."

Little, indeed, did the young Oliver realize when he wrote that pathetic poem, "The Last Leaf," that he was the one of our five great poets destined to be the "last upon the tree!"

Upon his eightieth birthday, he remarked, "I have worn well, but you cannot cheat old age. The difficulty with me now in writing is that I don't like to start on anything. I always feel that people must be saying, 'Are you not rash at eighty years of age to write for young people who think a man old at forty?'"

But in his delightful series of papers, "Over the Teacups," we mark the same brilliant flashes of wit, the same keen intuition, the same warmhearted sympathy with all phases of human nature, that our beloved Autocrat showed in the Breakfast Table chats. As Doctor Holmes himself says:

[309] "In sketching the characters, I have tried to make just the difference one would naturally find in a breakfast and a tea table set."

Another volume of poems, "Before the Curfew," and a series of essays entitled "Our New Portfolio," were published soon after. The last poem of Doctor Holmes printed in the *Atlantic Monthly* was written in his eighty-fourth year and dedicated to the memory of Francis Parkman. Some of its verses, however, pay a loving tribute also to his old friends Prescott and Motley:

"One wrought the record of a royal pair
Who saw the great discoverer's sail
unfurled,
Happy his more than regal prize to
share,
The spoils, the wonders of the sunset
world.

There, too, he found his theme; upreared
anew
Our eyes beheld the vanished Aztec
shrines,
And all the silver splendors of Peru
That lured the conqueror to her fatal
mines.

Nor less remembered he who told the
tale
Of empire wrested from the strangling
sea;
Of Leyden's woe, that turned his readers
pale,
The price of unborn freedom yet to be;

Who taught the new world what the old
could teach;
Whose silent hero, peerless as our own,
By deeds that mocked the feeble breath
of speech
Called up to life a State without a
throne.

[310]

As year by year his tapestry unrolled,
What varied wealth its growing length
displayed!
What long processions flamed in cloth of
gold!
What stately forms their glowing robes
arrayed!"

Contrasting with Prescott's and Motley's the subject of Parkman's histories, the poet says,

"Not such the scenes our later craftsman
drew,
Not such the shapes his darker pattern
held;
A deeper shadow lent its sombre hue,
A sadder tale his tragic task compelled.

He told the red man's story; far and wide
He searched the unwritten records of his
race;
He sat a listener at the sachem's side,
He tracked the hunter through his
wildwood chase.

* * * * * * *

Soon o'er the horizon rose the cloud of
strife,
Two proud, strong nations battling for
the prize;
Which swarming host should mould a
nation's life,
Which royal banner flout the western
skies.

Long raged the conflict; on the crimson
sod
Native and alien joined their hosts in
vain;
The lilies withered where the lion trod,
Till peace lay panting on the ravaged
plain."

In the extracts given from this fine poem, with its stately, majestic rhythm, it is plain to see that, even at the age of eighty-four, our autocrat poet had lost none of the vigor and fire of youth.

[311] In the closing verses he speaks most tenderly of Parkman's patient, untiring energy,

"While through long years his burdening cross he bore,"

and concludes with this fine eulogy:

"A brave, bright memory! his the stainless
shield

No shame defaces and no envy mars!
When our far future's record is unsealed
His name will shine among its morning
stars."

It was in January, 1889, that Doctor Holmes sent to Doctor Richard M. Hodges, who was at that time president of the Boston Medical Library Association, the following characteristic letter:

My Dear Sir:

I have transferred my medical library to the hall of the Boston Medical Library Association. Please accept it as a gift from its late president. As there is no provision for its reception, and as I liked the idea of keeping together the books which had been so long together, I have provided a new set of shelves in which they can be properly and conveniently arranged.

Your very truly,
O.W. Holmes.

[312] To show how highly Doctor Holmes valued this library, which consisted of nine hundred and sixty-eight extremely rare volumes, Doctor Chadwick, the librarian, said: "All these books have been collected by him in his fifty years of experience, and it is fitting that we should realize it is the result of years of labor. He has been ready on every occasion to deliver addresses on topics having a wide scope. He carried off with honor three of the four Boylston prizes, and this alone shows the range of his studies. He has contributed to the funds of the association in various ways, and now gives us his most valuable library. In this act, as well as his continuing the position as president of the association several years after he had relinquished all other connection with the profession, he has designated our institution as the one in which he takes the greatest pride; in whose future he has the greatest confidence."

In reply, Doctor Holmes then said:

"The books I have offered the association, and which you have kindly accepted, constitute my own medical library, with the exception of a few volumes which, for several reasons, I have
[313] retained. It has grown by a slow process of accretion. The first volume of it was 'Bell's Anatomy,' and the last was 'Elements of Pharmacy.' The oldest book was written in 1490, and the latest in 1887, so it can be seen that the library covers the space of four centuries."

After reviewing the better books of the library, and alluding to the private library that a practitioner should keep, Doctor Holmes added: "These books are dear to me; a twig from some one of my nerves runs to every one of them, and they mark the progress of my study and the stepping-stones of my professional life. If any of them can be to others as they have been to me, I am willing to part with them, even if they are such old and beloved companions."

Doctor Holmes' warm interest in everything connected with education was shown most emphatically in one of the last public addresses he delivered. It was at that memorable reception given at the Vendome, February 28, 1893, by the Boston publishers to Doctor Holmes and other authors, and to the members of the National Educational Association. Mrs. Elizabeth Phelps-Ward, with Mr. Henry O. Houghton and Mr. Edwin Ginn, gave welcome to the many distinguished guests.

When Doctor Holmes was called upon to address the large company assembled, he began:

[314] "Surely the Autocrat never felt more powerless than he does at this moment. I meant to come here and say a few almost careless words. I was saying to myself, 'You know very well what you've got to talk about, and you can soon say it.' But," and here the Autocrat's bright face grew serious, "at half-past ten this morning there came to me an elegantly engraved copper-plate invitation to appear here, with a formality and a style about it which showed that I had deceived myself in thinking I could utter a few careless words. There was but one refuge for me, and that was the old one. I can only hold up a copy of verses," and he waved the manuscript deprecatingly.

"But not one word, not one thought of it was in my head before half-past ten to-day. There are things in literature," and here Dr. Holmes dropped his voice to a confidential key, "that are christened 'impromptus,' the authenticity of which I am inclined to doubt. I have the idea that a good many impromptus have cost their authors many sleepless nights.

"I shall tell you what I would have spoken about. I should have said, in the first place, that I
[315] have a great sympathy with instructors. I have been an instructor myself. I was for thirty-five years professor in Harvard College, and two years before that professor in Dartmouth College. I enjoyed very much the relations I had with my students in both places. Many of them have lasted up to the present time, and it is pleasant for me every now and then to have a bald-headed man come up to me and tell me he was one of my boys thirty or forty years ago.

"A great many changes have taken place since that time, but two of them are especially interesting. One is the sub-division of teaching. There were six of us who taught the medical graduates of Harvard College during a considerable part of the time when I was professor there. There are now seventy. How much better they are taught I do not know. I presume they are taught well. But a wicked thought came into my head just now—it is not every animal that has the most legs who crawls the fastest. It reminds me of the sirloin of beef one day, which was mince-

meat on the second."

All these pleasantries were given in the Autocrat's happiest manner, amidst many interruptions of laughter and applause from his audience.

[316] "I don't mean, however," he added, "to deprecate that which I accomplished by the sub-division into specialties. What I say is rather playful than serious. The next point is the education of women, which I have regarded at a distance, to be sure. But, occasionally visiting Wellesley and the Cambridge Annex, it has been a great delight to me to see how the intellects of the fair sex matched with those of the sterner. I then thought I should say something of the importance of implanting ideas on all the most important subjects at a very early period of life, and I was going to recall my theology which came out of the little primer, and my patriotism which was kindled at the shrine of Dr. Dwight's 'Columbia, Queen of the World.' But all these things I would prefer to leave, and what else I would have said I will defer until the next occasion, I also wish to say here, personally, that it was most unwillingly that I appeared before an audience like this. I felt it was, at my age, more becoming that I should be a listener rather than a speaker." Here he was interrupted by cries of "No! No!" but he shook his head determinedly, saying, "I am speaking seriously now, however difficult it may be to do that. These little verses I have written, and which
[317] I am going to read, are really impromptu. They are poorly scrawled, for my hand was unsteady."

Then in a clear, strong voice he read:

"Teachers of teachers! yours the
task,
Noblest that noble minds can ask,
High up Aonia's murmurous mount
To watch, to guard the sacred
fount
That feeds the stream below.
To guide the hurrying flood that
fills
A thousand silvery, rippling rills
In ever widening flow.

Rich is the harvest from the fields
That bounteous nature kindly
yields;
But fairer growths enrich the soil
Ploughed deep by thought and
wearied toil,
In learning's broad domain.
And where the leaves, the flowers,
the fruits,
Without your watering at the roots
To fill each branching vein?

Welcome! the author's firmest
friends,
Your voice the surest Godspeed
lends.
Of you the growing mind demands
The patient care, the guiding
hands
Through all the mists of morn.
And knowing well the future's
need,
Your prescient wisdom sows the
seed
To flower in years unborn."

[318] It will be remembered that the last time Doctor Holmes appeared in public to read a poem was on May 28, 1893, when he attended the celebration of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the reorganization of the Boston Young Men's Christian Union. The beautiful hymn he wrote for this occasion is the sweet, simple expression of his own lifelong creed:

"Our Father! while our hearts
unlearn
The creeds that wrong thy name,
Still let our hallowed altars burn
With faith's undying flame.

Not by the lightning's gleam of
wrath
Our souls thy face shall see,
The star of love must light the
path
That leads to heaven and thee.

Help us to read our Master's will
  Through every darkening stain
That clouds his sacred image still,
  And see him once again,

The brother man, the pitying
      friend
  Who weeps for human woes,
Whose pleading words of pardon
      blend
  With cries of raging foes.

If, 'mid the gathering storms of
      doubt
  Our hearts grow faint and cold,
[319] The strength we cannot live
      without,
  Thy love will not withhold.

Our prayers accept; our sins
      forgive;
  Our youthful zeal renew;
Shape for us holier lives to live,
  And nobler work to do!"

[320]

CHAPTER XXI.

LAST DAYS.

THE eighty-fifth birthday of Doctor Holmes was quietly spent at his pleasant country home in Beverly.

"The burden of years sits lightly upon me," he remarked to a friend that day, "but after fourscore years the encroachments of time make themselves felt with rapidly increasing progress. The twelfth septennial period has always seemed to me as one of the natural boundaries of life. One who has lived to complete his eighty-fourth year has had his full share, even of an old man's allowance. Whatever is granted over that is a prodigal indulgence of nature. When one can no longer hear the lark, when he can no longer recognize the faces he passes on the street, when he has to watch his steps, when it becomes more and more difficult for him to
[321] recall names, he is reminded at every moment that he must spare himself, or nature will not spare him the penalties she exacts for overtaxing his declining powers."

In spite of these words, that seem prophetic to us now, the sunny-hearted Autocrat declared he was "eighty-five years *young*" that day, and all the friends who came with loving gifts and congratulations fully agreed with him. His conversation sparkled with all the wit of his younger days, and he talked with animation of his daily walks through the town, and of his long drives into the country in search of "big trees." Near the base of "Woodbury's Hill" in Beverly, he had recently found a mammoth elm that he considered finer than all his other favorites in Essex county; for, in addition to its great size, the wide spreading branches were covered with unusually thick rich foliage.

"I call all trees mine," said the Autocrat, "that I have put my wedding-ring on—that is, my thirty-foot tape-measure!"

Having been slightly troubled with writers' cramp, Doctor Holmes was advised by one of his callers that day to try a typewriter. This remark brought forth a smile from the man who had moved the people of the world with his pen; and he said, with a merry laugh, that he did not
[322] propose to forsake an old friend for a new one at that late time in life.

In speaking of his birthday, Doctor Holmes alluded to the great men who were born that same year, 1809.

"Yes," he said, "I was particularly fortunate in being born the same year with four of the most distinguished men of the age, and I really feel flattered that it so happened. Now, in England, there were Tennyson, Darwin, and Gladstone—Gladstone being, I think, four months younger than myself. That is a most remarkable trio, isn't it? Just contemplate the greatness of those three men, and then remember that in the same year Abraham Lincoln was born in this country. Most remarkable!" And when the visitor added, "You have forgotten to mention the fifth, doctor; there was also Oliver Wendell Holmes," Doctor Holmes quickly retorted in his own inimitable way:

"Oh! that does not count; I 'sneaked in,' as it were!"

Doctor Holmes remained at his country home in Beverly until late in September, this last year

of his life, and his health seemed steadily to improve with the bracing autumn weather.

[323] On his return to the city, however, he had a severe attack of the asthmatic trouble from which he had suffered all his life. A severe cold, and the "weight of years" aggravated what seemed at first but a slight indisposition; and the poet, with his accurate medical knowledge, realized that the end was not far distant.

But as he grew weaker and weaker, his sunshiny spirit shone all the brighter. With playful jests he tried to soothe the sad hearts of his dear ones, and to make them feel that the pain of parting was the only sting of death. He seldom, indeed, made any reference to the dark shadow he felt so near; but one morning, three or four days before his death, he said to his son:

"Well, Wendell, what is it? King's Chapel?"

"Oh, yes, father," said Judge Holmes.

"Then I am satisfied. That is all I am going to say about it."

On Sunday morning, October 7th, he seemed so much easier that his physician and intimate friend, Doctor Charles P. Putnam, went out of town to make a professional visit, leaving his brother, Doctor James Putnam, in charge.

[324] About noon Doctor Holmes had a sudden spasm, and his breathing became so labored that he asked to be moved into his favorite armchair.

"That is better, thank you. That rests me more," he said to his son, who stood beside him.

These were his last words. Painlessly and peacefully, with all the dear ones of his home around him, his life flowed away like the ebbing of a tide.

To the world outside, the tidings of Doctor Holmes' death, that bright October day, came with a terrible shock. As late as Thursday of the preceding week he had been down town, and was intending to be present at the meeting of the Saturday Morning Club. Not even his nearest friends realized that the end was so near.

"It is as if a long accustomed element had gone out of the air!" exclaimed one Boston citizen. "While Doctor Holmes lived we felt as if we were still bound by a living tie to the Titanic age of American literature."

"The death of Doctor Holmes," said Charles Eliot Norton, "marks the close of an epoch in American literature. He was the sole survivor of the five great New England authors, and he has
[325] no successor. This group was a remarkable one. They grew up, as it were, together, and are the product of our New England life in the first half century. Their writings were contemporaneous, and they were bound in the closest ties of friendship. Emerson, Longfellow, Whittier, Lowell, Holmes—no other section of the country can show such a group."

"Boston without Doctor Holmes!" exclaimed another friend. "What will it be like? There has been but one 'Autocrat,'—there will never be another!"

Yet not only Boston—the whole world mourned the departure of Oliver Wendell Holmes. Within his domain his genius was imperial, and his bright cheery nature endeared him to all humanity.

It seemed fitting that Nature herself should weep on the sad burial day of one whose life had embodied her sunshine!

The wind mourned, the rain fell continuously, as loving hands bore into King's Chapel, upon Wednesday, October 10, all that was mortal of our famous poet. The simple funeral rites began just at noon. The casket, upon which rested wreaths of pansies and laurels, was borne up the aisle to the wailing organ strains of Händel's "Dead March in Saul." Rev. Edward Everett Hale led
[326] the sad procession, reciting in his clear, sympathetic voice, "I am the resurrection and the life, saith the Lord; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live."

All the seats upon the middle aisle were reserved and occupied by the poet's immediate family and intimate friends, members of the Massachusetts Medical Society, representatives of Harvard College, and delegations from the numerous other societies of which the poet and physician was a member.

A beautiful wreath of laurel hung from the south gallery, marking with mute eloquence the vacant pew of the dead poet.

The Chapel was filled with a notable assembly, representing the best life of Boston—its intellect, culture, and heart. And probably never at one time had the ancient church held so many venerable personages. Rev. S.F. Smith, the author of "America," and Rev. Samuel May of Leicester, the only surviving classmates of Doctor Holmes, were present, in spite of the inclement weather. Judge Rockwood Hoar, fast nearing the fourscore milestone, Doctor Bartol, Mrs. Julia Ward Howe—all the great poet's friends and contemporaries were there to pay their last tribute.

[327] After the reading of passages from the Bible, and a prayer by Rev. Edward Everett Hale, a selection from Mendelssohn's "Elijah," "Oh, rest in the Lord," was sung by Miss Lena Little, followed by a chant, "The Lord is my Shepherd," and a hymn, "O Paradise," by the choir.

Then the strains of the "Dead March" again rolled from the organ, and the funeral procession

left the Chapel.

The services at the grave were attended by only the relatives and most intimate friends. It was the wish of Doctor Holmes and his family that he should rest beside his wife in the Jackson lot at Mt. Auburn. It is in the immediate vicinity of the Holmes' lot, amidst the beautiful oaks that the poet loved; and only a few yards distant rest Longfellow and James Russell Lowell.

The life of Oliver Wendell Holmes spanned nearly the whole nineteenth century; and to the very last he kept abreast of the feeling, the thought, the movement, of the day. He was one of the few men of our generation who raised the American name in the esteem of the whole world.

[328] Comparing Doctor Holmes with his four illustrious contemporaries in literature, Professor Norton says:—

"Emerson was the deepest thinker of them all; Longfellow possessed in a rare degree the power of felicitous expression, and gave us thoughts couched in the most beautiful poetry; Whittier was the apostle of freedom, fearless, and moved by an untiring purpose; Lowell was a man of versatile genius, as great in the field of poetry as he was in that of prose.

"Holmes was one who wrote without effort. His was a ready genius. His thoughts came unbidden, and he had but to give them expression in words. Apt, vivacious, animated, pure, happy, he always was at once a wit and a humorist, but greater in his wit than in his humor. Whatever his subject, he wrote of it with equal ability, and his books are remarkable for the variety of topics which he has treated so easily."

Of all his poems, Doctor Holmes ranked "The Chambered Nautilus" highest.

"I wrote that poem," he said, "at white heat. When it was finished I took it to my wife, who was sewing in an adjoining room, and said, 'I think I have the best poem here that I have ever written.' And I have never changed my mind about it."

[329] By universal consent, indeed, "The Chambered Nautilus" is considered the gem of Doctor Holmes' beautiful lyrics. The poet always kept in his study specimens of the nautilus shell, cut entirely across, to show the spiral ascent of its curious inhabitant. He delighted to show these shells to his visitors; and, as he replaced them on the shelves, he would often repeat the last stanza of his beautiful poem:—

Build thee more stately mansions, O my
soul,
As the swift seasons roll;
Leave thy low-vaulted past;
Let each new temple, loftier than the
last,
Shut thee from heaven with a dome
more vast,
Till thou at length art free,
Leaving thine out-grown shell by life's
unresting sea.

Among the poems of Oliver Wendell Holmes are seven that may truly be called "Hymns;" and it is well to remember that the test of the use and value of a hymn is not the occasion for which it was written, but its adoption into hymnal collections, and its use thereafter.

[330] "We were singing one of Doctor Holmes' hymns in our church," said Rev. Minot Savage, "that Sunday morning when the great singer was passing into the higher choir.

"Doctor Holmes was manly in his religion, and his songs show the bright and noble spirit that dominated his life. He was worshipful and trustful, and always hopeful. He was a firm, even passionate, believer in an existence after death, and found the ground of his trust in the dissecting-room. As a scientist he faced everything, and then believed that the soul was more than the body."

Of these seven hymns of Doctor Holmes', the familiar one beginning,—

Lord of all being, throned afar,
Thy glory flames from star to star,

the poet appropriately characterized his "Sunday Hymn." It first appeared in the *Atlantic Monthly* of December, 1859, and the "Professor" prefaced it with these words:—

"Peace be to all such as may have been vexed by any utterance the pages have repeated. They will doubtless forget for the moment the difference in the lines of truth we look at through our
[331] human prisms, and join in singing (inwardly) this hymn to the Source of the Light we all need to lead us, and the warmth which alone can make us all brothers."

In the many heartfelt tributes to Doctor Holmes, it is interesting to note that his spiritual character was appreciated and approved by men differing from him very widely in religious belief. Indeed, it would be impossible for any one to hold communion with him through his writings without growing more kindly, more loving toward his fellow-men, and more reverent,

more filial, towards his Heavenly Father.

"And personally," remarked an intimate friend, "Doctor Holmes was as delightful a character as he is in his books. His best thoughts came full flood, as it were, from a richly stocked mind. His most characteristic traits were his extreme kindliness and his animation. The mirth and vivacity which bubble forth from his books was the same which came spontaneously from his lips in conversation. He was a delightful companion, and a true friend to those who were so fortunate as to know him and be known by him."

Oliver Wendell Holmes taught that life is good and sweet, and worth the living. There is not in all his writings a single morbid note. The world is brighter and happier and better for the rare gift of such a life.

[332] His wit has been the solvent of bigotry. He has done for the religious thought of the century what Whittier did for the political; and his bright optimism has pierced many an old-time error with the potency of the sunbeam.

"It is clearly seen in the perspective," says Charles Dudley Warner, "that Doctor Holmes' life gives us the kind of reputation that is of value to one's native land, and shows us that, after all the parade of official station and the notoriety of politics and money, those names only endure in honor and love which are borne by men of high intellectual and moral qualities. When we sum up all our sources and achievements, it is to him and his few compeers that we must point for our distinction."

FOOTNOTES:

[1] From notes furnished the writer by Dr. Holmes.

[2] In the Harvard College Library may be seen a copy of Anne Bradstreet's poems, which passed through eight editions. The extraordinary title of her world-renowned book reads as follows: "Several poems compiled with great variety of wit and learning, full of delight, wherein especially is contained a complete discourse and description of the four elements, constitutions, ages of man, seasons of the year, together with an exact epitome of the three first monarchies, viz., the Assyrian, Persian, Grecian, and beginning of the Roman Commonweal to the end of their last king: with diverse other pleasant and serious poems. By a gentlewoman in New England." This talented lady was the ancestress not only of Oliver Wendell Holmes, but also of the Channings, Danas and Phillipses.

[3] From notes furnished by Doctor Holmes.

[4] From notes furnished by Doctor Holmes.

[5] From notes furnished by Doctor Holmes.

[6] From notes furnished by Dr. Holmes.

[7] From notes furnished by Dr. Holmes.

[8] The site occupied by the medical college was once covered by the tides.

Transcribers notes:

Maintained original spelling and punctuation.

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