

spirit of the composition. He is best in works which allow free range to his impatient fancy. In Joachim's great Hungarian Concerto, in some of the brilliant compositions of Ernst, in his own arrangement of Schubert's "Divertissement Hongrois," in certain transcriptions from Chopin, strangely unlike the transcriptions of Wilhelmj from the same poetic composer, he never fails to create a sensation. But those who would know Reményi must hear him, not in a great concert hall, but among a few sympathetic listeners. Fluent in five or six languages, he entertains the company now with droll conceits, now with reminiscences of famous artists and composers. He fondles the Stradivarius which he uses at concerts, or he displays with pride the beautiful violin

just made for him by an amateur in Brooklyn. The mazurka alternates with the merry jest. Field's exquisite "Nocturne of the Rose," or a fairy song of Mendelssohn's interrupts a rattle of anecdote. Suddenly Reményi begins the "Bach Chaconne," so transfigured by variations of expression that we stare in wonder. Or perchance, if the mood seize him, it may be our fortune to listen to some of the stirring melodies of the Hungarian people. In the wild rhythms of the gypsy dance, in the fierce splendor of the patriotic hymn, the player and the audience alike are fired with excitement. The passion rises; the tumult waxes furious; a tremendous sweep of the bow brings the music to an end; and then we can say that we have heard Reményi.

OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES.



STAIR-WAY IN THE OLD HOLMES MANSION.

THE subject of this sketch is a good specimen of the blood and training of New England. The laws of heredity, though they may be often complex and obscure, are as immutable as any of the laws of God; and a grandfather is not merely an ornament upon the family genealogical tree,

but a factor in the problem to be wrought out in the life and character of his descendant. The ancestors for generations back may be represented in the new-born babe of to-day. Each predecessor, considered as a descendant, is complex, having inherited a mixture of traits and tendencies; yet each, as an ancestor, may be considered as a substantial unity,—as yeoman, soldier, philosopher, lawyer, priest or poet.

The genius of American democracy applauds the manly lines of Burns, and despises the ignoble pride that glories in inherited titles and honors. But while it is a mark of weakness to strut through the world with badges of factitious distinction, it cannot be unworthy to trace one's acumen from an ancestor who was the first scholar of his age, one's courage and dignity from a

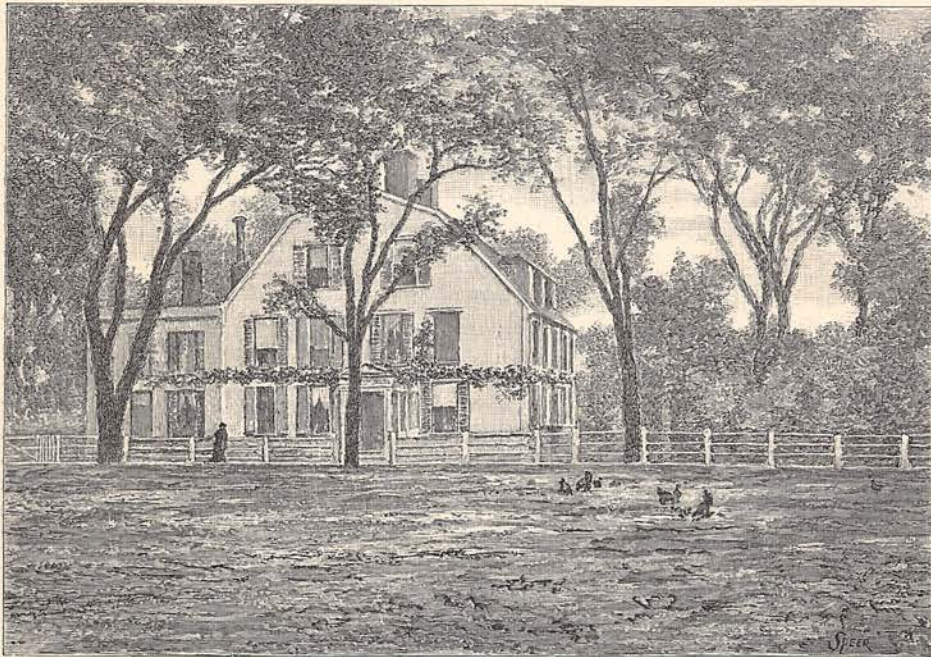
great captain, one's integrity from a great judge, or one's poetic feeling and power from some lover of beauty. It might seem that at birth all the descendible traits were shaken like dice, and the combination became a personality that never existed before.

It was a "fair conjunction" that produced

Oliver Wendell Holmes. The combination of his faculties would have made him a remarkable man in any country or in any sphere of life. It is on this account that his ancestry, as well as his mental training, is worth studying.

He was born in Cambridge, Mass., August

so Doctor Holmes is great-grandson of the lady celebrated in his poem, "Dorothy Q." The Wendells were lineal descendants of Evert Jansen Wendell, who came from Emden, in East Friesland, about 1640. He was a ruling elder in the church, and his arms were stained on a window of the old



BIRTHPLACE OF DOCTOR HOLMES, CAMBRIDGE, MASS.

29th, 1809. His father, the Rev. Abiel Holmes, was then in his forty-sixth year, in the maturity of his powers, and near the summit of his attainments. He was a man of good intellect, of pure character, just, well balanced and humane; an industrious student and meritorious writer. In religion he was "orthodox," but he exercised a large charity toward those of his brethren who inclined to the liberal views of Channing. In the poem entitled "A Family Record," read at Woodstock, Conn., July 4th, 1877, Doctor Holmes has given a most beautiful and touching picture of his father, Abiel; his grandfather David, "the Deacon"; and his great-grandfather John, one of the first settlers of the town.

The mother of our author was Sarah Wendell, daughter of the Hon. Oliver Wendell, a man of distinction, as the ancient aristocratic classification in the college catalogue shows. The wife of Oliver Wendell was Mary Jackson, daughter of Dorothy Quincy:

Dutch Church, in Albany. Jacob Wendell came to Boston early in the eighteenth century, and married the daughter of Dr. James Oliver. The family must have been wealthy, for in 1735 Jacob purchased the township of Pontoosuc, on the Housatonic River, containing 24,000 acres. This is the modern Pittsfield, and Doctor Holmes's country house was built upon a remnant of this tract of land that had descended to him.

Tradition has it that Jacob Wendell, in passing by Doctor Oliver's house, saw a pretty girl of nine years, and so much was he struck by her beauty (and by whatever else the lover sees in the predestined fair face) that he declared to a friend that he meant to wait for her to grow up and then to make her his wife,—which he accordingly did. Now, the pretty Mistress Wendell was the granddaughter of Mercy Bradstreet Oliver; and Mercy Bradstreet was the daughter of the colonial governor, Simon Bradstreet, and (what is of far more consequence)

of Anne Dudley Bradstreet, daughter of Thomas Dudley, the former governor and successor to Winthrop. Thomas Dudley was

"a puritan * * * tough to the core,
Such as prayed smiting Agag on red Marston
Moor,"—

but he had some tender fibers in his nature, too, and wrote quaint verses after the fashion of his time, as the curious may see in Duyckinck. He was also reported to be variously and thoroughly learned. His daughter Anne, the pride of the colony, who was heralded as the Tenth Muse, is our early morning star, casting the one gleam of beauty over that distant and dreary time. She did not appear to think, with the author of "Avis," that marriage and the Muses were incompatible; for she was wedded at sixteen, and from time to time brought along her numerous poems and her eight children together. It is not necessary that we should admire her poems, for most of them are devoted to topics foreign to poetic art and sentiment. "The Four Elements," "The Four Humors," "The Four Ages of Man," "The Four Seasons," "The Four Monarchies" (of the ancient world) would be tough subjects, even for such a versatile writer as Anne's illustrious descendant. But there are many touches here and there which show her feeling for the beautiful in nature. She could not, however, escape the incurable pedantry that infected the age. The elements of poetry in New England had to wait for development. Time was necessary to soften the prevailing austerity, to show that "beauty is its own excuse for being," and that the love of beauty is not idolatry. Time is necessary to transmute the stores of thought and experience into enduring forms of grace,—to reject triteness, to shun affectation, and to leave a certain other-worldliness of tone to the exclusive care of the clergy. The flowers of to-day spring from the leaf-mold of yesterday, and the poet is the fortunate product of all the best traits, the experience, toil and sacrifice of converging lines of ancestors. Although we cannot pretend to say from whom all the traits have come that are blended in Holmes, still the reflective man will believe that, besides the many excellences derived from the paternal line, some strain of courage and decision came from the Puritan captain, Dudley; some perception of the beautiful and some plastic art from his daughter Anne; some elegant and urbane graces

from the accomplished Olivers; some public spirit and probity from the Quincys; some cosmopolitan breadth and good-humor from Jacob Wendell.

The poet was born in a house that fronts the northern boundary of Harvard College grounds. In the opening chapter of "The Poet at the Breakfast Table" the old house is described with all the vividness that belongs to early impressions. This is a charming specimen of the author's prose.

Doctor Holmes was the fourth child of his parents. The eldest was Mary Jackson, who died soon after her marriage with Doctor Usher Parsons; the second was Ann Susan, married to Hon. Charles W. Upham, a well-known scholar and author; the third was Sarah Lathrop, who died in childhood; the fifth was John, a man of brilliant parts and universally beloved, who still resides in Cambridge. Readers of Lowell's poems will find frequent and friendly allusion to a certain "J. H."

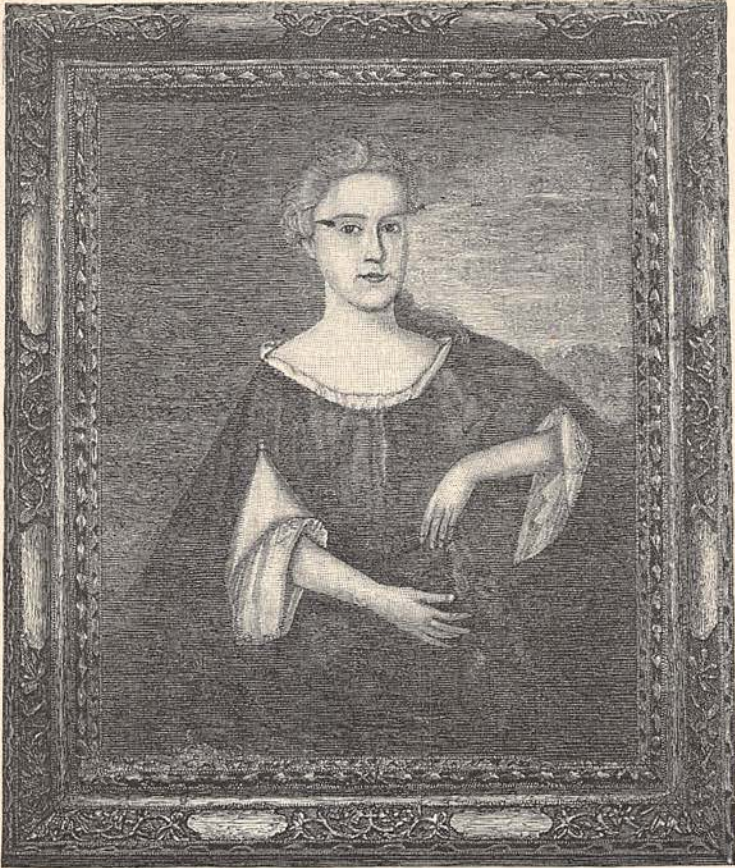
At the age of fifteen, the future poet was sent to Andover to finish his preparatory studies; not to Exeter, as Duyckinck erroneously has it. His recollections of this fine old town and of the now historic school are embodied in a noble poem, recited at a recent anniversary, mentioned later. He entered college at the age of sixteen, and was graduated in the class of 1829. The class numbered many distinguished men, and its annual gatherings have called forth some of the liveliest of the author's poems. Two of the most eminent of the class,—Judges B. R. Curtis and George T. Bigelow,—also the Hon. George T. Davis, a wonderfully brilliant talker, have died. There are still living Professor Pierce, the great mathematician, the Revs. James Freeman Clarke, Chandler Robbins, and William Henry Channing, eminent Unitarian clergymen, the Rev. S. F. Smith, author of our best-known national hymn, and others. These are "The Boys of '29." What college class was ever so commemorated? In the last complete edition, the class poems make over thirty pages,—a delightful collection, in which are seen all the changing lights of feeling, from frisky and rollicking youth to reflective, saddening age. One of the best known, of the lighter kind, is that for the year 1852, entitled "Questions and Answers:"

"Where, O where are the visions of morning,
Fresh as the dews of our prime?
Gone, like tenants that quit without warning,
Down the back entry of time."

The true poet begins to sing at an early age. The impulse comes with youthful blood, though the maturity of art is attained in later years. At Andover our poet made a spirited translation of a passage in Virgil, which may be found at the end of the complete edition (1877). His first published poems were written between 1830 and 1836—that is, during the time of his professional studies. For a young man of twenty-one to

at Harvard, and at the same commencement read his poem before the Phi Beta Kappa Society, entitled "Poetry, a Metrical Essay." In this year his first volume appeared, from the press of Otis, Broaders & Co. It was a thin book, but it had the "promise and potency" of fame.

In 1837 he joined with Doctors Storer, Reynolds, and Bigelow, in establishing the Tremont Medical School, a very suc-



PORTRAIT OF DOROTHY QUINCY ("DOROTHY Q."), SHOWING INJURIES RECEIVED FROM BRITISH BAYONETS DURING THE REVOLUTION.

produce such verses as are to be seen in the "Old Ironsides," "The Last Leaf," "My Aunt," "The Dilemma," and "The Music-Grinders," was not only a triumph in itself, but a sure portent of a successful career.

After leaving college, our author read law for a year, and then commenced the study of medicine. In 1833 he went to Europe, and spent nearly three years in the schools and hospitals of London and Paris. On his return in 1836, he took his medical degree

successful institution, afterward merged in the summer session of the Harvard Medical College. In this year, June 4th, his father died, aged seventy-four. His mother was spared for many years longer, dying in 1862, in the full possession of her faculties, at the age of ninety-three. In 1839 and '40 he was professor of anatomy and physiology in Dartmouth College, at Hanover, N. H. He became professor in the medical department of Harvard in 1847, and his connection with the college is still kept up. For several years

he practiced medicine in Boston, but relinquished it nearly twenty years ago.

He was married June 15, 1840, to Amelia Lee Jackson, daughter of the Hon. Charles Jackson, one of the justices of the Supreme Court. The very eminent physician, Dr. James Jackson, was a brother of the judge. Three children were born of this marriage: Oliver Wendell Holmes, jr., whom readers of the "Atlantic Monthly" will remember in the article, published during the late war, entitled "My Hunt after 'The Captain,'" and who is now a prominent lawyer in Boston, and an able and learned editor and author of legal works; Amelia Jackson, married to Mr. Turner Sargent, and now a widow; and Edward, also a lawyer, but not now in active practice.

For eighteen years after his marriage Doctor Holmes resided in Montgomery Place, near the Tremont House, then a more fashionable quarter than it is at present. There appears to have been no period in his life in which he was not busy with the pen. His "Boylston Prize Essays," published in 1843, gained him great reputation with the profession. Technical works like these will not demand our notice.

In 1849 a new edition of his poems appeared from the press of Ticknor & Co. This included among other additions the short, but exquisite, poem written for the Dickens dinner in 1842,—the "Nux Post-cœnatica," perhaps the best of his many after-dinner poems,—"Urania, a Rhymed Lesson," and the incomparable "Song of Other Days." In the same year he built a house for a summer residence in Pittsfield, Mass. He spent seven seasons in this pleasant retreat.

Doctor Holmes had come to be widely known as a poet, but few persons suspected that he was to become still more eminent in an entirely new field.

The "Atlantic Monthly" was established in 1857, the first number appearing in November. The original coterie included Emerson, Longfellow, Lowell, Holmes, Motley, J. Eliot Cabot, Edmund Quincy, Norton, Dwight and some others. Mr. Lowell was nominated as editor-in-chief by the writer of this sketch. In accepting the position, he said he thought Doctor Holmes would have been the better choice. "Depend upon it," he said, "Doctor Holmes will be our most effective writer. He is to do something that will be felt. He will be a new power in letters." The result proved the correctness of the prophecy. The "Atlantic" had many able contributors and was in-

debted greatly to the genius and taste of its editor, but "The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table" made an impression upon the public, both immediate and lasting.

The magazine was launched in a season of storm and stress. The financial condition of the country was unfavorable to any such enterprise, and its speedy failure was anticipated by the public. That it survived those early perils and became established as the representative of the matured thought, the literary conscience and the growing art of New England, is due to Doctor Holmes more than to any other man. There were in the first number other attractions, it is true, and many of them belong by common consent to American classics. But all were, in a certain sense, cast in familiar forms. "The Autocrat" only was an entirely new creation. The reader of the "Atlantic" always turned to "The Autocrat" first. This was proven after the first number by the notices of the press. Very odd most of the early notices were. The good, sedate critics did not know what to make of the thing. Some thought it undignified. Others professed to be more confirmed in their opinion that Holmes was only an inordinate egotist. The suckling reviewer undertook to put the puns under his microscope for analysis. The solemn purist lamented the tendency to slang; and while he admitted the brilliancy of the poems that were interspersed he thought they showed as ill as diamonds among the spangles of the court fool. The truth was the prosaic folk had no way to estimate Holmes. They wrote only stately sentences, while he was free when he chose to use the simplest language of every-day life. The ideas they would formally promulgate in methodical order, he flashed upon the reader with a dazzling wit. His winged words always feathered an unerring arrow. But the better class of readers understood the purpose of the author, and were content to follow him in his own willful way. He was very soon acknowledged to be the most original and powerful as well as most witty and sparkling of the writers of occasional essays. No series of papers for a century on either side of the Atlantic, excepting the "Noctes Ambrosianæ" of John Wilson, ever secured such attention. The "Noctes" are now obsolescent, and deservedly so. The poetry and sentiment they contain are not sufficient to preserve them, weighted as they are with allusions to now forgotten topics, with boxing, blackguardism, and hot toddy.

About the time the series of "The Autocrat" was completed, Doctor Holmes removed to a pleasant house on Charles street, No. 154, where he resided twelve years. From the back windows of this house there is a fine view of the broad expanse of Charles River, and of the charming region beyond, including the lovely rounded slopes of the Corey and Parker hills. Here at the end of the garden were kept the boats which readers of "The Autocrat" so well remember. One almost feels the cool salt breeze of the harbor and shrinks from the expected concussion with the bridge piles as he reads.

The success of "The Autocrat" was so enormous, and the fame of the author so surely established, that some timorous friends trembled for the fate of the next series, "The Professor." The same scene was set, and the same machinery was employed, but with a change of characters, and the materials for discussion, as before, came from the same inexhaustible quarry. Some hint of this apprehension of failure came to the author, as the reader may see (pp. 27-29), "—and the question is, whether there is anything left for me, the Professor, to suck out of creation, after my lively friend (the Autocrat) has had his straw in the bung-hole of the Universe." There was no occasion for fear. "The Professor" discoursed with a new energy, dealt with deeper problems, illustrated them by the lights of science and experience, and adorned them with striking and beautiful imagery. The Professor appears a graver person than the Autocrat. He has less to say upon social customs and the minor morals; he is less addicted to badinage, punning and drollery. He carries a high, serene head. The topics and the mode of treatment are mostly beyond the comprehension of the vulgar, and the book is necessarily less popular than its predecessor. But it is a noble book, and marks an increase in force of thought, in felicitous expression, and in sincere and tender pathos.

Doctor Holmes's next contribution to the "Atlantic" was entitled "The Professor's Story," since published as "Elsie Venner," the name of its unfortunate heroine. The work is characterized by many high qualities; especially in the observations that accompany the story. Many descriptions also are vivid and natural. But the motive is a hideous one, and affects the nervous reader as if it were the precursor of delirium tremens. The physiological theories and speculations in the book lie in the

debatable ground between science and superstition; and the unlearned, who can neither affirm nor deny, are fain to escape by quoting Hamlet upon the things undreamt of in philosophy.

The breaking out of the Civil War produced a great change in the current of our author's thought. The old abolitionists and the political antislavery men had always reproached him for his indifference to their cause; and they would have been glad to paraphrase for him some of the maledictions uttered by the Hebrew prophets. But the hour of the nation's need was to find him a patriot inspired with the most passionate devotion, as well as a bard clad in singing robes. Then came the "Voice of the Loyal North," in January, 1861.

"Enough of speech! the trumpet rings;
Be silent, patient, calm,—
God help them, if the tempest swings
The pine against the palm!"

We have little room to quote, but the titles are significant. Who can forget the feeling and the melody in "Brother Jonathan's Lament for Sister Caroline"?—the solemnity of the "Army Hymn"?—the thrilling appeal of "Never or Now"? But of all the hymns for music inspired by the war on either side the line, Holmes's "Union and Liberty" is undoubtedly the best. It is pitched as it should be upon a high key in sentiment and style; its movement is majestic as well as melodious; it breathes the most intense feeling, and ends in a glorious aspiration. It is impossible to listen to this grand hymn unmoved. Whenever it is sung, it draws the inevitable tribute of tears.

For a period of about six years after "Elsie Venner," the "Atlantic" had no continued work from Doctor Holmes; but there were many pieces both in prose and verse which are memorable, and have since been collected. A volume has been made of these prose articles, entitled "Soundings from the Atlantic." Among these are "My Hunt after 'The Captain,'" "A Visit to the Asylum for Aged and Decayed Punsters," "The Human Wheel, its Spokes and Felloes" (an ingenious explanation of the principles involved in walking).

"The Guardian Angel" was begun in the first number of the nineteenth volume of the "Atlantic," and was completed in the year 1867. This is a far more agreeable story than "Elsie Venner," of which it is in some respects a counterpart. Gifted Hopkins, a

rustic, would-be poet, but without the vision or the faculty divine, is the character probably best remembered. Of the pretty heroine, Myrtle Hazard, there are a number of pleasing pictures. The clergy are strongly represented, and in them we see the contending currents and eddies of theological opinion.

Probably the most devoted admirers of Doctor Holmes do not claim for him the power of a great novelist, the creator of new and permanent types of character. His people are incarnated qualities, personified traits. Few authors attain to the height of looking upon men as the Creator may do, still less of setting them forth as they are. The Creator protects the hawk no less than the dove, just as His rain and sunshine bless the just and the unjust. What may happen in His moral government we cannot say; but in the natural world there is no division of saints and sinners. The great poet looks at men with a like breadth of view, and the characters he develops are not all separated into heroes and villains, but are painted as they are, with some strain of good in the worst, some blemish of weakness, or perhaps a stain of guilt in the best.

Doctor Holmes has a clear vision, but mostly in the keenness of analysis. He could give the formula for Hamlet or Lear. To reverse this, to create a before-unimagined Hamlet, is another thing; and this special power of genius has been manifested rarely in any age. You can count all the great creators of character in English literature upon the fingers of one hand. The lessons of life as read in "The Guardian Angel" are salutary; its tone is generous and ennobling, and its pictures of New England people vivid and charming. And in this, as in every other work he has published, there is a flavor of personality which can never be mistaken. On every page you see "Holmes his mark." The chance utterances, the anecdotes, all the *obiter dicta*, show the intellectual superiority of the man, and give the story a value independent of its rank as a work of art.

In 1870 Doctor Holmes removed to the house, No. 296 Beacon street, where he still resides. This extension of the old Beacon street, formerly known as the Milldam, has a water line on the right going west, and the back windows of the house look out upon the same beautiful expanse of Charles River, of which mention has been made. The river here is near the sea and feels the strong incoming tides, and every day are to be seen the tribes of sea-birds, so charm-

ingly depicted in the poem entitled "My Aviary."

"The Poet at the Breakfast Table" appeared in 1871. The Poet is still farther removed than the Professor from the sympathy and appreciation of the general public, but the work contains some of the noblest thoughts of the author as well as the most perfect examples of his literary art. Its vigorous and almost passionate attacks upon certain theological opinions, especially the more rigid Calvinistic views of the Divine character and government, render the work more acceptable to the liberals than to the conservatives in religion. Theologians like Canon Farrar and Beecher now preach similar doctrines; it was not common to hear or read them a few years ago. The fellow-boarders of the Poet are finely drawn, and the conversations are strong and suggestive. If the talk seems a little less fresh and spontaneous than in "The Autocrat,"—if the topics are graver, and if the characters themselves are a little less entertaining, it must be remembered that in the long interval the author had naturally grown more reflective, and that his natural exuberance had yielded to the terrible pressure which the Civil War exerted upon all thoughtful men.

In closing this brief account of the "Breakfast Table" series the epilogue should be quoted. The author imagines that a book collector in 1972 finds the three volumes in a stall.

"YOUR CHOICE AMONG THESE BOOKS I DIME!

* * * *

"What have I rescued from the shelf?
A Boswell, writing out himself!
For though he changes dress and name,
The man beneath is still the same,
Laughing or sad, by fits and starts,
One actor in a dozen parts,
And whatsoever the mask may be,
The voice assures us, *This is he.*

* * * *

"And his is not the playwright's page;
His table does not ape the stage;
What matter if the figures seen
Are only shadows on a screen?
He finds in them his lurking thought,
And on their lips the words he sought,
Like one who sits before the keys,
And plays a tune himself to please."

There is not space to quote the whole; it will be enough to call the reader's attention to it as one of the most quaint and thoughtful poems of our author.

Motley, the historian, in a letter written from Rome in 1859 said, *apropos* of the Autocrat: "He is, beyond question, one

of the most original writers in English literature, and I have no doubt his fame will go on increasing every day. I hardly know an author in any language to be paralleled with him for profound and suggestive thought, glittering wit, vivid imagination and individuality of humor."

Whittier in his letters often referred to the poems contained in the "Autocrat," and of the "Chambered Nautilus" wrote, "That poem is booked for immortality."

In 1870 appeared "Mechanism in Thought and Morals," a study of the functions of the brain,—a treatise that compels the attention of the reader, and makes him for the time a thinker upon the most abstruse matters. In many respects this is the most profound work by Doctor Holmes, a work for which few living men would be equal. The physiologist, possessing the requisite knowledge, might be found wanting in the imagination or the transcendent power of expression. No other literary artist of equal eminence—if there is one—has the basis of professional training and experience. It has always been noticeable in "The Autocrat" and similar works that the author's stores of learning are made entertaining as well as useful to common readers. The researches of most scientific men, especially in abstruse subjects, like the relations of body and mind, are preserved in works which the public cannot understand if they should try. What Tyn-dall has done in the interpretation of the laws of nature is done even more brilliantly by our author; and this is not due to any letting down the subject; it is rather furnishing the means for the ordinary mind to ascend to the higher level of thought.

It would be impossible in the limits of this article to mention all the results of Doctor Holmes's mental activity. Besides the works we have quoted, he has delivered many brilliant literary lectures, which we trust may be printed in the full collection yet to come. On every great civic occasion he has been called upon for an ode or a song, and never in vain. Poems, they tell us, are never written to order. But Doctor Holmes, though in perpetual demand, has always produced something in harmony with the occasion. He is fairly Boston's laureate.

Since the appearance of the last "complete" volume Doctor Holmes has written "My Aviary," "The Silent Melody," Sonnets on the Seals of Harvard College, and the Centennial Poem for Phillips Academy

of Andover. He has also published a memoir of John Lothrop Motley, the historian.

It is impossible to say what our grandsons will think of the poems we now delight in. Great poets like Tennyson dominate their age. Their rule ends, and their fashion is obsolete, when a new power comes into being. Of the poets lauded by Griswold thirty years ago not one in ten is read. The romantic and sentimental bards of the old Philadelphia magazines are as visionary and voiceless as Ossian's ghosts. This age demands something beyond juvenile sentiment and melodious woe. And while it is neither wise nor necessary to make comparisons among our leading six or eight poets, we may be allowed to consider the work of Holmes by itself, in reference to its intrinsic qualities, its agreement with what is universal in human nature and therefore likely to endure. The most obvious characteristic of his poetry is its combined terseness and finish. The lines are often poetical proverbs or epigrams, with vigor and point in every phrase. This enhances the value both of tender and of comic verse, giving the height of beauty to the one, and the keenness of wit to the other. Professedly witty poems are often tedious. The regularly recurring pun or quibble in the fourth line of the stanza, after the manner of Hood, may be amusing, but is yet something quite unlike true wit. Holmes has not only the command of witty phrases, but is a creator of wit in the concrete. "The One-Hoss Shay," for instance, is a complete witticism,—a witticism illustrating itself in action, a pseudo-logical demonstration leading to an absurd and merry end. Enough quips and jokes could be gleaned from his poems to furnish every living pretender to the *vis comica* excepting Lowell. The only Englishman of modern times comparable in this respect to Holmes is Hood, and there are many points of resemblance in the natures of the two men. But Holmes is healthier in tone, more robust in intellect, wider in culture, and superior in learning, style, and in splendor of effect.

As in the case of Hood, the fun in Holmes is always jostling the pathos. After some comic picture or grotesque phrase or quick thrust, the reader comes suddenly upon a stanza of perfect beauty of form, with the gentlest touch of natural feeling. To illustrate this, it may be pardonable to quote even from so well-known a poem as "The Last Leaf."

"I know it is a sin
For me to sit and grin
At him here;
But the old three-cornered hat,
And the breeches and all that
Are so queer.

"The mossy marbles rest
On the lips that he has prest
In their bloom;
And the names he loved to hear
Have been carved for many a year
On the tomb."

The last stanza is a pearl so perfect that one cannot conceive it as having been *made*; it seems that it must have been created.

The unreflecting portion of the reading world has been unjust to Holmes. Dull gravity often passes for profundity, and wit is considered an attribute of shallow minds. It is dangerous, to the jester, to shake the jester's bauble, and he who makes the world laugh is often thought to wear only a fool's cap. But with Holmes the sparkles of wit are like bubbles on a strong tide of feeling. He was himself apprehensive of the effect of his jocose poems.

"Besides—my prospects—don't you know that people wont employ
A man that wrongs his manliness by laughing like a boy;
And suspect the azure blossom that unfolds upon a shoot,
As if wisdom's old potato could not flourish at its root?"

It may be observed here with regard to his easy-going prose, as in "The Autocrat," that some men profess to be soon tired of Holmes. Probably he does not let them drowse. His liveliness is undignified. And truly there are writers who have admirable qualities without any trace of humor or any scintillation of wit. But we have enough of laborious dullness, and we must welcome the writer who gives life and zest to thought, and who can be gay and wise at once.

The sense of melody is perhaps included in the idea of finish; but the melody of Holmes's verse is characteristic and supreme. Of all the meters he has chosen he is easily master. In the measure of some really great poets you discern only a formal and studied correctness. In Holmes the movement is so perfect that one cannot conceive of the thought apart from its natural music. It is now as light and joyous as the flight of a bird; now as steady as the tramp of an army; now as gay and arch as the practiced steps of a dancer, or as swift as an athlete in a race. As poetry is thought in musical form, the perfection of meter, answering to

the inner sense of melody, can never be unimportant.

In the choice of subjects Holmes is seen to be a poet of high rank. He is not restricted like many to a monotonous kind of song. Of out-door nature we see less perhaps than we could desire; but we are consoled by thinking that in many volumes of poetry we see nothing else. But scarcely any form of poetic thought and expression is foreign to him. Almost his first production was the spirited address to the "Old Ironsides,"—a poem that is alive with patriotic feeling. In the same grand style are written the songs inspired by the late Civil War, as a whole the noblest of their kind.

If it be allowed to praise a classic drinking song, "The Song of Other Days" may be cited as one of the most splendid and ornate specimens in modern literature. There is not a line in it that does not sparkle like a gem. The only criticism is that there is too much of it,—an embarrassment of riches. Perhaps so, for singing; but, for reading, which stanza would you cut out? None of the jovial crew of bards, from Ben Jonson down, have done anything finer.

The poems entitled "Vignettes" were originally pendants to his lectures on Wordsworth, Keats, Shelley and Moore. They have an inexpressible charm for the reader of literary tastes, because they show in the most musical verse how deep and strong are the sympathies of our poet for his elder brethren. Equally hearty, graceful and touching, are his tributes to Lowell, Motley, Dr. Clarke, Webster, Dickens and Burns. The lines take hold of us like the grasp of a friendly hand. The images vary, and the thoughts, but the same fervent spirit animates all.

We have spoken of great poets as dominating their age. Probably every writer of verse feels at the outset the strong influence of the masters. Imitation is an inevitable homage to the superior mind. The weaker remain imitators, the stronger in time assert and free themselves. But it is remarkable in reading the poems of Holmes to see how little he is indebted to his predecessors. His ideas, his manner, his wit and pathos, his fire, his melody, are entirely his own. Not one of his characteristic poems can be referred to any outward source, nor mistaken for the production of any other poet. He is a new essence, a new color or flavor. Equally original, *sui generis*, is his prose; and it has a charm that is inexplicable. When the casual reader, looking over a

number of the "Atlantic," begins a sentence by Holmes, no matter upon what subject, he is a limed bird. He cannot choose but read on. Everything else is poor and common by comparison. There is but the one man who could have written it.

The absence of formality is one of the principal charms both in his prose and his poetry. Not that he is flippant or slangy, but he has the rare art of varying the tone so as to suit the changing forms and coloring of thought. Sometimes he uses pungent short sentences, formed of the most familiar words, and hitting the sense like Æsop. Then without bustle or jar he glides into passages of exquisite beauty, in which every thought is a poem and every word a gem. Or it may be that he hurls a bolt of indignation at some hypocrisy, or rises into a strain of eloquence, such as would please the stately rhetorician fresh from the study of Livy or Macaulay.

While so much stress is laid upon the literary art of Holmes,—his skill in presenting subjects and his unrivaled felicity in witty and wise illustration,—it must not be overlooked that he is in himself a prime force. This is felt by all who come in contact with him. Those who have observed him in playful or serious talk with such persons as Emerson and Lowell can never forget the impression of *intensity*. His words and his countenance were alive with power and with feeling; the whole man, body and mind, seemed only a miraculous intellectual engine. It is this primal force that pierces through his wit, sparkles in his humor, lifts his imagination, touches in his pathos, and gives to thought its resistless power.

At the same time it is remarkable to notice the perfect balance. Generally the men of such vividness of thought and energy of expression are hasty, unfair and one-sided. Witness the great reformers, one and all. The energy of Holmes is under perfect control. He is decidedly a conservative in his general tendency. With all the abundant flow of hilarity in some of his class songs, he can scarcely be called jovial; and, in spite of his having written a fine bacchanalian song, he is by nature and habit abstemious. Neither robust nor yet delicate in constitution, he keeps a secure and moderate course, and is as fresh now when verging on three-score and ten as most men at fifty. Still his habits of thought, his perhaps over-refined sensibility, and a certain *shyness* lead him to shun contact with men of more robust nature. One paragraph in "The Poet at the

Breakfast Table" might be taken for an expression of the peevishness of an invalid or the ill-nature of a misanthrope, if we did not have the proper commentary. He says:

"I have a kind of dread, rather than hatred, of persons with a large excess of vitality; great feeders, great laughers, great story-tellers, who come sweeping over their company with a huge tidal wave of animal spirits and boisterous merriment. I have pretty good spirits myself, and enjoy a little mild pleasantry, but I am oppressed and extinguished by these great, lusty, noisy creatures, and feel as if I were a mute at a funeral when they get into full blast."

Readers of "The Autocrat" and the others come to know Holmes as very few authors are known. As in Montaigne, the egotism of the essayist becomes a charm. That Holmes is no Puritan in creed, no ascetic in practice, no partisan, neither wholly optimist nor pessimist; that he has no "sentiment" but that which is in harmony with intellectual health and cheerful temper; that he is as obstinate a cit as Doctor Johnson, and believes in Boston as Johnson did in London; that he prefers a brown stone mansion to a cabin in the woods; that he is the hater of vulgarity and pretension, and of quacks, literary and other; that he has, in spite of sarcasm and gibe, a warm and tender heart, full of delicate consideration for others; that he is active in sympathy and friendly help; that he has gone through the perils of life without reproach—all these things and many more are to be seen in his pages by the wise reader.

The later poems give not the least intimation of declining power. The reminiscences of school days at Andover are fresh in feeling, somewhat chastened by experience, but as beautiful as the memory of spring-time. This poem has been likened to Goldsmith's "Deserted Village," but the only reason appears to be that it is a personal retrospection in melodious ten-syllabled verse, finished with the nicest care. "My Aviary" is full of masterly effects,—a series of marine pictures, showing that our author, had he taken to the woods and the shore, might have coped with the poets of nature on their own ground. "The Silent Melody" is saddening, but it is the conception and the work of a true poet. Evidently the time for *Terminus* to be written is still distant.

Perhaps we are too near now to judge dispassionately of what is likely to become classic. Only a certain, measurable bulk of poetry holds its place among men.

Every new poet, when his works come to be generally read, crowds off some older one. But it is difficult to imagine the time when any of the characteristic poems of Holmes will slumber on the shelves of antiquaries. They must be eternally new to the new generations, because they are founded in nature, constructed with art, animated by the noblest qualities of intellect and feeling,—uniting the wit of Heine with the freshness of Béranger,—and are finished as few poems have been finished since the odes of Horace.

The life of our poet has not in the ordinary sense been eventful. Goethe attempted to sum human experience in a phrase: "I have lived and have loved." But this seems inadequate unless we add "I have toiled and have achieved." Holmes has encountered no adverse fates, nor has he passed through those vicissitudes that try the souls of some men. Nature gave him a good outfit, and fortune has favored him at every step of his career. His has been an active life, devoted to earnest study and the pursuit of high ideals; it has been rewarded by ample contemporary honor, and, above all, blest with domestic happiness and with the love of friends. Not until the silver cord is loosed, and the golden bowl is broken, can the curtain be lifted from the serene beauty of the poet's home.

The man who is nearing three-score-and-ten may feel the glow of emotion as keenly as in middle age, but he is certain to be more reserved in expressing it. Twenty years ago the "Atlantic" dinners were wonderfully brilliant. The sparkle of the after-dinner talk was incommunicable,—not in the least studied, but natural and exuberant. The absolute loss of those conversations and encounters of wit, when Emerson, Longfellow, Holmes, Lowell and others, sat about the board, is greatly to be regretted. Judge Hoar, who inherits the wit of Roger Sherman, bore his full part. Lowell probably uttered more elaborate sentences,—glowing with new-born images; Holmes made the swiftest play and scored most points, both serious and comic. Meanwhile Emerson's wise face was lighted by a miraculous smile that would have been the delight and despair of a painter; and in the end he took the thought which the others were playing hockey with, and calmly set it in an apothegm of crystal beauty.

The "Atlantic" Club at times was ambulatory, although it generally met at Parker's.

Once or twice it dined at Point Shirley with Taft, who is *facile rex* of our sea-board. Once it dined at a little restaurant in Winter place, kept by a man of versatile genius, M. Fontarive, the first of the French cooks of the time. Once it met at Zach. Porter's in North Cambridge,—not a hotel, but an old-fashioned tavern. The cooking was marvelous, and was done under the landlord's eye. His creed was that of Ezra Weeks of the Eagle Inn:

"Nothin' riles me, I pledge my fastin' word,
Like cookin' out the natur' of a bird."

The ducks were brought in and carved by Porter himself, as a mark of consideration to the distinguished guests. The knife was keen and was wielded by a deft hand; the slices fell about the platter like a mower's swath, until the carcass was bare as a barrel.

"What do you do with the bird after that?" Lowell asked of the landlord.

"Wal," said Porter, with a curious twinkle in his eyes, "when I've sliced off the breast, an' the wings an' legs like that" (pointing to the shell), "I gin'rally give the carkess to the poor."

Dr. Palmer, whose East Indian sketches had just been published and greatly admired, was a special guest on this occasion; and the fun of the chorus of palanquin bearers was as current about the table as "Pinafore" phrases are to-day. Holmes was in high spirits and talked his best, mostly to Longfellow. It was almost like a veritable autocrat in full activity, cōruscating, punning, and bearing all before him.

There were no horse-cars then, I think; or it might have been late; at all events, the whole party, including Emerson, Longfellow and the other Olympians, walked down to Harvard square through nearly a foot of new-fallen snow. The impression of this intellectual feast is ineffaceable, but it seems now as far away as the Trojan war.

Doctor Holmes attends church at the old King's Chapel, where the creed is Unitarian, though the English form of worship has been retained. He is as fully occupied in his duties as professor as in his younger days, and there are but few marks of physical strain. His poetic faculties seem to be as active and creative as ever. All lovers of letters will join in wishing that the additions to his three-score-and-ten may be many, and that his wintry days may be as free from "labor and sorrow" as those of his sunny autumn.