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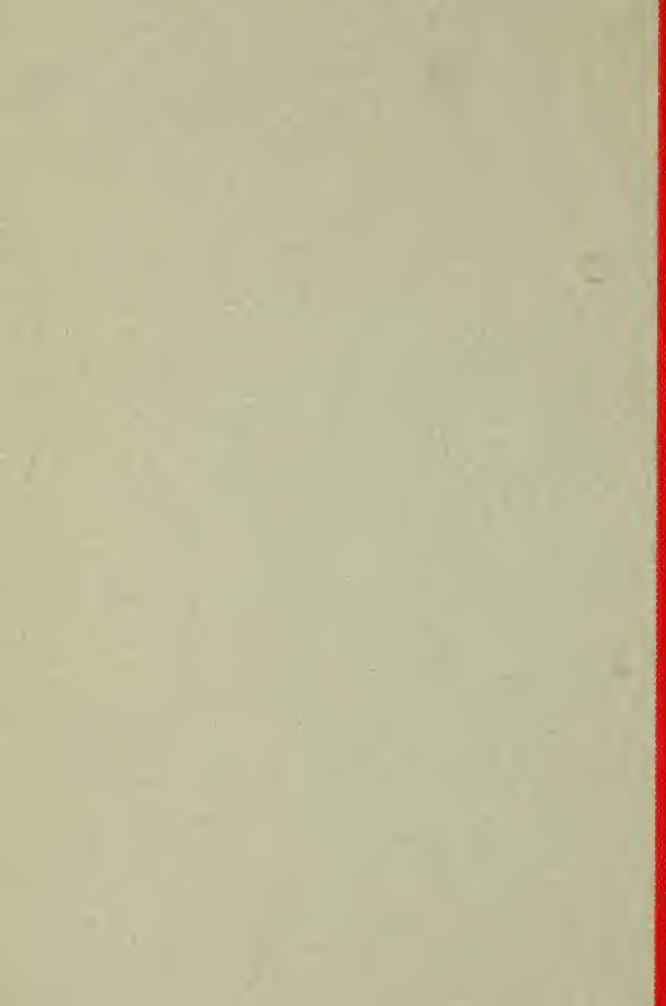
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MAYNARD'S
ENGLISH · CLASSIC · SERIES

WITH · EXPLANATORY · NOTES

SELECTED POEMS

OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES

MAY 25 1898
NEW YORK

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- 61 **Macaulay's Essay on Lord Bacon.** (Condensed.)
- 62 **The Alcestis of Euripides.** English Version by Rev. B. Potter, M.A.

(Additional numbers on next page.)

APR 4 1898

SELECTED POEMS

BY
OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES

WITH INTRODUCTION AND NOTES

BY
E. H. TURPIN



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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

UNTIL 1884 there stood on Cambridge Common an old yellow gambrel-roofed house, its grounds sweet with honeysuckle and shady with elms and Lombardy poplars. It was a house with a history. It had been General Ward's headquarters, and there Washington and his staff had been entertained. But its chief interest for us lies in the fact that it was the birthplace and home of one of our best loved American men of letters.

Oliver Wendell Holmes, the third child but first son of Rev. Abiel Holmes, was born August 29, 1809. Among his ancestors he counted the Wendells, Olivers, Quincys, Bradstreets—"the Brahmin caste of New England," to use a phrase of his own coining. His father was an orthodox Calvinist, "full of learning but never distressing others by showing how learned he was." Holmes, then, "had a right to be grateful for a probable inheritance of good instincts, a good name, and a bringing up in a library, where he bumped about among books from the time when he was hardly taller than one of his father's or grandfather's folios."

The merry, restless boy was sent to school first to Ma'am Hancock, afterward to Ma'am Prentiss, and then to a school in Cambridgeport, where he first met Margaret Fuller and Richard Henry Dana. At the age of fifteen he was sent to Phillips Academy in Andover, and he graduated from Harvard in the famous class of '29—among whose members were Benjamin R. Curtis, Samuel T. Smith, James Freeman Clarke, G. T. Bigelow, G. T. Davis, and Benjamin Pierce. His talent showed itself in sparkling

verses contributed to *The Collegian*, and some of his best known poems—such as *Old Ironsides* and *The Last Leaf*—belong to this early period.

His father cherished a vain hope that he would enter the ministry, but, after a year's experimental study of law, he settled on medicine as his profession. He studied two years in Boston, and then went abroad for three years' work in Paris and Edinburgh. In 1836 he took his degree of M. D., and he built up a fair practice for himself during the next two years. His dissertations gained three of the four Boylston prizes, and in 1839 he was appointed Professor of Anatomy and Physiology in Dartmouth College. The next year he married Miss Amelia Lee Jackson. A little later he resigned his Dartmouth professorship and devoted himself to the practice of medicine until 1847, when he became Professor of Anatomy and Physiology at Harvard. Alluding to the variety of his functions, he said that he occupied not a professor's chair in the school but a whole settee; after a separate professorship was established for physiology his work was limited to anatomy. On this subject he delivered four weekly lectures, sometimes written but generally extemporaneous, illustrated by diagrams, models, microscopic preparations, etc. He was an enthusiastic teacher, and the one o'clock hour was assigned him because he alone could hold the attention of the students wearied by four hours of previous lectures. He experimented in optics, improved the stereoscope, did original work in microscopy, and published various medical treatises. In one of these he attacked homeopathy, in another he made an onslaught on his allopathic brethren for excessive use of drugs. There are few subjects in medical science which Dr. Holmes did not investigate, and that in thorough and illuminating fashion. About the time he accepted the Harvard professorship he undertook to deliver a course of lyceum lectures, and he remained in the lecture field for several years. Those were days when our best men—such men as Lowell, Emerson, even Thackeray—

were engaged in such work, but life on the wing was distasteful to Holmes, and he decided that he "preferred nateral death to puttin' himself out of the world by any such violent means as lecterin'." He was known far and wide as a graceful writer of "occasional" verse; whenever a poem, grave or gay, was desired he was applied to, and he rarely failed to respond. Among the best known of his "occasional" poems, are those written for the annual meetings of the Harvard class of '29.

Had Dr. Holmes died before 1858, he would have been remembered only as "a clever man, a good medical professor, a shrewd humorist, a merry wit, and 'occasional' writer," but in that year he established his fame as the inventor of a new kind in literature. In 1857 *The Atlantic Monthly*, which owed its name to Holmes' suggestion, was established with Lowell as editor. Holmes was asked to contribute. Long before he had published two crude, bright articles in *The New England Magazine*, and breaking the silence of a quarter of a century, he resumed the thread of his discourse with "I was just going to say, when I was interrupted"—the beginning of the famous *Autocrat* papers. These papers scored immediate success as a work charming and *sui generis*. There is indeed nothing like it in literature unless it be Wilson's *Noctes Ambrosianæ*. Over his coffee the *Autocrat* dispenses wit and wisdom on diverse subjects. The other persons around the boarding-house table are vividly photographed—the soft-voiced little schoolmistress, the landlady's daughter, the poor relation, "the young man whom they call John," the boy Benjamin Franklin, the poet, the divinity student, the professor. Holmes said, "the series was not the result of an express premeditation, but was, as I may say, dipped out of the running stream of my thoughts."

The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table was followed by *The Professor at the Breakfast Table*, and later by *The Poet at the Breakfast Table*—works on the same plan but inferior in execution. Holmes then tried his hand on a novel, *Elsie*

Venner, first called *The Professor's Story*. He never quite forgave the friend who called it "a medicated novel." *Elsie Venner* and *The Guardian Angel* are not novels of plot, but stories written "to illustrate a psychological theory of heredity, and interest centers chiefly on the one character whose life and nature sets forth the theory." Both contain much practical philosophy and vivid pictures of New England life. *The Guardian Angel*, while less weird, is more artistic.

Coeval with *The Atlantic Monthly* was the Saturday Club, which numbered among its members Emerson, Motley, Hawthorne, Holmes, Whittier, Lowell, Longfellow, Hoar, Agassiz, Sumner, Whipple, Fields—a brilliant array. Holmes loved the club with peculiar affection, and seldom voluntarily missed one of its meetings. Dr. Sanborn, an Oxford scholar who met Holmes at the club, described him thus: "Dr. Holmes was highly talkative and agreeable; he converses very much like the Autocrat of the Breakfast Table, wittily and in a literary way, but, perhaps, with too great an infusion of physiological and medical metaphor. He is a little deaf, and has a mouth like the beak of a bird; indeed, he is, with his small body and quick movements, very like a bird in his general aspect. When poor Kingsley was in Boston he met Holmes, who came in, frisked about and talked incessantly, Kingsley intervening with a few words only occasionally. At last Holmes whisked himself away, saying, 'And now I must go.' 'He is an insp-sp-spired j-j-j-hackdaw,' said Kingsley."

In 1882 he resigned his Harvard professorship, held thirty-five years, and he gave his dearly loved medical library, consisting of "965 volumes and many pamphlets," to the Boston Medical Library. In 1886, accompanied by his daughter Mrs. Sargent, he made his second visit to Europe. He gave an account of this in his *Hundred Days in Europe*, published as a serial in *The Atlantic Monthly*. The universities of Edinburgh, Oxford, and Cambridge conferred degrees on him, he was entertained by Carlyle

and Tennyson, fêted and honored everywhere. Personally he was as delightful as in his books. Miss Mitford found him "a small, compact little man, the delight and ornament of every society he enters, buzzing about like a bee or fluttering about like a humming bird, exceedingly difficult to catch unless he really be wanted for some kind act, and then you are sure of him."

Holmes' long, uneventful life had been singularly care-free and happy, but toward the end troubles came thick and fast. In 1884 his younger son, Edward, died; four years later his wife, the helpmate of nearly half a century, was taken from him, and the next year was saddened by the death of Mrs. Sargent, his only daughter. Longfellow, Whittier, Lowell, Emerson, Bryant, these lifelong friends had passed away, and his old comrades, Ticknor, Fields, Prescott, Pierce, Clarke, Parkman, were dead. The meetings of the Saturday Club became more and more for him a gathering of ghosts; the fancy of his youth was fulfilled and he was "the last leaf." Yet, as he said, he was "all alive" to the last. Even under the shadow of impending blindness our "laughing philosopher's" merry humor did not forsake him, and he explained to a friend that he had "a cataract in the *kitten* state of development." Happily, however, the threatened calamity never overtook him. Dr. Holmes' eyesight lasted his lifetime. When he was "eighty-five years *young*," he could still take long walks through the Boston streets, dear to him as those of London to Dr. Johnson, and drive through the country in search of big trees. Painlessly and peacefully the end came on the 10th of October, 1894. Two days later he was buried from King's Chapel. Rev. E. E. Hale led the funeral procession, which was attended by Rev. S. F. Smith and Rev. Samuel May, Holmes' only surviving classmates.

Holmes struck no morbid note. He felt that life was good and well worth living and his readers "grow more kindly to men and more reverent to God."

Among the best biographies of Holmes are those by

Kennedy, Brown, and Morse. But Holmes is, as he himself intimated, his own Boswell, and to know him, man and author, at his best we must read *The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table*.

CHRONOLOGY OF HOLMES' CHIEF WORKS

Poems, 1836.

Boylston Prize Dissertations for the years 1836, 1837, and 1838.

Homeopathy and its Kindred Delusions, 1842.

The Contagiousness of Puerperal Fever, 1843.

Urania: a Rhymed Lesson, 1846.

Astræa: the Balance of Illusions, 1850.

The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table, 1858.

The Professor at the Breakfast Table, 1859.

Currents and Counter-Currents in Medical Science, 1860.

Elsie Venner: a Romance of Destiny, 1861.

Border Lines of Knowledge in Some Provinces of Medical Science, 1862.

Songs in Many Keys, 1863.

Soundings from the Atlantic, 1863.

The Guardian Angel, 1867.

Mechanism in Thought and Morals, 1871.

The Poet at the Breakfast Table, 1873.

Songs of Many Seasons, 1874.

John Lothrop Motley: a Memoir, 1878.

The Iron Gate, and other Poems, 1880.

Medical Essays, 1883.

Pages from an Old Volume of Life, 1883.

A Mortal Antipathy, 1885.

One Hundred Days in Europe, 1887.

Before the Curfew, and other Poems, 1888.

Over the Teacups, 1890.

CRITICAL OPINIONS

MOST of you have perhaps the impression that Dr. 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 Dr. Holmes is chiefly skillful. I assure you that he is equally skillful with scalpel and with microscope. And I think that none of us can understand the meaning and scope of Dr. 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 vein and nerve, the form and function of every muscle, and not only to know 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.—*President Eliot of Harvard, on occasion of Holmes' Seventieth Birthday.*

If the question is asked, Would the verse of Dr. Holmes be held in so much favor if he had not confirmed his reputation by prose replete with poetic humor and analogy? the fairest answer may be in the negative. Together, his writings surely owe their main success to an approximate exhibition of the author himself. . . . As a New Englander he long ago was awarded the highest sectional praise, that of being among all his tribe the cutest. His cleverness and versatility bewilder outside judges. Is he a genius? By all means. And in what degree? His prose, for the most part, is peculiarly original. His serious poetry scarcely has been the serious work of his life; but in his specialty, verse suited to the frolic or pathos of occasions, he has

given us much of the best delivered in his own time, and has excelled all others in delivery. Both his strength and weakness lie in his genial temper and his brisk, speculative habit of mind. For, though almost the only modern poet who has infused enough spirit into table and rostrum verse to make it worth recording, his poetry has appealed to the present rather than the future; and, again, he has too curious and analytic a brain for purely artistic work. . . . A few of his lyrics already belong to our select anthology, and one or two of his books must be counted as striking factors in what twentieth-century chroniclers will term (and here is matter for reflection) the development of early American literature.—*E. C. Stedman in Poets of America.*

One day, reading what Emerson said of Montaigne (after I had passed the first half dozen words) the thought of Dr. Holmes at once arose in my mind: "There have been men with deeper insight, but, one would say, never a man with such abundance of thought; he is never dull, never insincere, and has the genius to make the reader care for all that he cares for. The sincerity and marrow of the man reaches to his sentences. I know not anywhere the book that seems less written. It is the language of conversation transferred to a book. Cut these words and they would bleed; they are vascular and alive. Montaigne talks with shrewdness; knows the world and books and himself, and uses the positive degree"—with more almost equally applicable. In spite, however, of the fact that all this which is said of Montaigne might be said of Holmes, if anyone says that Holmes is "an American Montaigne," he must be contradicted, absolutely. *Holmes was Holmes!*

There can be no question that lyric poetry was his proper field. Truly the lyre is never far away from him in his happiest moods. His melody was absolutely perfect; he could take any form of rhyme ever devised by song-writers, and render perfect music with it. He was a consummate master of all that is harmonious, graceful, and

pleasing in rhythm and in language. He played with measures with such light, natural mastery as Hawthorne tells us that the Fawn displayed in dancing. In all respects his literary finish defied fault-finding. His perfect taste could never be deceived. He had more even than taste, or judgment, or discretion; he had a quality which must be called tact. . . .

Very accurate and painstaking was he concerning the literary finish of his works. He wrote a simple, what may be called a gentlemanlike style, and of great purity, but crowded with allusions, so that it was truly remarked by one of his critics, and has been often repeated by others, that the greater the scholarship of the reader, the greater also the pleasure which he would derive from Dr. Holmes' writings. The same thing was true of Thackeray; both wrote for educated and well-bred audiences.—*John T. Morse, Jr., in Life and Letters of Holmes.*

Few authors of Holmes' depth have covered so wide a field and done their work so uniformly well. He was not a great thinker; he brought no burning message; he seldom struck the deep strata of life; but he knew the world surprisingly well, and he touched its life at a thousand different points. He skimmed with wonderful grace over a vast amount of surface, but he seldom dived deep below. Like Pope, he could recut a somewhat commonplace idea until it scintillated at every point; with both it mattered not so much what? as how? But had Holmes nothing to commend him but his wit, he would soon be forgotten. He possessed a deep vein of pathos, which, mingled with his wit, produced humor of the genuine kind. In reading his books one may not always tell whether the tears that sometimes come are from sympathy or from laughter. It is as a humorist that Holmes will be longest remembered.—*Pattee's American Literature.*

So thick beneath the line he reads,
 They shade the sculptured stone; 20
 The child unveils his clustered brow
 And ponders for a while
 The graven willow's pendent bough,
 Or rudest cherub's smile.

But what to them the dirge, the knell? 25
 These were the mourner's share;—
 The sullen clang, whose heavy swell
 Throbb'd through the beating air;—
 The rattling cord,—the rolling stone,—
 The shelving sand that slid, 30
 And far beneath, with hollow tone
 Rung on the coffin's lid.

The slumberer's mound grows fresh and green,
 Then slowly disappears;
 The mosses creep, the gray stones lean, 35
 Earth hides his date and years;
 But long before the once-loved name
 Is sunk or worn away,
 No lip the silent dust may claim,
 That pressed the breathing clay. 40

Go where the ancient pathway guides,
 See where our sires laid down
 Their smiling babes, their cherished brides,
 The patriarchs of the town;

Hast thou a tear for buried love? 45
 A sigh for transient power?
 All that a century left above,
 Go, read it in an hour!

The Indian's shaft, the Briton's ball,
 The saber's thirsting edge, 50
 The hot shell, shattering in its fall,
 The bayonet's rending wedge,—
 Here scattered death; yet seek the spot,
 No trace thine eye can see,
 No altar,—and they need it not 55
 Who leave their children free!

Look where the turbid rain-drops stand
 In many a chiseled square,
 The knightly crest, the shield, the brand
 Of honored names were there;— 60
 Alas! for every tear is dried
 Those blazoned tablets knew,
 Save when the icy marble's side
 Drips with the evening dew.

Or gaze upon yon pillared stone, 65
 The empty urn of pride;
 There stand the Goblet and the Sun,—
 What need of more beside?

67. **The Goblet and the Sun:** The goblet and the sun (*Vas-Sol*), sculptured on a freestone slab, designated the family tomb of the Vassalls in Cambridge churchyard.

Where lives the memory of the dead,
Who made their tomb a toy? 70
Whose ashes press that nameless bed?
Go, ask the village boy!

Lean o'er the slender western wall,
Ye ever-roaming girls;
The breath that bids the blossom fall 75
May lift your floating curls,
To sweep the simple lines that tell
An exile's date and doom;
And sigh, for where his daughters dwell,
They wreath the stranger's tomb. 80

And one amid these shades was born,
Beneath this turf who lies,
Once beaming as the summer's morn,
That closed her gentle eyes;—
If sinless angels love as we, 85
Who stood thy grave beside,
Three seraph welcomes waited thee,
The daughter, sister, bride!

I wandered to thy buried mound
When earth was hid, below 90
The level of the glaring ground,
Choked to its gates with snow,

And when with summer's flowery waves
The lake of verdure rolled,
As if a Sultan's white-robed slaves 95
Had scattered pearls and gold.

Nay, the soft pinions of the air,
That lift this trembling tone,
Its breath of love may almost bear,
To kiss thy funeral stone;— 100
And, now thy smiles have past away,
For all the joy they gave,
May sweetest dews and warmest ray
Lie on thine early grave!

When damps beneath, and storms above 105
Have bowed these fragile towers,
Still o'er the graves yon locust-grove
Shall swing its Orient flowers;—
And I would ask no moldering bust,
If e'er this humble line,
Which breathed a sigh o'er other's dust,
Might call a tear on mine.

OLD IRONSIDES *

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;
 Beneath it rung the battle shout, 5
 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, 10
 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 15
 The eagle of the sea!

* The sailors called the Constitution Old Ironsides because, they said, the Guerrière's balls fell harmless on her iron sides. After a glorious career the frigate was condemned as unseaworthy, and it was proposed to break her up. The proposition excited popular indignation. This poem, Holmes tells us, was written in 1830 "with a pencil in the white chamber, *stans pede in uno*, pretty nearly." It was first published in the *Boston Daily Advertiser*, then copied in other papers, and printed on handbills circulated in Washington. It saved the old vessel and won fame for its author. We hear in it an echo of the popular poetry of the day—such as, "Stand! the ground's your own, my braves!"

15. Harpies: In classical mythology, greedy, loathsome winged monsters, having heads and bodies like women and extremities like birds; the term is applied to greedy persons, plunderers.

O better that her shattered hulk
 Should sink beneath the wave;
 Her thunders shook the mighty deep,
 And there should be her grave; 20
 Nail to the mast her holy flag,
 Set every threadbare sail,
 And give her to the god of storms,—
 The lightning and the gale!

OUR YANKEE GIRLS

LET greener lands and bluer skies,
 If such the wide earth shows,
 With fairer cheeks and brighter eyes,
 Match us the star and rose;
 The winds that lift the Georgian's veil 5
 Or wave Circassia's curls,
 Waft to their shores the sultan's sail,—
 Who buys our Yankee girls!

The gay grisette, whose fingers touch
 Love's thousand chords so well; 10
 The dark Italian, loving much,
 But more than *one* can tell;

5. The Georgian veil, Circassia's curls: The women of Georgia and Circassia are world-famous for their beauty.

9. Grisette: A Parisian work-girl.

And England's fair-haired, blue-eyed dame,
Who binds her brow with pearls;—
Ye who have seen them, can they shame 15
Our own sweet Yankee girls?

And what if court and castle vaunt
Its children loftier born?—
Who heeds the silken tassel's flaunt
Beside the golden corn? 20
They ask not for the courtly toil
Of ribboned knights and earls,
The daughters of the virgin soil,
Our freeborn Yankee girls!

By every hill whose stately pines 25
Wave their dark arms above
The home where some fair being shines,
To warm the wilds with love,
From barest rock to bleakest shore
Where farthest sail unfurls, 30
That Stars and Stripes are streaming o'er,—
God bless our Yankee girls!

ILLUSTRATION OF A PICTURE

“A Spanish Girl in Reverie.”

SHE twirled the string of golden beads,
That round her neck was hung,—
My grandsire's gift; the good old man
Loved girls when he was young;
And, bending lightly o'er the cord, 5
And turning half away,
With something like a youthful sigh,
Thus spoke the maiden gray:

“Well, one may trail her silken robe,
And bind her locks with pearls, 10
And one may wreathe the woodland rose
Among her floating curls;
And one may tread the dewy grass,
And one the marble floor,
Nor half-hid bosom heave the less, 15
Nor broidered corset more!

“Some years ago, a dark-eyed girl
Was sitting in the shade,—
There's something brings her to my mind
In that young dreaming maid,— 20
And in her hand she held a flower,
A flower, whose speaking hue
Said, in the language of the heart,
‘Believe the giver true.’

“ And, as she looked upon its leaves, 25
 The maiden made a vow
To wear it when the bridal wreath
 Was woven for her brow;
She watched the flower, as, day by day,
 The leaflets curled and died; 30
But he who gave it, never came
 To claim her for his bride.

“ O many a summer’s morning glow
 Has lent the rose its ray,
And many a winter’s drifting snow 35
 Has swept its bloom away;
But she has kept that faithless pledge
 To this, her winter hour,
And keeps it still, herself alone,
 And wasted like the flower.” 40

Her pale lip quivered, and the light
 Gleamed in her moistening eyes;—
I asked her how she liked the tints
 In those Castilian skies?
“ She thought them misty,—’twas perhaps
 Because she stood too near; ”— 46
She turned away, and, as she turned,
 I saw her wipe a tear.

THE LAST LEAF *

I SAW him once before,
 As he passed by the door,
 And again
 The pavement stones resound
 As he totters o'er the ground 5
 With his cane.

They say that in his prime
 Ere the pruning-knife of Time
 Cut him down,
 Not a better man was found 10
 By the Crier on his round
 Through the town.

But now he walks the streets,
 And looks at all he meets
 Sad and wan, 15
 And he shakes his feeble head,
 That it seems as if he said,
 “ They are gone.”

* “ If a gentleman of the betting fraternity were to propose placing a stake with me on ‘ the favorite ’ in the race for the ‘ Immortality cup,’ I should name—not *The Chambered Nautilus*—but *The Last Leaf*.” Edgar Allan Poe transcribed this with his own hand ; Abraham Lincoln knew it by heart ; the publishers selected it from all Dr. Holmes’ poetry for printing by itself in an elaborately illustrated edition. Thousands of persons can repeat every line of it. Such facts mean much.—*John T. Morse, Jr.*

11. Crier : One who proclaims publicly sales, lost persons, goods, and the orders of a court.

The mossy marbles rest
 On the lips that he has prest 20
 In their bloom,
 And the names he loved to hear
 Have been carved for many a year
 On the tomb.

My grandmamma has said,— 25
 Poor old lady, she is dead
 Long ago,—
 That he had a Roman nose,
 And his cheek was like a rose
 In the snow. 30

But now his nose is thin,
 And it rests upon his chin
 Like a staff,
 And a crook is in his back,
 And a melancholy crack 35
 In his laugh.

19. **The mossy marbles rest, etc.:** "There are some quaint, queer verses," said Lincoln, talking to a friend, "written, I think, by Oliver Wendell Holmes, entitled *The Last Leaf*, one of which is to me inexpressibly touching." He then repeated the poem from memory, and as he finished the stanza

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

he said, "For pure pathos, in my judgment, there is nothing finer than those lines in the English language."

I know it is a sin
 For me to sit and grin
 At him here;
 But the old three-cornered hat, 40
 And the breeches, and all that,
 Are so queer!

And if I should live to be
 The last leaf upon the tree
 In the spring,— 45
 Let them smile, as I do now,
 At the old forsaken bough
 Where I cling.

TO AN INSECT

I LOVE to hear thine earnest voice,
 Wherever thou art hid,
 Thou testy little dogmatist,
 Thou pretty Katydid!
 Thou mindest me of gentle folks,— 5
 Old gentle folks are they,—
 Thou say'st an undisputed thing
 In such a solemn way.

Thou art a female, Katydid!
 I know it by the trill 10
 That quivers through thy piercing notes,
 So petulant and shrill.

I think there is a knot of you
 Beneath the hollow tree,—
 A knot of spinster Katydids,— 15
 Do Katydids drink tea?

O tell me where did Katy live,
 And what did Katy do?
 And was she very fair and young,
 And yet so wicked, too? 20
 Did Katy love a naughty man,
 Or kiss more cheeks than one?
 I warrant Katy did no more
 Than many a Kate has done.

Dear me! I'll tell you all about 25
 My fuss with little Jane,
 And Ann, with whom I used to walk
 So often down the lane,
 And all that tore their locks of black,
 Or wet their eyes of blue,— 30
 Pray tell me, sweetest Katydid,
 What did poor Katy do?

Ah no! the living oak shall crash,
 That stood for ages still,
 The rock shall rend its mossy base 35
 And thunder down the hill,

Before the little Katydid
 Shall add one word, to tell
 The mystic story of the maid
 Whose name she knows so well. 40

Peace to the ever-murmuring race!
 And when the latest one
 Shall fold in death her feeble wings
 Beneath the autumn sun,
 Then shall she raise her fainting voice 45
 And lift her drooping lid,
 And then the child of future years
 Shall hear what Katy did.

THE MEETING OF THE DRYADS *

It was not many centuries since,
 When, gathered on the moonlit green,
 Beneath the Tree of Liberty,
 A ring of weeping sprites was seen.

* This poem was written just after the trees around Harvard College had been pruned. Holmes tells us that some time after writing it he was surprised and amused at finding a poem by Swift,—on a similar occasion,—from which the idea may have been unconsciously borrowed. “*The Meeting of the Dryads*, another early poem, is marked by so much grace that it seems as if the youth who wrote its quatrains might in time have added a companion piece to *The Talking Oak*.”—*E. C. Stedman*.

Dryads: In Greek mythology, wood nymphs whose lives were bound up with the origin and decay of the trees in which they lived.

The freshman's lamp had long been dim, 5
The voice of busy day was mute,
And tortured melody had ceased
Her sufferings on the evening flute.

They met not as they once had met,
To laugh o'er many a jocund tale; 10
But every pulse was beating low,
And every cheek was cold and pale.

There rose a fair but faded one,
Who oft had cheered them with her song;
She waved a mutilated arm, 15
And silence held the listening throng.

"Sweet friends," the gentle nymph began,
"From opening bud to withering leaf,
One common lot has bound us all,
In every change of joy and grief. 20

"While all around has felt decay,
We rose in ever-living prime,
With broader shade and fresher green,
Beneath the crumbling step of Time.

"When often by our feet has past 25
Some biped, nature's walking whim,
Say, have we trimmed one awkward shape,
Or lopped away one crooked limb?

- “Go on, fair Science; soon to thee
Shall Nature yield her idle boast; 30
Her vulgar fingers formed a tree,
But thou hast trained it to a post.
- “Go paint the birch’s silver rind,
And quilt the peach with softer down;
Up with the willow’s trailing threads, 35
Off with the sunflower’s radiant crown!
- “Go plant the lily on the shore,
And set the rose among the waves,
And bid the tropic bud unbind
Its silken zone in arctic caves; 40
- “Bring bellows for the panting winds,
Hang up a lantern by the moon,
And give the nightingale a fife,
And lend the eagle a balloon!
- “I cannot smile,—the tide of scorn, 45
That rolled through every bleeding vein,
Comes kindling fiercer as it flows
Back to its burning source again.
- “Again in every quivering leaf
That moment’s agony I feel, 50
When limbs, that spurned the northern blast,
Shrunk from the sacrilegious steel.

“ A curse upon the wretch who dared
To crop us with his felon saw!
May every fruit his lip shall taste, 55
Lie like a bullet in his maw.

“ In every julep that he drinks,
May gout, and bile, and headache be;
And when he strives to calm his pain,
May colic mingle with his tea. 60

“ May nightshade cluster round his path,
And thistles shoot, and brambles cling;
May blistering ivy scorch his veins,
And dogwood burn, and nettles sting.

“ On him may never shadow fall, 65
When fever racks his throbbing brow,
And his last shilling buy a rope
To hang him on my highest bough!”

She spoke;—the morning’s herald beam
Sprang from the bosom of the sea, 70
And every mangled sprite returned
In sadness to her wounded tree.

THE COMET *

THE Comet! He is on his way,
 And singing as he flies;
 The whizzing planets shrink before
 The specter of the skies;
 Ah! well may regal orbs burn blue, 5
 And satellites turn pale,
 Ten million cubic miles of head,
 Ten billion leagues of tail!

On, on by whistling spheres of light,
 He flashes and he flames; 10
 He turns not to the left nor right,
 He asks them not their names;
 One spurn from his demoniac heel,—
 Away, away they fly,
 Where darkness might be bottled up 15
 And sold for "Tyrian dye."

And what would happen to the land,
 And how would look the sea,
 If in the bearded devil's path
 Our earth should chance to be? 20

* The extravaganzas, *The Comet* and *The Hot Season*, are fair examples of what is called "American humor," the point of which lies in exaggerating to the degree of absurdity.

Full hot and high the sea would boil,
Full red the forests gleam;
Methought I saw and heard it all
In a dyspeptic dream!

I saw a tutor take his tube 25
The Comet's course to spy;
I heard a scream,—the gathered rays
Had stewed the tutor's eye;
I saw a fort,—the soldiers all
Were armed with goggles green; 30
Pop cracked the guns! whiz flew the balls!
Bang went the magazine!

I saw a poet dip a scroll
Each moment in a tub,
I read upon the warping back, 35
“The Dream of Beelzebub;”
He could not see his verses burn,
Although his brain was fried,
And ever and anon he bent
To wet them as they dried. 40

I saw the scalding pitch roll down
The crackling, sweating pines,
And streams of smoke, like water-spouts,
Burst through the rumbling mines;

I asked the firemen why they made
Such noise about the town;
They answered not,—but all the while
The brakes went up and down.

I saw a roasting pullet sit
Upon a baking egg; 50
I saw a cripple scorch his hand
Extinguishing his leg;
I saw nine geese upon the wing
Towards the frozen pole,
And every mother's gosling fell 55
Crisped to a crackling coal.

I saw the ox that browsed the grass
Writhe in the blistering rays,
The herbage in his shrinking jaws
Was all a fiery blaze; 60
I saw huge fishes, boiled to rags,
Bob through the bubbling waves;
I listened, and I heard the dead
All simmering in their graves!

Strange sights! strange sounds! O fearful dream!
Its memory haunts me still,
The steaming sea, the crimson glare,
That wreathed each wooded hill;

Stranger! if through thy reeling brain
Such midnight visions sweep, 70
Spare, spare, O spare thine evening meal,
And sweet shall be thy sleep!

THE BALLAD OF THE OYSTERMAN

It was a tall young oysterman lived by the river-
side,
His shop was just upon the bank, his boat was on
the tide;
The daughter of a fisherman, that was so straight
and slim,
Lived over on the other bank, right opposite to
him.

It was the pensive oysterman that saw a lovely
maid, 5
Upon a moonlight evening, a-sitting in the
shade;
He saw her wave her handkerchief, as much as if
to say,
“I’m wide awake, young oysterman, and all the
folks away.”

Then up arose the oysterman, and to himself
said he,
“I guess I’ll leave the skiff at home, for fear that
folks should see; 10

I read it in the story-book, that, for to kiss his
dear,
Leander swam the Hellespont,—and I will swim
this here.”

And he has leaped into the waves, and crossed
the shining stream,
And he has clambered up the bank, all in the
moonlight gleam;
O there were kisses sweet as dew, and words as
soft as rain,— 15
But they have heard her father's step, and in he
leaps again!

Out spoke the ancient fisherman,—“O what was
that, my daughter?”

“’Twas nothing but a pebble, Sir, I threw into
the water;”

“And what is that, pray tell me, love, that pad-
dles off so fast?”

“It's nothing but a porpoise, Sir, that's been
a-swimming past.” 20.

Out spoke the ancient fisherman,—“Now bring
me my harpoon!

I'll get into my fishing-boat, and fix the fellow
soon.”

12. **Leander swam the Hellespont**: Leander, a youth of Abydos, the hero of a poem by Musæus and a ballad by Schiller, nightly swam across the Hellespont to visit Hero, his lady-love; he was finally drowned. The Hellespont is better known by its modern name, Dardanelles.

Down fell that pretty innocent, as falls a snow-
 white lamb,
 Her hair drooped round her pallid cheeks, like
 seaweed on a clam.

Alas for those two loving ones! she waked not
 from her swoond, 25
 And he was taken with the cramp, and in the
 waves was drowned;
 But Fate has metamorphosed them in pity of their
 woe,
 And now they keep an oyster-shop for mermaids
 down below.

LEXINGTON

SLOWLY the mist o'er the meadow was creeping,
 Bright on the dewy buds glistened the sun,
 When from his couch, while his children were
 sleeping,
 Rose the bold rebel and shouldered his gun.
 Waving her golden veil 5
 Over the silent dale,
 Blithe looked the morning on cottage and spire;
 Hushed was his parting sigh,
 While from his noble eye
 Flashed the last sparkle of liberty's fire. 10

On the smooth green where the fresh leaf is
springing

Calmly the first-born of glory have met;
Hark! the death-volley around them is ringing!
Look! with their life-blood the young grass is
wet!

Faint is the feeble breath, 15
Murmuring low in death,

“Tell to our sons how their fathers have died;”
Nerveless the iron hand,
Raised for its native land,
Lies by the weapon that gleams at its side. 20

Over the hillsides the wild knell is tolling,
From their far hamlets the yeomanry come;
As through the storm-clouds the thunderburst
rolling,
Circles the beat of the mustering drum.

Fast on the soldier's path 25
Darken the waves of wrath,

Long have they gathered and loud shall they
fall;

Red glares the musket's flash,
Sharp rings the rifle's crash,

Blazing and clanging from thicket and wall. 30

Gayly the plume of the horseman was dancing,
Never to shadow his cold brow again;

Proudly at morning the war-steed was prancing,
 Reeking and panting he droops on the rein;
 Pale is the lip of scorn, 35
 Voiceless the trumpet horn,
 Torn is the silken-fringed red cross on high;
 Many a belted breast
 Low on the turf shall rest,
 Ere the dark hunters the herd have past by. 40

Snow-girdled crags where the hoarse wind is
 raving,
 Rocks where the weary floods murmur and
 wail,
 Wilds where the fern by the furrow is waving,
 Reeled with the echoes that rode on the gale;
 Far as the tempest thrills 45
 Over the darkened hills,
 Far as the sunshine streams over the plain,
 Roused by the tyrant band,
 Woke all the mighty land,
 Girded for battle, from mountain to main. 50

Green be the graves where her martyrs are
 lying!
 Shroudless and tombless they sunk to their
 rest,
 While o'er their ashes the starry fold flying

Wraps the proud eagle they roused from his
nest.

Borne on her northern pine, 55

Long o'er the foaming brine

Spread her broad banner to storm and to sun;

Heaven keep her ever free,

Wide as o'er land and sea

Floats the fair emblem her heroes have won. 60

THE MUSIC-GRINDERS

THERE are three ways in which men take

One's money from his purse,

And very hard it is to tell

Which of the three is worse;

But all of them are bad enough 5

To make a body curse.

You're riding out some pleasant day,

And counting up your gains;

A fellow jumps from out a bush

And takes your horse's reins, 10

Another hints some words about

A bullet in your brains.

It's hard to meet such pressing friends

In such a lonely spot;

It's very hard to lose your cash, 15

But harder to be shot;

And so you take your wallet out,
Though you would rather not.

Perhaps you're going out to dine,—
Some filthy creature begs 20
You'll hear about the cannon ball
That carried off his pegs,
And says it is a dreadful thing
For men to lose their legs.

He tells you of his starving wife, 25
His children to be fed,
Poor little, lovely innocents,
All clamorous for bread,—
And so you kindly help to put
A bachelor to bed. 30

You're sitting on your window-seat
Beneath a cloudless moon;
You hear a sound, that seems to wear
The semblance of a tune,
As if a broken fife should strive 35
To drown a cracked bassoon.

And nearer, nearer still, the tide
Of music seems to come,
There's something like a human voice,
And something like a drum; 40
You sit, in speechless agony,
Until your ear is numb.

Poor "home, sweet home," should seem to be
A very dismal place;
Your "auld acquaintance," all at once, 45
Is altered in the face;
Their discords sting through Burns and Moore,
Like hedgehogs dressed in lace.

You think they are crusaders, sent
From some infernal clime, 50
To pluck the eyes of Sentiment,
And dock the tail of Rhyme,
To crack the voice of Melody,
And break the legs of Time.

But hark! the air again is still, 55
The music all is ground,
And silence, like a poultice, comes
To heal the blows of sound;
It cannot be,—it is,—it is,—
A hat is going round! 60

No! Pay the dentist when he leaves
A fracture in your jaw,
And pay the owner of the bear,
That stunned you with his paw,
And buy the lobster, that has had 65
Your knuckles in his claw;

47. Burns and Moore : Robert Burns (1759-1796), a Scotch poet, and Thomas Moore (1779-1852), an Irish poet, whose popular melodies were favorites with the street-musicians of Holmes' youth.

But if you are a portly man,
 Put on your fiercest frown,
 And talk about a constable
 To turn them out of town; 70
 Then close your sentence with an oath,
 And shut the window down!

And if you are a slender man,
 Not big enough for that,
 Or, if you cannot make a speech, 75
 Because you are a flat,
 Go very quietly and drop
 A button in the hat!

THE HEIGHT OF THE RIDICULOUS

I WROTE some lines once on a time
 In wondrous merry mood,
 And thought, as usual, men would say
 They were exceeding good.

They were so queer, so very queer, 5
 I laughed as I would die;
 Albeit, in the general way,
 A sober man am I.

I called my servant, and he came;
 How kind it was of him, 10
 To mind a slender man like me,
 He of the mighty limb!

“These to the printer,” I exclaimed,
And, in my humorous way,
I added, (as a trifling jest,) 15
“There’ll be the devil to pay.”

He took the paper, and I watched,
And saw him peep within;
At the first line he read, his face
Was all upon the grin. 20

He read the next; the grin grew broad,
And shot from ear to ear;
He read the third; a chuckling noise
I now began to hear.

The fourth; he broke into a roar; 25
The fifth; his waistband split;
The sixth; he burst five buttons off,
And tumbled in a fit.

Ten days and nights, with sleepless eye,
I watched that wretched man, 30
And since, I never dare to write
As funny as I can.

THE HOT SEASON

THE folks, that on the first of May
Wore winter-coats and hose,
Began to say, the first of June,
“Good Lord! how hot it grows.”

At last two Fahrenheits blew up, 5
 And killed two children small,
 And one barometer shot dead
 A tutor with its ball!

Now all day long the locusts sang
 Among the leafless trees; 10
 Three new hotels warped inside out,
 The pumps could only wheeze;
 And ripe old wine, that twenty years
 Had cobwebbed o'er in vain,
 Came spouting through the rotten corks 15
 Like Joly's best Champagne!

The Worcester locomotives did
 Their trip in half an hour;
 The Lowell cars ran forty miles
 Before they checked the power; 20
 Roll brimstone soon became a drug,
 And loco-focos fell;
 All asked for ice, but everywhere
 Saltpeter was to sell!

Plump men of mornings ordered tights, 25
 But, ere the scorching noons,

5. **Fahrenheits:** Thermometers, named from a German physicist, G. D. Fahrenheit, on whose scales the freezing point of water is 32° and its boiling point 212°.

16. **Joly's best champagne:** A fine brand of wine.

22. **Loco-focos:** Friction matches. The word *loco-foco* was intended to mean *self-lighting*, being invented on the model of *locomotive*, erroneously supposed to mean *self-moving*.

Their candle-molds had grown as loose
 As Cossack pantaloons!
 The dogs ran mad,—men could not try
 If water they would choose; 30
 A horse fell dead,—he only left
 Four red-hot, rusty shoes!

But soon the people could not bear
 The slightest hint of fire;
 Allusions to caloric drew 35
 A flood of savage ire;
 The leaves on heat were all torn out
 From every book at school,
 And many blackguards kicked and caned,
 Because they said,—“Keep cool!” 40

The gaslight companies were mobbed,
 The bakers all were shot,
 The penny press began to talk
 Of lynching Doctor Nott;
 And all about the warehouse steps 45
 Were angry men in droves,
 Crashing and splintering through the doors,
 To smash the patent stoves!

35. *Caloric*: “A hypothetical fluid formerly supposed to produce the phenomena of heat; the word is loosely used for heat.”

44. *Doctor Nott*: Eliphalet Nott (1773-1866), a Connecticut clergyman, who studied physical science, especially the laws of heat, and invented the first stove for burning anthracite coal.

The abolition men and maids
 Were tanned to such a hue, 50
 You scarce could tell them from their friends,
 Unless their eyes were blue;
 And when I left, society
 Had burst its ancient guards,
 And Brattle Street and Temple Place 55
 Were interchanging cards!

THE WASP AND THE HORNET *

THE two proud sisters of the sea,
 In glory and in doom!
 Well may the eternal waters be
 Their broad, unsculptured tomb!
 The wind that rings along the wave, 5
 The clear, unshadowed sun,
 Are torch and trumpet o'er the brave,
 Whose last green wreath is won!

No stranger-hand their banners furled,
 No victor's shout they heard; 10
 Unseen, above them ocean curled,
 Save by his own pale bird;

55. *Brattle Street and Temple Place*: The social antipodes of Boston.

* The *Wasp*, commanded by Captain Jones, and the *Hornet*, commanded by Captain Lawrence, were American ships-of-war, distinguished for their services in the War of 1812.

The gnashing billows heaved and fell;
 Wild shrieked the midnight gale;
 Far, far beneath the morning swell 15
 Were pennon, spar, and sail.

The land of Freedom! sea and shore
 Are guarded now, as when
 Her ebbing waves to victory bore
 Fair barks and gallant men; 20
 O many a ship of prouder name
 May wave her starry fold,
 Nor trail, with deeper light of fame,
 The paths they swept of old!

“ QUI VIVE ! ”

“ *Qui vive!* ” The sentry’s musket rings,
 The channeled bayonet gleams;
 High o’er him like a raven’s wings
 The broad tri-colored banner flings
 Its shadow, rustling as it swings 5
 Pale in the moonlight beams;
 Pass on! while steel-clad sentries keep
 Their vigil o’er the monarch’s sleep,
 Thy bare, unguarded breast
 Asks not the unbroken, bristling zone 10
 That girds yon sceptered trembler’s throne;—
 Pass on, and take thy rest!

" *Qui vive!*" How oft the midnight air
 That startling cry has borne!
 How oft the evening breeze has fanned 15
 The banner of this haughty land,
 O'er mountain snow and desert sand,
 E'er yet its folds were torn!
 Through Jena's carnage flying red,
 Or tossing o'er Marengo's dead, 20
 Or curling on the towers
 Where Austria's eagle quivers yet,
 And suns the ruffled plumage wet
 With battle's crimson showers!

" *Qui vive!*" And is the sentry's cry, 25
 The sleepless soldier's hand,—
 Are these,—the painted folds that fly
 And lift their emblems printed high
 On morning mist and sunset sky,—
 The guardians of a land? 30
 No! If the patriot's pulses sleep,
 How vain the watch that hirelings keep,
 The idle flag that waves,
 When conquest, with his iron heel
 Treads down the standards and the steel 35
 That belt the soil of slaves!

19. **Jena** : In the battle of Jena, October 14, 1806, the French forces under Napoleon defeated the Prussians.

20. **Marengo** : In the battle of Marengo, June 14, 1800, Napoleon defeated the Austrians under General Melas.

22. **Austria's Eagle** : The national ensign.

URANIA *

A RHYMED LESSON

YES, dear Enchantress, wandering far and long,
 In realms unperfumed by the breath of song,
 Where flowers ill-flavored shed their sweets
 around,
 And bitterest roots invade the ungenial ground,
 Whose gems are crystals from the Epsom mine,
 Whose vineyards flow with antimonial wine, 6
 Whose gates admit no mirthful feature in,
 Save one gaunt mocker, the Sardonic grin,
 Whose pangs are real, not the woes of rhyme
 That blue-eyed misses warble out of time; 10
 Truant, not recreant to thy sacred claim,
 Older by reckoning, but in heart the same,
 Freed for a moment from the chains of toil,
 I tread once more thy consecrated soil;
 Here at thy feet my old allegiance own, 15
 Thy subject still, and loyal to thy throne!

* *Urania* : It was customary for poets to begin poems by an invocation of, or a dedication to, one of the nine muses—frequently, as in this case, *Urania*, the heavenly one.

This poem was delivered before the Boston Mercantile Library Association, October 14, 1846.

6. *Antimonial wine* : Wine medicated with tartar emetic.

8. *Sardonic grin* : Mocking smiles, "caused, as was supposed, by a plant growing in Sardinia, of which they who ate died laughing."—*Trench*.

My dazzled glance explores the crowded hall;
Alas, how vain to hope the smiles of all!
I know my audience; all the gay and young
Love the light antics of a playful tongue, 20
And these, remembering some expansive line
My lips let loose among the nuts and wine,
Are all impatience till the opening pun
Proclaim the witty shamfight is begun.
Two-fifths at least, if not the total half, 25
Have come infuriate for an earthquake laugh;
I know full well what alderman has tied
His red bandanna tight about his side;
I see the mother, who, aware that boys
Perform their laughter with superfluous noise,
Beside her kerchief, brought an extra one 31
To stop the explosions of her bursting son;
I know a tailor, once a friend of mine,
Expects great doings in the button line;—
For mirth's concussions rip the outward case 35
And plant the stitches in a tenderer place;—
I know my audience; these shall have their due,
A smile awaits them ere my song is through!

I know myself; not servile for applause,
My Muse permits no deprecating clause; 40
Modest or vain, she will not be denied
One bold confession, due to honest pride.
And well she knows, the drooping veil of song

Shall save her boldness from the caviler's wrong;
 Her sweeter voice the Heavenly Maid imparts 45
 To tell the secrets of our aching hearts;
 For this, a suppliant, captive, prostrate, bound,
 She kneels imploring at the feet of sound;
 For this, convulsed in thought's maternal pains,
 She loads her arms with rhyme's resounding
 chains; 50
 Faint though the music of her fetters be,
 It lends one charm; her lips are ever free!

Think not I come, in manhood's fiery noon,
 To steal his laurels from the stage buffoon;
 His sword of lath the harlequin may wield; 55
 Behold the star upon my lifted shield!
 Though the just critic pass my humble name,
 And sweeter lips have drained the cup of fame,
 While my gay stanza pleased the banquet's lords,
 The soul within was tuned to deeper chords! 60
 Say, shall my arms, in other conflicts taught
 To swing aloft the ponderous mace of thought,
 Lift, in obedience to a school-girl's law,
 Mirth's tinsel wand or laughter's tickling straw?
 Say, shall I wound with satire's rankling spear
 The pure, warm hearts that bid me welcome
 here? 66

55. *Harlequin*: A leading character in a pantomime.

59. *While my gay stanza, etc.*: Holmes here intimates the truth that "his brilliant occasional poems were only the glitter on the surface, while below lay unnoted depths of feeling and thought."

No! while I wander through the land of dreams
 To strive with great and play with trifling themes,
 Let some kind meaning fill the varied line;
 You have your judgment; will you trust to mine?

BETWEEN two breaths what crowded mysteries
 lie,—
 The first short gasp, the last and long-drawn
 sigh!

Like phantoms painted on the magic slide,
 Forth from the darkness of the past we glide,
 As living shadows for a moment seen 75
 In airy pageant on the eternal screen,
 Traced by a ray from one unchanging flame,
 Then seek the dust and stillness whence we came.

But whence and why, our trembling souls in-
 quire,
 Caught these dim visions their awakening fire?
 O who forgets, when first the piercing thought
 Through childhood's musings found its way un-
 sought,

I AM. I LIVE. The mystery and the fear
 When the dread question—WHAT HAS BROUGHT
 ME HERE?

Burst through life's twilight, as before the sun
 Roll the deep thunders of the morning gun! 86

Are angel faces, silent and serene,
 Bent on the conflicts of this little scene,
 Whose dream-like efforts, whose unreal strife
 Are but the preludes to a larger life? 90

Or does life's summer see the end of all,
 These leaves of being moldering as they fall,
 As the old poet vaguely used to deem,
 As WESLEY questioned in his youthful dream?
 O could such mockery reach our souls indeed, 95
 Give back the Pharaohs' or the Athenian's creed;
 Better than this a Heaven of man's device,—
 The Indian's sports, the Moslem's paradise!

Or is our being's only end and aim
 To add new glories to our Maker's name, 100
 As the poor insect, shriveling in the blaze,
 Lends a faint sparkle to its streaming rays?
 Does earth send upwards to the Eternal's ear
 The mingled discords of her jarring sphere
 To swell his anthem, while Creation rings 105
 With notes of anguish from its shattered strings?
 Is it for this the immortal Artist means
 These conscious, throbbing, agonized machines?

Dark is the soul whose sullen creed can bind
 In chains like these the all-embracing Mind; 110

94. John Wesley (1703-1791): An English divine, founder of Methodism.

95. O could such mockery, etc.: Better, says Holmes, are pagan fables than the views of gloomy religionists.

No! two-faced bigot, thou dost ill reprove
 The sensual, selfish, yet benignant Jove,
 And praise a tyrant throned in lonely pride,
 Who loves himself, and cares for nought beside;
 Who gave thee, summoned from primeval night,
 A thousand laws, and not a single right; 116
 A heart to feel and quivering nerves to thrill,
 The sense of wrong, the death-defying will;
 Who girt thy senses with this goodly frame,
 Its earthly glories and its orbs of flame, 120
 Not for thyself, unworthy of a thought,
 Poor helpless victim of a life unsought,
 But all for him, unchanging and supreme,
 The heartless center of thy frozen scheme!

Trust not the teacher with his lying scroll, 125
 Who tears the charter of thy shuddering soul:
 The God of love, who gave the breath that warms
 All living dust in all its varied forms,
 Asks not the tribute of a world like this
 To fill the measure of his perfect bliss. 130
 Though winged with life through all its radiant
 shores,
 Creation flowed with unexhausted stores
 Cherub and seraph had not yet enjoyed;
 For this he called thee from the quickening void!

112. *Jove* : Jupiter, the supreme god of the Greeks and Romans.

Nor this alone; a larger gift was thine, 135
 A mightier purpose swelled his vast design;
 Thought,—conscience,—will,—to make them all
 thine own,
 He rent a pillar from the eternal throne!

Made in His image, thou must nobly dare
 The thorny crown of sovereignty to share; 140
 With eye uplifted it is thine to view
 From thine own center, Heaven's o'erarching blue;
 So round thy heart a beaming circle lies
 No fiend can blot, no hypocrite disguise;
 From all its orbs one cheering voice is heard, 145
 Full to thine ear it bears the Father's word,
 Now, as in Eden where his first-born trod:
 "Seek thine own welfare, true to man and
 God!"

Think not too meanly of thy low estate;
 Thou hast a choice; to choose is to create! 150
 Remember whose the sacred lips that tell,
 Angels approve thee when thy choice is well;
 Remember, One, a judge of righteous men,
 Swore to spare Sodom if she held but ten! 154
 Use well the freedom which thy Master gave,
 (Think'st thou that Heaven can tolerate a slave?)
 And he who made thee to be just and true
 Will bless thee, love thee,—ay, respect thee too!

Nature has placed thee on a changeful tide,
 To breast its waves, but not without a guide; 160
 Yet, as the needle will forget its aim,
 Jarred by the fury of the electric flame,
 As the true current it will falsely feel,
 Warped from its axis by a freight of steel; 164
 So will thy CONSCIENCE lose its balanced truth
 If passion's lightning fall upon thy youth;
 So the pure impulse quit its sacred hold,
 Girt round too deeply with magnetic gold.

Go to yon tower, where busy science plies
 Her vast antennæ feeling through the skies;
 That little vernier on whose slender lines 171
 The midnight taper trembles as it shines,
 A silent index, tracks the planets' march
 In all their wanderings through the ethereal arch,
 Tells through the mist where dazzled Mercury
 burns, 175
 And marks the spot where Uranus returns.

So, till by wrong or negligence effaced,
 The living index which thy Maker traced
 Repeats the line each starry Virtue draws
 Through the wide circuit of creation's laws:
 Still tracks unchanged the everlasting ray 181
 Where the dark shadows of temptation stray;

171. **Vernier**: The vernier scale (so called from its inventor, Pierre Vernier) consists of a movable scale to obtain fractional parts on a fixed scale, in instruments of precision.

But, once defaced, forgets the orbs of light,
And leaves thee wandering o'er the expanse of
night!

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