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The Riverside Literature Series

GRANDMOTHER'S STORY

AND OTHER POEMS

BY

OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES

WITH NOTES

AND

A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH



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OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH.

OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES was born at Cambridge, Massachusetts, August 29, 1809. The old house in which he was born, still standing near the colleges, has a historic interest as having been the headquarters of General Artemas Ward, and of the Committee of Safety in the days just before the Revolution. Upon the steps of the house stood President Langdon, of Harvard College, tradition says, and prayed for the men, who, halting there a few moments, marched forward under Colonel Prescott's lead to throw up intrenchments on Bunker Hill on the night of June 16, 1775. Dr. Holmes's father carried forward the traditions of the old house, for he was Rev. Dr. Abiel Holmes whose *American Annals* was the first careful record of American history written after the Revolution.

Born and bred in the midst of historic associations, Holmes had from the first a lively interest in American history and politics, and though possessed of strong humorous gifts, has often turned his song into patriotic channels, while the current of his literary life has been distinctly American.

He began to write poetry when in college at Cambridge, and some of his best-known early pieces, like

Evening by a Tailor, The Meeting of the Dryads, The Spectre Pig, were contributed to the *Collegian*, an undergraduate journal, while he was studying law the year after his graduation. At this same time he wrote the well-known poem *Old Ironsides*, a protest against the proposed breaking up of the frigate *Constitution*; the poem was printed in the *Boston Daily Advertiser*, and its indignation and fervor carried it through the country and raised such a popular feeling that the ship was saved from an ignominious destruction. Holmes shortly gave up the study of law, went abroad to study medicine, and returned to take his degree at Harvard in 1836. At the same time he delivered a poem, *Poetry, a Metrical Essay*, before the Phi Beta Kappa Society of Harvard, and ever since his profession of medicine and his love of literature have received his united care and thought. In 1838 he was appointed Professor of Anatomy and Physiology at Dartmouth College, but remained there only a year or two, when he returned to Boston, married, and practised medicine. In 1847 he was made Parkman Professor of Anatomy and Physiology in the Medical School of Harvard College, a position which he retained until the close of 1882, when he retired, to devote himself more exclusively to literature.

In 1857, when the *Atlantic Monthly* was established, Professor Lowell, who was asked to be editor, consented on condition that Dr. Holmes should be a regular contributor. Dr. Holmes at that time was known as the author of a number of poems of grace, life, and wit, and he had published several professional papers and books, but his brilliancy as a talker gave him a strong local reputation, and Lowell shrewdly guessed that he would bring to the new magazine a singularly fresh and un-

usual power. He was right, for *The Autocrat of the Breakfast-Table*, beginning in the first number, unquestionably insured the *Atlantic* its early success. The readers of the day had forgotten that Holmes, twenty-five years before, had begun a series with the same title in Buckingham's *New England Magazine*, a periodical of short life, so they did not at first understand why he should begin his first article, "I was just going to say, when I was interrupted." From that time Dr. Holmes was a frequent contributor to the magazine, and in it appeared successively, *The Autocrat of the Breakfast-Table*, *The Professor at the Breakfast-Table*, *Elsie Venner*, *The Professor's Story*, *The Guardian Angel*, *The Poet at the Breakfast-Table*, — prose papers, and stories with occasional insertion of verse; here also have been printed the many poems which he has so freely and happily written for festivals and public occasions, including the frequent poems at the yearly meetings of his college class. The wit and humor which have made his poetry so well known would never have given him his high rank had they not been associated with an admirable art which makes every word necessary and felicitous, and a generous nature which is quick to seize upon what touches a common life.

GRANDMOTHER'S STORY OF BUNKER HILL BATTLE.

AS SHE SAW IT FROM THE BELFRY.

[This poem was first published in 1875, in connection with the centenary of the battle of Bunker Hill. The belfry could hardly have been that of Christ Church, since tradition says that General Gage was stationed there watching the battle, and we may make it to be what was known as the new Brick Church, built in 1721, on Hanover, corner of Richmond Street, Boston, rebuilt of stone in 1845, and pulled down at the widening of Hanover Street in 1871. There are many narratives of the battle of Bunker Hill. Frothingham's *History of the Siege of Boston* is one of the most comprehensive accounts, and has furnished material for many popular narratives. The centennial celebration of the battle called out magazine and newspaper articles, which give the story with little variation. There are not many disputed points in connection with the event, the principal one being the discussion as to who was the chief officer.]

'TIS like stirring living embers when, at eighty,
one remembers

All the achings and the quakings of "the times that
tried men's souls" ;

2. In December, 1776, Thomas Paine, whose *Common Sense* had so remarkable a popularity as the first homely expression of public opinion on Independence, began issuing a series of tracts called *The Crisis*, eighteen numbers of which appeared. The familiar words quoted by the grandmother must often have been heard and used by her. They begin the first number of *The Crisis* :

When I talk of *Whig* and *Tory*, when I tell the
Rebel story,
 To you the words are ashes, but to me they're
 burning coals.

5 I had heard the muskets' rattle of the April running
 battle ;
 Lord Percy's hunted soldiers, I can see their red
 coats still ;
 But a deadly chill comes o'er me, as the day looms up
 before me,
 When a thousand men lay bleeding on the slopes of
 Bunker's Hill.

'T was a peaceful summer's morning, when the first
 thing gave us warning
 10 Was the booming of the cannon from the river and
 the shore :
 "Child," says grandma, "what's the matter, what is
 all this noise and clatter ?
 Have those scalping Indian devils come to murder us
 once more ?"

' These are the times that try men's souls : the summer soldier and the sun-
 shine patriot will, in this crisis, shrink from the service of his country ; but
 he that stands it now, deserves the love and thanks of man and woman.'

3. The terms *Whig* and *Tory* were applied to the two parties in England
 who represented, respectively, the Whigs political and religious liberty, the
 Tories royal prerogative and ecclesiastical authority. The names first came
 into use in 1679 in the struggles at the close of Charles II.'s reign, and con-
 tinued in use until a generation or so ago, when they gave place to somewhat
 corresponding terms of Liberal and Conservative. At the breaking out of the
 war for Independence, the Whigs in England opposed the measures taken by
 the crown in the management of the American colonies, while the Tories
 supported the crown. The names were naturally applied in America to the
 patriotic party, who were termed Whigs, and the loyalist party, termed
 Tories. The Tories in turn called the patriots rebels.

5. The Lexington and Concord affair of April 19, 1775, when Lord Percy's
 soldiers retreated in a disorderly manner to Charlestown, annoyed on the way
 by the Americans who followed and accompanied them.

Poor old soul ! my sides were shaking in the midst of
all my quaking,
To hear her talk of Indians when the guns began to roar :
15 She had seen the burning village, and the slaughter
and the pillage,
When the Mohawks killed her father with their bul-
lets through his door.

Then I said, " Now, dear old granny, don't you fret
and worry any,
For I'll soon come back and tell you whether this is
work or play ;
There can't be mischief in it, so I won't be gone a
minute " —
20 For a minute then I started. I was gone the livelong
day.

No time for bodice-lacing or for looking-glass grimac-
ing ;
Down my hair went as I hurried, tumbling half-way
to my heels ;
God forbid your ever knowing, when there's blood
around her flowing,
How the lonely, helpless daughter of a quiet house-
hold feels !
25 In the street I heard a thumping ; and I knew it was
the stumping

16. The Mohawks, a formidable part of the Six Nations, were held in great dread, as they were the most cruel and warlike of all the tribes. In connection with the French they fell upon the frontier settlements during Queen Anne's war, early in the eighteenth century, and committed terrible deeds, long remembered in New England households.

Of the Corporal, our old neighbor, on that wooden leg
 he wore,
 With a knot of women round him, — it was lucky I
 had found him,
 So I followed with the others, and the Corporal
 marched before.

They were making for the steeple, — the old soldier
 and his people ;
 30 The pigeons circled round us as we climbed the creak-
 ing stair,
 Just across the narrow river — Oh, so close it made
 me shiver ! —
 Stood a fortress on the hill-top that but yesterday was
 bare.

Not slow our eyes to find it ; well we knew who stood
 behind it,
 Though the earthwork hid them from us, and the stub-
 born walls were dumb :
 35 Here were sister, wife, and mother, looking wild upon
 each other,
 And their lips were white with terror as they said,
 THE HOUR HAS COME !

The morning slowly wasted, not a morsel had we
 tasted,
 And our heads were almost splitting with the cannons'
 deafening thrill,
 When a figure tall and stately round the rampart
 strode sedately ;
 40 It was PRESCOTT, one since told me ; he commanded
 on the hill.



Every woman's heart grew bigger when we saw his
 manly figure,
 With the banyan buckled round it, standing up so
 straight and tall;
 Like a gentleman of leisure who is strolling out for
 pleasure,
 Through the storm of shells and cannon-shot he
 walked around the wall.

45 At eleven the streets were swarming, for the red-coats'
 ranks were forming ;
 At noon in marching order they were moving to the
 piers ;
 How the bayonets gleamed and glistened, as we looked
 far down, and listened
 To the trampling and the drum-beat of the belted
 grenadiers !

At length the men have started, with a cheer (it
 seemed faint-hearted),
 50 In their scarlet regimentals, with their knapsacks on
 their backs,
 And the reddening, rippling water, as after a sea-
 fight's slaughter,
 Round the barges gliding onward blushed like blood
 along their tracks.

40. Colonel William Prescott, who commanded the detachment which marched from Cambridge, June 16, 1775, to fortify Breed's Hill, was the grandfather of William Hickling Prescott, the historian. He was in the field during the entire battle of the 17th in command of the redoubt.

42. *Banyan* — a flowered morning gown which Prescott is said to have worn during the hot day, a good illustration of the unmilitary appearance of the soldiers engaged. His nonchalant walk upon the parapets is also a historic fact, and was for the encouragement of the troops within the redoubt.



So they crossed to the other border, and again they
formed in order ;

And the boats came back for soldiers, came for sol-
diers, soldiers still :

55 The time seemed everlasting to us women faint and
fasting, —

At last they're moving, marching, marching proudly
up the hill.

We can see the bright steel glancing all along the
lines advancing —

Now the front rank fires a volley — they have thrown
away their shot ;

For behind their earthwork lying, all the balls above
them flying,

60 Our people need not hurry ; so they wait and answer
not.

Then the Corporal, our old cripple (he would swear
sometimes and tittle), —

He had heard the bullets whistle (in the old French
war) before, —

Calls out in words of jeering, just as if they all were
hearing, —

And his wooden leg thumps fiercely on the dusty bel-
fry floor : —

65 “ Oh ! fire away, ye villains, and earn King George's
shillin's,

But ye'll waste a ton of powder afore a ' rebel ' falls ;

62. Many of the officers as well as men on the American side had become familiarized with service through the old French war, which came to an end in 1763.

You may bang the dirt and welcome, they 're as safe
 as Dan'l Malcolm
 Ten foot beneath the gravestone that you 've splin-
 tered with your balls !”

In the hush of expectation, in the awe and trepidation
 70 Of the dread approaching moment, we are well-nigh
 breathless all ;
 Though the rotten bars are falling on the rickety bel-
 fry railing,
 We are crowding up against them like the waves
 against a wall.

Just a glimpse (the air is clearer), they are nearer,
 — nearer, — nearer,
 When a flash — a curling smoke-wreath — then a
 crash — the steeple shakes —
 75 The deadly truce is ended ; the tempest's shroud is
 rended ;
 Like a morning mist it gathered, like a thunder-cloud
 it breaks !

67. Dr. Holmes makes the following note to this line : “ The following epi-
 taph is still to be read on a tall gravestone, standing as yet undisturbed
 among the transplanted monuments of the dead in Copp's Hill Burial Ground,
 one of the three city [Boston] cemeteries which have been desecrated and
 ruined within my own remembrance : —

“ Here lies buried in a
 Stone Grave 10 feet deep
 Cap^t. DANIEL MALCOLM Merch^t
 Who departed this Life
 October 23, 1769,
 Aged 44 years,
 A true son of Liberty,
 A Friend to the Publick,
 An Enemy to oppression,
 And one of the foremost
 In opposing the Revenue Acts
 On America.”

O the sight our eyes discover as the blue-black smoke
blows over!

The red-coats stretched in windrows as a mower rakes
his hay ;

Here a scarlet heap is lying, there a headlong crowd
is flying

80 Like a billow that has broken and is shivered into spray.

Then we cried, "The troops are routed! they are
beat — it can't be doubted!

God be thanked, the fight is over!" — Ah! the grim
old soldier's smile!

"Tell us, tell us why you look so?" (we could hardly
speak, we shook so), —

"Are they beaten? *Are* they beaten? **ARE** they
beaten?" — "Wait a while."

85 O the trembling and the terror! for too soon we
saw our error:

They are baffled, not defeated; we have driven them
back in vain;

And the columns that were scattered, round the colors
that were tattered,

Toward the sullen silent fortress turn their belted
breasts again.

All at once, as we are gazing, lo! the roofs of Charles-
town blazing!

90 They have fired the harmless village; in an hour it
will be down!

The Lord in Heaven confound them, rain his fire and
brimstone round them, —

The robbing, murdering red-coats, that would burn a
peaceful town!

They are marching, stern and solemn; we can see
each massive column

As they near the naked earth-mound with the slanting
walls so steep.

95 Have our soldiers got faint-hearted, and in noiseless
haste departed?

Are they panic-struck and helpless? Are they palsied
or asleep?

Now! the walls they 're almost under! scarce a rod the
foes asunder!

Not a firelock flashed against them! up the earth-
work they will swarm!

But the words have scarce been spoken, when the
ominous calm is broken,

100 And a bellowing crash has emptied all the vengeance
of the storm!

So again, with murderous slaughter, pelted backwards
to the water,

Fly Pigot's running heroes and the frightened braves
of Howe;

And we shout, "At last they 're done for, it's their
barges they have run for:

They are beaten, beaten, beaten; and the battle's over
now!"

105 And we looked, poor timid creatures, on the rough
old soldier's features,

Our lips afraid to question, but he knew what we
would ask:

102. The generals on the British side were Howe, Clinton, and Pigot.

“Not sure,” he said ; “keep quiet, — once more, I
guess, they ’ll try it —
Here ’s damnation to the cut-throats !” — then he
handed me his flask,

Saying, “Gal, you ’re looking shaky ; have a drop of
old Jamaiky ;
110 I ’m afeard there ’ll be more trouble afore the job is
done ; ”
So I took one scorching swallow ; dreadful faint I felt
and hollow,
Standing there from early morning when the firing
was begun.

All through those hours of trial I had watched a calm
clock dial,
As the hands kept creeping, creeping, — they were
creeping round to four,
115 When the old man said, “They ’re forming with their
bagonets fixed for storming :
It ’s the death-grip that ’s a coming, — they will try
the works once more.”

With brazen trumpets blaring, the flames behind
them glaring,
The deadly wall before them, in close array they
come ;
Still onward, upward toiling, like a dragon’s fold un-
coiling, —
120 Like the rattlesnake’s shrill warning the reverber-
ating drum !

Over heaps all torn and gory — shall I tell the fear-
ful story,

How they surged above the breastwork, as a sea
breaks over a deck ;

How, driven, yet scarce defeated, our worn-out men
retreated,

With their powder-horns all emptied, like the swim-
mers from a wreck ?

125 It has all been told and painted ; as for me, they say
I fainted,

And the wooden-legged old Corporal stumped with
me down the stair :

When I woke from dreams affrighted the evening
lamps were lighted, —

On the floor a youth was lying ; his bleeding breast
was bare.

And I heard through all the flurry, “Send for
WARREN! hurry! hurry!

130 Tell him here’s a soldier bleeding, and he’ll come
and dress his wound !”

Ah, we knew not till the morrow told its tale of death
and sorrow,

How the starlight found him stiffened on the dark
and bloody ground.

Who the youth was, what his name was, where the
place from which he came was,

Who had brought him from the battle, and had left
him at our door,

135 He could not speak to tell us ; but ’t was one of our
brave fellows,

129. Dr. Joseph Warren, of equal note at the time as a medical man and a patriot. He was a volunteer in the battle, and fell there, the most serious loss on the American side.

As the homespun plainly showed us which the dying soldier wore.

For they all thought he was dying, as they gathered round him crying, —

And they said, "Oh, how they 'll miss him!" and, "What *will* his mother do?"

Then, his eyelids just unclosing like a child's that has been dozing,

140 He faintly murmured, "Mother!" — and — I saw his eyes were blue.

— "Why, grandma, how you're winking!" — Ah, my child, it sets me thinking

Of a story not like this one. Well, he somehow lived along;

So we came to know each other, and I nursed him like a — mother,

Till at last he stood before me, tall, and rosy-cheeked, and strong.

145 And we sometimes walked together in the pleasant summer weather;

— "Please to tell us what his name was? — Just your own, my little dear, —

There's his picture Copley painted: we became so well acquainted,

That, — in short, that's why I'm grandma, and you children are all here!"

147. John Singleton Copley was a portrait painter of celebrity, who was born in America in 1737, and painted many famous portraits, which hang in private and public galleries in Boston and vicinity chiefly. He lived in England the latter half of his life, dying there in 1815.

HOW THE OLD HORSE WON THE BET.

DEDICATED BY A CONTRIBUTOR TO THE COLLEGIAN, 1830,
TO THE EDITORS OF THE HARVARD ADVOCATE, 1876.

'T WAS on the famous trotting-ground,
The betting men were gathered round
From far and near ; the " cracks " were there
Whose deeds the sporting prints declare :
The swift g. m.,¹ Old Hiram's nag,
The fleet s. h.,² Dan Pfeiffer's brag,
With these a third — and who is he
That stands beside his fast b. g.?³
Budd Doble, whose catarrhal name
So fills the nasal trump of fame.
There too stood many a noted steed
Of Messenger and Morgan breed ;
Green horses also, not a few ;
Unknown as yet what they could do ;
And all the hacks that know so well
The scourgings of the Sunday swell.

Blue are the skies of opening day ;
The bordering turf is green with May ;
The sunshine's golden gleam is thrown
On sorrel, chestnut, bay, and roan ;
The horses paw and prance and neigh,
Fillies and colts like kittens play,
And dance and toss their rippled manes
Shining and soft as silken skeins ;

¹ g. m. *gray mare*.² s. h. *sorrel horse*.³ b. g. *bay gelding*.

Wagons and gigs are ranged about,
And fashion flaunts her gay turn-out ;
Here stands — each youthful Jehu's dream —
The jointed tandem, ticklish team !
And there in ampler breadth expand
The splendors of the four-in-hand ;
On faultless ties and glossy tiles
The lovely bonnets beam their smiles ;
(The style 's the man, so books avow ;
The style 's the woman, anyhow) ;
From flounces frothed with creamy lace
Peeps out the pug-dog's smutty face,
Or spaniel rolls his liquid eye,
Or stares the wiry pet of Skye —
O woman, in your hours of ease
So shy with us, so free with these !

“Come on! I'll bet you two to one
I'll make him do it!” “Will you? Done!”

What was it who was bound to do?
I did not hear and can't tell you, —
Pray listen till my story's through.

Scarce noticed, back behind the rest,
By cart and wagon rudely prest,
The parson's lean and bony bay
Stood harnessed in his one-horse shay —
Lent to his sexton for the day ;
(A funeral — so the sexton said ;
His mother's uncle's wife was dead.)

Like Lazarus bid to Dives' feast,
So looked the poor forlorn old beast ;

His coat was rough, his tail was bare,
 The gray was sprinkled in his hair ;
 Sportsmen and jockeys knew him not
 And yet they say he once could trot
 Among the fleetest of the town,
 Till something cracked and broke him down, —
 The steed's, the statesman's, common lot !
 "And are we then so soon forgot ?"
 Ah me ! I doubt if one of you
 Has ever heard the name "Old Blue,"
 Whose fame through all this region rung
 In those old days when I was young !

"Bring forth the horse !" Alas ! he showed
 Not like the one Mazeppa rode ;
 Scant-maned, sharp-backed, and shaky-kneed,
 The wreck of what was once a steed,
 Lips thin, eyes hollow, stiff in joints ;
 Yet not without his knowing points.
 The sexton laughing in his sleeve,
 As if 't were all a make-believe,
 Led forth the horse, and as he laughed
 Unhitched the breeching from a shaft,
 Unclasped the rusty belt beneath,
 Drew forth the snaffle from his teeth,
 Slipped off his head-stall, set him free
 From strap and rein, — a sight to see !

So worn, so lean in every limb,
 It can't be they are saddling him !
 It is ! his back the pig-skin strides
 And flaps his lank, rheumatic sides ;
 With look of mingled scorn and mirth
 They buckle round the saddle-girth ;



With horsey wink and saucy toss
A youngster throws his leg across,
And so, his rider on his back,
They lead him, limping, to the track,
Far up behind the starting-point,
To limber out each stiffened joint.

As through the jeering crowd he past,
One pitying look old Hiram cast ;
“Go it, ye cripple, while ye can !”
Cried out unsentimental Dan ;
“A Fast-Day dinner for the crows !”
Budd Doble’s scoffing shout arose.

Slowly, as when the walking-beam
First feels the gathering head of steam,
With warning cough and threatening wheeze
The stiff old charger crooks his knees ;
At first with cautious step sedate,
As if he dragged a coach of state ;
He’s not a colt ; he knows full well
That time is weight and sure to tell ;
No horse so sturdy but he fears
The handicap of twenty years.

As through the throng on either hand
The old horse nears the judges’ stand,
Beneath his jockey’s feather-weight
He warms a little to his gait,
And now and then a step is tried
That hints of something like a stride.

“Go !” — Through his ear the summons stung
As if a battle-trump had rung ;

The slumbering instincts long unstirred
Start at the old familiar word ;
It thrills like flame through every limb —
What mean his twenty years to him ?
The savage blow his driver dealt
Fell on his hollow flanks unfelt ;
The spur that pricked his staring hide
Unheeded tore his bleeding side ;
Alike to him are spur and rein, —
He steps a five-year-old again !

Before the quarter pole was past,
Old Hiram said, " He 's going fast."
Long ere the quarter was a half,
The chuckling crowd had ceased to laugh ;
Tighter his frightened jockey clung
As in a mighty stride he swung,
The gravel flying in his track,
His neck stretched out, his ears laid back,
His tail extended all the while
Behind him like a rat-tail file !
Off went a shoe, — away it spun,
Shot like a bullet from a gun ;
The quaking jockey shapes a prayer
From scraps of oaths he used to swear ;
He drops his whip, he drops his rein,
He clutches fiercely for a mane ;
He 'll lose his hold — he sways and reels —
He 'll slide beneath those trampling heels !
The knees of many a horseman quake,
The flowers on many a bonnet shake,
And shouts arise from left and right,
"Stick on! Stick on!" "Hould tight! Hould
tight!"

“Cling round his neck and don't let go —
That pace can't hold — there ! steady ! whoa !”
But like the sable steed that bore
The spectral lover of Lenore,
His nostrils snorting foam and fire,
No stretch his bony limbs can tire ;
And now the stand he rushes by,
And “ Stop him ! — stop him ! ” is the cry.
Stand back ! he 's only just begun —
He 's having out three heats in one !

“ Don't rush in front ! he 'll smash your brains ;
But follow up and grab the reins ! ”
Old Hiram spoke. Dan Pfeiffer heard,
And sprang impatient at the word ;
Budd Doble started on his bay,
Old Hiram followed on his gray,
And off they spring, and round they go,
The fast ones doing “ all they know.”
Look ! twice they follow at his heels,
As round the circling course he wheels,
And whirls with him that clinging boy
Like Hector round the walls of Troy ;
Still on, and on, the third time round !
They 're tailing off ! they 're losing ground !
Budd Doble's nag begins to fail !
Dan Pfeiffer's sorrel whisks his tail !
And see ! in spite of whip and shout,
Old Hiram's mare is giving out !
Now for the finish ! at the turn,
The old horse — all the rest astern —
Comes swinging in, with easy trot ;
By Jove ! he 's distanced all the lot !

That trot no mortal could explain ;
Some said, " Old Dutchman come again ! "
Some took his time, — at least they tried,
But what it was could none decide ;
One said he could n't understand
What happened to his second hand ;
One said 2.10 ; *that* could n't be —
More like two twenty two or three ;
Old Hiram settled it at last ;
" The time was two — too dee-vel-ish fast ! "

The parson's horse had won the bet ;
It cost him something of a sweat ;
Back in the one-horse shay he went ;
The parson wondered what it meant,
And murmured, with a mild surprise
And pleasant twinkle of the eyes,
" That funeral must have been a trick,
Or corpses drive at double-quick ;
I should n't wonder, I declare,
If brother Murray made the prayer ! "

And this is all I have to say
About the parson's poor old bay,
The same that drew the one-horse shay.

Moral for which this tale is told :
A horse *can* trot, for all he 's old.

AN APPEAL FOR "THE OLD SOUTH." ¹

"While stands the Coliseum, Rome shall stand ;
When falls the Coliseum, Rome shall fall."

FULL sevenscore years our city's pride —
The comely Southern spire —
Has cast its shadow and defied
The storm, the foe, the fire ;
Sad is the sight our eyes behold ;
Woe to the three-hilled town,²
When through the land the tale is told —
"The brave 'Old South' is down !"

Let darkness blot the starless dawn
That hears our children tell,
"Here rose the walls, now wrecked and gone,
Our fathers loved so well ;
Here, while his brethren stood aloof,
The herald's blast was blown

¹ The Old South Meeting-house, an historic landmark of Boston, standing at the corner of Washington and Milk Streets, was built in the year 1730 ; it is the oldest church in the city, and perhaps the most noted in the United States ; in 1775 the British soldiers occupied it as a riding-school and place for cavalry drill, and established a grog-shop in the lower gallery.

In 1876 the Old South Society sold the structure, to be torn down and replaced by other buildings ; but certain Bostonians, unwilling to have this done, bought the building and the land on which it stands, for about \$430,000, with the intention of handing the property over to the Preservation Committee as soon as this amount should be secured. This poem is one of the many efforts that have been made to prevent the destruction of "The Old South."

The Church now contains curious historic relics ; it is open daily, and the entrance fee (25 cents) goes towards the Preservation Fund.

² Beacon Hill ; Copp's Hill ; Fort Hill (now removed).

HOLMES.

That shook St. Stephen's ¹ pillared roof
 And rocked King George's throne!

“The home-bound wanderer of the main
 Looked from his deck afar,
 To where the gilded, glittering vane
 Shone like the evening star,
 And pilgrim feet from every clime
 The floor with reverence trod,
 Where holy memories made sublime
 The shrine of Freedom's God!”

The darkened skies, alas! have seen
 Our monarch tree ² laid low,
 And spread in ruins o'er the green,
 But Nature struck the blow;
 No scheming thrift its downfall planned,
 It felt no edge of steel,
 No soulless hireling raised his hand
 The deadly stroke to deal.

In bridal garlands, pale and mute,
 Still pleads the storied tower;
 These are the blossoms, but the fruit
 Awaits the golden shower;
 The spire still greets the morning sun, —
 Say, shall it stand or fall?
 Help, ere the spoiler has begun!
 Help, each, and God help all!

¹ At the time of the Revolution the meetings of Parliament were held in St. Stephen's Hall.

² “The Old Elm” on Boston Common was, so far as known, the oldest tree in New England; in 1860 nearly 200 rings were counted on a branch that was broken off by a gale. The tree was blown down in 1876.

A BALLAD OF THE BOSTON TEA-PARTY.¹

No! never such a draught was poured
Since Hebe served with nectar
The bright Olympians and their Lord,
Her over-kind protector, —
Since Father Noah squeezed the grape
And took to such behaving
As would have shamed our grandsire ape
Before the days of shaving, —
No! ne'er was mingled such a draught
In palace, hall, or arbor,

¹ 1773, December 14. The attempt of the British government to tax the American Colonies when they had no representation in Parliament had been strenuously resisted. A bill repealing all duties excepting a duty of three pence a pound on tea had been passed by Parliament. But the colonists, believing that a tax was an infringement of their rights, resolved that England should not succeed in collecting any duties whatever.

“Three tea-ships came to Boston. The master of the first which arrived was persuaded to consent to take his freight back to England. But the collector held that he could give no clearance until the imported cargo was landed and the legal duties paid. The master then applied to the governor for a pass to prevent his being stopped at the Castle. But the governor said no such pass could be legally given till a clearance had been obtained at the Custom-house. While the master was on this errand to the governor’s country house at Milton the inhabitants of Boston were assembled in town-meeting at the Old South Church. When the answer was brought back, which was not till after dark, a shout was heard without, and a body of some fifty men, roughly dressed as (Mohawk) Indians, passed down Milk Street to the wharf where the tea ships lay. The meeting at the church was immediately dissolved, and a portion of the assembly following, stood by as a guard against interruption, while the disguised party did their work. They passed up from the holds of the vessels some three hundred and fifty chests of tea, broke them open with hatchets, and poured their contents into the dock. The next morning all was quiet. The doers of the bold act remained unknown. The governor went to the Castle for a night. He thought of issuing a proclamation, but concluded that it would only be ridiculed. He could get no encouragement from his Council to take any measure.” — Palfrey’s *History of New England*.

As freemen brewed and tyrants quaffed
 That night in Boston Harbor !
 It kept King George so long awake
 His brain at last got addled,
 It made the nerves of Britain shake,
 With sevenscore millions saddled ;
 Before that bitter cup was drained,
 Amid the roar of cannon,
 The Western war-cloud's crimson stained
 The Thames, the Clyde, the Shannon ;
 Full many a six-foot grenadier
 The flattened grass had measured,
 And many a mother many a year
 Her tearful memories treasured ;
 Fast spread the tempest's darkening pall
 The mighty realms were troubled,
 The storm broke loose, but first of all
 The Boston teapot bubbled !

An evening party, — only that,
 No formal invitation,
 No gold-laced coat, no stiff cravat,
 No feast in contemplation,
 No silk-robed dames, no fiddling band,
 No flowers, no songs, no dancing, —
 A tribe of Red men, axe in hand, —
 Behold the guests advancing !
 How fast the stragglers join the throng,
 From stall and workshop gathered !
 The lively barber skips along
 And leaves a chin half-lathered ;
 The smith has flung his hammer down, —
 The horseshoe still is glowing ;

The truant tapster at the Crown
Has left a beer-cask flowing ;
The cooper's boys have dropped the adze,
And trot behind their master ;
Up run the tarry ship-yard lads, —
The crowd is hurrying faster, —
Out from the Millpond's purlieus gush
The streams of white-faced millers,
And down their slippery alleys rush
The lusty young Fort-Hillers ;
The ropewalk lends its 'prentice crew, —
The tories seize the omen :
"Ay, boys, you 'll soon have work to do
For England's rebel foemen,
'King Hancock,' Adams, and their gang,
That fire the mob with treason, —
When these we shoot and those we hang
The town will come to reason."

On — on to where the tea-ships ride !
And now their ranks are forming, —
A rush, and up the Dartmouth's side
The Mohawk band is swarming !
See the fierce natives ! What a glimpse
Of paint and fur and feather,
As all at once the full-grown imps
Light on the deck together !
A scarf the pigtail's ¹ secret keeps,
A blanket hides the breeches, —
And out the cursèd cargo leaps,
And overboard it pitches !

¹ At this time, 1773, and until near the end of the century, it was the fashion to wear wigs tied in a queue (pigtail) behind.

O woman, at the evening board
 So gracious, sweet, and purring,
 So happy while the tea is poured,
 So blest while spoons are stirring,
 What martyr can compare with thee,
 The mother, wife, or daughter,
 That night, instead of West Bohea,
 Condemned to milk and water!

Ah, little dreams the quiet dame
 Who plies with rock and spindle
 The patient flax, how great a flame
 Yon little spark shall kindle!
 The lurid morning shall reveal
 A fire no king can smother
 Where British flint and Boston steel
 Have clashed against each other!
 Old charters shrivel in its track,
 His Worship's bench has crumbled,
 It climbs and clasps the union-jack,
 Its blazoned pomp is humbled,
 The flags go down on land and sea
 Like corn before the reapers;
 So burned the fire that brewed the tea
 That Boston served her keepers!

The waves that wrought a century's wreck
 Have rolled o'er whig and tory;
 The Mohawks on the Dartmouth's deck
 Still live in song and story;
 The waters in the rebel bay
 Have kept the tea-leaf savor;
 Our old North-Enders in their spray
 Still taste a Hyson flavor;

And Freedom's teacup still o'erflows
With ever fresh libations,
To cheat of slumber all her foes
And cheer the wakening nations !
1874.

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,
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 ;
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 shin-
ing stream,
And he has clambered up the bank, all in the moonlight
gleam ;

Oh there were kisses sweet as dew, and words as soft as
rain, —

But they have heard her father's step, and in he leaps
again!

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

“ 'T was nothing but a pebble, sir, I threw into the
water.”

“ And what is that, pray tell me, love, that paddles off
so fast ? ”

“ It 's nothing but a porpoise, sir, that 's been a swim-
ming past.”

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

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

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.

REFLECTIONS OF A PROUD PEDESTRIAN.

I SAW the curl of his waving lash,
And the glance of his knowing eye,
And I knew that he thought he was cutting a dash,
As his steed went thundering by.

And he may ride in the rattling gig,
Or flourish the stanhope gay,
And dream that he looks exceeding big
To the people that walk in the way ;

But he shall think, when the night is still,
On the stable-boy's gathering numbers,
And the ghost of many a veteran bill
Shall hover around his slumbers ;

The ghastly dun shall worry his sleep,
And constables cluster around him,
And he shall creep from the wood-hole deep
Where their spectre eyes have found him !

Ay ! gather your reins, and crack your thong,
And bid your steed go faster ;
He does not know as he scrambles along,
That he has a fool for his master ;

And hurry away on your lonely ride,
Nor deign from the mire to save me ;
I will paddle it stoutly at your side
With the tandem that nature gave me !

EVENING.

BY A TAILOR.

DAY hath put on his jacket, and around
His burning bosom buttoned it with stars.
Here will I lay me on the velvet grass,
That is like padding to earth's meagre ribs,
And hold communion with the things about me.
Ah me ! how lovely is the golden braid
That binds the skirt of night's descending robe !
The thin leaves, quivering on their silken threads,
Do make a music like to rustling satin,
As the light breezes smooth their downy nap.

Ha ! what is this that rises to my touch,
So like a cushion ? Can it be a cabbage ?
It is, it is that deeply injured flower,
Which boys do flout us with ; — but yet I love thee,
Thou giant rose, wrapped in a green surtout.
Doubtless in Eden thou didst blush as bright
As these, thy puny brethren ; and thy breath
Sweetened the fragrance of her spicy air ;
But now thou seemest like a bankrupt beau,
Stripped of his gaudy hues and essences,
And growing portly in his sober garments.

Is that a swan that rides upon the water ?
Oh no, it is that other gentle bird,
Which is the patron of our noble calling.
I well remember, in my early years,

When these young hands first closed upon a goose ;
I have a scar upon my thimble finger,
Which chronicles the hour of young ambition.
My father was a tailor, and his father,
And my sire's grandsire, all of them were tailors ;
They had an ancient goose, — it was an heirloom
From some remoter tailor of our race.
It happened I did see it on a time
When none was near, and I did deal with it,
And it did burn me, — Oh, most fearfully !

It is a joy to straighten out one's limbs,
And leap elastic from the level counter,
Leaving the petty grievances of earth,
The breaking thread, the din of clashing shears,
And all the needles that do wound the spirit,
For such a pensive hour of soothing silence.
Kind Nature, shuffling in her loose undress,
Lays bare her shady bosom ; — I can feel
With all around me ; — I can hail the flowers
That sprig earth's mantle, — and yon quiet bird,
That rides the stream, is to me as a brother.
The vulgar know not all the hidden pockets,
Where Nature stows away her loveliness.
But this unnatural posture of the legs
Cramps my extended calves, and I must go
Where I can coil them in their wonted fashion.

THE PLOUGHMAN.

ANNIVERSARY OF THE BERKSHIRE AGRICULTURAL SOCIETY, OCTOBER 4, 1849.

CLEAR the brown path, to meet his coulter's gleam!
Lo! on he comes, behind his smoking team,
With toil's bright dew-drops on his sunburnt brow,
The lord of earth, the hero of the plough!

First in the field before the reddening sun,
Last in the shadows when the day is done,
Line after line, along the bursting sod,
Marks the broad acres where his feet have trod ;
Still where he treads, the stubborn clods divide,
The smooth, fresh furrow opens deep and wide ;
Matted and dense the tangled turf upheaves,
Mellow and dark the ridgy cornfield cleaves ;
Up the steep hillside, where the laboring train
Slants the long track that scores the level plain ;
Through the moist valley, clogged with oozing clay,
The patient convoy breaks its destined way ;
At every turn the loosening chains resound,
The swinging ploughshare circles glistening round,
Till the wide field one billowy waste appears,
And wearied hands unbind the panting steers.

These are the hands whose sturdy labor brings
The peasant's food, the golden pomp of kings ;
This is the page whose letters shall be seen
Changed by the sun to words of living green ;
This is the scholar whose immortal pen

Spells the first lesson hunger taught to men ;
These are the lines which heaven-commanded Toil
Shows on his deed, — the charter of the soil !

O gracious Mother, whose benignant breast
Wakes us to life, and lulls us all to rest,
How thy sweet features, kind to every clime,
Mock with their smile the wrinkled front of time !
We stain thy flowers, — they blossom o'er the dead ;
We rend thy bosom, and it gives us bread ;
O'er the red field that trampling strife has torn,
Waves the green plumage of thy tasselled corn ;
Our maddening conflicts scar thy fairest plain,
Still thy soft answer is the growing grain.
Yet, O our Mother, while uncounted charms
Steal round our hearts in thine embracing arms
Let not our virtues in thy love decay,
And thy fond sweetness waste our strength away.

No! by these hills, whose banners now displayed
In blazing cohorts Autumn has arrayed ;
By yon twin summits, on whose splintery crests
The tossing hemlocks hold the eagles' nests ;
By these fair plains the mountain circle screens,
And feeds with streamlets from its dark ravines, —
True to their home, these faithful arms shall toil
To crown with peace their own untainted soil ;
And, true to God, to freedom, to mankind,
If her chained bandogs Faction shall unbind,
These stately forms, that bending even now
Bowed their strong manhood to the humble plough,
Shall rise erect, the guardians of the land,
The same stern iron in the same right hand,

Till o'er the hills the shouts of triumph run,
The sword has rescued what the ploughshare won!



THE OLD MAN OF THE SEA.

A NIGHTMARE DREAM BY DAYLIGHT.

Do you know the Old Man of the Sea, of the Sea?
Have you met with that dreadful old man?
If you have n't been caught, you will be, you will be;
For catch you he must and he can.

He does n't hold on by your throat, by your throat,
As of old in the terrible tale;
But he grapples you tight by the coat, by the coat,
Till its buttons and button-holes fail.

There's the charm of a snake in his eye, in his eye,
And a polypus-grip in his hands;
You cannot go back, nor get by, nor get by,
If you look at the spot where he stands.

Oh, you're grabbed! See his claw on your sleeve, on
your sleeve!

It is Sinbad's Old Man of the Sea!
You're a Christian, no doubt you believe, you believe:
You're a martyr, whatever you be!

— Is the breakfast-hour past? They must wait, they
must wait,

While the coffee boils sullenly down,
While the Johnny-cake burns on the grate, on the grate,
And the toast is done frightfully brown.

— Yes, your dinner will keep ; let it cool, let it cool,
And Madam may worry and fret,
And children half-starved go to school, go to school ;
He can't think of sparing you yet.

— Hark ! the bell for the train ! “ Come along !
Come along !

For there is n't a second to lose.”

“ ALL ABOARD ! ” (He holds on.) “ Fsht ! ding-dong !
Fsht ! ding-dong ! ” —

You can follow on foot, if you choose.

— There 's a maid with a cheek like a peach, like a
peach,

That is waiting for you in the church ; —

But he clings to your side like a leech, like a leech,
And you leave your lost bride in the lurch.

— There 's a babe in a fit, — hurry quick ! hurry quick !
To the doctor's as fast as you can !

The baby is off, while you stick, while you stick,
In the grip of the dreadful Old Man !

— I have looked on the face of the Bore, of the Bore ;
The voice of the Simple I know ;

I have welcomed the Flat at my door, at my door ;
I have sat by the side of the Slow ;

I have walked like a lamb by the friend, by the friend,
That stuck to my skirts like a bur ;

I have borne the stale talk without end, without end,
Of the sitter whom nothing could stir :



But my hamstrings grow loose, and I shake, and I shake,
 At the sight of the dreadful Old Man ;
 Yea, I quiver and quake, and I take, and I take
 To my legs with what vigor I can !

Oh the dreadful Old Man of the Sea, of the Sea !
 He 's come back like the Wandering Jew ¹
 He has had his cold claw upon me, upon me, —
 And be sure that he 'll have it on you !

DOROTHY Q.

A FAMILY PORTRAIT.

GRANDMOTHER's mother : her age, I guess,
 Thirteen summers, or something less ;
 Girlish bust, but womanly air ;
 Smooth, square forehead with uprolled hair,
 Lips that lover has never kissed ;
 Taper fingers and slender wrist ;
 Hanging sleeves of stiff brocade ;
 So they painted the little maid.

On her hand a parrot green
 Sits unmoving and broods serene.
 Hold up the canvas full in view, —
 Look ! there 's a rent the light shines through,

¹ An imaginary person about whom there are several legends, one of which is as follows : As the Saviour was on his way to the place of execution, overcome with the weight of the cross, he wished to rest on a stone before the house of a Jew, whom the story calls Ahasuerus, who drove him away with curses. Jesus calmly replied : "Thou shalt wander on the earth till I return."



Dark with a century's fringe of dust, —
That was a Red-Coat's rapier-thrust!
Such is the tale the lady old,
Dorothy's daughter's daughter, told.

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

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

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

What if a hundred years ago
Those close-shut lips had answered No,

When forth the tremulous question came
 That cost the maiden her Norman name,
 And under the folds that look so still
 The bodice swelled with the bosom's thrill?
 Should I be I, or would it be
 One tenth another, to nine tenths me?

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

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

It shall be a blessing, my little maid!
 I will heal the stab of the Red-Coat's blade,
 And freshen the gold of the tarnished frame,
 And gild with a rhyme your household name;
 So you shall smile on us brave and bright
 As first you greeted the morning's light,
 And live untroubled by woes and fears
 Through a second youth of a hundred years.

1871.

BILL AND JOE.

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

Your name may flaunt a titled trail
Proud as a cockerel's rainbow tail,
And mine as brief appendix wear
As Tam O'Shanter's luckless mare ;
To-day, old friend, remember still
That I am Joe and you are Bill.

You've won the great world's envied prize,
And grand you look in people's eyes,
With HON. and L. L. D.
In big brave letters, fair to see, —
Your fist, old fellow ! off they go ! —
How are you, Bill ? How are you, Joe ?

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

In vain is the strife! When its fury is past,
Their fortunes must flow in one channel at last,
As the torrents that rush from the mountains of snow
Roll mingled in peace through the valleys below.

Our Union is river, lake, ocean, and sky :
Man breaks not the medal, when God cuts the die!
Though darkened with sulphur, though cloven with steel,
The blue arch will brighten, the waters will heal!

O Caroline, Caroline, child of the sun,
There are battles with Fate that can never be won!
The star-flowering banner must never be furled,
For its blossoms of light are the hope of the world!

Go, then, our rash sister! afar and aloof,
Run wild in the sunshine away from our roof;
But when your heart aches and your feet have grown
sore,
Remember the pathway that leads to our door!

MARCH 25, 1861.