

LATTER-DAY WARNINGS<sup>1</sup>

WHEN legislators keep the law,  
When banks dispense with bolts and locks,  
When berries — whortle, rasp, and straw —  
Grow bigger *downwards* through the  
box, —

When he that selleth house or land  
Shows leak in roof or flaw in right,  
When haberdashers choose the stand  
Whose window hath the broadest light, —

When preachers tell us all they think,  
And party leaders all they mean, — 10  
When what we pay for, that we drink,  
From real grape and coffee-bean, —

When lawyers take what they would give,  
And doctors give what they would take, —  
When city fathers eat to live,  
Save when they fast for conscience'  
sake, —

When one that hath a horse on sale  
Shall bring his merit to the proof,  
Without a lie for every nail  
That holds the iron on the hoof, — 20

When in the usual place for rips  
Our gloves are stitched with special care,  
And guarded well the whalebone tips  
Where first umbrellas need repair, —

When Cuba's weeds have quite forgot  
The power of suction to resist,  
And claret-bottles harbor not  
Such dimples as would hold your fist, —

When publishers no longer steal,  
And pay for what they stole before, — 30  
When the first locomotive's wheel  
Rolls through the Hoosac Tunnel's  
bore; —

Till then let Cumming blaze away,  
And Miller's saints blow up the globe;  
But when you see that blessed day,  
Then order your ascension robe !  
1857.

<sup>1</sup> I should have felt more nervous about the late comet, if I had thought the world was ripe. But it is very great yet, if I am not mistaken; and besides, there is a great deal of coal to use up, which I cannot bring myself to think was made for nothing. . . . (HOLMES, introducing the poem, in the *Autocrat of the Breakfast Table*.)

This and the six following poems first appeared in the *Autocrat* papers, in the *Atlantic Monthly*.

THE CHAMBERED NAUTILUS<sup>2</sup>

THIS is the ship of pearl, which, poets feign,  
Sails the unshadowed main, —  
The venturous bark that flings  
On the sweet summer wind its purpled  
wings

In gulfs enchanted, where the Siren sings,  
And coral reefs lie bare,  
Where the cold sea-maids rise to sun their  
streaming hair.

Its webs of living gauze no more unfurl;  
Wrecked is the ship of pearl !  
And every chambered cell, 10  
Where its dim dreaming life was wont to  
dwell,

As the frail tenant shaped his growing  
shell,  
Before thee lies revealed, —  
Its irised ceiling rent, its sunless crypt un-  
sealed !

Year after year beheld the silent toil  
That spread his lustrous coil;  
Still, as the spiral grew,  
He left the past year's dwelling for the  
new,

Stole with soft step its shining archway  
through,  
Built up its idle door, 20  
Stretched in his last-found home, and knew  
the old no more.

Thanks for the heavenly message brought  
by thee,  
Child of the wandering sea,  
Cast from her lap, forlorn !

From thy dead lips a clearer note is born  
Than ever Triton blew from wreathed horn !  
While on mine ear it rings,  
Through the deep caves of thought I hear  
a voice that sings: —

Build thee more stately mansions, O my  
soul,  
As the swift seasons roll ! 30  
Leave thy low-vaulted past !  
Let each new temple, nobler than the last,

<sup>2</sup> Suggested by looking at a section of one of those chambered shells to which is given the name of Pearly Nautilus. . . . If you will look into Roget's *Bridgewater Treatise* you will find a figure of one of these shells and a section of it. The last will show you the series of enlarging compartments successively dwelt in by the animal that inhabits the shell, which is built in a widening spiral. (HOLMES, in the *Autocrat*.)

Shut thee from heaven with a dome more  
vast,  
Till thou at length art free,  
Leaving thine outgrown shell by life's un-  
resting sea !  
1858.

THE LIVING TEMPLE<sup>1</sup>

NOT in the world of light alone,  
Where God has built his blazing throne,  
Nor yet alone in earth below,  
With belted seas that come and go,  
And endless isles of sunlit green,  
Is all thy Maker's glory seen:  
Look in upon thy wondrous frame, —  
Eternal wisdom still the same !

The smooth, soft air with pulse-like waves  
Flows murmuring through its hidden  
caves, 10

Whose streams of brightening purple rush,  
Fired with a new and livelier blush,  
While all their burden of decay  
The ebbing current steals away,  
And red with Nature's flame they start  
From the warm fountains of the heart.

No rest that throbbing slave may ask,  
Forever quivering o'er his task,  
While far and wide a crimson jet  
Leaps forth to fill the woven net 20  
Which in unnumbered crossing tides  
The flood of burning life divides,  
Then, kindling each decaying part,  
Creeps back to find the throbbing heart.

But warmed with that unchanging flame  
Behold the outward moving frame,  
Its living marbles jointed strong  
With glistening band and silvery thong,  
And linked to reason's guiding reins  
By myriad rings in trembling chains, 30  
Each graven with the threaded zone  
Which claims it as the master's own.

See how yon beam of seeming white  
Is braided out of seven-hued light,

<sup>1</sup> Having read our company so much of the Professor's talk about age and other subjects connected with physical life, I took the next Sunday morning to repeat to them the following poem of his, which I have had by me for some time. He calls it — I suppose for his professional friends — 'The Anatomist's Hymn,' but I shall name it 'The Living Temple.' (HOLMES, introducing the poem, in the *Autocrat*.)

Yet in those lucid globes no ray  
By any chance shall break astray.  
Hark how the rolling surge of sound,  
Arches and spirals circling round,  
Wakes the hushed spirit through thine  
ear

With music it is heaven to hear. 40

Then mark the cloven sphere that holds  
All thought in its mysterious folds;  
That feels sensation's faintest thrill,  
And flashes forth the sovereign will;  
Think on the stormy world that dwells  
Locked in its dim and clustering cells !  
The lightning gleams of power it sheds  
Along its hollow glassy threads !

O Father ! grant thy love divine  
To make these mystic temples thine ! 50  
When wasting age and wearying strife  
Have sapped the leaning walls of life,  
When darkness gathers over all,  
And the last tottering pillars fall,  
Take the poor dust thy mercy warms,  
And mould it into heavenly forms !  
1858.

## THE DEACON'S MASTERPIECE

OR, THE WONDERFUL 'ONE-HOSS SHAY'

A LOGICAL STORY

HAVE you heard of the wonderful one-hoss  
shay,  
That was built in such a logical way  
It ran a hundred years to a day,  
And then, of a sudden, it — ah, but stay,  
I'll tell you what happened without delay,  
Scaring the parson into fits,  
Frightening people out of their wits, —  
Have you ever heard of that, I say ?

Seventeen hundred and fifty-five.  
*Georgius Secundus* was then alive, — 10  
Snuffy old drone from the German hive.  
That was the year when Lisbon-town  
Saw the earth open and gulp her down,  
And Braddock's army was done so brown,  
Left without a scalp to its crown.  
It was on the terrible Earthquake-day  
That the Deacon finished the one-hoss shay.

Now in building of chaises, I tell you what,  
There is always *somewhere* a weakest spot, —

In hub, tire, felloe, in spring or thill, 20  
 In panel, or crossbar, or floor, or sill,  
 In screw, bolt, thoroughbrace, — lurking  
 still,  
 Find it somewhere you must and will, —  
 Above or below, or within or without, —  
 And that's the reason, beyond a doubt,  
 That a chaise *breaks down*, but does n't wear  
 out.

But the Deacon swore (as deacons do,  
 With an 'I dew vum,' or an 'I tell *yeou*')  
 He would build one shay to beat the taown  
 'N' the keounty 'n' all the kentry raoun'; 30  
 It should be so built that it *could n'* break  
 daown:  
 'Fur,' said the Deacon, 't's mighty plain  
 That the weakes' place mus' stan' the  
 strain;  
 'N' the way t' fix it, uz I maintain,  
 Is only jest  
 T' make that place uz strong uz the rest.'

So the Deacon inquired of the village  
 folk  
 Where he could find the strongest oak,  
 That could n't be split nor bent nor broke, —  
 That was for spokes and floor and sills; 40  
 He sent for lancewood to make the thills;  
 The crossbars were ash, from the straight-  
 est trees,  
 The panels of white-wood, that cuts like  
 cheese,  
 But lasts like iron for things like these;  
 The hubs of logs from the 'Settler's el-  
 lum,' —  
 Last of its timber, — they could n't sell 'em,  
 Never an axe had seen their chips,  
 And the wedges flew from between their  
 lips,  
 Their blunt ends frizzled like celery-tips;  
 Step and prop-iron, bolt and screw, 50  
 Spring, tire, axle, and linchpin too,  
 Steel of the finest, bright and blue;  
 Thoroughbrace bison-skin, thick and wide;  
 Boot, top, dasher, from tough old hide  
 Found in the pit when the tanner died.  
 That was the way he 'put her through.'  
 'There!' said the Deacon, 'naow she 'll  
 dew!'

Do! I tell you, I rather guess  
 She was a wonder, and nothing less!  
 Colts grew horses, beards turned gray, 60  
 Deacon and deaconess dropped away,

Children and grandchildren — where were  
 they?

But there stood the stout old one-hoss shay  
 As fresh as on Lisbon-earthquake-day!

EIGHTEEN HUNDRED; — it came and found  
 The Deacon's masterpiece strong and  
 sound.

Eighteen hundred increased by ten; —  
 'Hahsum kerridge' they called it then.  
 Eighteen hundred and twenty came; —  
 Running as usual; much the same. 70  
 Thirty and forty at last arrive,  
 And then come fifty, and FIFTY-FIVE.

Little of all we value here  
 Wakes on the morn of its hundredth year  
 Without both feeling and looking queer.  
 In fact, there 's nothing that keeps its youth,  
 So far as I know, but a tree and truth.  
 (This is a moral that runs at large;  
 Take it. — You're welcome. — No extra  
 charge.)

FIRST OF NOVEMBER, — the earthquake-  
 day, — 80

There are traces of age in the one-hoss  
 shay,

A general flavor of mild decay,  
 But nothing local, as one may say.  
 There could n't be, — for the Deacon's art  
 Had made it so like in every part  
 That there was n't a chance for one to  
 start.

For the wheels were just as strong as the  
 thills,

And the floor was just as strong as the  
 sills,

And the panels just as strong as the floor,  
 And the whipple-tree neither less nor more,

And the back crossbar as strong as the  
 fore, 91

And spring and axle and hub *encore*.  
 And yet, *as a whole*, it is past a doubt  
 In another hour it will be *worn out!*

First of November, 'Fifty-five!  
 This morning the parson takes a drive.  
 Now, small boys, get out of the way!  
 Here comes the wonderful one-hoss shay,  
 Drawn by a rat-tailed, ewe-necked bay.  
 'Huddup!' said the parson. — Off went  
 they. 100

The parson was working his Sunday's  
 text, —

Had got to *fifthly*, and stopped perplexed  
 At what the — Moses — was coming next.  
 All at once the horse stood still,  
 Close by the meet'n'-house on the hill.  
 First a shiver, and then a thrill,  
 Then something decidedly like a spill, —  
 And the parson was sitting upon a rock,  
 At half past nine by the meet'n'-house  
 clock, —

Just the hour of the Earthquake shock! 110  
 What do you think the parson found,  
 When he got up and stared around?  
 The poor old chaise in a heap or mound,  
 As if it had been to the mill and ground!  
 You see, of course, if you're not a dunce,  
 How it went to pieces all at once, —  
 All at once, and nothing first, —  
 Just as bubbles do when they burst.

End of the wonderful one-hoss shay  
 Logic is logic. That's all I say. 120  
 1858.

## CONTENTMENT

'Man wants but little here below.'

LITTLE I ask; my wants are few;  
 I only wish a hut of stone  
 (A *very plain* brown stone will do)  
 That I may call my own; —  
 And close at hand is such a one,  
 In yonder street that fronts the sun.

Plain food is quite enough for me;  
 Three courses are as good as ten; —  
 If Nature can subsist on three,  
 Thank Heaven for three. Amen! 10  
 I always thought cold victual nice; —  
 My *choice* would be vanilla-ice.

I care not much for gold or land; —  
 Give me a mortgage here and there, —  
 Some good bank-stock, some note of hand,  
 Or trifling railroad share, —  
 I only ask that Fortune send  
 A *little* more than I shall spend.

Honors are silly toys, I know,  
 And titles are but empty names; 20  
 I would, *perhaps*, be Plenipo, —  
 But only near St. James;  
 I'm very sure I should not care  
 To fill our Gubernator's chair.

Jewels are baubles; 't is a sin  
 To care for such unfruitful things; —

One good-sized diamond in a pin, —  
 Some, *not so large*, in rings, —  
 A ruby, and a pearl, or so,  
 Will do for me; — I laugh at show. 30

My dame should dress in cheap attire  
 (Good, heavy silks are never dear); —  
 I own perhaps I *might* desire  
 Some shawls of true Cashmere, —  
 Some marrowy crapes of China silk,  
 Like wrinkled skins on scalded milk.

I would not have the horse I drive  
 So fast that folks must stop and stare;  
 An easy gait — two forty-five —  
 Suits me; I do not care; — 40  
 Perhaps, for just a *single spurt*,  
 Some seconds less would do no hurt.

Of pictures, I should like to own  
 Titians and Raphaels three or four, —  
 I love so much their style and tone,  
 One Turner, and no more  
 (A landscape, — foreground golden dirt, —  
 The sunshine painted with a squirt).

Of books but few, — some fifty score  
 For daily use, and bound for wear; 50  
 The rest upon an upper floor; —  
 Some *little* luxury *there*  
 Of red morocco's gilded gleam  
 And vellum rich as country cream.

Busts, cameos, gems, — such things as  
 these,  
 Which others often show for pride,  
 I value for their power to please,  
 And selfish churls deride; —  
 One Stradivarius, I confess,  
 Two Meerschaums, I would fain possess. 60

Wealth's wasteful tricks I will not learn.  
 Nor ape the glittering upstart fool; —  
 Shall not carved tables serve my turn,  
 But *all* must be of buhl?  
 Give grasping pomp its double share, —  
 I ask but *one* recumbent chair.

Thus humble let me live and die,  
 Nor long for Midas' golden touch;  
 If Heaven more generous gifts deny,  
 I shall not miss them *much*, — 70  
 Too grateful for the blessing lent  
 Of simple tastes and mind content!  
 1858.

## PARSON TURELL'S LEGACY

OR, THE PRESIDENT'S OLD ARM-CHAIR

## A MATHEMATICAL STORY

FACTS respecting an old arm-chair,  
At Cambridge. Is kept in the College  
there.

Seems but little the worse for wear.  
That's remarkable when I say  
It was old in President Holyoke's day.  
(One of his boys, perhaps you know,  
Died, at one hundred, years ago.)  
He took lodgings for rain or shine  
Under green bed-clothes in '69.

Know old Cambridge? Hope you do. — 10  
Born there? Don't say so! I was, too.  
(Born in a house with a gambrel-roof, —  
Standing still, if you must have proof. —  
'Gambrel? — Gambrel?' — Let me beg  
You'll look at a horse's hinder leg, —  
First great angle above the hoof, —  
That's the gambrel: hence gambrel-  
roof.)

Nicest place that ever was seen, —  
Colleges red and Common green,  
Sidewalks brownish with trees between. 20  
Sweetest spot beneath the skies  
When the canker-worms don't rise, —  
When the dust, that sometimes flies  
Into your mouth and ears and eyes,  
In a quiet slumber lies,  
Not in the shape of unbaked pies  
Such as barefoot children prize.

A kind of harbor it seems to be,  
Facing the flow of a boundless sea.  
Rows of gray old Tutors stand 30  
Ranged like rocks above the sand;  
Rolling beneath them, soft and green,  
Breaks the tide of bright sixteen, —  
One wave, two waves, three waves, four, —  
Sliding up the sparkling floor:  
Then it ebbs to flow no more,  
Wandering off from shore to shore  
With its freight of golden ore!  
Pleasant place for boys to play; —  
Better keep your girls away; 40  
Hearts get rolled as pebbles do  
Which countless fingering waves pursue,  
And every classic beach is strown  
With heart-shaped pebbles of blood-red  
stone.

But this is neither here nor there;  
I'm talking about an old arm-chair.  
You've heard, no doubt, of PARSON TU-  
RELL?

Over at Medford he used to dwell;  
Married one of the Mathers' folk;  
Got with his wife a chair of oak, — 50  
Funny old chair with seat like wedge,  
Sharp behind and broad front edge, —  
One of the oddest of human things,  
Turned all over with knobs and rings, —  
But heavy, and wide, and deep, and  
grand, —

Fit for the worthies of the land, —  
Chief Justice Sewall a cause to try in,  
Or Cotton Mather to sit — and lie —  
in.

Parson Turell bequeathed the same  
To a certain student, — SMITH by name; 60  
These were the terms, as we are told:  
'Saide Smith saide Chaire to have and  
holde;

When he doth graduate, then to passe  
To y<sup>e</sup> oldest Youth in y<sup>e</sup> Senior Classe.  
On payment of' — (naming a certain  
sum) —

'By him to whom y<sup>e</sup> Chaire shall come;  
He to y<sup>e</sup> oldest Senior next,  
And soe forever' (thus runs the text), —  
'But one Crown lesse than he gave to  
claime,  
That being his Debte for use of same.' 70

Smith transferred it to one of the BROWNS,  
And took his money, — five silver crowns.  
Brown delivered it up to MOORE,  
Who paid, it is plain, not five, but four.  
Moore made over the chair to LEE,  
Who gave him crowns of silver three.

Lee conveyed it unto DREW,  
And now the payment, of course, was two.  
Drew gave up the chair to DUNN, —  
Ah he got, as you see, was one. 80  
Dunn released the chair to HALL,  
And got by the bargain no crown at all.

And now it passed to a second BROWN,  
Who took it and likewise claimed a crown.  
When Brown conveyed it unto WARE,  
Having had one crown, to make it fair,  
He paid him two crowns to take the chair;  
And Ware, being honest (as all Wares be),  
He paid one POTTER, who took it, three. 90  
Four got ROBINSON; five got DIX;  
JOHNSON primus demanded six;

And so the sum kept gathering still  
Till after the battle of Bunker's Hill.

When paper money became so cheap,  
Folks would n't count it, but said 'a heap,'  
A certain RICHARDS, — the books de-  
clare

(A. M. in '90? I've looked with care  
Through the Triennial, — name not there), —  
This person, Richards, was offered then  
Eightscore pounds, but would have ten; 100  
Nine, I think, was the sum he took, —  
Not quite certain, — but see the book.

By and by the wars were still,  
But nothing had altered the Parson's will.  
The old arm-chair was solid yet,  
But saddled with such a monstrous debt!  
Things grew quite too bad to bear,  
Paying such sums to get rid of the chair!  
But dead men's fingers hold awful tight,  
And there was the will in black and white,  
Plain enough for a child to spell. 111  
What should be done no man could tell,  
For the chair was a kind of nightmare  
curse,  
And every season but made it worse.

As a last resort, to clear the doubt,  
They got old GOVERNOR HANCOCK out.  
The Governor came with his Lighthorse  
Troop

And his mounted truckmen, all cock-a-  
hoop;  
Halberds glittered and colors flew,  
French horns whinnied and trumpets blew,  
The yellow fifes whistled between their  
teeth, 121

And the bumble-bee bass-drums boomed  
beneath;

So he rode with all his band,  
Till the President met him, cap in hand.  
The Governor 'hefted' the crowns, and  
said, —

'A will is a will, and the Parson's dead.'  
The Governor hefted the crowns. Said  
he, —

'There is your p'int. And here's my fee.  
These are the terms you must fulfil, —  
On such conditions I BREAK THE WILL!' 130  
The Governor mentioned what these should  
be.

(Just wait a minute and then you'll see.)  
The President prayed. Then all was still,  
And the Governor rose and BROKE THE  
WILL!

'About those conditions?' Well, now you  
go

And do as I tell you, and then you'll know.  
Once a year, on Commencement day,  
If you'll only take the pains to stay,  
You'll see the President in the CHAIR,  
Likewise the Governor sitting there. 140

The President rises; both old and young  
May hear his speech in a foreign tongue,  
The meaning whereof, as lawyers swear,  
Is this: Can I keep this old arm-chair?  
And then his Excellency bows,  
As much as to say that he allows.  
The Vice-Gub. next is called by name;  
He bows like t' other, which means the  
same.

And all the officers round 'em bow,  
As much as to say that they allow. 150  
And a lot of parchments about the chair  
Are handed to witnesses then and there,  
And then the lawyers hold it clear  
That the chair is safe for another year.

God bless you, Gentlemen! Learn to give  
Money to colleges while you live.  
Don't be silly and think you'll try  
To bother the colleges, when you die,  
With codicil this, and codicil that,  
That Knowledge may starve while Law  
grows fat; 160  
For there never was pitcher that would n't  
spill,  
And there's always a flaw in a donkey's  
will!

1858.

## THE VOICELESS

WE count the broken lyres that rest  
Where the sweet wailing singers slum-  
ber,

But o'er their silent sister's breast  
The wild-flowers who will stoop to num-  
ber?

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

Nay, grieve not for the dead alone  
Whose song has told their hearts' sad  
story, —

Weep for the voiceless, who have known  
The cross without the crown of glory!

Not where Leucadian breezes sweep  
O'er Sappho's memory-haunted billow,  
But where the glistening night-dews weep  
On nameless sorrow's churchyard pillow.

O hearts that break and give no sign  
Save whitening lip and fading tresses,  
Till Death pours out his longed-for wine  
Slow-dropped from Misery's crushing  
presses, —

If singing breath or echoing chord  
To every hidden pang were given,  
What endless melodies were poured,  
As sad as earth, as sweet as heaven!

1858.

#### FOR THE BURNS CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION

JANUARY 25, 1859

His birthday. — Nay, we need not speak  
The name each heart is beating, —  
Each glistening eye and flushing cheek  
In light and flame repeating!

We come in one tumultuous tide, —  
One surge of wild emotion, —  
As crowding through the Frith of Clyde  
Rolls in the Western Ocean;

As when yon cloudless, quartered moon  
Hangs o'er each storied river, 10  
The swelling breasts of Ayr and Doon  
With sea-green wavelets quiver.

The century shrivels like a scroll, —  
The past becomes the present, —  
And face to face, and soul to soul,  
We greet the monarch-peasant.

While Shenstone strained in feeble flights  
With Corydon and Phillis, —  
While Wolfe was climbing Abraham's  
heights  
To snatch the Bourbon lilies, — 20

Who heard the wailing infant's cry,  
The babe beneath the sheeling,  
Whose song to-night in every sky  
Will shake earth's starry ceiling, —

Whose passion-breathing voice ascends  
And floats like incense o'er us,  
Whose ringing lay of friendship blends  
With labor's anvil chorus?

We love him, not for sweetest song,  
Though never tone so tender; 30  
We love him, even in his wrong, —  
His wasteful self-surrender.

We praise him, not for gifts divine, —  
His Muse was born of woman, —  
His manhood breathes in every line, —  
Was ever heart more human?

We love him, praise him, just for this:  
In every form and feature,  
Through wealth and want, through woe  
and bliss,  
He saw his fellow-creature! 40

No soul could sink beneath his love, —  
Not even angel blasted;  
No mortal power could soar above  
The pride that all outlasted!

Ay! Heaven had set one living man  
Beyond the pedant's tether, —  
His virtues, frailties, HE may scan,  
Who weighs them all together!

I fling my pebble on the cairn  
Of him, though dead, undying; 50  
Sweet Nature's nursling, bonniest bairn  
Beneath her daisies lying.

The waning suns, the wasting globe,  
Shall spare the minstrel's story, —  
The centuries weave his purple robe,  
The mountain-mist of glory!  
1859. (1861.)

#### THE BOYS<sup>1</sup>

HAS there any old fellow got mixed with  
the boys?  
If there has, take him out, without making  
a noise.

<sup>1</sup> For nearly forty years, from 1851 to 1889, Holmes never failed to bring a poem to the annual reunion of his college class. These poems, merely 'occasional,' and local as they were in origin, form a section in his collected works which is perhaps the most important, and, except for his best humorous narratives and his two finest lyrics, the most likely to survive; for, with all Holmes's characteristic wit and humor, they celebrate feelings that are broadly and typically American — class loyalty and college loyalty, and growing out of these, the loyalty of man's enduring friendship, and loyalty to country.

The 'famous class of '29' counted among its members a chief-justice of Massachusetts, George T. Bigelow (the 'Judge' of this poem); a justice of the United

Hang the Almanac's cheat and the Cata-  
logue's spite!  
Old Time is a liar! We're twenty to-  
night!

We're twenty! We're twenty! Who  
says we are more?  
He's tipsy, — young jackanapes! — show  
him the door!

'Gray temples at twenty?' — Yes! *white*  
if we please;  
Where the snow-flakes fall thickest there's  
nothing can freeze!

Was it snowing I spoke of? Excuse the  
mistake!  
Look close, — you will see not a sign of a  
flake! 10

We want some new garlands for those we  
have shed, —  
And these are white roses in place of the  
red.

We've a trick, we young fellows, you may  
have been told,  
Of talking (in public) as if we were old: —  
That boy we call 'Doctor,' and this we call  
'Judge';  
It's a neat little fiction, — of course it's all  
fudge.

That fellow's the 'Speaker,'<sup>1</sup> — the one on  
the right;  
'Mr. Mayor,'<sup>2</sup> my young one, how are you  
to-night?

That's our 'Member of Congress,'<sup>3</sup> we say  
when we chaff;  
There's the 'Reverend' What's his name?  
— don't make me laugh. 20

That boy with the grave mathematical look  
Made believe he had written a wonderful  
book,  
And the ROYAL SOCIETY thought it was  
*true!*

So they chose him right in; a good joke it  
was, too!

States Supreme Court, B. R. Curtis (the 'boy with the three-decker brain'); the great preacher, James Freeman Clarke; Professor Benjamin Peirce ('that boy with the grave mathematical look'); and the author of 'America,' S. F. Smith. For a full list of members of the class, see the Cambridge Edition of Holmes's *Poetical Works*, p. 340.

<sup>1</sup> Hon. Francis B. Crowninshield, Speaker of the Massachusetts House of Representatives.

<sup>2</sup> G. W. Richardson, of Worcester, Massachusetts.

<sup>3</sup> Hon. George L. Davis.

There's a boy, we pretend, with a three-  
decker brain,  
That could harness a team with a logical  
chain;  
When he spoke for our manhood in syl-  
labled fire,  
We called him 'The Justice,' but now he's  
'The Squire.'

And there's a nice youngster of excellent  
pith, —  
Fate tried to conceal him by naming him  
Smith; 30  
But he shouted a song for the brave and  
the free, —  
Just read on his medal, 'My country,' 'of  
thee!'

You hear that boy laughing? — You think  
he's all fun;  
But the angels laugh, too, at the good he  
has done;  
The children laugh loud as they troop to  
his call,  
And the poor man that knows him laughs  
loudest of all!

Yes, we're boys, — always playing with  
tongue or with pen, —  
And I sometimes have asked, — Shall we  
ever be men?  
Shall we always be youthful, and laughing,  
and gay,  
Till the last dear companion drops smiling  
away? 40

Then here's to our boyhood, its gold and  
its gray!  
The stars of its winter, the dews of its  
May!

And when we have done with our life-last-  
ing toys,  
Dear Father, take care of thy children,  
THE BOYS!  
1859. 1859.

#### AT A MEETING OF FRIENDS

AUGUST 29, 1859<sup>4</sup>

I REMEMBER — why, yes! God bless me!  
and was it so long ago?  
I fear I'm growing forgetful, as old folks  
do, you know;

<sup>4</sup> Holmes's fiftieth birthday.

It must have been in 'forty — I would say  
'thirty-nine —  
We talked this matter over, I and a friend  
of mine.

He said, 'Well now, old fellow, I'm  
thinking that you and I,  
If we act like other people, shall be older  
by and by;  
What though the bright blue ocean is  
smooth as a pond can be,  
There is always a line of breakers to fringe  
the broadest sea.

'We're taking it mighty easy, but that is  
nothing strange,  
For up to the age of thirty we spend our  
years like change;  
But creeping up towards the forties, as fast  
as the old years fill,  
And Time steps in for payment, we seem to  
change a bill.'

'I know it,' I said, 'old fellow; you speak  
the solemn truth;  
A man can't live to a hundred and likewise  
keep his youth;  
But what if the ten years coming shall  
silver-streak my hair,  
You know I shall then be forty; of course  
I shall not care.

'At forty a man grows heavy and tired of  
fun and noise;  
Leaves dress to the five-and-twenties and  
love to the silly boys;  
No foppish tricks at forty, no pinching of  
waists and toes,  
But high-low shoes and flannels and good  
thick worsted hose.'

But one fine August morning I found my-  
self awake:  
My birthday: — By Jove, I'm forty! Yes,  
forty and no mistake!  
Why, this is the very milestone, I think I  
used to hold,  
That when a fellow had come to, a fellow  
would then be old!

But that is the young folks' nonsense;  
they're full of their foolish stuff;  
A man's in his prime at forty, — I see that  
plain enough;

At fifty a man is wrinkled, and may be bald  
or gray;  
I call men old at fifty, in spite of all they  
say.

At last comes another August with mist  
and rain and shine;  
Its mornings are slowly counted and creep  
to twenty-nine,  
And when on the western summits the fad-  
ing light appears,  
It touches with rosy fingers the last of my  
fifty years.

There have been both men and women  
whose hearts were firm and bold,  
But there never was one of fifty that loved  
to say 'I'm old;'  
So any elderly person that strives to shirk  
his years,  
Make him stand up at a table and try him  
by his peers.

Now here I stand at fifty, my jury gathered  
round;  
Sprinkled with dust of silver, but not yet  
silver-crowned,  
Ready to meet your verdict, waiting to hear  
it told;  
Guilty of fifty summers; speak! Is the  
verdict *old*?

No! say that his hearing fails him; say  
that his sight grows dim;  
Say that he's getting wrinkled and weak in  
back and limb,  
Losing his wits and temper, but pleading,  
to make amends,  
The youth of his fifty summers he finds in  
his twenty friends.

1859.

(1877.)

THE TWO STREAMS<sup>1</sup>

BEHOLD the rocky wall  
That down its sloping sides  
Pours the swift rain-drops, blending, as  
they fall,  
In rushing river-tides!

Yon stream, whose sources run  
Turned by a pebble's edge,

<sup>1</sup> This and the three following poems are from the  
*Professor at the Breakfast Table*. 'The Boys' also is  
included in that volume.

Is Athabasca, rolling toward the sun  
Through the cleft mountain-ledge.

The slender rill had strayed,  
But for the slanting stone,  
To evening's ocean, with the tangled braid  
Of foam-flecked Oregon.

So from the heights of Will  
Life's parting stream descends,  
And, as a moment turns its slender rill,  
Each widening torrent bends, —

From the same cradle's side,  
From the same mother's knee, —  
One to long darkness and the frozen tide,  
One to the Peaceful Sea!

1859.

## UNDER THE VIOLETS

HER hands are cold; her face is white;  
No more her pulses come and go;  
Her eyes are shut to life and light; —  
Fold the white vesture, snow on snow,  
And lay her where the violets blow.

But not beneath a graven stone,  
To plead for tears with alien eyes;  
A slender cross of wood alone  
Shall say, that here a maiden lies  
In peace beneath the peaceful skies.

10

And gray old trees of hugest limb  
Shall wheel their circling shadows round  
To make the scorching sunlight dim  
That drinks the greenness from the  
ground,  
And drop their dead leaves on her mound.

When o'er their boughs the squirrels run,  
And through their leaves the robins call,  
And, ripening in the autumn sun,  
The acorns and the chestnuts fall,  
Doubt not that she will heed them all.

20

For her the morning choir shall sing  
Its matins from the branches high,  
And every minstrel-voice of Spring,  
That trills beneath the April sky,  
Shall greet her with its earliest cry.

When, turning round their dial-track,  
Eastward the lengthening shadows pass,  
Her little mourners, clad in black,

The crickets, sliding through the grass,  
Shall pipe for her an evening mass.

30

At last the rootlets of the trees  
Shall find the prison where she lies,  
And bear the buried dust they seize  
In leaves and blossoms to the skies.  
So may the soul that warmed it rise!

If any, born of kindlier blood,  
Should ask, What maiden lies below?  
Say only this: A tender bud,  
That tried to blossom in the snow,  
Lies withered where the violets blow.

40

1859.

## HYMN OF TRUST

O LOVE Divine, that stooped to share  
Our sharpest pang, our bitterest tear,  
On Thee we cast each earth-born care,  
We smile at pain while Thou art near!

Though long the weary way we tread,  
And sorrow crown each lingering year,  
No path we shun, no darkness dread,  
Our hearts still whispering, Thou art  
near!

When drooping pleasure turns to grief,  
And trembling faith is changed to fear,  
The murmuring wind, the quivering leaf,  
Shall softly tell us, Thou art near!

On Thee we fling our burdening woe,  
O Love Divine, forever dear,  
Content to suffer while we know,  
Living and dying, Thou art near!

1859.

## A SUN-DAY HYMN

LORD of all being! throned afar,  
Thy glory flames from sun and star;  
Centre and soul of every sphere,  
Yet to each loving heart how near!

Sun of our life, thy quickening ray  
Sheds on our path the glow of day;  
Star of our hope, thy softened light  
Cheers the long watches of the night.

Our midnight is thy smile withdrawn;  
Our noontide is thy gracious dawn;

Our rainbow arch thy mercy's sign;  
All, save the clouds of sin, are thine!

Lord of all life, below, above,  
Whose light is truth, whose warmth is  
love,  
Before thy ever-blazing throne  
We ask no lustre of our own.

Grant us thy truth to make us free,  
And kindling hearts that burn for thee,  
Till all thy living altars claim  
One holy light, one heavenly flame!

1859.

PROLOGUE TO 'SONGS IN  
MANY KEYS'

THE piping of our slender, peaceful reeds  
Whispers uncared for while the trumpets  
bray;

Song is thin air; our hearts' exulting play  
Beats time but to the tread of marching  
deeds,

Following the mighty van that Freedom  
leads,

Her glorious standard flaming to the day!  
The crimsoned pavement where a hero  
bleeds

Breathes nobler lessons than the poet's lay.  
Strong arms, broad breasts, brave hearts,  
are better worth

Than strains that sing the ravished echoes  
dumb.

Hark! 't is the loud reverberating drum  
Rolls o'er the prairied West, the rock-bound  
North:

The myriad-handed Future stretches forth  
Its shadowy palms. Behold, we come,—  
we come!

Turn o'er these idle leaves. Such toys as  
these

Were not unsought for, as, in languid  
dreams,

We lay beside our lotus-feeding streams,  
And nursed our fancies in forgetful ease.  
It matters little if they pall or please,  
Dropping untimely, while the sudden  
gleams

Glare from the mustering clouds whose  
blackness seems

Too swollen to hold its lightning from the  
trees.

Yet, in some lull of passion, when at last  
These calm revolving moons that come and  
go—

Turning our months to years, they creep so  
slow—

Have brought us rest, the not unwelcome  
past

May flutter to thee through these leaflets,  
cast

On the wild winds that all around us blow.  
1861. 1861.

BROTHER JONATHAN'S LAMENT  
FOR SISTER CAROLINE

MARCH 25, 1861

SHE has gone,— she has left us in passion  
and pride,—

Our stormy-browed sister, so long at our  
side!

She has torn her own star from our firma-  
ment's glow,

And turned on her brother the face of a foe!

Oh, Caroline, Caroline, child of the sun,  
We can never forget that our hearts have  
been one,—

Our foreheads both sprinkled in Liberty's  
name,

From the fountain of blood with the finger  
of flame!

You were always too ready to fire at a  
touch;

But we said, 'She is hasty,— she does not  
mean much.' 10

We have scowled, when you uttered some  
turbulent threat;

But Friendship still whispered, 'Forgive  
and forget!'

Has our love all died out? Have its altars  
grown cold?

Has the curse come at last which the fathers  
foretold?

Then Nature must teach us the strength of  
the chain

That her petulant children would sever in  
vain.

They may fight till the buzzards are gorged  
with their spoil,

Till the harvest grows black as it rots in  
the soil,

Till the wolves and the catamounts troop  
from their caves,  
And the shark tracks the pirate, the lord of  
the waves: 20

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 moun-  
tains 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!

Oh, Caroline, Caroline, child of the sun,  
There are battles with Fate that can never  
be won! 30

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, 1861. May, 1861.

PARTING HYMN

'DUNDEE'

FATHER of Mercies, Heavenly Friend,  
We seek thy gracious throne;  
To Thee our faltering prayers ascend,  
Our fainting hearts are known!

From blasts that chill, from suns that  
smite,

From every plague that harms;  
In camp and march, in siege and fight,  
Protect our men-at-arms!

Though from our darkened lives they take  
What makes our life most dear,

We yield them for their country's sake  
With no relenting tear.

Our blood their flowing veins will shed,  
Their wounds our breasts will share;  
Oh, save us from the woes we dread,  
Or grant us strength to bear!

Let each unhallowed cause that brings  
The stern destroyer cease,  
Thy flaming angel fold his wings,  
And seraphs whisper Peace!

Thine are the sceptre and the sword,  
Stretch forth thy mighty hand,—  
Reign Thou our kingless nation's Lord,  
Rule Thou our throneless land!  
1861. August, 1861.

UNION AND LIBERTY

FLAG of the heroes who left us their glory,  
Borne through their battle-fields' thun-  
der and flame,

Blazoned in song and illumined in story,  
Wave o'er us all who inherit their  
fame!

Up with our banner bright,  
Sprinkled with starry light,  
Spread its fair emblems from mountain  
to shore,

While through the sounding sky  
Loud rings the Nation's cry,—  
UNION AND LIBERTY! ONE EVER-  
MORE! 10

Light of our firmament, guide of our Na-  
tion,

Pride of her children, and honored  
afar,

Let the wide beams of thy full constella-  
tion

Scatter each cloud that would darken a  
star!

Up with our banner bright, etc.

Empire unscathed! what foe shall assail  
thee,

Bearing the standard of Liberty's van?  
Think not the God of thy fathers shall fail  
thee,

Striving with men for the birthright of  
man!

Up with our banner bright, etc. 20

Yet if, by madness and treachery blighted,  
Dawns the dark hour when the sword  
thou must draw,  
Then with the arms of thy millions united,  
Smite the bold traitors to Freedom and  
Law!  
Up with our banner bright, etc.

Lord of the Universe! shield us and guide  
us,  
Trusting Thee always, through shadow  
and sun!  
Thou hast united us, who shall divide us?  
Keep us, oh keep us the MANY IN ONE!  
Up with our banner bright,  
Sprinkled with starry light,  
Spread its fair emblems from mountain  
to shore,  
While through the sounding sky  
Loud rings the Nation's cry, —  
UNION AND LIBERTY! ONE EVER-  
MORE!

1861.

December, 1861.

J. D. R.<sup>1</sup>

1862

THE friends that are, and friends that were,  
What shallow waves divide!  
I miss the form for many a year  
Still seated at my side.

I miss him, yet I feel him still  
Amidst our faithful band,  
As if not death itself could chill  
The warmth of friendship's hand.

His story other lips may tell, —  
For me the veil is drawn;  
I only know he loved me well,  
He loved me — and is gone!

1862.

1862.

TO MY READERS<sup>2</sup>

NAY, blame me not; I might have spared  
Your patience many a trivial verse,  
Yet these my earlier welcome shared,  
So, let the better shield the worse.

<sup>1</sup> James D. Russell, a classmate of Holmes.  
<sup>2</sup> Written as a prologue to the collected edition of  
Holmes's poems published in 1862.

And some might say, 'Those ruder songs  
Had freshness which the new have lost;  
To spring the opening leaf belongs,  
The chestnut-burs await the frost.'

When those I wrote, my locks were brown,  
When these I write — ah, well-a-day!  
The autumn thistle's silvery down  
Is not the purple bloom of May!

Go, little book, whose pages hold  
Those garnered years in loving trust;  
How long before your blue and gold  
Shall fade and whiten in the dust?

O sexton of the alcoved tomb,  
Where souls in leathern ceremonies lie,  
Tell me each living poet's doom!  
How long before his book shall die?

It matters little, soon or late,  
A day, a month, a year, an age, —  
I read oblivion in its date,  
And Finis on its title-page.

Before we sighed, our griefs were told;  
Before we smiled, our joys were sung;  
And all our passions shaped of old  
In accents lost to mortal tongue.

In vain a fresher mould we seek, —  
Can all the varied phrases tell  
That Babel's wandering children speak  
How thrushes sing or lilacs smell?

Caged in the poet's lonely heart,  
Love wastes unheard its tenderest tone;  
The soul that sings must dwell apart,  
Its inward melodies unknown.

Deal gently with us, ye who read!  
Our largest hope is unfulfilled, —  
The promise still outruns the deed, —  
The tower, but not the spire, we build.

Our whitest pearl we never find;  
Our ripest fruit we never reach;  
The flowering moments of the mind  
Drop half their petals in our speech.

These are my blossoms; if they wear  
One streak of morn or evening's glow,  
Accept them; but to me more fair  
The buds of song that never blow.

1862.

1862.

VOYAGE OF THE GOOD SHIP  
UNION<sup>1</sup>

1862

'Tis midnight: through my troubled  
dream

Loud wails the tempest's cry;  
Before the gale, with tattered sail,  
A ship goes plunging by.  
What name? Where bound? — The rocks  
around

Repeat the loud halloo.  
— The good ship Union, Southward bound:  
God help her and her crew!

And is the old flag flying still  
That o'er your fathers flew,  
With bands of white and rosy light,  
And field of starry blue?  
— Ay! look aloft! its folds full oft  
Have braved the roaring blast,  
And still shall fly when from the sky  
This black typhoon has past!

Speak, pilot of the storm-tost bark!  
May I thy peril share?  
— O landsman, there are fearful seas  
The brave alone may dare!  
— Nay, ruler of the rebel deep,  
What matters wind or wave?  
The rocks that wreck your reeling deck  
Will leave me naught to save!

O landsman, art thou false or true?  
What sign hast thou to show?  
— The crimson stains from loyal veins  
That hold my heart-blood's flow!  
— Enough! what more shall honor claim?  
I know the sacred sign;  
Above thy head our flag shall spread,  
Our ocean path be thine!

The bark sails on; the Pilgrim's Cape  
Lies low along her lee,  
Whose headland crooks its anchor-flukes  
To lock the shore and sea.  
No treason here! it cost too dear  
To win this barren realm!  
And true and free the hands must be  
That hold the whaler's helm!

Still on! Manhattan's narrowing bay  
No rebel cruiser scars;

<sup>1</sup> Written for a reunion of the class of '29.

Her waters feel no pirate's keel  
That flaunts the fallen stars!  
— But watch the light on yonder height,  
— Ay, pilot, have a care!  
Some lingering cloud in mist may shroud  
The capes of Delaware!

Say, pilot, what this fort may be,  
Whose sentinels look down  
From moated walls that show the sea  
Their deep embrasures' frown?  
The Rebel host claims all the coast,  
But these are friends, we know,  
Whose footprints spoil the 'sacred soil,'  
And this is? — Fort Monroe!

The breakers roar, — how bears the shore?  
— The traitorous wreckers' hands  
Have quenched the blaze that poured its  
rays  
Along the Hatteras sands.  
— Ha! say not so! I see its glow!  
Again the shoals display  
The beacon light that shines by night,  
The Union Stars by day!

The good ship flies to milder skies,  
The wave more gently flows,  
The softening breeze wafts o'er the seas  
The breath of Beaufort's rose.  
What fold is this the sweet winds kiss,  
Fair-striped and many-starred,  
Whose shadow palls these orphaned walls,  
The twins of Beauregard?

What! heard you not Port Royal's doom?  
How the black war-ships came  
And turned the Beaufort roses' bloom  
To redder wreaths of flame?  
How from Rebellion's broken reed  
We saw his emblem fall,  
As soon his cursed poison-weed  
Shall drop from Sumter's wall?

On! on! Pulaski's iron hail  
Falls harmless on Tybee!  
The good ship feels the freshening gales,  
She strikes the open sea;  
She rounds the point, she threads the keys  
That guard the Land of Flowers,  
And rides at last where firm and fast  
Her own Gibraltar towers!

The good ship Union's voyage is o'er,  
At anchor safe she swings,