

**SELECTIONS FROM THE  
WRITINGS OF OLIVER  
WENDELL HOLMES**

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Selections from the writings of Oliver Wendell Holmes by Oliver Wendell Holmes

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SELECTIONS  
FROM THE WRITINGS OF  
OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES

*Arranged under the Days of the Year, and  
accompanied by Memoranda of Anniversaries  
of Noted Events and of the Birth or Death  
of Famous Men and Women* —————



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25 July 11 - R.B.R.

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,  
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 unsealed!

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,  
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!  
Leave thy low-vaulted past!  
Let each new temple, nobler than the last,  
Shut thee from heaven with a dome more vast,  
Till thou at length art free,  
Leaving thine outgrown shell by life's unresting sea!

THE CHAMBERED NAUTILUS.







## JANUARY 1-3

### 1. *Maria Edgeworth, 1767.*

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 !

A SUN-DAY HYMN.

### 2. *Philip Freneau, 1752.*

The wonderful exhibition of the Seasons is about to commence ; four shows under one cover ; the best ventilated place of entertainment in this or any other system ; the stage lighted by solar, lunar, and astral lamps. Performances in twelve parts. Overture by the feathered choir ; after which the white drop curtain will rise, showing the remarkable succession of natural scenery designed and executed solely for this planet, — real forests, meadows, water, earth, skies, etc. At the conclusion of each series of performances the storm-chorus will be given with the whole strength of the wind-instrument orchestra, and the splendid snow scene will be introduced, illuminated by grand flashes of the Aurora Borealis.

THE SEASONS.

### 3. *Douglas Jerrold, 1803.*

The silent changes of the rolling years,  
Marked on the soil, or dialled on the spheres.

POETRY.

## JANUARY 4-7

### 4. *Jakob Ludwig Grimm, 1785.*

Those who are really awake to the sights and sounds which the procession of the months offers them find endless entertainment and instruction. Yet there are great multitudes who are present at as many as threescore and ten performances, without ever really looking at the scenery, or listening to the music, or observing the chief actors. Some are too busy with their books or their handicraft, and many women, even, who ought to enjoy the sights, keep their eyes on their work or their knitting, so that they seem to see next to nothing of what is going on.

THE BRADONS.

### 5. *Stephen Decatur, 1770.*

Every human soul leaves its port with sealed orders. These may be opened earlier or later on its voyage, but until they are opened no one can tell what is to be his course or to what harbor he is bound.

RALPH WALDO EMERSON.

### 6. *Epiphany.*

A holy life is Heaven's unquestioned text ;  
That shining guidance doubt can never err, —  
The pillar's flame, the light of Bethlehem's star !

MEDICAL SOCIETY DINNER.

### 7. *Israel Putnam, 1718.*

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.

TO MY READERS.

## JANUARY 8-10

### 8. *Alma Tadema*, 1836.

This solemn pause, the breathing-space of man,  
The halt of toil's exhausted caravan, —  
Comes sweet with music to thy wearied ear ;  
Rise with its anthems to a holier sphere !

A RHYMED LESSON.

### 9. *Napoleon III. died*, 1873.

Reason may be the lever, but sentiment gives  
you the fulcrum and the place to stand on if you  
want to move the world. Even "sentimentality,"  
which is sentiment overdone, is better than the af-  
fectionation of superiority to human weakness.

THE POET AT THE BREAKFAST-TABLE.

In spite of all that Time is bringing, —  
Treasures of truth and miracles of art,  
Beauty and Love will keep the poet singing,  
And song still live, — the science of the heart.

THE COMING ERA.

### 10. *Aubrey de Vere*, 1814.

It seems rather odd that winter does not fairly  
begin until the sun has turned the corner, and is  
every day shining higher and higher, in fact bring-  
ing summer to us as fast as he can. But the astro-  
nomical date corresponds with the popular belief as  
well as the meteorological record. "As the day  
lengthens, the cold strengthens."

THE SEASONS.