

**THE IRON GATE:
AND OTHER POEMS**

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The Iron Gate: And Other Poems by Oliver Wendell Holmes

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OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES

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AND OTHER POEMS**



Oliver Wendell Holmes.

THE IRON GATE,

AND OTHER POEMS.

BY

OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES.



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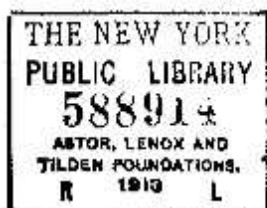
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THE IRON GATE.

READ AT THE BREAKFAST GIVEN IN HONOR OF DR. HOLMES'S
SEVENTIETH BIRTHDAY BY THE PUBLISHERS OF THE ATLANTIC
MONTHLY, BOSTON, DECEMBER 3, 1879.

WHERE is this patriarch you are kindly greeting?
Not unfamiliar to my ear his name,
Nor yet unknown to many a joyous meeting
In days long vanished, — is he still the same,

Or changed by years, forgotten and forgetting,
Dull-eared, dim-sighted, slow of speech and
thought,
Still o'er the sad, degenerate present fretting,
Where all goes wrong, and nothing as it ought?

Old age, the graybeard! Well, indeed, I know
him, —
Shrunk, tottering, bent, of aches and ills the prey;
In sermon, story, fable, picture, poem,
Oft have I met him from my earliest day:

In my old Æsop, toiling with his bundle, —
His load of sticks, — politely asking Death,
Who comes when called for, — would he lug or
trundle
His fagot for him? — he was scant of breath.

And sad "Ecclesiastes, or the Preacher," —
Has he not stamped the image on my soul,
In that last chapter, where the worn-out Teacher
Sighs o'er the loosened cord, the broken bowl?

Yes, long, indeed, I've known him at a distance,
And now my lifted door-latch shows him here;
I take his shrivelled hand without resistance,
And find him smiling as his step draws near.

What though of gilded baubles he bereaves us,
Dear to the heart of youth, to manhood's prime;
Think of the calm he brings, the wealth he leaves us,
The hoarded spoils, the legacies of time!

Altars once flaming, still with incense fragrant,
Passion's uneasy nurslings rocked asleep,
Hope's anchor faster, wild desire less vagrant,
Life's flow less noisy, but the stream how deep!

Still as the silver cord gets worn and slender,
Its lightened task-work tugs with lessening strain,