

**THE BOYHOOD OF  
LIVING AUTHORS**

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The Boyhood of Living Authors by William H. Rideing

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**WILLIAM H. RIDEING**

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WHITTIER READING HIS FIRST POEM IN PRINT. — PAGE 118

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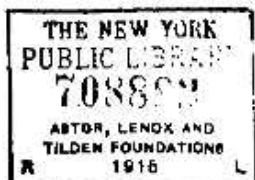
BY

WILLIAM H. RIDEING

AUTHOR OF "THACKERAY'S LONDON," ETC.

NEW YORK  
DODD  
*The spirit of a youth  
That means to be of note*  
DODD

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## BOYHOOD OF LIVING AUTHORS.

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*OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES.*

THERE is a pleasant little house in Beacon Street, Boston, which is occupied by a gentleman who has written some books which have made his name famous wherever the English language is spoken, and also in many other countries into the language of which they have been translated. As he goes along the streets of the town, with a friendly, observant eye, which has a bird-like quickness, people who see him whisper — those who are unmannered point at him — and say, "See, the Autocrat!"

He is probably referred to thus as often as by his proper name; and this is because one of his books is called "The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table," a volume full of

wisdom and humor, which on one page moves us to tears, and in the next sets us shaking with laughter. He is a rather slender gentleman, with white hair, though no one would guess him to be over seventy-five; and the wavy white hair on his head is matched by white side-whiskers of an English cut. He is not distinctly a writer for the young; writing of any kind has not been the business of his life, indeed, and aside from it he has made himself famous in the medical profession: but there are few boys or girls who, though they may not have read "The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table" all through, do not know by heart "The Chambered Nautilus" and the story of the deacon's "One-hoss Shay."

"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 heard of that, I say?"

It is Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes I am speaking about; one of the two survivors of that splendid period of American literature which gave us Longfellow, Motley, Emerson, and Lowell.

The doctor's study in the house in Beacon Street looks out over the Charles River; and it is a question whether the view from the windows is more beautiful at night, when the electric lights on the bridge cast their reflections on the water like javelins of glittering silver, or in the day, when the gray stream flowing to the sea, and the spires and towers of Cambridge, with the green hills of Arlington and Belmont beyond, are visible. It is at all times a view of which Boston people are very proud; and, aside from its beauty, it has the added interest to the doctor of encompassing nearly all the scenes of his youth, and of his manhood too.

He was born at Cambridge, and went to school at Cambridgeport, and both of those places are in sight from his windows. All his past is unfolded there; and when he turns from the book or manuscript on his