

SONGS OF MANY SEASONS.

1862-1874.

BY

OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES.



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OPENING THE WINDOW.

Thus I lift the sash, so long
Shut against the flight of song ;
All too late for vain excuse, —
Lo, my captive rhymes are loose !

Rhymes that, fitting through my brain,
Beat against my window-pane,
Some with gayly colored wings,
Some, alas ! with venom'd stings.

Shall they bask in sunny rays ?
Shall they feed on sugared praise ?
Shall they stick with tangled feet
On the critic's poisoned sheet ?

PROGRAMME.

Are the outside winds too rough ?
Is the world not wide enough ?
Go, my winged verse, and try, —
Go, like Uncle Toby's fly !

PROGRAMME.

READER — gentle — if so be
Such still live, and live for me,
Will it please you to be told
What my ten-score pages hold ?

Here are verses that in spite
Of myself I needs must write,
Like the wine that oozes first
When the unsqueezed grapes have burst.

Here are angry lines, "too hard" !
Says the soldier, battle-scarred.
Could I smile his scars away
I would blot the bitter lay,

PROGRAMME.

v

Written with a knitted brow,
Read with placid wonder now.
Throbbled such passion in my heart ?
— Did his wounds once really smart ?

Here are varied strains that sing
All the changes life can bring,
Songs when joyous friends have met,
Songs the mourner's tears have wet.

See the banquet's dead bouquet,
Fair and fragrant in its day ;
Do they read the self-same lines, —
He that fasts and he that dines ?

Year by year, like milestones placed,
Mark the record Friendship traced.
Prisoned in the walls of time
Life has notched itself in rhyme :

As its seasons slid along,
Every year a notch of song,
From the June of long ago,
When the rose was full in blow,