



UH 61-33  
83

A  
4  
u

**T** H E **D** O E M S

OF

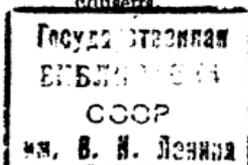
OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES.



BOSTON:  
JAMES R. OSGOOD AND COMPANY,  
LATE TICKNOR & FIELDS, AND FIELDS, OSGOOD, & CO.  
1876.

A

Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1862, by  
 TICKNOR AND FIELDS,  
 in the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the District of Mass-  
 chusetts.



*243847-61*

TWENTY-THIRD EDITION.

*University Press :*  
 Welch, Bigelow, and Company,  
 Cambridge.



## TO MY READERS.



AY, 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.

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 wreathe in the dust?

## TO MY READERS.

O sexton of the alcoved tomb,  
 Where souls in leathern cerements 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.