



Gleanings from Great Writers.

The Long Path.

[From "The Autocrat at the Breakfast Table." By Oliver Wendell Holmes. "The long path" is still pointed out on "The Commons" in Boston,—a sort of park with trees, running close to the heart of the city.]

I can't say just how many walks she and I had taken together before this one. I found the effect of going out every morning was decidedly favorable on her health. Two pleasing dimples, the places for which were just marked when she came, played, shadowy, in her freshening cheeks when she smiled and nodded good-morning to me from the school-house steps. I am afraid I did the greater part of the talking. At any rate, if I should try to report all that I said during the first half-dozen walks we took together, I fear that I might receive a gentle hint from my friends the publishers that a separate volume, at my own risk and expense, would be the proper method of bringing them before the public.

Books we talked about, and education. It was her duty to know something of these, and, of course, she did. Perhaps I was somewhat more learned than she, but I found that the difference between her reading and mine was like that of a man's and a woman's dusting a library. The man flaps about with a bunch of feathers; the woman goes to work softly with a cloth. She does not raise half the dust, nor fill her own eyes and mouth with it; but she goes into all the corners, and attends to the leaves as much as the covers. Books are the negative pictures of thought, and the more sensitive the mind that receives their images, the more nicely the finest lines are reproduced. A woman (of the right kind) reading after a man, follows him as Ruth followed the reapers of Boaz, and her gleanings are often the finest of the wheat. But it was in talking of life that we came most nearly together. I thought I knew something about that—that I could speak or write about it somewhat to purpose.

To take up this fluid earthly being of ours as a sponge sucks up water—to be steeped and soaked in its realities as a hide fills its pores lying seven years in a tan-pit—to have winnowed every wave of it as a mill-wheel works up the stream that runs through the flume upon its float-boards—to have curled up in the keenest spasms and flattened out in the laxest languors of this breathing-sickness, which keeps certain parcels of matter uneasy for three or four score years—to have fought all the devils and clasped all the angels of its delirium—and then, just at the point when the white-hot passions have cooled down to cherry-red, plunge our experience into the ice-cold stream of some human language or other, one might think would end in a rhapsody with something of spring and temper in it. All this I thought my power and province.

The schoolmistress had tried life, too. One in a while one meets with a single soul greater than all the living pageant that passes before it. As the pale astronomer sits in his study with sunken eyes and thin fingers, and weighs Uranus or Neptune as in a balance, so there are meek, slight women who have weighed

all that this planetary life can offer, and hold it like a bauble in the palm of their slender hands. This was one of them. Fortune had left her, sorrow had baptized her; the routine of labor and the loneliness of almost friendless city-life were before her. Yet, as I looked upon her tranquil face, gradually regaining a cheerfulness that was often sprightly, as she became interested in the various matters we talked about, and places we visited, I saw that eye and lip and every shifting lineament were made for love—unconscious of their sweet office as yet, and meeting the cold aspect of duty with the natural graces which were meant for the reward of nothing less than the Great Passion.

—I never spoke one word of love to the schoolmistress in the course of these pleasant walks. It seemed to me that we talked of everything but love on that particular morning. There was, perhaps, a little more timidity and hesitancy on my part than I have commonly shown among our people at the boarding-house. In fact, I considered myself the master at the breakfast table; but, somehow, I could not command myself just then so well as usual. The truth is, I had secured a passage to Liverpool in the steamer which was to leave at noon—with the condition, however, of being released in case circumstances occurred to detain me. The schoolmistress knew nothing about all this, of course, as yet. It was on the Common that we were walking. The mall, or boulevard of our Common, you know, has various branches leading from it in different directions. One of these runs downward from opposite Joy Street, southward across the whole length of the Common to Boylston Street. We

ment, as if an arrow had struck her. One of the long granite blocks used as seats was hard by—the one you may still see close by the Ginkgo-tree. "Pray, sit down," I said. "No, no," she answered softly, "I will walk the long path with you!" —The old gentleman who sits opposite met us walking, arm in arm, about the middle of the long path, and said, very charmingly, "Good morning, my dears!"

The Deacon's Masterpiece.

By Oliver Wendell Holmes.

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 happens without delay.

Seventeen hundred and fifty-five, Georgius Secundus was then alive— Snuffy old drone from the German hive. That was the year when Lisbon town Saw the earth open and gulp her down, And Braddock's army was done so brown. Left without a scalp to its crown. It was on the terrible earthquake day That the Deacon finished the one-hoss shay.

Now in building of chaises, I tell you what. There is always somewhere a weakest spot—

He would build one shay to beat the town. 'N' the keounty 'n' all the kentry raoun; It should be so built that it couldn't break daown: "Far," said the Deacon, "'tis mighty plain That the weakes' place mus' stan' the strain; 'N' the way t' fix it, uz I maintain, Is only jest.

T' make that place uz strong uz the rest." So the Deacon inquired of the village folk

Where he could find the strongest oak, That couldn't be split, nor bent, nor broke—

That was for spokes and floor and sills; He sent for lancewood to make the thills;

The crossbars were ash, from the straightest trees, The panels of white-wood, that cuts like cheese,

But lasts like iron for things like these; The hubs of logs from the settler's ellum,

Last of its timber—they couldn't sell 'em; Never an axe had seen their chips,

And the wedges flew from between their lips, Their blunt ends frizzled like celery-tips;

Step and propiron, bolt and screw, Spring, tire, axle, and linchpin, too, Steel or the finest, bright and blue;

Thoroughbrace bison-skin, thick and wide; Boot, top, dasher, from tough old hide

Found in the pit when the tanner died. That was the way he put her through."

"There!" said the Deacon, "naow she'll dew!"

Do! I tell you, I rather guess She was a wonder, and nothing less. Colts grew horses, beards turned gray, Deacon and deaconess dropped away, Children and grandchildren—where were they? But there stood the stout old one-hoss shay, As fresh as on Lisbon earthquake day!

Eighteen hundred; it came and found The Deacon's masterpiece strong and sound.

Eighteen hundred increased by ten; "Hahusum kerridge" they called it then.

Eighteen hundred and twenty came— Running as usual, much the same. Thirty and forty at last arrive, And then came fifty, and Fifty-five.

Little of all we value here Wakes on the morn of its hundredth year

Without both feeling and looking queer. In fact, there's nothing that keeps its youth,

So far as I know, but a tree and truth. (This is a moral that runs at large; Take it—You're welcome. No extra charge.)

First of November the earthquake days— There are traces of age in the one-hoss shay.

A general flavor of mild decay.



The Grand Canal, Venice.

(From a painting by J. M. W. Turner.)

called it the long path, and were fond of it.

I felt very weak indeed (though of a tolerably robust habit) as we came opposite the head of this path on that morning. I think I tried to speak twice without making myself distinctly audible. At last I got out the question, "Will you take the long path with me?" "Certainly," said the schoolmistress, "with much pleasure." "Thank you," I said, "before you answer, if you take the long path with me now, I shall interpret it that we are to part no more!" The schoolmistress stepped backward with a sudden in-

In hub, tire, felloe, in spring or thill, In panel, or cross-bar, or floor or sill.

In screw, bolt, thoroughbrace—lurking still. Find it somewhere you must and will.

Above or below, or within or without— And that's the reason, beyond a doubt.

That a chaise breaks down, but doesn't wear out.

But the Deacon swore his Deacon's shay.

With me, I say, you'll see me, I tell you.