

THE CANADA LANCET.

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Communications solicited on all Medical and Scientific subjects, and also Reports of Cases occurring in practice.
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OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES, M.D.

In an old almanac of the year 1809, kept by the Rev. Abiel Holmes, against the date August 2nd, is the simple entry, "Son born." Within the last month nearly every newspaper and journal in America has made a biographical reference to the son, regarding whom that old entry was made. What need to repeat here the details so often given. To very many of the readers of the CANADA LANCET the announcement of Dr. Holmes' death must have come with something like a sense of personal bereavement. And yet not half a dozen in our craft are living to-day, who can remember when he began his life-long task of bringing the profession of medicine into pleasant, agreeable contact with society at large. More than any man who has ever lived, Dr. Holmes has moral has existed between the medical profession bridged over that chasm which from time immemorial and the world.

By his life he illustrated the important lesson, that he who becomes distinguished as a physician need not remain a slave to his calling, or see things only from one point of view, but that he may, while maintaining his position, become a leader in ethical culture, and an ornament to literature. Emancipated, as he fortunately was, from the need of earning a livelihood, as well as from the drudgery of practice, his many-sided genius made it easy for him to become, while, perhaps, never a great

anatomist, certainly the best teacher of anatomy on this side of the Atlantic. At the same time he was building an enduring fame as poet, essayist and philosopher. If wit is the highest wisdom, as in its best form it certainly is, how much this century has to thank him for! Very truly he

"Never deemed it sin to gladden
This vale of sorrows with a wholesome laugh,"

and that warmth of nature which brought him into sunny contact with the whole world, made even the pessimist and the misanthrope laugh with him.

Dry bones lived again when he described them, and his old students bear willing testimony to the fact that his happy illustrations made it the easier to grasp and to retain the full significance of what he taught. One of their number, referring to his dual allegiance to science and literature has written of

The doctor-poet so doubly stored
With science as well as with native wit
Poeta nascitur, you know *non fit*
Skilled to dissect with knife or pen,
His subject dead or living men;
With thoughts sublime on every page,
To swell the veins with virtuous rage
Or with a syringe to inject them
With sublimate to disinfect them;
To show with demonstrative art,
The complex chambers of the heart,
Or, armed with a diviner skill,
To make it pulsate at his will;
With generous verse to celebrate
The loaves and fishes of some giver,
And then proceed to demonstrate
The lobes and fissures of the liver;
To soothe the pulses of the brain
With poetry's enchanting strain,
Or to describe to class uproarious
Pes hippocampi accessorius;
To move with fervor of appeal
The sluggish muscles into steel,
Or, pulling their attachments, show
Whence they arise and where they go;
To fix the eye with wit consummate
Or draw the aqueous humor from it,
In times of peril give the tone
To public feeling called back-bone,
Or to discuss that question solemn
The muscles of the spinal column.

All the world knows that for thirty-seven years he was Professor of Anatomy at Harvard, that some of the poems which he has written—"The Chambered Nautilus," for example—are as perfect as any in our language, and that the wit, the wisdom and the unsurpassable grace of the Autocrat Series has given him an *open sesame* into hearts and homes everywhere. But it may be doubted if as generous and universal recog-