

In due time the eagerly awaited volume arrived, and great was my delight on opening it to find within the following inscription :

J. MACDONALD ONLEY,

With the kind regards of

OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES,

and that most exquisite of his verses,

"And if I should live to be

The last leaf upon the tree

In the Spring.

Let them smile, as I do now

At the old forsaken bough,

Where I cling,"

with the poet's signature appended, but also a perfect photograph of his shrewd, kindly, winsome face, with his name in full beneath.

Having carefully inserted both the first letter and the photograph in the book, I need hardly say that I have ever since regarded my copy of the "Autocrat" as a possession of peculiar preciousness.

Some years later I contributed to the columns of the *Sunday School Times* an article on "The Children in the Library," which was, in the main, an expansion and application of the "Autocrat's" remark with regard to what constitutes a gentleman, "Above all things, as a child, he should have tumbled about in a library. All men are afraid of books who have not handled them from infancy."

Thinking that possibly Dr. Holmes might be interested in my development of his doctrine, I sent him the article, whereupon he promptly responded :

My Dear Sir,—

I thank you for your "sermon," which I have read with much pleasure. I am much gratified that you have honored me by making use of some words of mine as a text worth enlarging upon.

Believe me, My Dear Sir,

Yours very truly,

OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES.

In every case the hand-writing is the "Autocrat's" own throughout, and now that he has passed away from us as sweetly and gently as he lived, my brief correspondence with him must always remain one of the most dearly treasured experiences of my life.

J. MACDONALD ONLEY.

Montreal, Canada.

#### OF BEAUTY.

The convoluted wave, God's first sea-shell,  
Upgathers now the deep's great harmonies;  
From the far blue an Alp-like cloud doth  
well,

Baring its azure peaks to the heavenlies :  
My spirit's outward bound, hath liberty !  
Earnest as rising flame its young love  
burns

To catch the awesome gladness flowing free  
O'er earth and sky as Beauty's face upturns.

O, naught is great without thy effluence !  
In curving billow's culminating sweep,  
In mountain heights, the strength of  
grace is seen :  
Essence divine, of God-like competence,—  
Reposeful in the heart of things as sleep !  
Robed in the purple, sceptered, throned  
a queen !

THEODORE H. RAND.

At Minas Basin.

At the German manoeuvres a new shoe sole for soldiers will be tried. It consists of a kind of paste of linseed oil, varnish and iron fillings with which the soles of new shoes are painted. It is said to keep leather flexible and gives the shoe greater resistance than the best nails.

#### A NOVEMBER IDYL.

The Indian is not alone in thinking a good hunt the greatest earthly delight ; nor is he the only man whose idea of Paradise is a flat expanse of sedge and rank grasses, a treeless horizon, with the moist, dreary atmosphere, broken here and there by stream and pond. No, there might be one more addition to "Gates Ajar." Make it a heaven where we can take a good dog or two; a heaven where we can creep through eternity from forest game to that of the marsh; not a heaven with glare and glitter and music, but one where the melody will be the whir of the partridge, the rustle of leaves and the sharp ping-bang! that follows, where the harmony is one in which swan and mallard, teal and black duck, each lends aid. The sea there would not be crystal, but an endless tract of sluggish, reed-bordered, swampy pools; the only brightness, a dim-colored morning holding the flash that heralds the report. No warm heaven for us, with insence of flowers and meadow-sweet odors of an eternal summer's day; far better the whistling of the coming storm that drives the birds to shelter, the dank smell of the sedges, and the brown tints of autumn everywhere.

To a home bird this is one of the insolvable mysteries; as subtle as feminine delight in a new bonnet is to the average man. The word November means the drawing of the curtains half an hour earlier in the evening; a first fire in the grate; the putting away of summer-time things, and chrysanthemums on the table, with their glass catching the glint of the fire-light; it means the cat curled up on the rug; and the children's hour, when boy-princes and fairies have to be told of, and retold again. To some of us it means a time when, looking into those glowing coals, the past rises up phantom-like, and voices, long hushed, are heard in the eerie chimney wallings; to the younger ones, a time when speculation is rife as to what is coming.

To my mind November, since I was married, means a scow and a skiff, a shooting-jacket, an old muffler and a disreputable cap for one of us, a greasy rubbing of fire-arms, endless discussion as to the size of shot and the making of cartridges, the finding of decoys which, if they prove true to their name, pronounce the duck a most credulous creature; a raid upon the store-room for canned meats, pickles and sauces, with finally a sleepless night, and an early start for the marshes.

In a dismal rain we boarded the "Hiawatha," at Sarnia. We gave but one glimpse into the cabin, and recognized at once the suitability of "Hiawatha." Indians everywhere; Indian babies, from papoose strapped on, to baby limit; old women who looked a hundred in face but were still quick in movement; squaws who kept to blankets and beads, large earrings and moccasins, and squaws who had cast aboriginal adornings aside and were object lessons in evolution, with bangs, artificials, and mask-veils. We closed the door and sought shelter under the deck awning, upon the only dry spot left. We were between the cook-house and the refrigerator, and every five minutes the cook "troubled us to move," while he sought the wherewithal for supper, which was to be served on board. This was tiresome, but anything rather than the cabin and the Indians. Past Indian village and Indi

an church, from one mouldy dock to the next, and the rainy afternoon wore on to a bright sunset. The freight we carried seemed endless in disembarking; every wharf we left behind was laden. Those wharves were marvels of decay; rotten piles and planks each bowing to its neighbor; dismal holes and staring nail-marks, out of which the nails had dropped long ago; until at length we came upon one with nothing left but posts, and with an indignant snort the *Hiawatha* steamed on. From time to time skiff loads of decoys were taken on board, the wooden eyes plainly winking "birds of a feather flock together." We viewed from afar Oaklands and Mt. Clemens, but the joys of such resorts were dead; clearly, summer was gone, and they looked cold and uninteresting in the red autumnal evening. Darkness fell, and out of it loomed Walpole Island, and occasional gleams of the eddying channel écarté. How did that river's name ever become corrupted into "the Sni?" Ask the people of the Flats for the channel écarté, and they would stare; but the Sni all men know. Various red and green lights met and passed us in the darkness, seeming like the eyes of monsters bent on devouring our small boat. Those same lights are the most successful of decoys, and put to shame their wooden brethren. Our captain told us of a great "take" during the previous season. The bright light attracted a flight of ducks, and in a moment they were beating about the shivering glass in hundreds, with sticks and other improvised weapons, all hands carrying on the slaughter. The lighthouse-keepers tell the same story; more birds beat themselves to death on the sides of the Beacon than can be made use of by the families.

A sharp turn and we were up the Sydenham, one of the many meandering, snag-laden streams with which the district abounds. We were among the whisperings of the grassy reaches where acre upon acre of tussock offers an insecure foothold for the hunter, when he has to abandon his punt for the bird fallen within the marsh. These rivers are much like canals, with muddy sides and bottom; and where, unprotected by roots, are being washed wider and more shallow, owing to the traffic, which is great. We saw a group of lights, about a stone's-throw distant, as we judged; they were near, as the crow flies; but we were not crows and had to abide by the windings of the stream, which here behaves like a dissipated snake. Out of the darkness we heard an occasional cry, now a quack, again a plaintive piping; the fitful glinting of farm-house lights gave way to those of our village, which in turn were lost in the blackness about the dock where the runner for our inn made night still blacker with the swinging of an old-fashioned lantern. We followed him and it up the silent street; together we passed through a low doorway and on up an never ending passage-way, the latter three feet in width, which played us continual tricks with its uneven floor. No sooner had we stumbled up a two-inch step than we were headlong down one of three, and so on, until an open door and lights, that revealed a supper-tray with adjuncts, announced that we were "at home."

The next morning broke clear and coldish, with a bright sun and a haze on the horizon which meant fine weather and continued, though, when it once broke,