

acters, describing a profession which he never ceased to honor. Take, for example, the words of "The Master" in "The Poet at the Breakfast-Table":

"The ministers . . . are far more curious and interested outside of their own calling than either of the other professions. I like to talk with 'em. They are interesting men, full of good feelings, hard workers, always foremost in good deeds, and, on the whole, the most efficient civilizing class, working downward from knowledge to ignorance, that is—not so much upward, perhaps,—that we have. The trouble is that so many of 'em work in harness, and it is pretty sure to chafe somewhere. They feed on canned meats mostly. They cripple our instincts and reason, and give us a crutch of doctrine. . . . They used to lead the intelligence of their parishes; now they do pretty well if they keep up with it, and they are very apt to lag behind it. . . . The old minister thinks he can hold to his old course, sailing right into the wind's eye of human nature as straight as that famous old skipper, John Bunyan; the young minister falls off three or four points and catches the breeze that left the old man's sails all shivering. By and by the congregation will get ahead of *him*, and then it must have another new skipper. . . . Now and then one of 'em goes over the dam; no wonder they're always in the rapids."

His plea for ministerial good cheer, so prominent a characteristic of his own disposition, a plea enforced by certain childhood experiences that seem to have made a lasting impression upon him, is one well worth heeding:

"Now and then would come along a clerical visitor with a sad face and a wailing voice, which sounded exactly as if some one must be lying dead upstairs, who took no interest in us children, except a painful one, as being in a bad way with our cheery looks, and did more to unchristianize us with his weebegone ways than all his sermons were likely to accomplish in the other direction. I remember one in particular, who twitted me so with my blessings as a Christian child, and who whined so to me about the naked black children, who, like the 'Little Vulgar Boy,' 'hadn't got no supper, and hadn't got no ma,' and hadn't got no catechism (how I wished for the moment I was a little black boy!), that he

did more in that one day to make me a heathen than he had ever done in a month to make a Christian out of an infant Hottentot. What a debt we owe to our friends of the left center, the Brooklyn and the Park Street and the Summer Street ministers; good, wholesome, sound-bodied, sane-minded, cheerful-spirited men, who have taken the place of those wailing *poitrinaires* with the bandanna handkerchiefs round their meager throats and a funeral service in their forlorn physiognomies!"

In view of the truth that is behind the humorous exaggerations in the above passage from the "Poet," there is more than a little wisdom in the counsel given in the "Professor":

"In choosing your clergyman, other things being equal, prefer the one of a wholesome and cheerful habit of mind and body. If you can get along with people who carry a certificate in their faces that their goodness is so great as to make them miserable, your children cannot. And whatever offends one of these little ones cannot be right in the eyes of Him who loved them so well."

This devotion to the interest and sympathy with the concerns of childhood was characteristic of the man to his latest days. Never did his youthfulness of spirit forsake him, nor did he realize in his experience the truth of the Psalmist—words as to those attaining four-score years of life—that their strength is "labor and sorrow." A child in feeling throughout his long life, he felt for children somewhat as Elia did by virtue of his sympathy with "that other me" whose experiences brought him into such close touch with them.

In his views of truth, Dr. Holmes was undoubtedly a liberal of liberals. He had little respect for the somewhat prevalent "notion of private property in truth, with the right to fence it in and put up a signboard, thus:

☞ ALL TRESPASSERS ARE WARNED
OFF THESE GROUNDS."

Truth meant to him something living and lifegiving, a gift to all men as free as the air. It meant God manifesting Himself, even as light means the sun manifesting itself. It cannot