

the class. The teacher in her rendering of the poem should endeavor to place clearly before the pupils the pathos so aptly combined with humor.

### III. Analysis of Poem.

Do you think Holmes had frequently seen Major Melville? Why does he describe this old man as "tottering?"

Who will tell us about the "Crier" and his duties? Who will put the second stanza in his own words very briefly? To whom does the old man refer when he seems to say, "They are gone?"

Who will put the idea of the next stanza in his own words? Describe Major Melville's appearance when young. When old. Does the young poet think it is right for him to poke fun at the old man? How does he seek to justify himself?

What idea do you think the poet intends to convey in this poem? Why did Lincoln think this poem "inexpressibly touching?" Do you think it effective to make people think while they smile as in this poem? Or do you believe that sad poems are better to teach lessons?

### IV. Oral Reading and Memorizing.

Several members of the class should read this poem orally to assure correct interpretation and appreciation. I think most students will want to memorize the poem, the metre is so unusual.

### V. Correlation.

The class will no doubt enjoy the study of other humorous poems of Oliver Wendell Holmes such as *The Deacon's Masterpiece*, *Contentment*, *My Aunt*, etc. The teacher must feel a responsibility toward humorous appreciation as well as the appreciation of beauty and truth.

#### Grade VIII. OLD IRONSIDES.

Ay, tear her tattered ensign down!  
Long has it waved on high,  
And many an eye has danced to see  
That banner in the sky;  
Beneath it rung the battle shout,  
And burst the cannon's roar;  
The meteor of the ocean air  
Shall sweep the clouds no more.  
Her deck once red with heroes' blood,  
Where knelt the vanquished foe,  
When winds were hurrying over the flood,  
And waves were white below.  
No more shall feel the victor's tread,  
Or know the conquered knee;  
The harpies of the shore shall pluck  
The eagle of the sea!  
Oh, better that her shattered bulk  
Should sink beneath the wave;  
Her thunders shook the mighty deep,  
And there should be her grave;  
Nail to the mast her holy flag,  
Set every threadbare sail,  
And give her to the god of storms  
The lightning and the gale!

—Oliver Wendell Holmes.

### I. Preparation.

When Oliver Wendell Holmes was a student in Harvard Law School he read in the newspaper that the frigate *Constitution*, famous for its many battles, but old and unseaworthy, was condemned by the Navy Department to be destroyed. He wrote this poem and sent it to a Boston paper. It was copied in many others and soon such a storm of protest arose that the United States Navy Department decided to repair the old ship. The *Constitution*, which Holmes calls "Old Ironsides" in this poem, was launched in 1797. It served in the war against the pirates in the Mediterranean and later in the war of 1812. Owing to this poem of Holmes it was repaired in 1834 and continued to be used until 1881. From that time until 1897 she was kept at the Navy Yard in Portsmouth N. H. In 1897 the *Constitution* was taken to Charlestown Navy Yard for the celebration of the centenary of her launching.\*

### II. Presentation.

The teacher should read the whole poem with dignity to express the honor due to so noble a history as that of "Old Ironsides."

### III. Analysis of Poem.

What attitude does poet wish to express in first line, disgust or approval? What is the "ensign?" What do the third and fourth line mean? Who can recall another poem and quote the line in which "meteor" is used in referring to a flag? Who will give the meaning of the first stanza in his own words?

Read second stanza silently. What is meant by "vanquished foe?" How are they referred to later in same stanza? What word would we use instead of "flood?" What are "harpies?" Who can give us the thought of the second stanza in his own words?

Read the third stanza silently. What does "her shattered bulk" mean? "her thunders?" Why does the poet refer to her sails as "threadbare?" What does the poet suggest be done with "Old Ironsides?" Why does he suggest this? Why does he think it unfair that she be torn to pieces?

Who in history was called "Old Ironsides?" Why do you suppose Holmes used this title here?

### IV. Oral Reading and Memorizing.

The pupils should read this poem orally to assure the teacher that they have grasped the idea so vigorously expressed in this poem. The poem should be memorized and may be used in a Friday afternoon programme.

### V. Correlation.

The pupils should be encouraged to review their knowledge of the War of 1812 to find references to the *Constitution*. The moral discipline will also be good. Pupils in school must be taught the necessity of giving honour to an adversary when deserved.