

THE CHAMBERED NAUTILUS.

This is the ship of pearl, which, poets feign,
 Sails the unshadowed main,—
 The venturous bark that flings
 On the sweet summer wind its purpled wings
 In gulfs enchanted, where the siren sings,
 And coral reefs lie bare,
 Where the cold winds invade and rise to sun their stream-
 ing hair.

5

Its webs of living gauze no more unfurl;
 Wrecked is the ship of pearl!
 And every chambered cell,
 Where its dim dreaming life was wont to dwell,
 As the frail tenant shaped its growing shell,
 Before thee lies revealed,—
 Its irised ceiling rent, its sunless crypt unsealed!

10

Year after year beheld the silent toll
 That spread its lustrous coil;
 Still, as the spiral grew,
 He left the past year's dwelling for the new,
 Stole with soft step its shining archway through,
 Built up its idle door,
 Stretched in his last-found home, and knew the
 old no more.

15

Thanks for the heavenly message brought by thee,
 Child of the wandering sea,
 Cast from her lap forlorn!
 From thy dead lips a clearer note is born
 Than ever Triton blew from wreathed horn!
 While on my ear it rings,
 Through that old roof which eaves of thought I hear a voice
 that

25

BUILD thee mansions, O my soul,
 As the swift ships!
 Leave thy low-vaulted past!

30

Let each new temple, nobler than the last,
 Shut thee from heaven with a dome more vast,
 Till thou at length art free,
 Leaving thine outgrown shell by life's unresting
 sea!

35

—Oliver Wendell Holmes.