

war-ship, the *Constitution*, which had done such noble service for the Union in the war of 1812. These verses ran like wild-fire through the nation; they were published in all the newspapers, and were even circulated on handbills. So strong was public sentiment thereby aroused that the Secretary of the Navy was constrained to order that the *Constitution* be repaired and preserved.

As his time was now occupied in his medical studies, we hear little more from him in the way of literature until 1836, when the first edition of his poems was issued. Soon afterwards he gained three valuable prize medals for dissertations on medical subjects. The essay on intermittent fever is yet a standard work. Various other essays, addresses and poems appeared during the subsequent period. He also delivered a course of lectures in several eastern cities on the English poets of the nineteenth century. These were in general very much appreciated. He makes many amusing references throughout his books to his experiences as a public lecturer.

But the year 1857 marks the beginning of a new era in our author's life. It was then that the *Atlantic Monthly Magazine* was established. James Russell Lowell was appointed editor, and among his chief contributors were Longfellow, Motley, and Emerson. But it is affirmed that the enterprise would have been a complete failure had it not been for the extraordinary interest which was excited in the public mind by a series of sketches from the pen of Oliver Wendell Holmes, entitled "The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table." These sketches were followed in 1859 by a similar series under the name of "The Professor at the Breakfast Table," and still another in 1872, "The Poet at the Breakfast Table." So popular were these articles that immediately after their appearance in the *Atlantic* they were republished in book form.

Taking rank next to these, his most famous literary works are the two romances, "Elsie Venner" (1861) and "The Guardian Angel" (1867). The former book is generally considered the better. It is a weird, thrilling, and strikingly original story, in which romance and sentiment are blended with moral psychology, pedagogy, and satires on New England characters and society.

Dr. Holmes completed last year a critical study of the life, character and writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson, which was published in the "American Men of Letters" series. During recent years he has contributed essays and reviews to various literary and medical journals. Most of his poems had their first appearance in the *Atlantic*. He is now writing for that magazine a series of pleasing sketches, entitled "The New Portfolio."

It is scarcely necessary to say that our author's literary reputation rests mainly on the "Breakfast Table" series; but the more obvious excellences of these books have been lauded so much by the critics that only a bare reference to them is called for here. It will be fitting to dwell more at length upon features which have not been so generally commented upon.

In passing, then, let us say that it is doubtful whether, in the whole range of English prose literature, there is a work of greater and more interesting originality, or one which contributes in the same degree to the high intellectual enjoyment of so great a variety of readers. The famous "Noctes Ambrosianæ" most nearly approach them in character; but while the works of Professor Wilson excel those of Holmes in a certain masculine vigor and directness, yet in general excellence the latter must be allowed the precedence.

Of these three books, "The Autocrat" is most widely known; but "The Professor" is quite as good a book, and, indeed, some critical readers consider it better