

TO-DAY we have just returned from a call on the "Autocrat of the Breakfast-table"—Oliver Wendell Holmes. Any one less like an autocrat it would be impossible to imagine. No autocrat should be less than six feet high, and if he is seven feet all the better. But the Autocrat of the Breakfast-table is barely five feet three—spare, buckish, and gray-headed. We had to wait a few minutes for his return, as his servant said he was gone to a funeral. He soon came in and joined us in his beautiful library, quite out of breath. For a man who had just come from a funeral, I thought he was in a very jovial mood; for he began talking away at a great rate, and begged us to excuse the exuberance of his spirits, as, although a funeral was the last scene he had witnessed, he had just heard of the betrothal of a young friend of his to the very man he had always wanted her to marry, and it had given him more delight than he knew how to contain. His dark eyes twinkled with pleasure, and he kept us with him while he talked about people, and races, and writers, in the most fascinating style. He wrote his name and his age (sixty-nine) in the book tendered him for his autograph, and made a most superfluous apology for enriching the page with the following appended verse:

"The mossy marbles rest
On the lips that he has prest
In their bloom;
And the names he loved to hear
Have been carved for many a year
On the tomb."

"How do you spell 'pressed,'" he asked me smiling, as he paused in his writing, pen in hand. "Oh! I should spell it 'PRESSED'; but *you*, being a poet and an autocrat, should spell it '*prest*,' or however you please. But there will be a *spell* about it to me, however you write it." And so he chatted us to the doorstep, declaring that if he had not to give a lecture to his students (he is professor of physiology) in three-quarters of an hour, he would not let us go; that if we had not a lady with us he would not come downstairs, but leave us to let ourselves out; but that he could not resist the pleasure of following a lady to the door himself, and that it would be a pleasure to him to see us again. I thought this is rather a contrast to what we have heard of laureates elsewhere, who fly from the face of man and are even jealous of showing their poetical back to those who would keep them *in memoriam!*—ARTHUR MURSELL, in "*Christian World*."

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