

The habits and the life of the quick, joyous, enthusiastic young people have changed to the slow, quiet, reposeful manners of older people, and yet with delight and with gratitude they can still sit with "four feet on the fender" enjoying many and many a pleasant reverie.

The fender, in many a home, suggests most happy recollections. Doubtless such pictures as these of home life, where is found the truest happiness, appeared to Dr. Holmes as his friend answered the question "What is your idea of happiness?" by replying so promptly, "Four feet on the fender."

In the lonely years which followed, those words were often recalled by the autocrat. As he grew old he did indeed try to be cheerful, and as he possessed a more buoyant spirit than most men, it was not as difficult a matter as with many. He was blessed with a happy home in his son's house, and yet, as Mrs. Fields so truthfully says in her recent charming article, "Dr. Holmes had many lonely, sad hours and moods."

Not long ago the friend whom we have quoted was in Boston again, and called to see Dr. Holmes. He found him in his study sitting alone by the fire, looking somewhat unhappy.

To the visitor's solicitous greeting, he looked up quickly and said, in a pathetic tone of voice, "Only two feet on the fender."

How much was implied in that answer! There was a happy home, there were loving children, there were hosts of constantly admiring friends to do honor to the poet, and to show him many attentions.

But ah, the loving wife, who was nearer to him than them all, whose life had been bound with his own, who had been his fireside companion, his heart's best treasure, was no longer with him. "Only two feet on the fender!"

"Four feet on the fender," or "Two feet on the fender," ah, what a difference it makes in our hearts and in our homes! How it changes the face of all the world! It is hard up-hill work for many a loving heart who misses the companion of youth and of maturer years who was all the world to him or to her, to try continually to live in the happiness of others, and to say less and less of one's own loneliness!

It is hard in middle life, but it grows harder still as one grows old! Not many months before Dr. Holmes passed away, he wrote to a friend, "I am trying to be a cheerful old man, who lives now largely in the happiness of younger people." He enclosed a copy of his poem, "The Old Man's Dream." Many knew that he lived much in the past. The people talked of his cheerfulness, his enjoyment of others, his love of society, but there were some friends, like Mrs. Fields, who knew his loneliness, and who remembered to drop in often to cheer him, and to express the sympathy they felt for one, who said so pathetically, "Only two feet on the fender!"—*From the Chicago Standard.*