

# **The Poetical Works of O. W. Holmes, Volume 3.**

Oliver Wendell Holmes, Sr.



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# **The Poetical Works of O. W. Holmes, Volume 3.**

**Oliver Wendell Holmes, Sr.**

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- THE TWO ARMIES
- THE STETHOSCOPE SONG
- EXTRACTS FROM A MEDICAL POEM
- A POEM
- A SENTIMENT
- RIP VAN WINKLE, M. D.

Medical Poems

This etext was produced by David Widger [widger@cecomet.net](mailto:widger@cecomet.net)

## THE MORNING VISIT

A sick man's chamber, though it often boast  
The grateful presence of a literal toast,  
Can hardly claim, amidst its various wealth,  
The right unchallenged to propose a health;  
Yet though its tenant is denied the feast,  
Friendship must launch his sentiment at least,  
As prisoned damsels, locked from lovers' lips,  
Toss them a kiss from off their fingers' tips.

The morning visit,—not till sickness falls  
In the charmed circles of your own safe walls;  
Till fever's throb and pain's relentless rack  
Stretch you all helpless on your aching back;  
Not till you play the patient in your turn,  
The morning visit's mystery shall you learn.

'T is a small matter in your neighbor's case,  
To charge your fee for showing him your face;  
You skip up—stairs, inquire, inspect, and touch,  
Prescribe, take leave, and off to twenty such.

But when at length, by fate's transferred decree,  
The visitor becomes the visitee,  
Oh, then, indeed, it pulls another string;  
Your ox is gored, and that's a different thing!  
Your friend is sick: phlegmatic as a Turk,  
You write your recipe and let it work;  
Not yours to stand the shiver and the frown,  
And sometimes worse, with which your draught goes down.  
Calm as a clock your knowing hand directs,  
*Rhei, jalapae ana grana sex,*  
Or traces on some tender missive's back,  
*Scrupulos duos pulveris ipecac;*  
And leaves your patient to his qualms and gripes,  
Cool as a sportsman banging at his snipes.  
But change the time, the person, and the place,  
And be yourself “the interesting case,”  
You'll gain some knowledge which it's well to learn;  
In future practice it may serve your turn.

Leeches, for instance,—pleasing creatures quite;  
Try them,—and bless you,—don't you find they bite?  
You raise a blister for the smallest cause,  
But be yourself the sitter whom it draws,  
And trust my statement, you will not deny  
The worst of draughtsmen is your Spanish fly!  
It's mighty easy ordering when you please,  
*Infusi sennae capiat uncias tres;*  
It's mighty different when you quackle down  
Your own three ounces of the liquid brown.  
*Pilula, pulvis,*—pleasant words enough,  
When other throats receive the shocking stuff;  
But oh, what flattery can disguise the groan  
That meets the gulp which sends it through your own!  
Be gentle, then, though Art's unsparing rules  
Give you the handling of her sharpest tools;  
Use them not rashly,—sickness is enough;  
Be always “ready,” but be never “rough.”

Of all the ills that suffering man endures,  
The largest fraction liberal Nature cures;  
Of those remaining, 't is the smallest part  
Yields to the efforts of judicious Art;  
But simple *\_Kindness\_*, kneeling by the bed  
To shift the pillow for the sick man's head,  
Give the fresh draught to cool the lips that burn,  
Fan the hot brow, the weary frame to turn,—  
Kindness, untutored by our grave M. D.'s,  
But Nature's graduate, when she schools to please,  
Wins back more sufferers with her voice and smile  
Than all the trumpery in the druggist's pile.

Once more, be quiet: coming up the stair,  
Don't be a plantigrade, a human bear,  
But, stealing softly on the silent toe,  
Reach the sick chamber ere you're heard below.  
Whatever changes there may greet your eyes,  
Let not your looks proclaim the least surprise;  
It's not your business by your face to show  
All that your patient does not want to know;  
Nay, use your optics with considerate care,  
And don't abuse your privilege to stare.  
But if your eyes may probe him overmuch,  
Beware still further how you rudely touch;  
Don't clutch his carpus in your icy fist,  
But warm your fingers ere you take the wrist.  
If the poor victim needs must be percussed,

Don't make an anvil of his aching bust;  
(Doctors exist within a hundred miles  
Who thump a thorax as they'd hammer piles;)  
If you must listen to his doubtful chest,  
Catch the essentials, and ignore the rest.  
Spare him; the sufferer wants of you and art  
A track to steer by, not a finished chart.  
So of your questions: don't in mercy try  
To pump your patient absolutely dry;  
He's not a mollusk squirming in a dish,  
You're not Agassiz; and he's not a fish.

And last, not least, in each perplexing case,  
Learn the sweet magic of a cheerful face;  
Not always smiling, but at least serene,  
When grief and anguish cloud the anxious scene.  
Each look, each movement, every word and tone,  
Should tell your patient you are all his own;  
Not the mere artist, purchased to attend,  
But the warm, ready, self-forgetting friend,  
Whose genial visit in itself combines  
The best of cordials, tonics, anodynes.

Such is the \_visit\_ that from day to day  
Sheds o'er my chamber its benignant ray.  
I give his health, who never cared to claim  
Her babbling homage from the tongue of Fame;  
Unmoved by praise, he stands by all confest,  
The truest, noblest, wisest, kindest, best.

1849.

## THE TWO ARMIES

As Life's unending column pours,  
Two marshalled hosts are seen,—  
Two armies on the trampled shores  
That Death flows black between.

One marches to the drum-beat's roll,  
The wide-mouthed clarion's bray,  
And bears upon a crimson scroll,  
“Our glory is to slay.”

One moves in silence by the stream,  
With sad, yet watchful eyes,  
Calm as the patient planet's gleam  
That walks the clouded skies.

Along its front no sabres shine,  
No blood-red pennons wave;  
Its banner bears the single line,  
“Our duty is to save.”

For those no death-bed's lingering shade;  
At Honor's trumpet-call,  
With knitted brow and lifted blade  
In Glory's arms they fall.

For these no clashing falchions bright,  
No stirring battle-cry;  
The bloodless stabber calls by night,—  
Each answers, “Here am I!”

For those the sculptor's laurelled bust,  
The builder's marble piles,  
The anthems pealing o'er their dust

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Through long cathedral aisles.

For these the blossom-sprinkled turf  
That floods the lonely graves  
When Spring rolls in her sea-green surf  
In flowery-foaming waves.

Two paths lead upward from below,  
And angels wait above,  
Who count each burning life-drop's flow,  
Each falling tear of Love.

Though from the Hero's bleeding breast  
Her pulses Freedom drew,  
Though the white lilies in her crest  
Sprang from that scarlet dew,—

While Valor's haughty champions wait  
Till all their scars are shown,  
Love walks unchallenged through the gate,  
To sit beside the Throne

## THE STETHOSCOPE SONG

### A PROFESSIONAL BALLAD

THERE was a young man in Boston town,  
He bought him a stethoscope nice and new,  
All mounted and finished and polished down,  
With an ivory cap and a stopper too.

It happened a spider within did crawl,  
And spun him a web of ample size,  
Wherein there chanced one day to fall  
A couple of very imprudent flies.

The first was a bottle-fly, big and blue,  
The second was smaller, and thin and long;  
So there was a concert between the two,  
Like an octave flute and a tavern gong.

Now being from Paris but recently,  
This fine young man would show his skill;  
And so they gave him, his hand to try,  
A hospital patient extremely ill.

Some said that his liver was short of bile,  
And some that his heart was over size,  
While some kept arguing, all the while,  
He was crammed with tubercles up to his eyes.

This fine young man then up stepped he,  
And all the doctors made a pause;  
Said he, The man must die, you see,  
By the fifty-seventh of Louis's laws.

But since the case is a desperate one,  
To explore his chest it may be well;  
For if he should die and it were not done,  
You know the autopsy would not tell.

Then out his stethoscope he took,  
And on it placed his curious ear;  
Mon Dieu! said he, with a knowing look,  
Why, here is a sound that 's mighty queer

The bourdonnement is very clear,—  
Amphoric buzzing, as I'm alive  
Five doctors took their turn to hear;  
Amphoric buzzing, said all the five.

There's empyema beyond a doubt;  
We'll plunge a trocar in his side.  
The diagnosis was made out,—  
They tapped the patient; so he died.

Now such as hate new-fashioned toys  
Began to look extremely glum;  
They said that rattles were made for boys,  
And vowed that his buzzing was all a hum.

There was an old lady had long been sick,  
And what was the matter none did know  
Her pulse was slow, though her tongue was quick;  
To her this knowing youth must go.

So there the nice old lady sat,  
With phials and boxes all in a row;  
She asked the young doctor what he was at,  
To thump her and tumble her ruffles so.

Now, when the stethoscope came out,

The flies began to buzz and whiz  
Oh ho I the matter is clear, no doubt;  
An aneurism there plainly is.

The bruit de rape and the bruit de scie  
And the bruit de diable are all combined;  
How happy Bouillaud would be,  
If he a case like this could find!

Now, when the neighboring doctors found  
A case so rare had been descried,  
They every day her ribs did pound  
In squads of twenty; so she died.

Then six young damsels, slight and frail,  
Received this kind young doctor's cares;  
They all were getting slim and pale,  
And short of breath on mounting stairs.

They all made rhymes with "sighs" and "skies,"  
And loathed their puddings and buttered rolls,  
And dieted, much to their friends' surprise,  
On pickles and pencils and chalk and coals.

So fast their little hearts did bound,  
The frightened insects buzzed the more;  
So over all their chests he found  
The rale sifflant and the rale sonore.

He shook his head. There's grave disease,—  
I greatly fear you all must die;  
A slight post-mortem, if you please,  
Surviving friends would gratify.

The six young damsels wept aloud,  
Which so prevailed on six young men  
That each his honest love avowed,

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Whereat they all got well again.

This poor young man was all aghast;  
The price of stethoscopes came down;  
And so he was reduced at last  
To practise in a country town.

The doctors being very sore,  
A stethoscope they did devise  
That had a rammer to clear the bore,  
With a knob at the end to kill the flies.

Now use your ears, all you that can,  
But don't forget to mind your eyes,  
Or you may be cheated, like this young man,  
By a couple of silly, abnormal flies.

**EXTRACTS FROM A MEDICAL POEM**

THE STABILITY OF SCIENCE

THE feeble sea-birds, blinded in the storms,  
On some tall lighthouse dash their little forms,  
And the rude granite scatters for their pains  
Those small deposits that were meant for brains.  
Yet the proud fabric in the morning's sun  
Stands all unconscious of the mischief done;  
Still the red beacon pours its evening rays  
For the lost pilot with as full a blaze,—  
Nay, shines, all radiance, o'er the scattered fleet  
Of gulls and boobies brainless at its feet.

I tell their fate, though courtesy disclaims  
To call our kind by such ungentle names;  
Yet, if your rashness bid you vainly dare,  
Think of their doom, ye simple, and beware

See where aloft its hoary forehead rears  
The towering pride of twice a thousand years!  
Far, far below the vast incumbent pile  
Sleeps the gray rock from art's AEgean isle  
Its massive courses, circling as they rise,  
Swell from the waves to mingle with the skies;  
There every quarry lends its marble spoil,  
And clustering ages blend their common toil;  
The Greek, the Roman, reared its ancient walls,  
The silent Arab arched its mystic halls;  
In that fair niche, by countless billows laved,  
Trace the deep lines that Sydenham engraved;  
On yon broad front that breasts the changing swell,  
Mark where the ponderous sledge of Hunter fell;  
By that square buttress look where Louis stands,  
The stone yet warm from his uplifted hands;  
And say, O Science, shall thy life-blood freeze,  
When fluttering folly flaps on walls like these?

A PORTRAIT

Thoughtful in youth, but not austere in age;  
Calm, but not cold, and cheerful though a sage;  
Too true to flatter and too kind to sneer,  
And only just when seemingly severe;  
So gently blending courtesy and art  
That wisdom's lips seemed borrowing friendship's heart.

Taught by the sorrows that his age had known  
In others' trials to forget his own,  
As hour by hour his lengthened day declined,  
A sweeter radiance lingered o'er his mind.  
Cold were the lips that spoke his early praise,  
And hushed the voices of his morning days,  
Yet the same accents dwelt on every tongue,  
And love renewing kept him ever young.

A SENTIMENT

*O Bios Bpaxus*,—life is but a song;  
*H rexvn uakpn*,—art is wondrous long;  
Yet to the wise her paths are ever fair,  
And Patience smiles, though Genius may despair.  
Give us but knowledge, though by slow degrees,  
And blend our toil with moments bright as these;  
Let Friendship's accents cheer our doubtful way,  
And Love's pure planet lend its guiding ray,—  
Our tardy Art shall wear an angel's wings,  
And life shall lengthen with the joy it brings I

**A POEM**

FOR THE MEETING OF THE AMERICAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION  
AT NEW YORK, MAY 5, 1853

I HOLD a letter in my hand,—  
A flattering letter, more's the pity,—  
By some contriving junto planned,  
And signed \_per order of Committee\_.  
It touches every tenderest spot,—  
My patriotic predilections,  
My well-known—something—don't ask what,—  
My poor old songs, my kind affections.

They make a feast on Thursday next,  
And hope to make the feasters merry;  
They own they're something more perplexed  
For poets than for port and sherry.  
They want the men of—(word torn out);  
Our friends will come with anxious faces,  
(To see our blankets off, no doubt,  
And trot us out and show our paces.)

They hint that papers by the score  
Are rather musty kind of rations,—  
They don't exactly mean a bore,  
But only trying to the patience;  
That such as—you know who I mean—  
Distinguished for their—what d' ye call 'em—  
Should bring the dews of Hippocrene  
To sprinkle on the faces solemn.

—The same old story: that's the chaff  
To catch the birds that sing the ditties;  
Upon my soul, it makes me laugh  
To read these letters from Committees!  
They're all so loving and so fair,—  
All for your sake such kind compunction;  
'T would save your carriage half its wear

To touch its wheels with such an unction!

Why, who am I, to lift me here  
And beg such learned folk to listen,  
To ask a smile, or coax a tear  
Beneath these stoic lids to glisten?  
As well might some arterial thread  
Ask the whole frame to feel it gushing,  
While throbbing fierce from heel to head  
The vast aortic tide was rushing.

As well some hair-like nerve might strain  
To set its special streamlet going,  
While through the myriad-channelled brain  
The burning flood of thought was flowing;  
Or trembling fibre strive to keep  
The springing haunches gathered shorter,  
While the scourged racer, leap on leap,  
Was stretching through the last hot quarter!

Ah me! you take the bud that came  
Self-sown in your poor garden's borders,  
And hand it to the stately dame  
That florists breed for, all she orders.  
She thanks you,—it was kindly meant,—  
(A pale affair, not worth the keeping,)—  
Good morning; and your bud is sent  
To join the tea-leaves used for sweeping.

Not always so, kind hearts and true,—  
For such I know are round me beating;  
Is not the bud I offer you,  
Fresh gathered for the hour of meeting,  
Pale though its outer leaves may be,  
Rose-red in all its inner petals?—  
Where the warm life we cannot see—  
The life of love that gave it—settles.

We meet from regions far away,  
Like rills from distant mountains streaming;

The sun is on Francisco's bay,  
O'er Chesapeake the lighthouse gleaming;  
While summer girds the still bayou  
In chains of bloom, her bridal token,  
Monadnock sees the sky grow blue,  
His crystal bracelet yet unbroken.

Yet Nature bears the selfsame heart  
Beneath her russet-mantled bosom  
As where, with burning lips apart,  
She breathes and white magnolias blossom;  
The selfsame founts her chalice fill  
With showery sunlight running over,  
On fiery plain and frozen hill,  
On myrtle-beds and fields of clover.

I give you Home! its crossing lines  
United in one golden suture,  
And showing every day that shines  
The present growing to the future,—  
A flag that bears a hundred stars  
In one bright ring, with love for centre,  
Fenced round with white and crimson bars  
No prowling treason dares to enter!

O brothers, home may be a word  
To make affection's living treasure,  
The wave an angel might have stirred,  
A stagnant pool of selfish pleasure;  
HOME! It is where the day-star springs  
And where the evening sun reposes,  
Where'er the eagle spreads his wings,  
From northern pines to southern roses!

## A SENTIMENT

A TRIPLE health to Friendship, Science, Art,  
From heads and hands that own a common heart!  
Each in its turn the others' willing slave,  
Each in its season strong to heal and save.

Friendship's blind service, in the hour of need,  
Wipes the pale face, and lets the victim bleed.  
Science must stop to reason and explain;  
ART claps his finger on the streaming vein.

But Art's brief memory fails the hand at last;  
Then SCIENCE lifts the flambeau of the past.  
When both their equal impotence deplore,  
When Learning sighs, and Skill can do no more,  
The tear of FRIENDSHIP pours its heavenly balm,  
And soothes the pang no anodyne may calm  
May 1, 1855.

## RIP VAN WINKLE, M. D.

AN AFTER-DINNER PRESCRIPTION TAKEN BY THE MASSACHUSETTS  
MEDICAL SOCIETY, AT THEIR MEETING HELD MAY 25, 1870

### CANTO FIRST

OLD Rip Van Winkle had a grandson, Rip,  
Of the paternal block a genuine chip,—  
A lazy, sleepy, curious kind of chap;  
He, like his grandsire, took a mighty nap,  
Whereof the story I propose to tell  
In two brief cantos, if you listen well.

The times were hard when Rip to manhood grew;  
They always will be when there's work to do.  
He tried at farming,—found it rather slow,—  
And then at teaching—what he did n't know;  
Then took to hanging round the tavern bars,  
To frequent toddies and long-nine cigars,  
Till Dame Van Winkle, out of patience, vexed  
With preaching homilies, having for their text  
A mop, a broomstick, aught that might avail  
To point a moral or adorn a tale,  
Exclaimed, "I have it! Now, then, Mr. V.  
He's good for something,—make him an M. D.!"

The die was cast; the youngster was content;  
They packed his shirts and stockings, and he went.  
How hard he studied it were vain to tell;  
He drowsed through Wistar, nodded over Bell,  
Slept sound with Cooper, snored aloud on Good;  
Heard heaps of lectures,—doubtless understood,—  
A constant listener, for he did not fail  
To carve his name on every bench and rail.

Months grew to years; at last he counted three,  
 And Rip Van Winkle found himself M. D.  
 Illustrious title! in a gilded frame  
 He set the sheepskin with his Latin name,  
 RIPUM VAN WINKLUM, QUEM we—SCIMUS—know  
 IDONEUM ESSE—to do so and so.  
 He hired an office; soon its walls displayed  
 His new diploma and his stock in trade,  
 A mighty arsenal to subdue disease,  
 Of various names, whereof I mention these  
 Lancets and bougies, great and little squirt,  
 Rhubarb and Senna, Snakeroot, Thoroughwort,  
 Ant. Tart., Vin. Colch., Pil. Cochiae, and Black Drop,  
 Tinctures of Opium, Gentian, Henbane, Hop,  
 Pulv. Ipecacuanhae, which for lack  
 Of breath to utter men call Ipecac,  
 Camphor and Kino, Turpentine, Tolu,  
 Cubebs, “Copeevy,” Vitriol,—white and blue,—  
 Fennel and Flaxseed, Slippery Elm and Squill,  
 And roots of Sassafras, and “Sassaf’rill,”  
 Brandy,—for colics,—Pinkroot, death on worms,—  
 Valerian, calmer of hysteric squirms,  
 Musk, Assafoetida, the resinous gum  
 Named from its odor,—well, it does smell some,—  
 Jalap, that works not wisely, but too well,  
 Ten pounds of Bark and six of Calomel.

For outward griefs he had an ample store,  
 Some twenty jars and gallipots, or more:  
*Ceratum simplex*—housewives oft compile  
 The same at home, and call it “wax and ile;”  
*Unguentum resinosum*—change its name,  
 The “drawing salve” of many an ancient dame;  
*Argenti Nitras*, also Spanish flies,  
 Whose virtue makes the water-bladders rise—  
 (Some say that spread upon a toper’s skin  
 They draw no water, only rum or gin);  
 Leeches, sweet vermin! don’t they charm the sick?  
 And Sticking-plaster—how it hates to stick  
*Emplastrum Ferri*—ditto *Picis*, Pitch;  
 Washes and Powders, Brimstone for the—which,  
*Scabies* or *Psora*, is thy chosen name  
 Since Hahnemann’s goose-quill scratched thee into fame,  
 Proved thee the source of every nameless ill,  
 Whose sole specific is a moonshine pill,  
 Till saucy Science, with a quiet grin,  
 Held up the *Acarus*, crawling on a pin?  
 —Mountains have labored and have brought forth mice  
 The Dutchman’s theory hatched a brood of—twice

I've well-nigh said them—words unfitting quite  
For these fair precincts and for ears polite.

The surest foot may chance at last to slip,  
And so at length it proved with Doctor Rip.  
One full-sized bottle stood upon the shelf,  
Which held the medicine that he took himself;  
Whate'er the reason, it must be confessed  
He filled that bottle oftener than the rest;  
What drug it held I don't presume to know—  
The gilded label said "Elixir Pro."

One day the Doctor found the bottle full,  
And, being thirsty, took a vigorous pull,  
Put back the "Elixir" where 't was always found,  
And had old Dobbin saddled and brought round.  
—You know those old-time rhubarb-colored nags  
That carried Doctors and their saddle-bags;  
Sagacious beasts! they stopped at every place  
Where blinds were shut—knew every patient's case—  
Looked up and thought—The baby's in a fit—  
That won't last long—he'll soon be through with it;  
But shook their heads before the knocked door  
Where some old lady told the story o'er  
Whose endless stream of tribulation flows  
For gastric griefs and peristaltic woes.

What jack-o'-lantern led him from his way,  
And where it led him, it were hard to say;  
Enough that wandering many a weary mile  
Through paths the mountain sheep trod single file,  
O'ercome by feelings such as patients know  
Who dose too freely with "Elixir Pro.,"  
He tumbled—dismounted, slightly in a heap,  
And lay, promiscuous, lapped in balmy sleep.

Night followed night, and day succeeded day,  
But snoring still the slumbering Doctor lay.  
Poor Dobbin, starving, thought upon his stall,  
And straggled homeward, saddle-bags and all.  
The village people hunted all around,  
But Rip was missing,—never could be found.  
"Drowned," they guessed;—for more than half a year

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The pouts and eels did taste uncommon queer;  
Some said of apple—brandy—other some  
Found a strong flavor of New England rum.

Why can't a fellow hear the fine things said  
About a fellow when a fellow's dead?  
The best of doctors—so the press declared—  
A public blessing while his life was spared,  
True to his country, bounteous to the poor,  
In all things temperate, sober, just, and pure;  
The best of husbands! echoed Mrs. Van,  
And set her cap to catch another man.

So ends this Canto—if it's quantum suff.,  
We'll just stop here and say we've had enough,  
And leave poor Rip to sleep for thirty years;  
I grind the organ—if you lend your ears  
To hear my second Canto, after that  
We 'll send around the monkey with the hat.

CANTO SECOND

So thirty years had passed—but not a word  
In all that time of Rip was ever heard;  
The world wagged on—it never does go back—  
The widow Van was now the widow Mac—  
France was an Empire—Andrew J. was dead,  
And Abraham L. was reigning in his stead.  
Four murderous years had passed in savage strife,  
Yet still the rebel held his bloody knife.

—At last one morning—who forgets the day  
When the black cloud of war dissolved away  
The joyous tidings spread o'er land and sea,  
Rebellion done for! Grant has captured Lee!  
Up every flagstaff sprang the Stars and Stripes—  
Out rushed the Extras wild with mammoth types—  
Down went the laborer's hod, the school-boy's book—  
“Hooraw!” he cried, “the rebel army's took!”  
Ah! what a time! the folks all mad with joy

RIP VAN WINKLE, M. D.

Each fond, pale mother thinking of her boy;  
Old gray-haired fathers meeting—"Have—you—heard?"  
And then a choke—and not another word;  
Sisters all smiling—maidens, not less dear,  
In trembling poise between a smile and tear;  
Poor Bridget thinking how she 'll stuff the plums  
In that big cake for Johnny when he comes;  
Cripples afoot; rheumatics on the jump;  
Old girls so loving they could hug the pump;  
Guns going bang! from every fort and ship;  
They banged so loud at last they wakened Rip.

I spare the picture, how a man appears  
Who's been asleep a score or two of years;  
You all have seen it to perfection done  
By Joe Van Wink—I mean Rip Jefferson.  
Well, so it was; old Rip at last came back,  
Claimed his old wife—the present widow Mac——  
Had his old sign regilded, and began  
To practise physic on the same old plan.  
Some weeks went by—it was not long to wait—  
And "please to call" grew frequent on the slate.  
He had, in fact, an ancient, mildewed air,  
A long gray beard, a plenteous lack of hair,—  
The musty look that always recommends  
Your good old Doctor to his ailing friends.  
—Talk of your science! after all is said  
There's nothing like a bare and shiny head;  
Age lends the graces that are sure to please;  
Folks want their Doctors mouldy, like their cheese.

So Rip began to look at people's tongues  
And thump their briskets (called it "sound their lungs"),  
Brushed up his knowledge smartly as he could,  
Read in old Cullen and in Doctor Good.  
The town was healthy; for a month or two  
He gave the sexton little work to do.

About the time when dog-day heats begin,  
The summer's usual maladies set in;  
With autumn evenings dysentery came,  
And dusky typhoid lit his smouldering flame;  
The blacksmith ailed, the carpenter was down,  
And half the children sickened in the town.  
The sexton's face grew shorter than before—

The sexton's wife a brand-new bonnet wore—  
Things looked quite serious—Death had got a grip  
On old and young, in spite of Doctor Rip.

And now the Squire was taken with a chill—  
Wife gave “hot-drops”—at night an Indian pill;  
Next morning, feverish—bedtime, getting worse—  
Out of his head—began to rave and curse;  
The Doctor sent for—double quick he came  
*Ant. Tart. gran. duo*, and repeat the same  
If no et cetera. Third day—nothing new;  
Percussed his thorax till 't was black and blue—  
Lung-fever threatening—something of the sort—  
Out with the lancet—let him bleed—a quart—  
Ten leeches next—then blisters to his side;  
Ten grains of calomel; just then he died.

The Deacon next required the Doctor's care—  
Took cold by sitting in a draught of air—  
Pains in the back, but what the matter is  
Not quite so clear,—wife calls it “rheumatiz.”  
Rubs back with flannel—gives him something hot—  
“Ah!” says the Deacon, “that goes nigh the spot.”  
Next day a rigor—“Run, my little man,  
And say the Deacon sends for Doctor Van.”  
The Doctor came—percussion as before,  
Thumping and banging till his ribs were sore—  
“Right side the flattest”—then more vigorous raps—  
“Fever—that's certain—pleurisy, perhaps.  
A quart of blood will ease the pain, no doubt,  
Ten leeches next will help to suck it out,  
Then clap a blister on the painful part—  
But first two grains of *Antimonium Tart.*  
Last with a dose of cleansing calomel  
Unload the portal system—(that sounds well!)”

But when the selfsame remedies were tried,  
As all the village knew, the Squire had died;

The neighbors hinted. “This will never do;  
He's killed the Squire—he'll kill the Deacon too.”

Now when a doctor's patients are perplexed,  
A consultation comes in order next—  
You know what that is? In a certain place  
Meet certain doctors to discuss a case  
And other matters, such as weather, crops,  
Potatoes, pumpkins, lager-beer, and hops.  
For what's the use?—there 's little to be said,  
Nine times in ten your man's as good as dead;  
At best a talk (the secret to disclose)  
Where three men guess and sometimes one man knows.

The counsel summoned came without delay—  
Young Doctor Green and shrewd old Doctor Gray—  
They heard the story—"Bleed!" says Doctor Green,  
"That's downright murder! cut his throat, you mean  
Leeches! the reptiles! Why, for pity's sake,  
Not try an adder or a rattlesnake?  
Blisters! Why bless you, they 're against the law—  
It's rank assault and battery if they draw  
Tartrate of Antimony! shade of Luke,  
Stomachs turn pale at thought of such rebuke!  
The portal system! What's the man about?  
Unload your nonsense! Calomel's played out!  
You've been asleep—you'd better sleep away  
Till some one calls you."

"Stop!" says Doctor Gray—  
"The story is you slept for thirty years;  
With brother Green, I own that it appears  
You must have slumbered most amazing sound;  
But sleep once more till thirty years come round,  
You'll find the lancet in its honored place,  
Leeches and blisters rescued from disgrace,  
Your drugs redeemed from fashion's passing scorn,  
And counted safe to give to babes unborn."

Poor sleepy Rip, M. M. S. S., M. D.,  
A puzzled, serious, saddened man was he;  
Home from the Deacon's house he plodded slow  
And filled one bumper of "Elixir Pro."  
"Good-by," he faltered, "Mrs. Van, my dear!  
I'm going to sleep, but wake me once a year;  
I don't like bleaching in the frost and dew,  
I'll take the barn, if all the same to you.

RIP VAN WINKLE, M. D.

The Poetical Works of O. W. Holmes, Volume 3.

Just once a year—remember! no mistake!  
Cry, 'Rip Van Winkle! time for you to wake!'  
Watch for the week in May when laylocks blow,  
For then the Doctors meet, and I must go."

Just once a year the Doctor's worthy dame  
Goes to the barn and shouts her husband's name;  
"Come, Rip Van Winkle!" (giving him a shake)  
"Rip! Rip Van Winkle! time for you to wake!  
Laylocks in blossom! 't is the month of May—  
The Doctors' meeting is this blessed day,  
And come what will, you know I heard you swear  
You'd never miss it, but be always there!"

And so it is, as every year comes round  
Old Rip Van Winkle here is always found.  
You'll quickly know him by his mildewed air,  
The hayseed sprinkled through his scanty hair,  
The lichens growing on his rusty suit—  
I've seen a toadstool sprouting on his boot—  
Who says I lie? Does any man presume?—  
Toadstool? No matter—call it a mushroom.  
Where is his seat? He moves it every year;  
But look, you'll find him,—he is always here,—  
Perhaps you'll track him by a whiff you know—  
A certain flavor of "Elixir Pro."

Now, then, I give you—as you seem to think  
We can give toasts without a drop to drink—  
Health to the mighty sleeper,—long live he!  
Our brother Rip, M. M. S. S., M. D.!