

The Old Man's Dream.

BY OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES.

O, for one hour of youthful joy!
Give me back my twentieth spring!
I'd rather laugh a bright-eyed boy,
Than reign a gray-haired king.

Off with the wrinkled spoils of age;
Away with learning's crown;
Tear out life's wisdom-written page,
And cast its trophies down.

One moment let my life-blood stream
From boyhood's fount to fame;
Give me one giddy, reeling dream
Of life, and love, and fame.

My listening angel heard the prayer,
And calmly smiling, said,
"If I but touch thy silvered hair,
Thy hasty wish had sped.

But is there nothing in the track,
To bid thee fondly stay,
While the swift seasons hurry back,
To find the wished-for day?"

Ah, truest soul of woman kind,
Without thee what were life?
One bliss I cannot leave behind—
I'll take my precious wife.

The angel took a sapphire pen,
And wrote in rain-bow hue,
"The man would be a boy again,
And be a husband too.

And is there nothing yet unsaid,
Before the change appears?
Remember all thy gifts have fled
With these di-solving years."

"Why, yes, I would one favor more:
My fond paternal joys—
I could not bare to lose them all;
I'll take my girls and boys."

The smiling angel dropped his pen,
"Why, this will never do;
The man would be a boy again,
And be a father too!"

And so I laughed. My laughter woke
The household with its noise,
I wrot my dream when morning broke,
To please my girls and boys.

A Night in the Crypt of the Pantheon.

BY L. C. W.

The Pantheon, or Church of St. Genevieve, is one of the wonders of Paris, and one which every tourist is in duty bound to visit before he can conscientiously affirm that he has thoroughly "done" the French Capital. It is a noble pile situated in the Rue Soufflot, and is rich in magnificent marbles, frescoes and painting, and more than all is it celebrated for its splendid tombs and monuments, where repose the ashes of many of the most famous men of France. Here it was that Marat and Mirabeau were originally buried (the latter with great pomp in 1791); both, however, were afterwards depantheonized, and the body of Marat thrown into a common sewer in the rue Montmartre.

It was a bright afternoon in June, when I, in company with several other tourists, all strangers to me, and who, like myself, were waiting until the guide should get what he termed a "party," that is, a sufficient number to make the visit to the vaults the most profitable and the least troublesome to himself. Like all guides, he was a voluble talker, and told his story of the different passages and tombs in a mechanical, parrot-like manner, just as he had been telling it to curious sightseers every day for years. His main object seemed to be to get through his task as soon as possible, and rather faster than we cared to follow for our own personal safety; he led the way, light in hand, down the damp stone stairs to the vast cavernous depths below, where

reigned perpetually sombrous darkness and silence. Occasionally a pale glimmer of light, high up near the vaulted ceiling, shed a feeble ray on the mouldy walls, but for the most part all the place was one of deep funereal shadow, where the close, heavy atmosphere spoke of the charnel house, and the drear proximity of the dead.

Finding the glib explanations of the guide somewhat tiresome, and seeing at no great distance a tablet, above which a small grated window, apparently let in the pavement of the street, afforded enough light to enable me to decipher the inscription. I made my way to it, leaving the guide to enlarge upon the wonderful phenomena of the two concentric circular passages, where the smallest sound repeats the loudest and most dismal echo.

It was the tomb of Marshal Lannes. Lost in contemplating the beauty of its sculpture, and musing on the littleness of human greatness, since it must end in a handful of dust, however costly may be the marble of its enshrinement, how long I stood there I cannot tell. I was roused from my reverie by the slow fading of the light, and the distant sound as of the shutting of a heavy door. I looked around in sudden surprise, and was dismayed to find myself alone. Alone in that vast underground home of the dead. The truth flashed upon me in a moment. I had been forgotten by the guide; the ponderous door had shut between me and the upper world, and I was buried alive within the mighty crypt of the Pantheon. The thought was horrible, and I loudly shouted for help. Vain effort! Only the mocking echo of my own voice resounded through that ghastly solitude. Again and again I made the gloomy labyrinths ring with my frantic calls for assistance, while blindly groping my way from passage to passage, endless, seemingly, in their immensity, and rank with odors of the grave. Useless all; yet still I stumbled on, reaching hither and thither in the noisome darkness for some means of egress from so hideous a prison. Which ever way I turned only rough walls of polished marble met my outstretched hands. In my mad endeavor to escape I fell against a monument, from which an urn at the top, containing, perhaps, the ashes of some great soldier or statesman, became detached, and fell with a thunderous crash to the floor, breaking into fragments, as I knew by the dust which nearly stifled me and forced me to draw back in disgust and terror from its deadly vapors. Could anything be more appalling? Yet a greater horror was in store for me than any I had thus far encountered.

A superstitious fear crept over me. Might not the dead arise and resent the approach of the living among them? What if all those long silent lips should suddenly find voice, and sternly bid me begone from their place of sepulchre? What if all those skeleton hands, buried years and years ago, should be uplifted and clutch at me through the darkness? I fancied myself surrounded by baleful spirits, and loading the air with the sickening smell of their rotten grave garments. Phantom footsteps seemed to glide along the floor, and ghostly whispers assailed my ear from every corner. To my excited imagination a shadowy spectre lurked everywhere, and to stir was to be clasped in its fearful embrace. Faint almost to unconsciousness, I knelt on the damp ground and tried to pray. Hour after hour passed, and still I knelt there, repeating over and over again the prayers of my childhood. I was aroused at last by the far away chime of a bell. With bated breath and rapidly beating

heart I eagerly counted the strokes—twelve, midnight! Thank God, I was not buried beyond the reach of earthly sound. The knowledge gave me new courage. I put out my hand, and oh, horror! it fell upon a human face. Icily cold, immovable and mute, but still a human face; solid in substance and not a spectral shadow. The one brief touch told me as much without the aid of vision. Strangely fascinated in spite of the fear with which the unseen face had inspired, I had a mad desire to touch it again. The feeling was irresistible, and my trembling hand slowly traced the still outline of every feature. The brow was rigid and fixed, as if petrified when death struck from it life and warmth. The eyes, wide open, were staring blankly, and the firm lips were breathless, giving forth no sound or motion. I drew back, affrighted, afraid of the chill thing now it appeared so perfect and so utterly dead. Where was the soul that had once animated the countenance which the grim destroyer had no power to crumble into dust? Shuddering I sank to the earth, awe-stricken by that which I knew to be so near but which I could not see, and while I crouched there unable to contrive thought or action, a flickering moonbeam penetrated the darkness from somewhere above me, and wavered over that ghostly head a silvery thread of light. I looked up and found it shining there, and it showed me a face of noble contour, but awfully white in its frozen stillness—whiter than ever death left the face of mortal before. I saw it plainly—the wan, bare throat unrounded at its cerebraints; the full, wide open eyes; the pallid forehead, and bloodless lips. It had no body, but seemed to be suspended in the air from whence it gazed down on me with its sightless eyes as if to question my living presence in a place set apart for the dead. Surely it would speak. Yes, the beautiful head turns slowly, for it is beautiful even in its pallor. It bends forward—lower, still lower. I shiver in every limb, great drops of perspiration bedew my brow. I felt myself suffocating; one long agonized cry broke from my parched lips; nature could endure no more, and I fell insensible to the ground.

When I awoke to consciousness, I found the light of two or three candles flaring through the oppressive gloom of the vault where I lay as an inanimate apparently as the sculptured effigies which surrounded me, and over me was bending the old garrulous guide, now quite speechless from mingled astonishment and commiseration. Behind him were half a dozen wondering tourists, all of whom were eager to do something toward restoring me to sensibility. A little brandy from the pocket flask of a tall, kind-hearted Englishman, soon had the desired effect, and with the help of the guide I was able to stand on my feet, although very weak and faint from fasting and fatigue and the horror of excitement through which I had passed. I had been twenty hours imprisoned in the crypt of the Pantheon. And the terrible face seen by the flickering, shivering moonbeam, was—simply the cenotaph erected to the memory of Voltaire—the exquisite marble bust by Houdon. Nothing more. Imagination had done the rest.

The remains of both Voltaire and Rousseau were secretly removed from the Pantheon during the Restoration, but their tombs are still shown, being in fact, one of the main attractions of the vaults. In my aimless wandering through the crypts, I had luckily groped my way to the very spot most likely to be visited by the guide in his daily rounds with the usual number of sightseers at his heels.

As was very natural, the cenotaphs of those celebrated writers were an especial object of admiration, and one which he delighted to dwell upon when discoursing of their merits to strangers. Had I been so unfortunate as to have swooned in some remote corner of those numberless underground corridors and tunnels and old unused grave caverns, which are seldom, if ever, explored by any human being, my doom would have been certain, for all hope of escape or release would have been useless in my state of utter helplessness.

Once again in the light and brightness and pure air of day, I speedily recovered from the shock both mind and body had received during the hours of that awful night spent with the mouldering dead far below the surface of the earth; but I can never even think, even at this distant period of time, of the vaults of the Pantheon without a visible shudder.—*Evening Chronicle.*

If we traverse the world, it is possible to find cities without walls, without letters, without kings, without wealth, without man, without schools, and theatres; but a city without a temple, or that practice not worship, prayer, and the like, no one ever saw. [Paraphrase.]

1876.

The year 1876 comprises the latter part of the 99th and the beginning of the 100th year of the independence of the United States of America, and corresponds to the 6589th year of the Julian period; the 7384 14th year of the Byzantine; the 5656 7th year of the Jewish Era; the 2629 5th year since the foundation of Rome; the 2623d year since the beginning of the Era of Nabonassar, which has been assigned to Wednesday, the 27th of February, of the 397th year of the Julian period, corresponding according to the chronologists to the 750th, and according to the astronomers to the 749th year before the birth of Christ; the 2188th year of the Grecian Era, or the Era of the Seleucidæ; the 1592d year of the Era of Diocletian; the 1263d year of the Mohammedan Hegira; and the 5636th year of the Jews.

A Batch of Weather Signs.

In response to a circular sent to all the station observers by the chief signal officer, asking for the signs preceding storms, signal service observer Dumont has recently sent to Washington a report for his locality, based upon his own observations, and the weather notes which Major Jagersoll had kept for several years, and foreman Allen's record. After detailing the action of the instruments before storms, the reporter gives the weather signs by which the approach of a storm is heralded, and these rules with the maxims which they have drawn from their own observations. We append the signs.

1. As a rule, if the wind touches northeast or east for two or three days, it is a sure indication of rain.
2. Dense smoke and haze in early morning portend falling weather.
3. Summer showers of light character often follow two or three days of smoke and haze.
4. Fog, frost and dew precede rain twenty-four to forty-eight hours, except fog at close of a storm.
5. Wind veering from north or west to south and southeast, precedes falling weather.
6. Halos, lunar and solar, also fairly defined and brilliant auroras, precede rain twenty-four to sixty hours.
7. Barometer rising or falling considerably away from its mean, forebodes falling weather, subject to modifying influences of the neighboring ranges of mountains or hills.