**Contentment**

*“Man wants but little here below.”*

Oliver Wendell Holmes, Sr. (1809-1894) considered subsistence level living and wealth.

Little I ask; my wants are few;

I only wish a hut of stone,

(A *very plain* brown stone will do,)

That I may call my own;—

And close at hand is such a one,

In yonder street that fronts the sun.

Plain food is quite enough for me;

Three courses are as good as ten;—

If Nature can subsist on three,

Thank Heaven for three. Amen!

I always thought cold victual nice;—

My *choice* would be vanilla-ice.

I care not much for gold or land;—

Give me a mortgage here and there,—

Some good bank-stock, some note of hand,

Or trifling railroad share,—

I only ask that Fortune send

A *little* more than I shall spend.

Honors are silly toys, I know,

And titles are but empty names;

I would, *perhaps*, be Plenipo,—

But only near St. James;

I’m very sure I should not care

To fill our Gubernator’s chair.

Jewels are baubles; ’t is a sin

To care for such unfruitful things;—

One good-sized diamond in a pin,—

Some, *not so large*, in rings,—

A ruby, and a pearl, or so,

Will do for me;—I laugh at show.

My dame should dress in cheap attire;

(Good, heavy silks are never dear;)—

I own perhaps I *might* desire

Some shawls of true Cashmere,—

Some marrowy crapes of China silk,

Like wrinkled skins on scalded milk.

I would not have the horse I drive

So fast that folks must stop and stare;

An easy gait—two forty-five—

Suits me; I do not care;—

Perhaps, for just a *single spurt*,

Some seconds less would do no hurt.

Of pictures, I should like to own

Titians and Raphaels three or four,—

I love so much their style and tone,

One Turner, and no more,

(A landscape,—foreground golden dirt,—

The sunshine painted with a squirt.)

Of books but few,—some fifty score

For daily use, and bound for wear;

The rest upon an upper floor;—

Some *little* luxury *there*

Of red morocco’s gilded gleam

And vellum rich as country cream.

Busts, cameos, gems,—such things as these,

Which others often show for pride,

*I* value for their power to please,

And selfish churls deride;—

*One* Stradivarius, I confess,

*Two* Meerschaums, I would fain possess.

Wealth’s wasteful tricks I will not learn,

Nor ape the glittering upstart fool;—

Shall not carved tables serve my turn,

But *all* must be of buhl?

Give grasping pomp its double share,—

I ask but *one* recumbent chair.

Thus humble let me live and die,

Nor long for Midas’ golden touch;

If Heaven more generous gifts deny,

I shall not miss them *much*,—

Too grateful for the blessing lent

Of simple tastes and mind content!

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