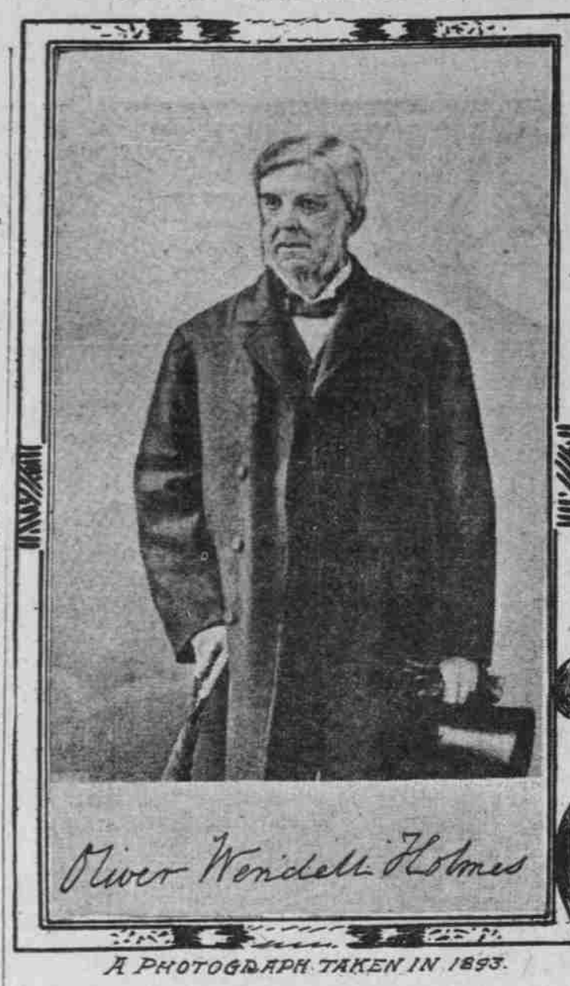
OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES, GENIAL AUTOCRAT

OLD IRONSIDES.

Ay, tear her tattered ensign down!
Long has it waved on high,
And many an eye has danced to see
That banner in the sky;
Beneath it rung the battle shout,
And burst the cannon's roar—
The meteor of the ocean air
Shall sweep the clouds no more.

Her deck, once red with heroes' blood,
Where knelt the vanquished foe,
When winds were hurrying o'er the flood,
And waves were white below,
No more shall feel the victor's tread,
Or know the conquered knee—
The harpies of the shore shall pluck
The eagle of the sea!

Oh, better that her shattered hulk
Should sink beneath the wave;
Her thunders shook the mighty deep,
And there should be her grave;
Nail to the mast her holy flag,
Set every threadbare sail,
And give her to the god of storms,
The lightning and the gale.



A PHOTOGRAPH TAKEN IN 1893.

LOVED OF THE PEOPLE HE SO LOVED, RECALLED ON HIS CENTENARY TO DAY

DR. HOLMES' FAVORITE SEAT AT HIS BEVERLY FARMS ESTATE. SNAPSHOT TAKEN THE YEAR BEFORE HIS DEATH.

"IN THE last week of August used to fall Commencement day at Cambridge. I remember that week well, for something happened to me once at that time, namely, I was born." So wrote that lovable compound of Lord Bacon and Montaigne, Hood and Lamb—Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes, thus setting the briefly witty text to the chapter which the whole American people is writing today on this the hundredth anniversary of the time. Two doctors in this year's long list of "mighty dead" demand commemorative notice, the old-world Johnson and the new-world Holmes. King Samuel, however, was of his own day and generation (almost the embodiment of it, indeed) while our kindly Bostonian was an 18th century gentleman, born in the early 19th, and touching the outer edge of 20th century things and thoughts.

When he was born—in the same twelvemonth as Darwin and Gladstone, Tennyson and Poe—Longfellow, Whittier and Nat Willis were babies of 2. John Stuart Mill, at 3, was probably being called "Little Jack." Hawthorne, Bulwer and Disraeli had reached the mature age of 5, with Emerson a year older, Victor Hugo 7 and Macauley 9. It was the year when Irving's "Knickerbocker" appeared in types; the year, too, of "Faust" and "Marmion"; Byron had taken his seat in the House of Peers, and Samuel Taylor Coleridge had just begun his short-lived "Friend." Holmes' contemporaries, aside from those just named, included Bryant and Bancroft, George William Curtis and the Danas, Washington Irving, Halleck and Percival, Prescott and Parkman and Motley, Dr. Lowell, Professor Ticknor and James T. Fields—and he outlived them all, dying, in 1894, the last remaining of the great group—Parkman, Curtis, Whittier, Whitman, Tennyson, Freeman, Manning and Renan having passed over into the Great Beyond during the two previous years. Holmes once wrote:

> I love to think of Hawthorne, the intellectual romancer, who, more appreciated today than formerly, is, nevertheless, far from being estimated at his real worth. I love also to think of Longfellow, the incomparable sweet singer, and of Emerson the philosopher, and of Lowell and Whittier, whose clarion voices in song awoke a nation to duty and self honor. I knew them all well and cherished their friendship. God knows how deeply. They are all gone, and if a personal reference be pardonable, I alone remain, only to recall from hour to hour these words of Moore, "I felt like one who treads alone some banquet hall deserted."

Last Leaf on the Tree.

The kindly poet-physician might well have quoted for his own case his "Last Leaf":

> 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.

In this case, though, the last lingering leaf was loosened from its bough only by a sort of Indian Summer insistence on the part of Father Time. Old age is only comparative, after all, and Dr. Holmes carried his youth past his 85th birthday. "Whom the Gods love die young"—because they never grow old. Dr. Boyesen said: "Unlike Tithonus, Dr. Holmes secured from the gods, who gave him immortality, also eternal youth," while the lovable man himself once wrote: "I cannot help thinking we carry our childhood's horizon with us all our days." This was essentially true of the man whose temperament was as mercurial as his pen; who was as genial as the great Sir Walter himself, and full as kindly as "the gentle Elia."

"I took my first draught of that fatal mixture called atmospheric air on the 29th of August, 1809," is the man's own testimony of the event we celebrate today. The third of five children, he came into the world under the venerable gambrel roof of an old Cambridge homestead once the headquarters of the committee of safety in pre-Revolutionary days, on whose steps the president of Harvard had offered up prayers for Prescott's men as they marched past on their way to Bunker Hill, and in whose great book-lined library Benedict Arnold received his first commission. It was a home full of the atmosphere of refinement, and this son of its traditions deeply imbibed its culture and its taste. Alike from his father, Abiel, "a gentleman, a scholar and a Christian," and from his mother, who was a Wendell of Dutch descent and a daughter of President Stiles, of Yale, he inherited "breeding." Nothing more marked the whole of this five-foot-four-inches specimen of humanity, small and quick and nervous. One has but to read his "Dorothy Q" to realize it—that sprightly capture of a portrait's maiden soul, all but matchless in its graphic phrasing and its sane, reverent sentiment for high lineage.

Life of Literature Plus Humanity.

If worldly wisdom beat in Holmes' blood as a part of his Puritan make-up, there yet was nothing in him of Puritanic coldness or narrowness. And he was a bookman from the first, brought up, as he later suggested a child well might be, in the very atmosphere of calf bindings and old types. What a start was his to begin his studies under such as Margaret Fuller and Richard Henry Dana! At Andover Academy he evidenced his poetical bent by translating the first book of the "Aeneid" into heroic couplets, and at Harvard he turned out a score and more of poems for "The Collegian," including "The Height of the Ridiculous." With Holmes, in the class of '29, were James Freeman Clark, William Henry Channing, and Samuel F. Smith, afterward famous as the author of "America," while at the university with them were Charles Sumner, Wendell Phillips and Motley, the historian.

For a year after his graduation young Holmes studied law, but then turned to medicine, continuing his preparations for that profession by three years' work in London and Paris. In 1836—the twelvemonth of the appearance of his first volume of poems, three years before Longfellow's "Voices of the Night"—he took his degree, and soon after received the appointment as professor of anatomy and physiology at Dartmouth College. That was in '39, the year of his marriage to Miss Jackson, and a twelvemonth later he had resigned from this first "official" post to go down to Boston as "a beloved physician of body and mind." "The smallest fevers gratefully received," he wrote a friend as he hung out his modest sign at No. 8 Montgomery Place, and there he practiced until called to his alma mater as Parkman professor of anatomy. There he lectured for more than a generation, occupying, as he quaintly put it, a settee rather than a chair of medicine, and when he left his was the rare honor of being named Professor Emeritus. It is not generally known that Dr. Holmes invented the stereoscope in its present form, but never patented it. It would unquestionably have made him a modest fortune, but, characteristically, he put it by with the remark that he did not care to be known as the patentee of a pill or peeping contrivance.

The last dozen years of the man's life were devoted wholly to letters, spent either at his Boston home, No. 296 Beacon street, where his three children were born (including a present member of the supreme bench of the land), or at his country homes at Pittsfield and Beverly Farms. Once, for a few months, he crossed again to Europe, receiving then a D. C. L. from Oxford and an LL. D. from the University of Edinburgh. On the 7th of October, 1894, he breathed his last, and the most notable men of the day gathered in King's Chapel to hear the late Edward Everett Hale read his burial service. He rests today in Mount Auburn Cemetery.

Versatility Personified.

Holmes was the direct opposite of his friend Hawthorne in temperament, as well as in intellect. He was critical, but sympathetic, fastidious and yet genuinely hearty, vivacious and optimistic. "Sparkling" and "effervescent" jump to the pen in attempting even the most cursory criticism of Holmes the man or Holmes the author. He who said, "Put not your trust in money, but put your money in trust," and who pointed out that "Facts always yield the place of honor in conversation to thoughts about facts," was a real humorist. Back in his undergraduate days he announced that he never dared write quite as funny as he could, but, uniting elegance and eloquence with genuine humor, he won perhaps the highest place ever accorded an American in post-prandial talk, as was eminently proper for a cousin of Wendell Phillips. Cannon Kingsley, who attended a dinner, while on a visit to this country, at which Dr. Holmes was one of the speakers, turned enthusiastically to his neighbor at the first pause and said: "He's an inspired jackdaw."

Versatile is as true an adjective to use of Holmes as humorous. Our literature has produced no essayist who is his equal in his own peculiar field, nor has he a peer as an odist. As poet and romancer he stands high, though probably not upon the level at which he himself aimed. "Elsie Venner," "The Guardian Angel" and "A Mortal Antipathy," good stories as they unquestionably are, are too pathological, too grim, for wide acceptance. The poet self-gauged not inaccurately his own achievement in that sort when he wrote:

> Deal gently with us, ye who read!
> Our largest hope is unfulfilled,
> The promise still outruns the deed,
> The tower, but not the spire we build!

In spite of this, "The Chambered Nautilus" and "The Last Leaf" are poems of the first order. The latter, once called by Lincoln "inexpressably touching," is as artless a piece of perfect art as our literature has to show, while the graceful elegy on a shell is, as Whittier predicted it would be, booked for immortality. All poetry is enriched by such lines as these:

> Build thee more stately mansions, O my soul,
> As the swift seasons roll!
> Leave thy low-vaulted past!
> Let each new temple, nobler than the last,
> Shut thee from heaven with a dome more vast,
> Till thou at length art free;
> Leaving thine outgrown shell by life's unresisting sea.

Dr. Holmes was a master of "occasional" verse, "rhymes of an hour" he called them. His collected works embody more than a hundred of such pieces, class poems and memorials, dinner verses and odes for more dignified gatherings, stanzas of welcome and farewell and graceful appreciations composed in honor of someone's birthday; the last completed bit from the great man's pen was such a poem, which appeared in the February Atlantic, 1894, in memory of Francis Parkman. In this field the poet often evidenced fervor and impressiveness, while his wit and fancy, his grace and appositeness, were always present. Most famous of all such compositions is, of course, "Old Ironsides," which was penciled on a scrap of paper, during the author's brief months as a Cambridge law student, and sent in to the Boston Daily Advertiser. Rumor had it that the Navy Department had decreed the destruction of the most celebrated frigate which ever sailed under our flag, the Constitution, then lying at Charleston. Impromptu, young Holmes wrote out his protest, now as immortal as the memory of the old ship herself, and nothing did more to prolong her material life.

THE "GAMBREL ROOFED HOUSE" WHERE HOLMES WAS BORN JUST 100 YEARS AGO.

THE CHAMBERED NAUTILUS.

This is the ship of pearl, which, poets feign,
Sails the unshadowed main—
The venturous bark that flings
On the sweet Summer wind its purpled wings
In gulfs enchanted, where the siren sings,
And coral reefs lie bare,
Where the cold seamaids rise to sun their streaming hair.

Its webs of living gauze no more unfurl;
Wrecked is the ship of pearl!
And every chambered cell,
Where its dim dreaming life was wont to dwell,
As the frail tenant shaped his growing shell,
Before thee lies revealed—
Its irised ceiling rent, its sunless crypt unsealed!

Year after year beheld the silent toil
That spread his lustrous coil;
Still, as the spiral grew,
He left the past year's dwelling for the new,
Stole with soft step its shining archway through,
Built up its idle door,
Stretched in his last-found home, and knew the old no more.

Thanks for the heavenly message brought by thee,
Child of the wandering sea,
Cast from her lap forlorn!
From thy dead lips a clearer note is borne
Than ever Triton blew from wreathed horn!
While on mine ear it rings,
Through the deep caves of thought I hear a voice that sings:

Build thee more stately mansions, O my soul,
As the swift seasons roll!
Leave thy low-vaulted past!
Let each new temple, nobler than the last,
Shut thee from heaven with a dome more vast,
Till thou at length are free,
Leaving thine outgrown shell by life's unresting sea!

THE LAST LEAF.

I saw him once before,
As he passed by the door,
And again
The pavement stones resound,
As he totters o'er the ground
With his cane.

They say that in his prime,
Ere the pruning-knife of Time
Cut him down,
Not a better man was found
By the Crier on his round
Through the town.

But now he walks the streets,
And he looks at all he meets
Sad and wan,
And he shakes his feeble head,
That it seems as if he said,
"They are gone."

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.

My grandmamma has said—
Poor old lady, she is dead
Long ago—
That he had a Roman nose,
And his cheek was like a rose
In the snow.

But now his nose is thin,
And it rests upon his chin
Like a staff,
And a crook is in his back,
And a melancholy crack
In his laugh.

I know it is a sin
For me to sit and grin
At him here;
But the old three-cornered hat,
And the breeches, and all that,
Are so queer!

And if I should live to be
The last leaf upon the tree
In the Spring,
Let them smile, as I do now,
At the old forsaken bough
Where I cling.

THE LAST CHARGE.

1864.

Now, men of the North! will you join in the strife
For country, for freedom, for honor, for life?
The giant grows blind in his fury and spite—
One blow on his forehead will settle the fight!

Flash full in his eyes the blue lightning of steel,
And stun him with cannon-bolts, peal upon peal!
Mount, troopers, and follow your game to its lair,
As the hound tracks the wolf and the beagle the hare!

Blow, trumpets, your summons, till sluggards awake!
Beat, drums, till the roofs of the faint-hearted shake
Yet, yet, ere the signet is stamped on the scroll,
Their names may be traced on the blood-sprinkled roll!

Trust not the false herald that painted your shield:
True honor today must be sought on the field!
Her scutcheon shows white with a blazon of red—
The life-drops of crimson for liberty shed!

The hour is at hand, and the moment draws nigh;
The dog-star of treason grows dim in the sky;
Shine forth from the battle-cloud, light of the morn,
Call back the bright hour when the Nation was born!

The rivers of peace through our valleys shall run,
As the glaciers of tyranny melt in the sun;
Smite, smite the proud parricide down from his throne—
His sceptre once broken, the world is our own!

At the Breakfast Table.

Dr. Holmes was an essayist by nature. The prose of the man who had listened to Thackeray's lectures, when delivered in Boston, with such real pleasure, was, as might have been expected, marked by tenderness and drollery, observation as keen as the comment was kindly, and scholarly withal. His paragraphs suggest now Sterne, now Goldsmith, now his fellow laborer and friend, Dr. Lowell. The old Spectator comes to one's mind as he reads in the breakfast table series, for there is the same semi-dramatic form, the same undercurrent of sermonizing, the same mingling of gentle sentiment with yet gentler pathos. Holmes was as real a moralizer as Addison, but he had even a brighter smile to throw about all his lessons.

The world first looked in upon the breakfast table in the pages of the just-born "Atlantic," Dr. Holmes actually standing godfather at the birth of that famous periodical and giving it its name. It was in '57 that Lowell and Longfellow, Whittier and Motley, Charles Eliot and Dr. Holmes started the magazine with which have since been associated practically all the best names of our literature. Lowell was to be the first editor, but he accepted the post only on the condition that Holmes should be a regular contributor. "You see," he said, "the Doctor is a bright mountain stream that has been dammed up among the hills, and is waiting for an outlet into the Atlantic." So the autocrat took his seat at the breakfast table, introducing himself with those genius-begot words, "I was just going to say when I was interrupted." It was but a question of days till a wide circle, including English readers as well as American, felt the charm of this most genial old gentleman, and it was not long till Irving wrote down from "Sunnyside," "I do not wish to arouse your suspicions, but I am quite in love with your pretty school mistress."

The very cast of characters at the breakfast table comedy is masterly beyond most; the nervous landlady, anxious to please, the venerable and opiniated bachelor, ready to be displeased, the timid school ma'am, the young fellow named John, the spinster in black bombazine, the divinity student, to say nothing of the poet or the professor or the autocrat himself, epitomize all New England as it was in the middle of the last century. Writing of the books only the other day, Samuel McCord Crothers (himself in lineal descent from Holmes) aptly says: "Dr. Holmes' wit was a safety match which struck fire on the prepared surface of the box in which it came. Boston was the box—the Boston of the transcendental period, intelligent, right-minded, but dreadfully self-conscious."

The "Professor" followed the "Autocrat" by two years; the "Poet" did not come till '75, and "Over the Tea Cups," which in many ways is to be classed with the three greater books, was not written till 1890, in the white Winter of Dr. Holmes' 80th year, though it is full of the same shrewd common-sense and wise comment and tender thought.

Praise of a World.

While Dr. Holmes was still with us, Lowell wrote of him:

> Master alike in speech and song
> Of Fame's great antiseptic—Style,
> You with the classic few belong
> Who tempered wisdom with a smile.

And this adequately sums up one side of the man. But he was many-sided, and no single estimate of him occurs to mind which fully covers the ground. To be at all just, one must quote several, perhaps beginning with the words of that other friend of his, Motley, who wrote, "I hardly know an author in any language to be paralleled with him for profound and suggestive thought, glittering wit, vivid imagination and individuality of humor." Professor Haweis, summing up Dr. Holmes in one of his Oxford lectures on "The American Humorists," said: "Heaven send us on this side of the Atlantic a teacher so wise and generous, so witty, so tender, so true!" George William Curtis wrote: "The kindly humorist, the melting poet, the shrewd essayist—all his countrymen are his lovers." And perhaps, as fitly as with any other phrase, this tribute to the man may be closed with his own words—words which might well stand as his epitaph: "He reverences truth, he loves kindness, he respects justice."

WILL DIE POOR AT 90 YEARS

Aged Philanthropist Will Give Away the Rest of His Fortune.

CHICAGO, Aug. 28.—(Special.)—Daniel K. Pearson, millionaire patron of small colleges, has decided to make his final bow as a philanthropist next April, when he will have reached his 90th birthday. Mr. Pearsons will give the remainder of his once considerable fortune to Chicago institutions before his next birthday. Mr. Pearsons does not approve of trusteeships and explains that he will give away the balance of his fortune because he wishes to be his own executor. He does not believe that an administrator, however scrupulous, can spend another man's money with the same wisdom he would display in disposing of his own.

Many colleges and philanthropic institutions have benefited by Mr. Pearsons' bounty in the last quarter of a century. Mr. Pearsons does not himself know how much money he has given to the colleges of the country, but it is reputed to be more than $4,000,000. Each institution has been carefully investigated, and in no instance has this most prodigal of givers contributed a cent where he did not believe that the college or hospital was worthy. He believes that philanthropy is a science and he wants to see his final gifts go where they will do the most good. Hence he intends to spend it himself.

Giving While He Lives.

"I am giving this money while I live," he said recently, "because I desire to be my own executor. I have been the administrator of a number of estates in my time, and I have never felt that such a trust can be satisfactorily executed.

"Where a man desires to restore the fortune he has accumulated to the public, let him do it himself, say I. I believe that to be the duty of men of wealth. It is a duty which many might naturally like to shirk because it entails no end of trouble, but it is a duty which they should not shift to someone else after they are dead.

"I have always intended to die a poor man at least that has been my purpose for a quarter of a century. I have quite definite ideas as to how my money should be invested for the public benefit. Why, then, should I not assume the responsibility of making the investment? That is just what I am starting to do now.

"I am no longer a young man. I shall be 90 my next birthday, which falls in April. I want to dispose of my remaining holdings and round out a gift of $1,000,000 to Chicago while my brain is still vigorous and unclouded. That's why I have decided to make my final bow as a philanthropist on my 90th birthday."

Mr. Pearsons already has begun the final distribution of his wealth. On July 6 Huron College, of Huron, S. D., received a $15,000 check. Other colleges are expected to benefit later, but the bulk of the remainder of Mr. Pearsons' fortune will go to Chicago institutions. Mr. Pearsons recently gladdened the hearts of the leaders of the anti-cigarette movement by promising that in the future he would make no gifts to colleges unless assured by the faculty that no cigarette smoking on the part of the students would be allowed.

Age has left few marks upon Mr. Pearsons. His walk is brisk, his manner alert and, when he speaks, his mind works with absolute precision. He discussed the motive which has impelled him to devote most of his thoughts and time during the last 25 years to giving away vast sums of money to the cause of education. He is a Vermonter by birth, in the South they call him "the good Yankee abolitionist"; and it is because he believes implicitly in the future of democracy in this country that he has given his money to help bring it about through education.

Hunter After Poverty.

"You want to know what impelled me to set about giving away my fortune?" Mr. Pearsons asked. "Well, I've been a hunter after poverty all my life and it isn't hard to find, even in America. I have wanted to give young men the advantages of education because they need it and because the country needs educated young men.

Most of my gifts have been made to small colleges in poor or sparsely settled regions. Eleven of the colleges which have been benefited are situated in the South and I may say that I have got more satisfaction out of these gifts than out of any of the others. Three are in the Pacific Coast States and five are in new states.

"I have selected the wilderness because it is just in the wilderness that education is most needed and yields the richest returns on a small investment. I have investigated the country adjacent to all of these colleges before giving anything and satisfied myself that the need for assistance was genuine. It has been my aim to place a liberal education within the reach of poor boys and girls. One college, for instance, was enabled to reduce the cost of a year's tuition to $150.

Mr. Pearsons does not pose as a philanthropist. "I haven't a particle of benevolence in me," he said. "I am the most economical, close-fisted man you ever set your eyes on. I don't think I ever foolishly spent $20 in my life. I never went to a theater but once, and then I was ashamed of myself. I never went to a baseball game or to a horse race, or to one of those football games that students all over the country are making consummate fools of themselves about. No, I am a thrifty and frugal old man."

Dr. Pearsons retired from business in 1887. He traveled extensively in the United States and Europe. Always he insisted that his beneficiary among the colleges should have a religious denomination back of it, though he did not belong to a church and is not a sectarian.

Mr. Pearsons began business as a real estate dealer. By telling strictly the truth about the land he had for sale and handling only desirable farms, he became famous throughout the state. By 1870 he had accumulated a fortune. In Chicago street railways and other enterprises he had heavy interests and at one time was considered one of the greatest capitalists of the city. Michigan timber lands and Chicago real estate became his favorite investments and at one time he owned 16,000 acres of timber and over 100 houses and stores in Chicago's North Side.

In 1875 Dr. Pearsons entered politics. He was elected alderman from the First Ward. Political life was little to his taste, however, and he retired from the Council in 1876.

For many years the home of Dr. Pearsons has been at Hinsdale, Ill. No children were born to him and Mrs. Pearsons.

PEARSON'S GIFTS TO COLLEGES.

Beloit College, Beloit, Wis.	$235,000
Chicago Theological Seminary	280,000
Colorado College, Colorado Springs, Colo.	150,000
Mount Holyoke College, Massachusetts	150,000
Berea College, Kentucky	150,000
Lake Forest University, Lake Forest, Ill.	125,000
Whitman College, Walla Walla, Wash.	120,000
Knox College, Galesburg, Ill.	100,000
Drury College, Springfield, Mo.	100,000
Yankton College, Yankton, S. D.	100,000
Presbyterian Hospital, Chicago	70,000
Pacific University, Forest Grove, Or.	60,000
Carleton College, Northfield, Minn.	50,000
Fargo College, Fargo, N. D.	50,000
Pomono College, Pomono, Cal.	50,000
Fairmont College, Fairmont, Kan.	50,000
McCormick Theological Seminary, Chicago	50,000
Chicago Young Men's Christian Association	40,000
Olivet College, Olivet, Mich.	25,000
Marietta College, Marietta, O.	25,000
Sheridan College, Sheridan, Wyo.	25,000
McKendree College, Kewanee, Ill.	25,000
Presbyterian Board of Missions	20,000
Grand Prairie Seminary, Onarga, Ill.	20,000
Anatona College, Turkey	20,000
Woman's Board of Foreign Missions	20,000
Chicago Art Institute	15,000
Chicago Missionary Society	12,000
First Presbyterian Church, Chicago	10,000
Public Library, Bradford, Vt.	2,000
Unknown college	200,000
Northwestern University, Evanston, Ill.	30,000
Colorado College, Colorado Springs	30,000
Guilford College, Greensboro, N. C.	25,000
Piedmont College, Demorest, Ga.	25,000
Washington College, Tennessee	25,000
Grant University, Chattanooga, Tenn.	50,000
West Virginia Seminary, Morgantown, W. Va.	10,000
Huron College, Huron, S. D.	16,000