



# The Autocrat at the Breakfast Table

*Oliver Wendell Jr. Holmes*

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**The Autocrat at the Breakfast Table** Oliver Wendell Jr. Holmes

You may set it down as a truth which admits of few exceptions, that those who ask your opinion really want your praise, and will be contented with nothing else. -from The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table A superb example of a literary form that has long since fallen into disuse, this seriocomic one-sided conversation with the dictatorial "autocrat" was originally published in segments in the Atlantic Monthly magazine in 1857 and 1858. The unnamed speaker offers an entertainingly rambling series of observations on everything from the odd things that children believe to the unexpected benefits of old age, from the divide between the creative and the scholarly to a recommendation for drinking as a vice. An insightful and frequently hilarious discourse on American civic life, this is a forgotten classic of playful liberal intellectualism. OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES (1809-1894) was born in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and educated at Harvard. Though he trained as a physician, he is best known for his verse, and was one of the most beloved poets of the 19th century. A regular contributor to the Atlantic Monthly, he also wrote novels. After his death, his son, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr., was appointed to the U.S. Supreme Court.

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