

## HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW.

YOUTH never forgets the earliest vision of the gracious presence which glorified its opening day. The impression of it deepens with years, and is at no time so vivid as in late life, when new sensations come rarely, if at all, and old ones, felt when the mind was plastic and receptive, steal out from the background of experience. One whose youth is far behind him recalls distinctly a figure which appeared many times at a house in Summer Street, where lived a man of letters, scholar and poet, about whom the fine spirits of the day clustered. To my boyish fancy, the name Longfellow had a strange, unfamiliar, foreign sound, as that of some inhabitant of a distant sphere; but a sight of its owner dispelled any such whimsical vagaries. It was a clear-cut figure, of middle size, handsome, erect, the countenance cheerful, the step buoyant, the manner cordial, the voice mellow and musical; a melodious voice, educated, coming from the depths of the man, with character and cultivation in it,—the voice of a gentleman and a scholar. His conversation had a jocund flavor, as if he enjoyed his thoughts about books and the men who wrote them. It was pleasant; not deep, but hearty and appreciative; flowing in a full, easy stream along the channels of literature, making music as it flowed. The great masters of song he loved without respect to their nationality, their age, or their creed; taking them on their merits, and rendering hearty honor to their genius, it mattering little to him whether they wrote in English, French, German, Italian, Spanish. When the youth met, a few years later, at Harvard College, the professor of modern languages and literatures, he found the same delightful person. The ordinary lecture-rooms being occupied, Longfellow met his classes in

a kind of parlor, carpeted and furnished with comfortable chairs. The comparative elegance was so completely in keeping with the teacher and his topics that the peculiarity was not noticed at the time, and for the hour seemed to be no peculiarity at all. The professor sat and read his lecture in a simple manner, showing an entire familiarity with whatever concerned the literature of the subject; never discussing points of philosophical difficulty, never diving into abysses of abstraction or rising to heights of speculation, but fully equipped for the task of translation and exposition, especially the former, in which he excelled. His style of writing was flowing, picturesque, abounding in literary illustration, exuberant in imagery; more than pleased the prosaic members of the class, but none too florid for the imaginative and enthusiastic.

This was about 1840. Mr. Longfellow, though a young man, was accomplished and even learned in his department. He had published *Outre-Mer* and *Hyperion*. He had written the essays on *Frithiof's Saga*, *Anglo-Saxon Literature*, *Dante*. He had traveled in Northern Europe, Germany, France, Spain, Italy, observing and studying as he went. He had read many books that lie far out of the diligent reader's path, such as William of Malmesbury, Bede, Turner, Fléchier; the early Italian poets,—Ciullo d'Alcamo, Brunetto Latini, Beato Benedetti, Guido Guinicelli, Guittone d'Arezzo; the *Nibelungen-Lieds*, the *Helden-Buchs*, the songs of Minnesingers and Meistersingers; the strange allegories, legends, and fables embodied in German Volk-lore; the *Ship of Fools*, *Reynard the Fox*; the quaint stories which furnished themes for later dramatists, romancers, poets. He had made translations from the

German, the Spanish, the Italian, the Swedish. He had the passion for elegant wisdom which made him patient, laborious, careful, exact, and the conscientiousness that compelled him to glean every scrap of information which his occupation required. His courtesy was proof against the rudeness of the boys, and his readiness to answer questions was inexhaustible. He was not jocose, humorous, or witty, but he was always gentle, kind, sympathetic, generous; meeting the young men as a gentleman should meet gentlemen, as a teacher should meet those who are eager to learn, quite in the spirit of his own saying in the printed *Table Talk*: "There is so much aspiration in them, so much audacious hope and trembling fear, that all errors and short-comings are for a while lost sight of in the amiable self-assertion of youth." He could not lose his dignity or his suavity, and he was more than good to any who took interest in noble or beautiful things, giving them welcome to his library, and opening to them the storehouse of his mind.

My meetings with him in the classroom were few, but they stand out in memory with a vividness in singular contrast with their rarity, showing how much their quality was superior to their quantity. The drudgery of teaching the rudiments was committed to tutors, an inferior grade of instructors, — an arrangement which left him free to follow the leading of his genius over the high levels of literature. Many years afterwards, while spending an evening at his house in Cambridge, I met William Dempster, the composer and singer of ballads, then making a final tour in the United States, and coming, as celebrities of every kind did, to visit the hospitable poet. He sat at the piano and sang *Enid's* song from Tennyson's *Idylls*.

"Turn, Fortune, turn thy wheel and lower the  
proud;  
Turn thy wild wheel through sunshine, storm, and  
cloud;  
Thy wheel and thee we neither love nor hate."

It was interesting to watch the poet's face as the music proceeded; to note the complete absence of self-consciousness, the simple, cordial appreciation of the noble words, and the courteous reception of the rather indifferent adaptation of them by the musician. The poet was a member of the family, for whose entertainment, and not for his own honor the performance was given. Yet by this time his fame was established as one of the most popular poets of the century, and he might have set himself up as an oracle, if not as an idol.

By this time the poems of Longfellow were in all households that made the smallest pretense to literary cultivation. Young people read them. Lovers took them into the woods. Old people had the volume in their hands as they sat musing by the firelight. The bereaved repeated them over and over, and thought more tenderly of their dead. The lonely, disappointed, tired, desponding, knew them by heart. The longing, aspiring, struggling, repeated them with fervor. In hours of leisure, weariness, weakness, thoughtful men and women were soothed and uplifted by the melodious verse. It was poetry of the heart in its peaceful, not in its martial, moods, and it met those moods not lackadaisically, but hopefully, cheerily, bravely. It was customary then to say that his poetry was sentimental. So it was, but the sentiment was healthy, sweet, and true, such as the best, even the most high-souled and intellectual, know at times, or ought to know; such as the large majority of men and women rest in at their highest moments, the choice moments of their life. It was the sentiment which fills with most the place of reasoning, with some is a substitute for faith; a sentiment, tender, humane, devout, trusting, submissive, but manly, touching all objects with romantic charm, associating the lowest with some human interest, connecting the highest with the mysteriousness of

Providence and the unchanging benignity of God.

A strain of pathetic hope, veneration, awe, ran through it. A temper of happy resignation breathed in it. In its way it was religious. In his own language it seemed to say, "Round about what is lies a whole mysterious world of what might be, — a psychological romance of possibilities and things that do not happen. By going out a few minutes sooner or later, by stopping to speak with a friend at a corner, by meeting this man or that, or by turning down this street instead of the other, we may let slip some great occasion of good or avoid some impending evil, by which the whole current of our lives would have been changed. There is no possible solution to the dark enigma but the one word, Providence." The state of mind expressed in these words, the common state of bewilderment and perplexity under which such multitudes suffer, is met by this simply human poet as it never was met before, in language so choice, so simple, so sincere, so various, so musical, that all can understand, and in certain moods enjoy it. The great masters are out of reach and difficult to comprehend, and besides that their lines suggest "life's endless toil and endeavor;" they rather apologize for than sympathize with the softer emotions of the soul, allowing for them, but excusing them as a weakness of human nature. Here is a poet who accepts them, appeals to them, builds upon them, takes them for granted as a holy attribute, puts them forward as ministers of heaven, to serve as guides to the immortal seats. To ordinary humanity this is an inestimable boon. To live in sentiment may not be the most exalted state of man, but, seeing that it is the lot of the great majority to do so, we ought to be profoundly grateful to the man who takes them as they are, and carries them higher on the power of their own wings. Thus regarded, what

is made Longfellow's reproach should be accounted his glory.

The charge of being European more than American has been urged by another class of minds. It is alleged, and not without truth, that he was indebted to the Old World for his mental furniture; that his culture, his taste, his habitual cast of thought, were foreign, and lacked the flavor of his native soil. To some extent the criticism is just, but it should not be pushed beyond reasonable limits. Longfellow was essentially a romantic poet. This appears in some of his earliest poems, written before his first visit to Europe, while yet a youth at college. The closing verse of *Sunrise on the Hills* suggests it: —

"If thou art worn and hard beset  
With sorrows, that thou wouldst forget,  
If thou wouldst read a lesson, that will keep  
Thy heart from fainting and thy soul from sleep,  
Go to the woods and hills! No tears  
Dim the sweet look that Nature wears."

The lines on the Spirit of Poetry express the same or a kindred sentiment:

"And this is the sweet spirit, that doth fill  
The world; and, in these wayward days of youth,  
My busy fancy oft embodies it,  
As a bright image of the light and beauty  
That dwell in nature; of the heavenly forms  
We worship in our dreams, and the soft hues  
That stain the wild-bird's wing, and flush the  
clouds  
When the sun sets."

*Outre-Mer* is really a "pilgrimage beyond the sea," saturated with the very spirit of the Old World; a good deal more than a record of travel in strange lands, it is a hearty reproduction of the foreign soil, scenery, mode of life, habit of feeling, such as none but a romantic soul could have been capable of. It breathes the atmosphere of France, Spain, Italy. It shows a lover's delight in legend and song. There is no homesickness in the book, no retrospect except of a fabulous past, which in America has no existence. The second book, *Hyperion*, is frankly called a romance. The author had been a professor nearly ten years, at Bowdoin and at Harvard,

yet his duties, instead of blunting the edge of his feeling, seem to have made it keener. The volume is overcharged with foreign sentiment. The traveler revels in European lore. His quaint conceits, his curious learning, his fondness for color, his passion for music and tale, enrich every page. He is at home in Germany, at Frankfort, Heidelberg, Nuremberg. The Epistle Dedicatory to the first edition of *Outre-Mer* (1833) craves the reader's "forbearance for having thought that even the busiest mind might not be a stranger to those moments of repose, when the clock of time ticks drowsily behind the door, and trifles become the amusement of the wise and great." And in the book itself the author confesses, for his own part, "that there are seasons when he is willing to be the dupe of his imagination; and if this harmless folly but lends its wings to a dull-paced hour, he is even ready to believe a fairy tale." Leaving out the words "trifles" and "folly," we may accept this as the poet's conception of his office, namely, to give repose and cheer to the busy mind by touching the chords of melody in the heart.

At the same time, in his sympathies he was a true American, as any reader of his poetry may see. By conviction and conscience, as well as by birth and circumstance of life, he belonged to the foremost rank of believers in republican institutions. Even as poet he did so. In a review of Hawthorne's *Twice-Told Tales*, written in 1837, he notes as one of their prominent traits that they are national in their character; that the author has chosen his themes among the traditions of New England. "This is the right material for story. Truly, many quaint and quiet customs, many comic scenes and strange adventures, many wild and wondrous things, fit for humorous tale and soft, pathetic story, lie all about us here in New England. There is no tradition of the Rhine nor of the Black Forest which

surpasses in beauty that of the Phantom Ship of New Haven. The Flying Dutchman of the Cape and the Klaboterman of the Baltic are nowise superior. The story of Peter Rugg, the man who could not find Boston, is as good as that told by Gervase of Tilbury of a man who gave himself to the devils by an unfortunate imprecation, and was used by them as a wheelbarrow; and the Great Carbuncle of the White Mountains shines with no less splendor than that which illuminated the subterranean palace in Rome, as related by William of Malmesbury." Many of his own best known pieces, long and short, were based upon American themes: *Evangeline*, said to be the author's favorite, *The Song of Hiawatha*, *The Courtship of Miles Standish*, the *Poems on Slavery*, *The Building of the Ship*, *The Wreck of the Hesperus*, *The Arsenal at Springfield*, *The Village Blacksmith*, and numerous poems not so well known, the suggestion of which came from local objects, and the imagery of which recalls familiar things. The reflective habit of his muse soon carried him away from his starting-point, whether it lay in the New World or in the Old, and made his verses human, but the flight was taken from his native land more often than is commonly supposed. True, he seldom chose a theme which did not present a romantic aspect. He transfigured *Evangeline*, he idealized the Indian, he exalted Miles Standish, he saw the dreamy, pathetic side of the negro. In carefully re-reading the passage above quoted, we cannot overlook the fact that he compares the New World favorably with the Old, on the ground that it furnishes as good material for legend, has in spots as much color, is susceptible of as romantic treatment. The elements of romance, he would say, are the same all over the earth. "It seems as natural to make tales" (and poems too, we may add) "out of old, tumble-down traditions as canes and

snuff-boxes out of old steeples, or trees planted by great men. The dreary old Puritanical times begin to look romantic in the distance." Naturally, a poet of this order seeks his material where there is the best chance of finding it; and, beyond question, it is more abundant in Germany, Holland, Flanders, than in New England or any of the United States. Still, he did use the native product whenever he could find it, and sometimes, perhaps, thought he found it where it did not exist. For the rest, should we not be grateful to the man who diffused the softening haze of sentiment, though it were foreign, since no other was to be had, over the hard, angular facts of our common American life; to the man who imparted something of the spirit of Spain and Italy to the sandy coast of the Atlantic and the monotonous prairies of the West; to the man who did for Massachusetts, Louisiana, Texas, in part at least, what Irving did for the Hudson River and the Catskills? Longfellow is still an American poet, though with a European fancy; and Americans should love him all the more because the fancy irradiated places which were prosaic before he came.

The Poems on Slavery were written in 1842, when the agitation was in the moral phase, before the republican party was formed, nearly twenty years before the final appeal to arms. The poet was at that period personally intimate with men who afterwards were leaders in the political battle. That the pieces express intense feeling, and performed their part in forming the public sentiment of the North, cannot be doubted. That they were never followed up, that they were almost forgotten, allowed to sink into oblivion, is easily explained by the poet's abhorrence of violence in word or deed. He was a man of peace beyond his friend Charles Sumner, who pronounced an oration on it. Yet when Sumner died no garland on his grave was more tender or lovely than Longfellow's:—

"His was the troubled life,  
The conflict and the pain;  
The grief, the bitterness of strife,  
The honor without stain."

In a country where political animosities ran high, and party vituperation flew about at random, the gentle poet withdrew into the solitude of his study. During the war he made no public demonstration, nor was quoted either in defense or in reprobation of any public policy; yet his loyalty was never called in question, nor was the course of his sympathy ever misunderstood. Whoever penetrated even a little way beneath the surface found an enthusiasm for liberty as hearty, a faith in justice as firm, a confidence in the final issue as lofty, as any combatant could desire. In a country where there was no national church, no generally accepted form of religious worship or observance, and where, consequently, theological opinions were vehemently debated, he kept his religious thoughts to himself; but he was an honest friend to liberty of inquiry, and associated himself with those who put it sincerely into practice. He was no controversialist, no sectary. Religion, with him, was an affair of the heart rather than of the intellect, and, for his part, he was content to believe reasonably. At one time the Roman Catholics claimed him as being of their communion, finding justification in certain generous words that came from his pen in praise of some cathedral, rite, or holy custom. But it was merely a touch of sentiment, a spark of that broad, poetic feeling which recognized beauty under all forms of ritual. He was a poet, and he was religious: that is the whole secret. A religious reformer he certainly was not, could not be. He could not be a partisan or a polemic. But shall it be reckoned against him that he abstained from dogmatic assertion, and yet held by his convictions; that he was silent yet devout, non-committal yet worshipful? Most of the dissent about us is indifference; most



of the dumbness is denial. If he did not speculate, at least he did not quarrel, denounce, or sit down in sullen discontent. He was neither optimist nor pessimist, but a submissive disciple. "The gale that blows from God we must endure, toiling but not repining," he says in *Kavanagh*. Similar sentiments abound in his writings: "Peace, peace! Why dost thou question God's providence?" "Tell me, my soul, why art thou restless? Why dost thou look forward to the future with such strong desire? The present is thine, and the past; and the future shall be! Oh that thou didst look forward to the great hereafter with half the longing wherewith thou longest for an earthly future, which a few days, at most, will bring thee! — to the meeting of the dead as to the meeting of the absent! Thou glorious spirit land! Oh that I could behold thee as thou art, the region of light and life and love, and the dwelling-place of those beloved ones whose being has flowed onward, like a silver-clear stream into the solemn-sounding main, into the ocean of Eternity!" "Yes, death brings us again to our friends. They are waiting for us, and we shall not long delay. They have gone before us, and are like the angels in heaven. They stand upon the borders of the grave to welcome us, with the countenance of affection which they wore on earth, yet more lovely, more radiant, more spiritual! He spake well who said that graves are the foot-prints of angels!" Speaking of Holbein's designs for the Dance of Death, he mentions as striking that one where, from a group of children sitting around a cottage hearth, Death has taken one by the hand, and is leading it, quiet and unresisting, with no fear or grief on its countenance, but only wonder in its eyes, away from its dismayed companions. "It is a beautiful design, in all save the skeleton. An angel had been better, with folded wings and torch inverted." "When I take

the history of one poor heart that has sinned and suffered, and represent to myself the struggles and temptations it has passed, the brief pulsations of joy, the feverish inquietude of hope and fear, the tears of regret, the feebleness of purpose, the pressure of want, the desertion of friends, the scorn of a world that has little charity, the desolation of the soul's sanctuary, and threatening voices within; health gone, happiness gone; even hope, that stays longest with us, gone, — I have little heart for anything but thankfulness that it is not so with me, and would fain leave the erring soul of my fellow-man with Him from whose hands it came." These passages are from *Hyperion*, published in 1839, and they express the gentle faith in which he lived. The same Romance contains the exquisite version from Salis, — *The Song of the Silent Land*, — with which all readers are familiar. When, many years later, his noble and beautiful wife went up in a chariot of flame, the same child-like faith kept him patient and submissive. He did not question, complain, or doubt. He was not tempted to discard his liberality of belief under the pressure of bitter personal experience.

It is a common remark that Longfellow was singularly fortunate; that Providence treated him with indulgence, and spared him the struggles and disappointments which attend the lot of most literary men. Hence, add some, faith to him was unnecessary, and all expression of it was sentimental, unreal, literary. But, to say nothing of such afflictions as are so tenderly hinted at in *Voices of the Night*, the multitude have yet to learn what they have to endure who, along with success, popularity, honor, and worldly competence, are endowed with sensitiveness of conscience and tenderness of heart. If it be true that opulence bears more heavily on talent than penury does, it is equally true that responsibility entails more mis-

ery than toil does, — misery in the form of regret, uneasiness, dissatisfaction, a sense of weakness, failure, ill-desert, not to speak of multitudinous demands that can be neither met nor dismissed, questions that can be neither answered nor put aside. In spite of ease, Longfellow labored. Success stimulated him to toil; praise made him modest; popularity threw him back on self-knowledge; privilege kept him mindful of duty; honors educated him in charity; and the perpetual presence of a world filled with pain drove him to the bosom of a divine love. Conditions which might have encouraged a self-conscious man to think this the best possible order of things, and a morbid man to regard it as the worst possible, simply rendered him submissive and thoughtful. Perhaps he did not choose to think, being constitutionally ordained to feel; but feeling is as important as thought. Whoever, in a world like this, can maintain a still heart is quite as much to be marveled at as he who can preserve a calm intellect. To outward seeming Mr. Longfellow was a prosperous man. To what extent this impression of him was due to his own equability no one will ever know. That he was endowed with a highly sensitive nature, that in consequence of possessing it he enjoyed and suffered keenly, we do know from his writings, not only in verse, but also in prose; as well original, as selected for translation from the writings of others. After all, temperament counts for a good deal in this matter of optimism or pessimism, and the poetic temperament is exposed to the severest strain. The poet must either be born with a child-like heart, which is proof against the shocks of fate, or he must earn his composure by hard discipline of will. In the first case we admire, in the last we venerate, him. In which category our poet stands is yet to be revealed when his life shall be laid open.

But this is digression from our main

purpose, which is to bear testimony to Longfellow's capacity and rank as a man of letters. Much of his time and much of his talent was devoted to the task of reproducing in English the work of foreign authors. Apart from the translation of Dante, he made not fewer than forty-nine or fifty versions, from nearly every European language, and from writers otherwise little known. Especially in the smaller pieces is his talent conspicuous, for in them sentiment is condensed into a few stanzas, and the single thought soon spends itself. In this difficult work his skill is unsurpassed, if not unequaled. His sympathy with the author he chose to render, his copious vocabulary, his sense of the value of words, his ear for rhythm, his resources of rhyme, fitted him in a peculiar degree to pour fancy from one vessel into another. He made the stranger's production so entirely his own that it might easily pass for his. He caught the very spirit of the poem that fascinated him, learned it by heart, as it were, and sang it as a bird sings, because he could not help it. Whither? Beware! The Castle by the Sea, The Happiest Land, King Christian, will occur to every one. The range was not wide, but within the prescribed limits the workmanship was perfect; and none but those who have tried it have any conception of the labor involved in this kind of achievement. None save the genuine poet can venture on the undertaking; yet the genuine poet, who is equal to spontaneous creation from the activity of his own genius, must restrain himself, lest he fill with his wine the cup which a brother artist holds out to him. The more he is in sympathy with his fellow-bard, the more careful he must be to present him, and him only, laying all his private treasures at the feet of his inspirer. For a laborious, literal, mechanical versifier, the task, though by no means easy, is much easier, because, being absorbed in admira-

tion of his model, and stimulated by thoughts wholly beyond his own reach, he collects all his powers, without reserve, to reproduce what he could not create. But for a natural singer like Longfellow the undertaking must be arduous. Indeed, it is surprising that Longfellow did so much of this kind of work; and he would probably have done less had his sympathy been less than it was, or his ambition greater.

The version of Dante's immortal poem has been criticised on the score of its excessive literalness. One of its ablest reviewers thus describes two methods of translating a poem: "The translator of a poem may proceed upon either of two distinct principles. In the first case, he may render the text of his original into English, line for line and word for word, preserving as far as possible its exact verbal sequences, and translating each individual word into an English word as nearly as possible equivalent in its etymological force. In the second case, disregarding mere syntactic and etymological equivalence, his aim will be to reproduce the inner meaning and power of the original, so far as the constitutional difference of the two languages will permit him. It is the first of these methods that Mr. Longfellow has followed in his translation of Dante." The critic admits that in carrying out this principle the translator achieved a degree of success "alike delightful and surprising;" that "the method of literal translation is not likely to receive any more splendid illustration;" that "throughout the English portions of the world his name will always be associated with that of the great Florentine." He nevertheless finds fault with the method as involving the too frequent use of syntactic inversion, permissible in Italian, but forbidden in English, and as favoring a preference of Romaic over Saxon words. We have no disposition to dispute the criticism. It is doubtless well sustained. The version

of Mr. Longfellow, with all its astonishing merits, is open to the objections alleged. But a further question remains, which the critic does not venture to answer, which no one can finally answer, which Mr. Longfellow himself might have been a little puzzled to answer, namely, *why the first method was selected*. Was it chosen because, on the whole, it was preferred, or because it was more congenial with the talent of the translator? Some have thought that the genius of Longfellow shrank before the task of reproducing from the inside so profound a work, and instinctively took refuge in a humbler style, to which he could do justice. Others, presuming his ability to perform the more arduous feat, have suggested that his reverence for the mighty master and his desire to present him as he was induced him to adopt a method which rendered impossible any infusion of his own ideas. In the first supposition, there is implied a limitation of the translator's power; by the other, a tribute is paid to his modesty of character. For our part, we prefer the second, as being most in accordance with the poet's nature. He was a hearty worshiper of other men's genius. There was in him no jealousy of his neighbor. He was without envy as he was without guile.

In the present instance he spared no pains to make his work perfect. As it went on friends were called in whose judgment as scholars, men of taste, poets, could be relied on, and to them the cantos were read in English; they comparing the version with the original, which they held in their hands, and making suggestions as the reading proceeded. Thus the utmost accuracy was obtained. In this way every line, every word, was tested by those most competent to pass judgment.

We will not start a discussion whether Longfellow's earliest or latest pieces were most worthy of his genius. A Psalm of Life, The Reaper and the



Flowers, *The Light of Stars*, *Maidenhood*, *Excelsior*, though remarkable in their time, exuberant, level to the common feeling, are less interesting as literary achievements, and even as expressions of human experience, than many of his later pieces. *The Morituri Salutamus* voices a much higher strain. With due submission to the author's own preference (did ever author fairly estimate the relative value of his performances?), *Hiawatha* is, not merely as a work of art, but as a moral achievement, greatly in advance of *Evangeline*. In fact, *Hiawatha*, published in 1855, is, in our opinion, the poet's masterpiece, the fullest expression of his mind. Theme and treatment perfectly correspond: the former calling forth all the poet's peculiar talent; the latter taxing, yet exquisitely illustrating, his literary skill. The descriptions of natural scenery; the joyous, sunny sympathy with the primitive life of the children of the forest; the romantic delight in wild situations; the humor, the pathos, the avoidance of critical learning, dissertation, fault-finding, erudition; the exuberance of fancy which characterized the poet, and is scattered up and down the pages of his books, are here brought together in the most delicious combinations. We are tempted to quote passages to confirm this judgment, but lack of space forbids, for the quotations would have to be many and full to convey our admiration of that artless, graceful poem, that swan song of a departing race. The Indian's friend must read it with eyes smiling through tears; the Indian's enemy will not begrudge him so dignified and beautiful a dirge. This song came from the singer's heart. Some of his latest pieces betray the marks of effort, as if the writer were making verses as a profession; but this is spontaneous, simple, fresh, child-like, a revelation of the man who chanted it.

Longfellow will never stand high as a critic. The character of his genius for-

bids. He was too broad in his sympathies, too catholic in his taste, too generous in his appreciations, to make fine discriminations. He was lost in praise. One of the first to greet Hawthorne, his admiration was arrested by "the exceeding beauty of his style. It is as clear as running waters. He uses words as mere stepping-stones, upon which, with a free and youthful bound, his spirit crosses and recrosses the bright and rushing stream of thought." It was something in 1839 to speak of Goethe rationally, as he does in *Hyperion*, which is in some sort a book of personal confessions, but a nearer approach to criticism he does not undertake. Dante he describes from the outside. Chaucer, Shakespeare, Milton, Keats, are subjects of admiring sonnets, which suggest nothing like criticism of their respective work as poets. Chaucer is spoken of as "the poet of the dawn;" Shakespeare, as the

"Poet paramount,

Whom all the Muses loved, not one alone."

Milton is the "ninth wave," "England's Mæonides," the "sightless bard."

Keats is

"The shepherd-boy, whose tale was left half told."

The volume containing specimens of the poetry of Europe gives an admirable idea of the wealth and variety of foreign production, along with enough of biography to make the reader acquainted with the writers' lives and times, but makes no attempt at discrimination, as indeed it scarcely could do. The office of the critic requires coolness. He is a looker-on, standing outside, with scales in his hand. The entire mind of Longfellow was poetic. His aphorisms were tropes. "The tragic element in poetry is like Saturn in alchemy, — the malevolent, the destroyer of nature; but without it no true Aurum Potabile, or Elixir of Life, can be made." "In the mouths of many men soft words are like roses that soldiers put into the muzzles of their muskets on holidays."

It would be interesting to contrast Irving with Longfellow, in Spain, at Seville, Granada, or the Alhambra,—the cast of their enthusiasm, the tone of their impressions. The comparison would bring out the exuberance of Longfellow's nature, his passion for light and color, his brimming appreciation of everything he saw or heard. It is remarkable that neither in Rome, Florence, nor Madrid does he appear to be impressed by the masterpieces of art, in painting, sculpture, or architecture. He is possessed by the joy of existence, the daily aspect of human life, the beauty of the hills, the splendor or loveliness of morning and evening, the costume of peasants, the poetry of local traditions, the bits of song, the fragrance of flowers, the foliage of trees. He catches the invisible aroma of existence, and is so enchanted with that as to be almost unaware of more ambitious or demonstrative wonders. In his calmer moments he reveals a delicate sensibility to every form of productiveness in art, but when made the subject of strong impressions an inordinate sensibility seems to have overmastered his power of reflection, and drawn him away. It is worthy of note that in giving an account of Goethe, in the *Poets and Poetry of Europe*, he quotes Hauff, Börne, Gleim, Menzel, Heine, Niebuhr, Jean Paul, Carlyle; thus presenting different views of the man instead of giving his own opinion, as if distrusting his private judgment in a case where personal feeling was strong. Respecting Schiller, for whom he had a less qualified admiration, he cites Menzel. Heine, whom he vehemently disliked, he passes sentence on.

No estimate of Longfellow, either as critic or as poet, can be just that makes small account of his character. He was not man *and* poet, but a poetical man. His verse was a reflection of himself,—of his simplicity, sincerity, gentleness, sweet dignity, and gracious goodness of

heart. To some it seemed shallow because it was translucent. He was without disguise or affectation. He abhorred vagueness and writing for effect. In truth, he was deep of thought, but his thought was so saturated with feeling that its intellectual edge was lost. Yet whoever will take to pieces his most prosaic lines will be aware of the profound reflection which lay beneath them. He was a man of reserve, quiet, meditative, interior, rather reticent than demonstrative; wholly destitute of vanity,—a remarkable trait in any man so attractive, a singular quality in one so flattered and adored. He was the soul of honor and of kindness, with a patience unweariable and a charity that could not be exhausted. "Who will be kind to them, if I am not?" was his reply to a remonstrance against his ductility under the pressure of bores. What he said of Heine never could be said of him: "With all his various powers, he wanted one great power,—the power of truth. He wanted, too, that ennobling principle of all human endeavor, the aspiration after an ideal standard that is higher than himself."

One who was Longfellow's friend for many years, who knew him as intimately as any, and who was as little as any liable to be imposed on by a great reputation, has said, "But beautiful and ample as the expression of himself was, it fell short of the truth. The man was more and better than the poet." He was such a man that London working-men thought it an honor to kiss his hand. An immortality like this the most illustrious might envy; an immortality, if it may not be more properly called a universality, which is immortal too, for the sentiments which are common to humanity are the least likely to die. The few in this generation are questioning and becoming skeptical, but the many are still growing towards a faith tender and trusting as his was, and the doubting, denying few are happy

when they feel at home in the bosom of their kind.

A poetical atmosphere, an aroma, hung about him as about no other of our poets. Among strangers and foreigners this was of course due in great measure to the sentiment of his verse. Among his countrymen it arose from various causes. His abstinence from public life gave him an air of seclusion: men did not think of him in their hours of political or commercial rivalry; when they read their paper, discussed party candidates, or smoked at the club. He was associated with the old Craigie house; with memories of the early years of the republic; with the picturesque epoch of our national existence; with the dawn of democratic institutions; with the flushing hope which reddened the sky when the young nation committed itself so cordially to the faith in man, before the arising of those agitating questions in philosophy and social ethics which divide parties in these days. His residence at Cambridge, the oldest seat of American learning, linked his name with those of other men well known in the world of literature; thus he stood aloof, in calm retirement, as Bryant, for example, did not, and came in no bruising collisions with his fellow-men. His very sorrows idealized him, making him seem touchingly human, and in a peculiar way calling up thoughts of the divine compassion with mortal helplessness and blamelessness. His name was seldom spoken except in connection with charity and good-will. The

academic honors which were heaped upon him he bore so meekly that some forgot he ever had them, so little impression did any mark of distinction make on him, or on others through him. He valued them as recognitions, not as authentications or certificates. He was simply Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. If that be true which an English sonneteer, writing in memory of him, has said, calling Longfellow

"The bard whose sweet songs, more than aught beside,

Have bound two worlds together,"

it is true purely by force of that humanity which unites together the family of mankind. When they heard of his failing health, how many recalled the lines which he put into the mouth of Walter the Minnesinger, of the Golden Legend! —

"Ah, what a cruel sense of loss,  
Like a black shadow, would fall across  
The hearts of all, if he should die!  
His gracious presence upon earth  
Was as a fire upon a hearth;  
As pleasant songs, at morning sung,  
The words that dropped from his sweet tongue  
Strengthened our hearts, or, heard at night,  
Made all our slumbers soft and light."

And when he died the sorrow of the greatest and of the least was equally sincere, but the grief of the little ones will be deep and lasting for the poet who gave voice to their fears and their hopes. Let our consolation be that he sang as he did, with so full-breasted an expression, and that in what he left unexpressed he deepened the mystery that surrounds us all.

*O. B. Frothingham.*

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## THE RAPID PROGRESS OF COMMUNISM.

"*Omnia aliundo: omnia alio.*"

HISTORIANS and ethnologists give us the assurance that in some former days property was held in common; and

the distribution of the products of the soil and of the forest was made under social rules or customs, of which there are no counterparts to-day in what are