

## Books and Authors

### The Witness to Immortality<sup>1</sup>

Whoever attempts to deal adequately with the subject of immortality must, so to speak, drain the entire upland of human thought; for faith in, or the hope of, another life has been a part of every philosophy worthy the name, of all great poetry, and of the very tissue of the habitual, although often unexpressed, life of civilized men. The belief in the reality of another world, and that men stand in vital and indissoluble relations with it, has overhung the entire intellectual history of humanity as the heavens overhang the earth. This faith has been held not only as a dogma, but as a philosophical conclusion, a poetic perception, and a motive of immense and immediate influence on the character and daily life of vast multitudes of men. No other idea, save that of the existence and nature of Deity, has been so widely held, so deeply interwoven in the history of the world, and so constantly, directly or by suggestion, represented and interpreted in art.

To deal adequately with this theme, therefore, involves much more than a purely intellectual or philosophic investigation; it involves a comprehensive study of all that men have been and done, and a deep and clear reading of the heart of humanity in all its experiences and vicissitudes. The title of Dr. Gordon's book indicates his standpoint, and suggests the breadth of his treatment of the theme. The arguments for immortality are set in impressive and telling order, and the demonstration gathers volume and force as it moves on to its end; but in the mind of the writer and in the heart of his discussion, immortality is not an open question: it is the divinest of all realities next after the being of God. It is not immortality proven or demonstrated which Dr. Gordon discusses, but immortality *witnessed* by the thought, the heart, and the history of men. The method of the presentation is broad and simple, as the theme demanded. "My secrets have been few," said Savonarola, "because my purposes have been great." There is first, by way of introduction, an account of the different lines of investigation along which the subject may be approached; then follows a study of the Hebrew prophets and their relations to the thought of immortal existence; and to this succeed a survey of representative poetry and lucid interpretations of the attitude of the poets; a more extended and deeply interesting report of the conclusions of philosophy; a study of the relation of the Apostle Paul to the theme which was of such supreme and thrilling interest to him; a reverent and thorough presentation of the final and authoritative contribution to the clearing up of the great mystery made, not only by the words, but by the life, death, and resurrection of Christ; and a concluding chapter on "The Grounds of Faith Today," in which Dr. Gordon, touching incidentally on the theory of conditional immortality, and indicating his uncompromising antagonism to it, suggests lines of thought not unworthy of the arguments drawn from so many sources which precede it.

One is impressed, in reading this volume, with the breadth of view and with the power of interpreting and setting in vital connection the great tendencies of the intellectual and moral life of men. A purely philosophic discussion of the question of immortality would have added little to the knowledge of the subject or to its force of motivity, for the reason that immortality, like all the great primary truths by which men live, is in no sense the creation or the product of merely intellectual activity. It has far greater depth of root than those ideas which have been consciously worked out along philosophic lines, and it has far greater authority. It is a necessity of man's life; an inevitable inference of his intellectual and moral being; and it comes to light as soon as he begins to live in free and intelligent relations with the universe. Philosophy has cleared up the idea and given it logical statement, and poetry has grasped it as one of the great realities upon

which the imagination instinctively fastens itself; but the idea is part of the constitution of man, and has its roots in a soil deeper and richer than that of the intellect. Whoever would adequately trace its development and determine its validity must look for its origin neither in the intellect nor in the imagination, but in the essential nature of man; for it is neither a speculation nor an aspiration; it is a reality; a thing to be discovered, not created, by the intellect; to be realized, not fashioned, by the imagination.

Dr. Gordon has dealt with the great theme in this deep and vital fashion; he has not neglected the different aspects, the varying forms of demonstration, which the idea has had at the hands of thinkers and poets; but he has emphasized the vast and overwhelming witness of the nature, the life, and the history of man to its reality. One of the most impressive and able chapters in this volume is that which deals with the Hebrew prophets and points out the inevitable sequence of immortality from their sublime conception of the rule of righteousness. More than this, the prophetic element in all high and noble moral living is brought out with great force and beauty, and becomes a fresh and conclusive demonstration. What more convincing argument can be advanced than the fact that when the moral consciousness becomes sensitive and complete, and the moral nature invigorated and dominant, the mind is driven on to the idea of immortality by a vital logical process which it cannot resist? The survey of the contributions of philosophy to the subject is admirable in its orderliness, clearness, and sense of proportion; no one can read this noble chapter in the history of human thought without a deeper respect for the human mind and a new sense of the cumulative force of the arguments for immortality drawn from the meditations of the great thinkers. The authority of Paul, as the master of all those who have dealt with this great theme, is shown to rest on the securest foundations of personal faith, philosophic power and definiteness, and beauty of statement; while the treatment of the whole subject culminates in the clear and victorious identification of the teaching and life of Christ with the idea of immortality, not as a mere continuance of individual existence, but as the present and only life, the knowledge of and fellowship with the only true God.

Such a discussion as that contained in this volume demands a style of sustained power and of unusual compass, and it is very high praise to say that, with occasional and incidental lapses into commonplace phrase or expression, Dr. Gordon has held his subject to a very high plane, and has continually imparted to it that power of touching the imagination, without whose co-operation the reason is shorn of half its force in such an endeavor. The breadth of treatment which characterizes the book as a whole is supplemented by a style at all times capacious and at some points genuinely rich and beautiful. Summing up the ideas of life held by the Hebrew prophets, Dr. Gordon introduces this striking illustration:

As one standing among the Scotch hills in the early autumn, at sundown, and when the heather is in full bloom, perceives first the glory of the whole as it fashions itself into one seamless and superb robe, flung like royal purple round the shoulders of the kingly elevation, then observes the rich clusters and groups of beauty in the separate bushes, and, last of all, notices the single flower, the individual blossom, and its delicate and exquisite tint and tone, so the Hebrew prophets regarded life. The general outline was the first to impress them, the gathered greatness and collective dignity of men, the multitudes of people as they melted into one mass of royal possibility, with the beauty of the Lord their God resting upon them; then came the recognition of the smaller groups and wholes, the sense of the loveliness and lofty import of home; and finally the prophet's eyes fell upon the individual heart and discerned its wonderful structure, its sacred office, its priceless worth. The moral government of God, first discovered as concerned with the nation, is next beheld as extending to the family, and lastly is seen searching the heart of the individual human being, and clothing his life with a dignity altogether unspeakable.

The intellectual and literary quality of Dr. Gordon's book clearly predict other contributions to religious thought at a time when there is great need of thinkers deep enough

<sup>1</sup>The Witness to Immortality in Literature, Philosophy, and Life. By George A. Gordon. Houghton, Mifflin & Co., Boston. \$1.50.

and courageous enough to give the new knowledge of the time not only coherence and order, but spiritual reality and significance. There is in the book another and perhaps a still finer quality: the power to console, to invigorate, and to inspire.



### The One-Volume Longfellow<sup>1</sup>

The Cambridge Edition of the Complete Poetical Works of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow is in every respect a model of a low-priced but tasteful and substantial book. It contains, in the first place, the complete works of a standard writer, whose position and influence require no comment in this place and at this time, but a knowledge of whose verse is a part of the education of every American, and the memory of whose life and character belongs to the best heritage bequeathed by the past to the present. It presents that work, in the second place, entire, so that between the covers of a single volume is to be found the whole contribution of Longfellow to American poetry. It furnishes the reader, in the third place, with all the information necessary to a complete understanding of Longfellow's work in the form of condensed biographical and other notes, with a biographical sketch by the editor, Mr. Horace E. Scudder. Its workmanship, in the fourth place, is almost beyond criticism, for, although the paper used is necessarily light in weight, it is so opaque and so excellent in quality that it secures all the advantages to the eye of heavier paper; the type is large and clear, the binding substantial and agreeable to the hand, for the book opens perfectly, and the cover is tasteful in color and design. The Riverside Edition of Longfellow was published nine years ago in eleven volumes, six being devoted to verse, three to the translation of Dante, and two to prose. The Cambridge Edition is based on the Riverside, and contains the entire text published in the six volumes of verse, and includes the "whole, therefore, of Longfellow's original work in poetry. A book so thoroughly edited, arranged, and printed, at so low a price, is an event in the history of publishing in this country worthy of special attention, and is a most practical effort in the direction of the popularization of the best literature.



Readers of The Outlook have not forgotten Mr. William Root Bliss's occasional contributions to its columns—contributions which have been characterized by the interest that springs from closeness of observation and freshness of touch. Mr. Bliss has collected thirteen of his sketches in an attractive volume, which bears the imprint of Messrs. Houghton, Mifflin & Co., Boston, and which is appropriately entitled *The Old Colony Town, and Other Sketches*. The old colony town is, of course, Plymouth, much written about but always interesting, and to the history of which, in the way of comment and report of old times and old men, Mr. Bliss has added a very entertaining chapter. Buzzard's Bay is not far from Plymouth, and its picturesque outlooks and historic associations find in Mr. Bliss a sympathetic and affectionate observer and reporter. "Life on Matinicus Rock" takes the reader further away from Plymouth, but does not take him out of the boundaries of New England; for the rock stands in the Atlantic, thirty miles from the entrance to the Penobscot River, and is given over to the three families who take care of the sea-lights, and to an innumerable throng of sea-birds. Mr. Bliss's love of the sea is evidenced in many ways, but it is not greater than his affection for old-time New England characterizations and New England humor. The other chapters in this volume furnish the reader with a kind of background against which the New England studies are more sharply outlined, for among them we find the account of "Seven Days in a Jinrikisha," which first appeared in the columns of The Outlook. Mr. Bliss's book is not a contribution to the history of the country, and does not pretend to be, but it is a very delightful and entertaining report of the observations and impressions of a man of fresh intelligence and of wide human interests.

*The Sunday-School Teacher's Edition of the Holy Bible* (Thomas Nelson & Sons, New York) is, on the whole, one of the most complete and useful editions of the Bible for the Sunday-

school teacher and scholar. In the ideal church there will be a Sunday-school library, and on some week evening or some hour of Sunday, teachers and scholars will meet in this library to do some real, honest study of the Bible. But there are not many such churches—if, indeed, one anywhere exists. The library it is easy to provide; but the enthusiasm which will bring teachers and scholars together to really study the lesson is difficult to arouse; and so long as that is the case, "helps," such as are furnished by the Sunday-school magazines, the various volumes of Notes on the International Lessons, and such volumes as this, will be indispensable as substitutes for libraries. About one-third of this Bible is given to "helps." We doubt the practical value of the seventy-four pages of plates which give illustrations of ancient manuscripts, and of pictures from ancient monuments and the like. The brief general introduction to the Bible is, on the whole, very good, though the edition has not availed itself of the latest and best results of modern criticism. In the main, it insists upon the traditional views respecting the authorship and dates of the Old Testament books. There is a good deal of what might be called Bible dictionary matter in the volume, a variety of valuable indexes, a substantially complete concordance, and a very good index atlas. The paper is so thin that the volume is not bulky, while the type is large enough to be clear and easily read.

"Greek Lines and Their Influence on Modern Architecture," "The Growth of Conscience in Modern Decorative Art," "The Influence of the Personal Element upon Historical Architecture," "The Royal Château of Blois," "The Present State of Architecture," and "Poetry and Architecture," are six essays by Mr. Henry Van Brunt, the well-known architect, now bound together in one volume, under the general title of *Greek Lines*. Of these chapters, the most interesting are the first and fifth. The few illustrations are hardly worthy of the text, which, in matter and manner, leaves little to be desired, save that we wish there were more of it. Especially and entertainingly instructive is the explanation of the monumental stiffening of the lotus in Egyptian temples, a subject already more sumptuously treated by Mr. Goodyear. Next comes the development in Doric architecture of the entasis and echinus and abacus, and in Ionic of the anthemion and volutes. The characteristic of art in Greece was freedom, but at Rome it became both academic and enslaved. This bondage, with the subsequent Romanesque, Gothic, and Renaissance periods (all included under the general head Roman), has been more satisfactorily described by others. Mr. Van Brunt is, however, an essayist pure and simple, not a historian. As to the present revival, he attributes its beginning to the labors of that Luther of architecture, the great Berliner, Schinkel. The underlying spirit of this valuable volume is never material, but wholly spiritual; and to its author, true architecture means Destiny, Love, Life, just as it is Egyptian, Greek, Roman. (Houghton, Mifflin & Co., Boston.)

*Liquor Legislation in the United States and Canada*. By E. L. Fanshawe. (Cassell & Co., New York.) This is the only authoritative volume we have ever seen upon the temperance legislation of the various American commonwealths. The author, a London barrister, conducted his investigation at the request of an English Member of Parliament whose one desideratum was reliable information. He went in turn to each of the States whose legislation he describes—and these include nearly all—and obtained all the obtainable, including all the unofficial, information that a truth-loving man could collect. It would be difficult to tell what his prejudices were, his descriptions are so colorless. The resultant of the evidence submitted is that prohibition prohibits wherever the sentiment of the local public favors it; that local option is generally successful, though not universally so; and that high license has been highly successful as a revenue measure, but not certainly so as a measure to lessen drinking and drunkenness. The descriptions of the legislation in various States are often full of suggestions of features which might with advantage be incorporated in the excise law of other States.

Messrs. G. P. Putnam's Sons, of New York, have published a little volume which ought to be widely read in these days when social and industrial questions are so generally discussed. Among the earliest of the writings which disturbed the old ideas with regard to the organization of society was Rousseau's *Social Contract*; or, *The Principle of Political Rights*, a volume which takes its place, in point of time, between Rousseau's two other notable books, the "Nouvelle Heloise" and "Emile." The thesis which the great French writer expounded is no longer held, at least in the form in which he set it forth, but the book remains one of those documents of human history which no student can leave unread. In this edition, Rousseau's work is translated by Rose M. Harrington, and is furnished with a long introduction

<sup>1</sup> *The Complete Poetical Works of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow*. Houghton, Mifflin & Co., Boston. \$2.