LONGFELLOW

MEMORIAL ADDRESS,

BEFORE THE

ALUMNI OF BOWDOIN COLLEGE,

JULY 12, 1882.

BY REV. DANIEL R. GOODWIN, D. D., LL. D.

LIBRARY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA.

PORTLAND:
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BOWDOIN COLLEGE, August 1, 1882.

DANIEL R. GOODWIN, D. D., LL. D.

My Dear Sir:—The Trustees and Overseers of Bowdoin College, at their last session, desired me to express to you their grateful recognition of your kindness in giving the memorial address on Longfellow, and their high appreciation of the manner in which you portrayed his character and genius.

Desiring to preserve so valuable a memorial of so beloved a graduate and Professor of the College, they respectfully request a copy of the address for publication.

With highest esteem, your friend and servant,

JOSHUA L. CHAMBERLAIN.

PRINCETON, MASS., August 3, 1882.

MY DEAR PRESIDENT:

I very cheerfully comply with the request of the Trustees and Overseers of Bowdoin College, which you have so kindly communicated. I am willing that the address should be published, not because it will do anything whatever towards perpetuating the memory of Longfellow—in that respect just the converse is true—but because it may tend to perpetuate the memory of his connection with Bowdoin College.

With sentiments of the highest regard,

Very sincerely yours,

D. R. GOODWIN.

Gen. JOSHUA L. CHAMBERLAIN, LL. D., ETC.,

President of Bowdoin College.

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HENRY W. LONGFELLOW.

A MEMORIAL ADDRESS.

BOWDOIN COLLEGE,

JULY 12, 1882.

Seven years ago, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, in the name of his semi-centennial class, and with his own gentle voice, addressed to his Alma Mater his immortal *Morituri Salutamus*—his beautiful Swan Song; whose idea was an inspiration and whose words a benediction. Now, his voice is changed to an echo, and his beloved presence to a sacred memory; and we come, in the name of his Alma Mater, to utter to him our feeble *vale, vale, magister, poeta noster, vale.* But our *Χαῖρε* changes to *Χαίρωμεν*, our *vale* becomes an *exultemus*, while we speak. At this hour it is pride and exultation that are uppermost in our hearts;—the sadness and the sorrow are suppressed. We triumph more than we weep.

When the Spartan mother received the lifeless body of her son brought home upon his shield, and heard the story of his deeds of valor and of duty for the defence and the glory of his native city, and every tongue around her was loud in his praise, the exulting pride of the mother's as well as of the patriot's heart must have quite overwhelmed her maternal grief. For what higher end could she have borne her son?

Our beautiful city of Portland has much to be proud of. What city ever had more? Besides giving to the world, through Bowdoin College, her Henry Boynton Smith, foremost among American scholars and thinkers, she has also given, and also through Bowdoin College, her Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, the noblest, the sweetest, the purest, the most beloved of modern poets. And now, as he passes away amidst the loving admiration of all the world, she may be justly proud, while all her spreading elms wave to him their fond adieus. Seven cities of Greece are said to have contended for the honor of being the birthplace of Homer. The greatest cities in America would be glad to have any show of evidence on their side in contending for Longfellow; but the day will never come when his birthplace shall be forgotten. Cambridge, the residence of his later years and the place of his death, makes haste to honor him with statues and tributes of affectionate remembrance. Portland is moved by no jealousy, but rather looks on, with added pleasure, while she says: "He is my son, and I rejoice in your recognition of his greatness."

The State of Maine is proud that Longfellow was a native of her soil, one whom she sent forth from her "rock-bound coast" to enrich, to teach and bless the world. America is proud that he was her own poet. The English tongue, and all who speak it, are proud to claim him as theirs. Humanity is proud to claim the man and the poet for herself. Bowdoin College is proud in the pride of all the rest; she rejoices in the honor of having given to the world one who is the glory of his city, the glory of his State, the glory of his country, the glory of all English-speaking peoples, the glory and the flower of human civilization. Her whispering pines breathe the notes of exultation; her simple academic halls grow grand with the pride of his great memory; her trustees and her overseers, her faculty and her students, her alumni and her friends, feel the consciousness of a new inspiration, a sense of added dignity, an in-breathing of cheerful energy, of hope and confidence and

bold endeavor, as they look at their own Longfellow, and remember his words:

"Lives of great men all remind us
We can make our lives sublime,
And, departing, leave behind us
Footprints on the sands of time —

"Footprints, that perhaps another,
Sailing o'er life's solemn main,
A forlorn and shipwrecked brother,
Seeing, shall take heart again."

It is fit and right that the first public exercise in this Hall, after its formal opening to-day, should be in commemoration of our great poet. This edifice is erected in memory of those who laid down their lives for their country in her hour of supreme peril. But, though they died in war, they died for peace; though they perished in strife, they perished for union and harmony and brotherhood; and in their blood have peace and union and fraternal concord been cemented anew. To peace and union, then, these walls are consecrated. May that peace and union never be disturbed while they stand; and may they stand while stand the granite hills from which they were quarried. Poetry makes all men kin; she utters the common voice, she throbs with the common heart of humanity. It is well, then, that this Memorial Hall, as an emblem of peace, should be associated not only with the name of our honored Professor Smyth, who gave for its foundation his indefatigable efforts and his very life, but now also with the name of our beloved poet, of whom it is emphatically true that he wrote and lived and died—to use the immortal words of one whose greatness was of another order—"with malice towards none, with charity for all."

To follow the usual style of commemorative discourses, by entering into statistic details of the parentage and life of Mr. Longfellow, I feel would be altogether impertinent in this place and on this occasion. We are at his home, and in the midst of his own family. Let our discourse be of the man we loved

and of the poet we honor. In these aspects it will do us good to look at him and to study him, however familiar we may already have been with his face or with his verse.

Ofttimes we find that great men are bad men—the very pests and scourges of mankind—that genius is married with meanness or with malice and mischief, with vice or good-for-nothingness, an imperial intellect with moral weakness or debasement; in short, a marvelous development in one direction, with as extraordinary deficiencies in others.

> "Think how Bacon shined,
> The wisest, brightest, meanest of mankind."

Think of the beastly and murderous intoxication of Alexander, the cool and savage selfishness of Napoleon, the dissolute and dare-devil character of Byron, the domestic infelicities of Milton, the amiable but pitiable weaknesses of Burns. Not so with Longfellow. To a native genius of the highest order, he united a simplicity and purity and nobleness of character that are rarely equalled. The more we scrutinize, the more we admire; and we wonder that we had been so unaware of the treasure we possessed.

Longfellow was universally beloved. Multitudes loved him who had never seen his face, but who knew him only in his hearty and sympathetic, his tender and loving words. Those who knew him personally, had for him an affection which increased with the knowledge and the intimacy.

In his character and in his manners he was cordial, gentle, genial;—ever wishing and contriving to make others happy. He was always unaffected and unassuming. He showed no consciousness of his greatness; he claimed no homage; he posed for none; and yet, when offered, he did not reject it with the coy humility of self-consciousness, but, with a singular *naïveté* he seemed to sympathize with those who offered it, and would quietly receive it simply to give them pleasure. He submitted to the drudgery of giving his autographs by the hundred, in pure self-forgetfulness, and from a simple desire to confer

upon those who sought them a gratification which, as he used to say, cost him so little.

He was kind and helpful, ever ready to encourage and assist youthful aspirations and endeavors. He would throw himself entirely into the case of the ambitious and struggling youth, forgetful of all the time and pains it cost him; and, when there was good promise, would continue his kindly aid and interest for years.

Probably no person ever lived who more scrupulously and thoroughly fulfilled the precept: Speak evil of no man. He would never make or even assent to a disparaging remark. He was quick to detect what was, or even might be, good; and for the rest he was silent. Especially was this the case in reference to contemporary poets or even to those who would be poets. When some severe strictures were made in his presence on the rugged and unkept realism, the wild contortions and senseless jargon of Lanier's centennial ode, he quietly said: "I suppose he has his ideal, and, from his point of view, his ode may have its merits." His "Wapentake" to Tennyson shows how heartily he could recognize the genius and greatness of a brother poet, without the faintest undertone of envy or rivalry. He had no rivals. He knew not any. If Tennyson had reciprocated the generous courtesy, it would have been much to his honor. He may have done so, but it has not fallen under my notice. When Longfellow was asked which of Browning's poems he liked best, his reply is said to have been: "That which I understand best"; and perhaps this comes nearest to a sharp criticism of anything he ever uttered. For what was good and beautiful in every body and in every thing, his scent was keen; no bee had ever a sharper discernment or a nicer skill.

He was distinguished for a singular and unfailing love of children and of child-life. At three-score years and ten he entered into their thoughts, and hopes and sympathies, as if he were yet a child of twelve years old. In return, the children

mingled their love for him with their veneration. Since his death, thousands and myriads of children in the schools, from one end of the land to the other, have united in grateful acts of homage to his memory. No man ever called forth such an expression of affectionate regard and almost of worship from the hearts of so many children before. How beautiful the celebration of his birthday, by the Cambridge schools, from year to year! How touching the incident of their presentation, on his seventy-second birthday, of a chair made from the wood of the Village Blacksmith's chestnut tree! And how beautiful his verses of acknowledgment "from the Arm-Chair":

"And thus, dear children, have ye made for me
This day a jubilee,
And to my more than three-score years and ten
Brought back my youth again.
Only your love and your remembrance could
Give life to this dead wood,
And make these branches, leafless now so long,
Blossom again in song."

And then his little song to "Children," closing with:

"Ye are better than all the ballads
That were ever sung or said;
For ye are living poems,
And all the rest are dead."

And the exquisite home and child feeling of "The Hanging of the Crane";—a picture so minutely distinct and lifelike that we think it must have been drawn from and for his own fireside, until we reach the end, and find that it was not, or else was something more.

Longfellow's mind had a soft, pervading tinge, or rather, a prevailing undertone of sadness, a serene seriousness: which betrayed his real depth, for it was the result of a profound and poetic sentiment of the dark mystery, the insoluble enigma of human life and destiny. But, what was most striking, this was interpenetrated and illumined with a constant, buoyant cheerfulness, which worked itself out through all, rose above all,

"overflowed and passed over." His cheerfulness was a perennial fountain. Nothing in his works is more remarkable than the hopeful, cheery tone which runs through them. Under all circumstances and for all parties he has an encouraging, animating, inspiring word. His sadness and cheerfulness merged in a spirit of manly earnestness.

He was a person of deep as well as broad religious sensibilities and sympathies. He was ever ready to appreciate what was excellent and to overlook what was deficient in the religious systems or characters of others. To him the devout pomp of the Romanist's worship, and the simple, unadorned piety of the Quaker, were alike beautiful. He never wrote or said a word derogatory to the Christian religion in any of its forms. Dogmatic truth did not, it is true, stand before his mind as a finished statue;—this may sometimes become only a form of idolatry;—but neither did his religious ideas remain a permanent solution of mingled truth and falsehood, which is really no religion at all. In his mind the truth was crystallized, radiating the prismatic colors under the light of the poetic spirit, illumined sometimes, we may suppose, by a diviner spirit still. He reverently acknowledged Jesus in the simple words, "My Saviour." And one is not surprised to hear that persons in distant regions, who had never heard the sound of his voice, have traced their first deep religious impressions to passages in his poems. Those poems certainly have stimulated and strengthened the highest and purest emotions and purposes in multitudes of minds; and it is pleasant to think that they will continue so to do for ages to come. We might think it had been better that he should have made an open profession of religion in your church or mine, and perhaps it would have been; but if he had the spirit of the Master, and wrought mighty works for the good of man in His name, what matters it that he followed not with us? Let us remember him who said, "Forbid him not, for he that is not against us is for us." For my part, if a man lives and works in the spirit of

Jesus, reverencing his name, receiving his word, seeking to do the will of God and to promote the virtue and happiness of man, nothing shall hinder me from welcoming him as my Christian brother, and taking him to my heart.

Longfellow's greatness did not consist in his towering above all men in any one prominent or exaggerated trait or talent. His was a remarkably full, rounded, complete, well-balanced mind and character. The opening words of his sweet sonnet to Parker Cleaveland are even more appropriate to himself:

> "Among the many lives that I have known,
> None I remember more serene and sweet,
> More rounded in itself and more complete,
> Than his."

His greatness was like that of our Washington, with whom his Cambridge residence associates his name. To some, this may seem overstrained panegyric. But I do not so intend or regard it. I say it because it forces itself upon me as simply and strikingly true What Washington was in his sphere, such was Longfellow in his. What Washington was as a general, a statesman and a man, Longfellow was as a man, a writer and a poet; equal to his work, equal with himself, a leader in all, serene, solid, symmetrical, *teres atque rotundus*, good in his greatness, and great in his goodness. And this is the greatest kind of greatness. Proud may America be to produce more of the same type—men that are men.

In 1829, Mr. Longfellow returned from his first visit to Europe, and entered upon his duties as Professor of Modern Languages in Bowdoin College. My class was the first that received his whole course of instruction, beginning the French with him in their Sophomore year, and completing the course with the German in the Junior year; several of us adding the Spanish and Italian as voluntary studies, for which he kindly gave us the extra hours of instruction. He created an interest —a *furore*—for the modern languages, which has here never

since been equalled. He was a model teacher; with a special fitness, both natural and acquired, for this department. To a musical voice and singularly facile organs, to a refined taste, a ready command of the best English, and a thorough acquaintance with the languages and literature he taught—he added an affable and winning manner, a warmth of enthusiasm, a magnetic power, a ready sympathy and an inexhaustible patience, which made his lecture-room and the studies of his department a joy and pleasure at the time, and ever afterwards a happy memory. All his pupils loved him through life, and they will always remember him with strong affection. None of us who have succeeded to his chair has succeeded to his success. This department of "the Modern Languages," of which he was the first Professor, was, I believe, the first example of such a department in the regular course of any of our American colleges. Harvard soon began to look at Bowdoin with envy. She coveted, and she purloined our jewel. But admirable Professor as Longfellow was, the teaching of college classes was not his mission in the world. His was a wider sphere, a larger audience. He was to be the teacher of mankind. His instruction at Harvard University was soon restricted to courses of lectures on the literature of the modern languages, and then, in 1854, was relinquished altogether; that he might give himself freely and fully to his proper office and mission as a poet.

We rightly regard Longfellow as *the poet;* but in so doing, we are liable to forget that he was also one of our best prose writers;—next, perhaps, to Irving and Hawthorne. Hyperion was his longest prose work; and, passing by all the rest, I shall take from this three brief passages, simply to let in further light on some traits of his character.

"The talent of success," says he, "is nothing more than doing what you can do well; and doing well whatever you do." He knew the secret, and he applied it successfully. So did our Parker Cleaveland. By the same secret, how many might profit!

Again he writes: "I love that tranquillity of soul, in which we feel the blessing of existence, and which, in itself, is a prayer and a benediction."

And again: "Tell me, my soul, why art thou restless? * * * * Oh that thou didst look forward to the great hereafter with half the longing wherewith thou longest for an earthly future." Here, too, we are permitted to have glimpses of a beautiful inner life.

But Longfellow stood in his own light. His prose is eclipsed, not by another's prose, but by his own poetry.

As a poet we are now to contemplate him. And here we need a poet to guide us;—a poet's eye and a poet's tongue. But, though possessing neither, yet, as a layman, as one of the people, I shall boldly speak my mind, just as if I knew all about it; and leave the responsibility to those who have so inconsiderately put me in this position to-night.

The first, the most striking and pervading traits of Longfellow as a poet are, not grandeur or sublimity, or mighty force, or dazzling brilliancy, but beauty and gentleness. His thoughts breathe from the deepest soul of beauty and grace, and clothe themselves in the most fascinating forms and the most felicitous expressions. A beauty it is, not like that of Spenser, not an airy and an artificial beauty reflected from the vanishing past, or from the spectral abstractions of the brain, but a living, fresh, healthy, real beauty; stirring, filling, captivating our hearts. He never attempts to soar into the empyrean. He never grasps the thunderbolt. His gentle spirit could not assume the *rôle* of the stern reformer, the lash of the bitter satirist, or the majestic and awful voice of the prophet, threatening and denouncing sin. I do not regard this as a positive perfection, nor do I speak of it as a positive defect; it was a relative deficiency. For, while there are Scribes and Pharisees and hypocrisy in the world, while there are baseness and

meanness and lust and hate, while there are fraud, corruption and villainy in high places as well as in low, the reckless selfishness of tyranny, the oppression of the weak by the strong, the lash of the slaveholder and the cry of the slave, so long will it pertain to the prophetic vocation of the poet—and that in the full spirit of Christ himself—to visit them with the just judgment of stern rebuke and righteous indignation. To the Muses the Eumenides are as nearly related as the Graces. All this Longfellow himself recognized. He was not one of those modern sentimentalists who eschew all sternness and punishment, whose sympathies are always with the wrong-doer, who are severe only against severity, and condemn nothing but condemnation. He never eulogized or defended or embellished vice, iniquity or wrong. He simply found his greatest pleasure in converse with the beautiful and the good; and he sought to make them attractive to others. This he felt was what he could do well. This was his talent. This was his vocation. For Dante, no man had a higher regard and reverence than he; for Dante, with all his colossal grandeur and crushing might, and terrific imagery of future judgment. Yet in him he finds, and he rejoices in, the tenderness of heart that lies beneath it all. Thus he apostrophizes the great Tuscan:

> "Stern thoughts and awful from thy soul arise
> Like Farinata from his fiery tomb.
> Thy sacred song is like the trump of doom;—
> Yet in thy heart what human sympathies,
> What soft compassion glows, as in the skies
> The tender stars their clouded lamps relume!"
>
> * * * * * * *
>
> "Thy voice along the cloister whispers, 'Peace.'"

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Longfellow was the poet of beauty; yet, for him, the esthetic never effaced the ethical, never was substituted for it. For him *in* the right, the good, the true, resided the very soul of beauty. In symbolizing or in strengthening them, external nature has for him her highest poetic charm. Nor did his love of art, as with Goëthe, swallow up and annul, together with all moral

distinctions, all sentiments of patriotism, and all regard for the practical interests of mankind. The man was not lost in the poet. Charles Sumner was his bosom friend. To him he gave his full sympathy while he lived,

"And to his tender heart and brave
The tribute of this verse.

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

"Like Winkelried, he took
Into his manly breast
The sheaf of hostile spears, and broke
A path for the oppressed.

"Then from the fatal field
Upon a nation's heart,
Borne like a warrior on his shield!—
So should the brave depart."

So in his earlier lines addressed to Channing:

"A voice is ever at thy side
Speaking in tones of might,
Like the prophetic voice that cried
To John in Patmos, 'Write'!
Write! and tell out the bloody tale;
Record this dire eclipse,
This day of wrath, this endless wail,
This dread Apocalypse!"

And then, in his poems on Slavery:

"Paul and Silas in their prison,
Sang of Christ the Lord arisen,
And an earthquake's arm of might,
Broke their dungeon gates at night.

"But, alas! what holy angel
Brings the Slave this glad evangel?
And what earthquake's arm of might
Breaks his dungeon gates at night?"

And again:

"These are the woes of slaves;
They glare from the abyss;
They cry from unknown graves
'We are the witnesses.'"

And "The Warning":

"There is a poor blind Samson in this land,
Shorn of his strength and bound in bonds of steel,
Who may, in some grim revel, raise his hand,
And shake the pillars of this commonweal,
Till the vast temple of our liberties
A shapeless mass of wreck and rubbish lies."

How timely the warning! How narrow our escape! And through what a terrible passage!

When I read again his poems on slavery, I am inclined to admit that even he could speak with plainness if not with severity. But this to him was strange work, and in his later years was quite disused.

Nor did his Muse forget those to whose memory these walls are raised. How touching, how thrilling, his lines on one "Killed at the Ford"!

"He is dead, the beautiful youth,
The heart of honor, the tongue of truth,
He, the life and the light of us all,
Whose voice was blithe as a bugle-call.
* * * * * * *
Two white roses upon his cheeks,
And one just over his heart blood-red!

"And I saw in a vision, how far and fleet
That fatal bullet went speeding forth,
Till it reached a town in the distant North,
Till it reached a house in a sunny street,
Till it reached a heart that ceased to beat
Without a murmur, without a cry;
And a bell was tolled in that far off town
For one who had passed from cross to crown,
And the neighbors wondered that she should die."

Thus has the poet embalmed forever the deepest sadness of those sad days. These walls shall crumble, but those words shall remain.

Longfellow is to be compared with Petrarch or Tasso rather than with Dante, though he preferred Dante before either; with Schiller rather than with Goëthe, though he combined in himself what is best in both; with Scott or Wordsworth, or Southey or Burns, rather than with Milton or Shakespeare or Byron. And yet, if to form our idea of Milton, we include with the Paradise Lost his minor poems, which have far more of the spirit of poetry than his greater work, we shall find between him and Longfellow more points of resemblance than we should have imagined. Shakespeare is, of course, incomparable. Byron, too, is unique; and, taking him all in all, we may well be glad of it.

Next, after its beauty, gentleness and delicacy of sentiment, the most striking characteristic of Longfellow's poetry is its unspotted purity. We need no expurgated edition of his works. He wrote no Don Juan. He left not a line which he, or any good man, could wish to blot. In his works there is nothing to offend the ear or corrupt the heart. Yet this purity is not prudery; it is simple, unconscious, natural loveliness, that charms and satisfies the mind. It is felt to be, not a mere negative attribute, but a positive perfection. It is a sweet, fresh, healthy atmosphere. One rises from reading Longfellow a happier and a better man. This moral purity has much to do also with that infallible purity of taste which is a pervading trait of all he wrote. Probably no poet has ever written so many lines on such a variety of themes and in so many measures and forms, and made them at once so universally attractive and yet so absolutely stainless and faultless.

Another characteristic of Longfellow's poetry is its popularity. He is emphatically the poet of the people. And this is one of the principal marks of his real greatness. It is what every great poet must be. Homer was the poet of the people. Shakespeare was the poet of the people. And so were Dante and Tasso; so were Burns and Scott. It is not meant that the

poet should become vulgar, or dole out doggerel—not that he should degrade himself to the lowest level, but that he should so reach all as to raise all to a higher level, or even, if possible, to his own plane. No poet has ever shown, so well as Longfellow, how the highest ideals, the noblest sentiments, and the purest taste can be made to reach and stir the popular heart. The true poet is not the minister of a class, or the mouthpiece of a school; no mystagogue or priest of "high art"; he is the *vates*, the prophet, of humanity; who is to interpret and reveal to men the voice of nature and the secrets of their own souls. He deals not with the special idiosyncrasies of some set or clique, but with what belongs to man as man, what all men have in common. The more universal and profound are his sympathies, and the more universally and thoroughly he makes himself understood, the more completely does he fulfil his office. Neither poetry nor language in general, was intended to hide ideas or to wrap them up, like mummies, in infinite convolutions of high art. This is why such poetry as Browning's—or much of it—must be ephemeral. It requires as deep study to unroll and unravel it as to learn a new language or to master a new system of metaphysics. It may be superb and superexcellent to a few artistic connoisseurs; but, being unintelligible to men in general, it will just as certainly go into speedy oblivion, or become a matter of interest only to rare antiquarian research, as the subtle concetti and hieroglyphic oddities of a school of poetry of the seventeenth century, whose painstaking productions,—though once supposed to be the beau-ideal of poetic excellence,—nobody now cares to take the trouble to decipher. Schools and systems pass away, but the human mind and heart remain the same. One of the first duties of the poet, as of every man who presumes to speak to his fellow man, is to make himself intelligible;—to make himself intelligible to the greatest possible number which his subject matter will admit. And in proportion as he brings the highest and noblest ideas, in all their beauty and attractiveness, into contact with more and

more human minds, the more fully does he accomplish his proper end, the education and elevation of mankind. The Protestant doctrine of public prayer is eminently true of poetry; that it should be expressed in "language understanded of the people."

If Longfellow did not belong to the school of "high art," neither did he belong to the "realistic" school. He had a love of the beautiful too ardent and absorbing, a sensibility too keen and delicate and refined, a soul too large and deep, an imagination too fastidious, and an intellectual insight too penetrating, to allow him to be satisfied with the rudeness and triviality, not to say the grossness and filth, of the realistic school of poetry. The bare reproduction, with scrupulous minuteness, of naked, ordinary nature, in words and rhyme, may do for Dutch or Chinese art, but it is not poetry. No goddess smiles upon it. Every Muse averts her face. At best, it is only artificiality and outside. Mere facts and forms, however real, have no value in themselves. Their value lies in their generic or representative character, in the ideas they express, in the meaning they convey; and if the realist replies that he sets the facts and forms truthfully before us, and lets them speak for themselves, I answer, to what purpose, then, his work? Nature and experience are continually presenting naked, ordinary facts and forms before all men, and leaving them to speak for themselves; and what does he add to this? Does he reply that art consists in the *imitation* of nature? But mere imitation is the part of a monkey, not of a poet. Does he finally appeal to the sculptor in his defence? Read Winckelmann on the Apollo di Belvedere. It is not all facts and forms that are naturally poetic. To the mass of men, the most of them are dumb, they have no speech, they convey no meaning. If the realist has made a good selection, he has so far performed the office of the poet; for a good selection means that he presents, not merely the trivial and the ordinary at hazard, but chooses that which will

of itself reveal its generic idea, and convey its meaning and its lesson to the common mind. But the true poet finds the idea, the meaning, the lesson, everywhere. He gives to all nature and all history a thousand tongues. He opens the eyes of the blind, and gives a new vision to all observers.

> "He can behold
> Things manifold
> That have not been wholly told,
> Have not been wholly sung or said.
> For his thought that never stops
> Follows the water drops
> Down to the graves of the dead."

Thus our poet muses on the falling of the "Rain in Summer." He has given us his own philosophy of art:

> "Art is the child of Nature; yes,
> Her darling child, in whom we trace
> The features of the mother's face,
> Her aspect and her attitude,
> All her majestic loveliness
> Chastened and softened and subdued
> Into a more attractive grace,
> *And with a human sense imbued.*
> He is the greatest artist, then,
> Whether of pencil or of pen,
> Who follows nature."

Longfellow is real, therefore, as well as ideal. His ideal is not a mere invention of the fancy, a mere phrenzy or extravaganza, not merely *his* ideal, but the hidden ideal of all minds, which needs but his magic touch to reveal it to them all. He sees the ideal *in* the real, and elevates the common instead of sticking in it. He bodies forth, in form and beauty, what was secret or shadowy and shapeless. He prophesies upon the dry bones, and they stand up a living army. He teaches mankind not as a metaphysician or a moralist, but as a prophet and a seer. He teaches *the people*, and by the people he is loved.

Here we may be told that working for an end is inconsistent with the spontaneousness of genius,—that art, in its very nature,

is not teleological. But a true work of art is never a freak, a random stroke, an effect of mere aimless and lawless accident. It is instinct with meaning and replete with lofty harmonies; it is aimed at and accomplishes a high purpose. Instinctive genius may not have a logical consciousness of that purpose, it never seeks to compass it with a plodding and painstaking contrivance; but the meaning and the purpose are there, and they constitute the very kernel of the artistic or poetic inspiration; while the easy unconsciousness of the achievement is the measure of its inherent power. In creative genius, the purpose and the effect *coincide;* yet in their logical correlation they both remain distinguishable. Longfellow's poetry exhibits the easy flow of genial spontaneity, and yet always moves in harmony with the noblest and purest ends. The simple truth of the case is;—a true work of genius is always in conformity with the highest laws, and tends to the accomplishment of the highest ends, whether its author is conscious of obeying those laws, and of aiming at those ends or not. *It is as if he were.*

Longfellow is our beautiful, gentle, pure, popular, beloved poet; and his poetry, expressed as it is in the sweetest, simplest and noblest English, will be enshrined in the hearts of the people as long as the English tongue shall last. When all the metaphysical involutions and unintelligibilities of high art, all the embellished but disgusting immoralities of a prurient Muse, and all the empty insipidities of realistic commonplace shall have passed into oblivion, Longfellow's poetry will remain dear to men's hearts as household words, cherished and consecrated with ever-increasing affection. Shakespeare's racy English never grows obsolete. Antiquity only makes it more homely and familiar. Mannerisms, poetical patois, artificial dialects and enigmatical subtleties of thought and speech, may have an ephemeral life, but clear and noble thought, in pure and simple speech, will be immortal.

Longfellow has sometimes been assigned to the school of

Wordsworth. If the love of nature and of natural simplicity is peculiar to the school of Wordsworth, then to that he belonged. But in truth he belonged to no school but his own. Of no English poet could Longfellow say, as Dante of his dear master, Virgil: "It is he

da cui io tolsi
Lo bello stile che m' ha fatto honore."

Though he wrote much less than Wordsworth, and poems of less ambitious proportions, it is not risking much to say that, a hundred years hence, more of Longfellow's poems will survive in men's hearts and memories than of all that Wordsworth ever wrote. Wordsworth's long-drawn, poetical diffusions, with all their rich veins of poetic sentiment and their exquisite pensive beauties, grow tiresome; they pall upon the ear and lose their hold upon the mind. But Longfellow's thoughts—never without pith and point—have a perennial freshness and a deathless fragrance.

To compare him with other American poets, might seem invidious; but it is hardly so; for, by general consent, he is the first and greatest of them all. Certainly no other American poet has been so many-sided, has touched so many of the chords of the human heart, or touched them so delicately and so profoundly. Others may have excelled him in the humorous or the ludicrous, in the facetious, the comic or the satirical, in epic stateliness or the philosophic apothegm, or some other special form of poetic expression; but none has reached him in the rich fulness, the wide compass, the refined sentiment, the tender pathos, the warm and genial fancy, the varied and honied sweetness of his Muse.

His poetic diction is marvellous in its aptness and its completeness, in the beauty of its associations and the delicacy of its taste. No less marvellous is his rhythm, always smooth, easy and free; as simple and unstudied as the speech of childhood, and as natural as the flow of the babbling brook. Hence

the unrivalled and unequalled success of his translations. They are so free and fresh, they could not be suspected of being translations at all; and yet they are perfect transcripts and transfusions of the sense and spirit, the style, movement and rhythm of the originals. But perhaps the most striking illustration of his wonderful readiness and aptness of poetic diction, and his perfect ease of metrical arrangement, is found in his "Divine Tragedy." In reading it, we seem to be reading whole chapters straight from our English translation of the New Testament,—so deftly are the slight changes made in the words or in their arrangement. And yet the whole is brought into flowing metrical form; which shows, indeed, not only Longfellow's admirable talent of versification, but the wonderful harmony of rhythm and cadence which characterizes our received version of the Scriptures, making it at least equal to what the French substitute for our blank verse. With the new Revision, he could not have done the same.

But I must here venture one criticism upon the so-called "Christus," of which the "Divine Tragedy" is the opening part. It may have been well to trace, in "The Golden Legend" and "The New England Tragedies," the course of Christianity through its corruptions and perversions, down to the anti-climax in the "Salem Witchcraft." But having reached this ultimate outgrowth of inverted development, from such a splendid opening with the real living, dying *and risen* Christ,—to have nothing better for a "*finale*" than the faint and feeble, though exquisitely beautiful and poetic reflections, and the general but desponding hopes and wishes, of a legendary John, a mythical shadow, wandering on wearily through the ages, with no vision and no assurance of aught better to come,—seems to me a sad and insignificant, not to say a lame and impotent conclusion. The real Christ at the beginning, and the legendary John at the end! Is this the ideal "Christus"? Is this the completion of

the kingdom of God upon earth? After the sad picture of perversion, corruption, and decline, we needed the blast of a trumpet, proclaiming the coming triumph and glory. We needed some one, in the spirit and power of Elias, or of John the Baptist risen from the dead, to announce again the kingdom of God at hand. We needed, to unfold to us the vision of the future, some seer with the faith of Abraham, who staggered not at the promise of God, or of Isaiah, to whom was revealed the glory of Messiah's coming reign. We needed the apocalyptic and not the mythical John, to look beyond all the corruptions and conflicts and trials through which Christianity must pass, and tell us of the New Jerusalem coming down from God out of Heaven, adorned as a bride for her husband. But, peradventure, the poet had a high idea, which I have not fully caught or fitly weighed. He may have regarded Christianity as an ideal, a doctrine, a spirit, introduced into the world in the life and teaching of Christ, and then left to its fortunes to propagate itself sporadically, from age to age, in a few meek, gentle, patient, loving, Christlike souls, who should make a feeble struggle against prevailing corruption, oppression and violence; as we see specimens in the "Golden Legend" and in the "New England Tragedies." He may have regarded Christianity no longer as "the little leaven" and "the grain of mustard seed," but—without a church, without organic growth or development, or maturity, or "the glory that should follow"—as purely a subjective spirit, having no objective historical embodiment; and thus bequeathing, in a last echo, the beautiful and affectionate but meekly desponding words of the loving and legendary John. This is, indeed, one aspect of Christianity, but surely it is not its whole concrete idea, not the "Christus," the whole Christ of history. With all this, I must still think, therefore, that a more fitting close would have been found in the real John of the Apocalypse, than in the spectral apparition of the legend.

But let that pass; and listen to the ringing of his "Christmas Bells," as they echo from the days of our civil war:

"I heard the bells on Christmas day
Their old familiar carols play,
And wild and sweet
The words repeat
Of peace on earth, good will to men.

* * * * *

"Then from each black accursed mouth
The cannon thundered in the South,
And with the sound
The carols drowned
Of peace on earth, good will to men.

"And in despair I bowed my head;
'There is no peace on earth,' I said;
'For hate is strong,
And mocks the song
Of peace on earth, good will to men!'

"Then pealed the bells more loud and deep:
'God is not dead; nor doth he sleep!
The wrong shall fail,
The right prevail,
With peace on earth, good will to men!'"

Yes, verily; and why should not such have been the close of his "Christus"?

Longfellow has a singular mastery of poetic forms. He does not, like Scott, sing on and on in rhymed iambic eights, till the ear is cloyed with the sweet monotony. He tries all measures and combinations, and seems equally at home and at his ease in all. He even had the boldness to adventure the naturalization in English of the peculiar metres of the classic Muse; and with a success surpassing all expectation. His sweet Evangeline in hexameters, and his wild and weird Hiawatha in unrhymed trochaic eights,—which John Bright has pronounced the greatest poem of America—will be read with pleasure while the language lasts.

The Evangeline has a tone of bewitching sadness, which

culminates—as is often Longfellow's manner—in a pathetic and almost tragic conclusion:

"All was ended now, the hope and the fear and the sorrow,
All the aching of heart, the restless, unsatisfied longing,
All the dull, deep pain, and constant anguish of patience!
And, as she pressed once more the lifeless head to her bosom,
Meekly she bowed her own and murmured, 'Father, I thank thee'!

"Still stands the forest primeval; but far away from its shadow,
Side by side, in their nameless graves, the lovers are sleeping.
Under the humble walls of the little Catholic churchyard,
In the heart of the city, they lie, unknown and unnoticed.
Daily the tides of life go ebbing and flowing beside them,
Thousands of throbbing hearts, where theirs are at rest forever,
Thousands of aching brains, where theirs no longer are busy,
Thousands of toiling hands, where theirs have ceased from their labors,
Thousands of weary feet, where theirs have completed their journey!
Still stands the forest primeval."

Similarly sad is the ending of Hiawatha. But there are many gleams of bright sunshine in the story. He appeals to us:

"Listen to this Indian legend
To this song of Hiawatha,
Ye whose hearts are fresh and simple,
Who have faith in God and nature,
Who believe, that in all ages
Every human heart is human,
That in even savage bosoms
There are longings, yearnings, strivings
For the good they comprehend not,
That the feeble hands and helpless,
Groping blindly in the darkness,
Touch God's right hand in that darkness,
And are lifted up and strengthened;—
Listen to this simple story,
To this song of Hiawatha."

Then he tells

"Of a half-effaced inscription,
Written with little skill of song-craft,
Homely phrases, but each letter

Full of hope, and yet of heart-break,
Full of all the tender pathos
Of the Here and the Hereafter;—
Stay and read this rude inscription,
Read this song of Hiawatha."

Of friends, he says:

"Straight between them ran the pathway,
Never grew the grass upon it.
Spoke with naked hearts together,
Brave as man is, soft as woman."

Of a dearer relation he says:

"As unto the bow the cord is,
So unto the man is woman;
Though she bends him, she obeys him,
Though she draws him, yet she follows;—
Useless each without the other.
Like a fire upon the hearthstone
Is a neighbor's homely daughter;
Like the starlight or the moonlight
Is the handsomest of strangers.
Rule by love, O Hiawatha;
Rule by patience, Laughing Water."

Among his earlier effusions, "The Spirit of Poetry" contains a presage of the coming man:

"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 life and beauty
That dwell in nature; of the heavenly forms
We worship in our dreams."

The "Psalm of Life" and the "Excelsior" are probably the most familiar and popular of his little pieces; and, if he had written nothing else, they would have made him immortal.

With what a tone of cheerfulness he closes his "Village Blacksmith":

"Thus at the flaming forge of life
Our fortunes must be wrought;
Thus on its sounding anvil shaped
Each burning deed and thought."

And when he would playfully cast the horoscope of the merry child upon his mother's knee:

"And if a more auspicious fate
On thy advancing steps await,
Still let it ever be thy pride
To linger by the laborer's side,
With words of sympathy or song
To cheer the dreary march along."

Here is another of his characteristic notes of encouragement:

"No endeavor is in vain;
Its reward is in the doing,
And the rapture of pursuing
Is the prize the vanquished gain."

You remember the hopefulness and cheerfulness of his "Morituri Salutamus."

Once, in a Sonnet, a "Shadow" crossed his mind:

"I said unto myself, if I were dead,
What would befall these children?"

Then, as the shadow passed away:

"The world belongs to those who come the last,
They will find hope and strength, as we have done."

Take these beautiful stray lines from "The Masque of Pandora:"

"Still the same,
Nameless or named, will be thy loveliness."
"Thy whole presence seems
A soft desire, a breathing thought of love."
"O what a tell-tale face thou hast,"
"Thy very weakness
Hath brought thee nearer to me, and henceforth
My love shall have a sense of pity in it,
Making it less a worship than before."
"Let me die;
What else remains for me?
Youth, hope and love;
To build a new life on a ruined life,
To make the future fairer than the past,
And make the past appear a troubled dream.

Even now, in passing through the garden walks,
Upon the ground I saw a fallen nest
Ruined and full of rain; and over me
Beheld the uncomplaining birds already
Busy in building a new habitation."

Thus the unfailing cheerfulness breaks through again.

"The Builders," in his pieces "By the Fireside," is almost as characteristic as his "Psalm of Life":

"All are architects of fate,
Working in these walls of time;
Some with massive deeds and great,
Some with ornaments of rhyme.

"In the elder days of art,
Builders wrought with greatest care
Each minute and unseen part;
For the Gods see everywhere.

"Let us do our work as well,
Both the unseen and the seen;
Make the house where Gods may dwell
Beautiful, entire and clean."

"The Bridge" and "The day is done," are exceedingly sweet and beautiful, but will bear no brief selection. But "The Arrow and the Song" may be taken entire:

"I shot an arrow into the air,
It fell to earth, I knew not where;
For so swiftly it flew, the sight
Could not follow it in its flight.
I breathed a song into the air,
It fell to earth, I knew not where;
For who has sight so keen and strong,
That it can follow the flight of song?
Long, long afterward, in an oak
I found the arrow still unbroke;
And the song, from beginning to end,
I found again in the heart of a friend."

How pretty his retort of the Weather-cock to the Maiden, when she says:

"Ah, that is the ship from over the sea,
That is bringing my lover back to me,
Bringing my lover so fond and true,
Who does not change with the wind, like you.

O pretty maiden, so fine and fair,
With your dreamy eyes and your golden hair,
When you and your lover meet to-day
You will thank me for looking some other way."

And how noble his musings on the epitaph over a nameless grave:

"A SOLDIER OF THE UNION MUSTERED OUT."

"Thou unknown hero, sleeping by the sea
In thy forgotten grave! With secret shame
I feel my pulses beat, my forehead burn,
When I remember thou hast given for me
All that thou hadst, thy life, thy very name,
And I can give thee nothing in return."

Longfellow has a special love for Burns; and how Burns would have loved Longfellow! I cannot refrain from reading a few verses from his lines to the sweet Scottish bard,—they are so hearty and true:

"Touched by his hand, the wayside weed
Becomes a flower; the lowliest reed
Beside the stream
Is clothed with beauty; gorse and grass
And heather, where his footsteps pass,
The brighter seem."

* * * * *

"And then to die so young, and leave
Unfinished what he might achieve!
Yet better sure
Is this, than wandering up and down
An old man, in a country town,
Infirm and poor."

"For now he haunts his native land
As an immortal youth; his hand
Guides every plough;
He sits beside each ingle-nook,
His voice is in each rushing brook,
Each rustling bough."

"His presence haunts this room to-night,
A form of mingled mist and light
From that far coast:
Welcome beneath this roof of mine!
Welcome! this vacant chair is thine,
Dear guest and ghost."

That portion or collection of Longfellow's poems which he entitles, "Tales of a Wayside Inn," is especially rich in varied and characteristic beauties, of which we have not plucked a single specimen;—but I forbear.

Longfellow was emphatically the poet of his native land. Though deeply imbued with the classic spirit, and revelling at his ease in all the treasures of English and European literature, not insensible to the poetic aspect of the middle ages, enjoying, with a refined taste and an artist's soul, the scenery and the art of the old world, with its mighty monuments and ancient historic memories and glorious ideals, its magnificent domes, its gorgeous palaces, its ivied towers and its crumbling castles;—his heart yet was in this new world, in its wild scenes, its forests and hills, its lakes and "rivers unknown to song," in its new associations and histories, in its fresh life and recent memories. Here he found the true heroic age,—the age of origins and foundations; here his poetic soul found the answering soul of poesy, and the materials for his verse; here he found a home for his Muse, and he made that home illustrious.

His "New England Tragedies" present characteristic, but sad and not very flattering pictures of early New England life. Yet, in reality, they are not so discreditable as one might at first suppose. He did not mean them so. He was perfectly aware that the spirit of excessive ecclesiasticism, of intolerance and superstition, which he portrayed, was not peculiar to New England. Witches were burned or drowned by the hundred and the thousand in other parts of Christendom. The contemporary law of England visited witchcraft with the penalty

of death. And so does the common and civil law to this day. In 1683, the very year after the arrival of William Penn in America, two persons were tried before the council in Philadelphia, for witchcraft. And in 1719 the assembly of Pennsylvania enacted that the English law of the first year of King James I—the same under which the Salem trials had been held so many years before—should be enforced in that colony. In Belgium, a witch is said to have been judicially drowned, so late as the year 1834. Why, then, does all the world stand aghast at the Salem witchcraft—the Salem witchcraft,—and hears of nothing else? The reason must be that of New England so much better things were and are expected than of the rest of the world, that a vice or a superstition, which elsewhere in Christendom would be passed by as a matter of course, becomes, when found on the fair face of New England, a staring blot of disfigurement.

In his Hiawatha he has distilled the essence of poetry from the life of the North American Indian; in his Evangeline he has disinterred it from among the French Catholics of the almost mythical Acadie; in his Miles Standish and his Priscilla —with her quaint hexametric,

* * "Why don't you speak for yourself, John?"—

he has detected it among the rugged New England Puritans; and in his Elizabeth and John Estaugh, he has extracted it from the quiet and demure Quakers of colonial times.

The epic pomp may be past; but poetry and poetic themes remain. We have not left Europe and the old World and the old civilization, with all its classic models and all its clustering historic associations, behind. We retain and we prize them all; but we have found, besides them, a new World, with a fresh, new life, and a new history, with new associations and bright beckoning hopes. Longfellow has shown us that the spirit of poesy resides here as well as there. He has revealed to us the riches of a new inheritance. He was, he is, our great *American* poet. He is our beloved and immortal—Longfellow.

We bid him a fond adieu to-night, in the warm-hearted words of an English bard:

> "*Nec turpem senectam*
> *Degere, nec cithara carentem.*"

> "'Not to be tuneless in old age!'
> Ah! Surely blest his pilgrimage,
> Who in his winter's snow,
> Still sings with note as sweet and clear
> As in the morning of the year
> When the first violets blow!

> "Blest! but more blest, whom summer's heat,
> Whom spring's impulsive stir and beat,
> Have taught no feverish lure;
> Whose Muse, benignant and serene,
> Still keeps his autumn chaplet green,
> Because his verse is pure!

> "Lie calm, O white and laureate head!
> Lie calm, O dead, that art not dead,
> Since from the voiceless grave,
> Thy song shall speak to old and young,
> While song yet speaks an English tongue,
> By Charles' or Thamis' wave!"

[*Austin Dobson.*

For the following genealogical data I am indebted to the kindness of Cyrus Woodman, Esq., of Cambridge, Mass.:

H. W. LONGFELLOW

was the son of Stephen Longfellow, an eminent lawyer, of Portland, graduate of Harvard and Trustee of Bowdoin College, born 1776, died 1849. He was chosen M. C. in 1822, and received the degree of LL.D. in 1828. He had a seat in the State Legislature, and had been a member of the Hartford Convention. He married Zilpha, daughter of Gen. Wadsworth, of Revolutionary fame; she was our Henry Wadsworth's mother. Stephen's father was Judge Stephen Longfellow, of Gorham, who married Patience Young, of York. He died in 1824, aged 74. His father was Stephen Longfellow, the "Schoolmaster," whose wife was Tabitha Bragdon, of York. He graduated at Harvard in 1742, died in 1790, and was buried at Portland, where he taught the Grammar School. He was Parish Clerk, Town Clerk, Clerk of the Judicial Courts, and Register of Probate The father of Stephen, the Schoolmaster, was also Stephen, who married Abigail, daughter of the Rev. Edward Tompson, of Marshfield, and sister of the Rev. Wm. Tompson, of Scarboro.* He was owner of the farm called "the High Field," in Byfield Parish, Newbury, Mass., and lived in a house which is still standing. His father, who lived on the same farm, was Wm. Longfellow, born 1651, in Hampshire, England, married in 1676 Anna Sewall, daughter of Henry Sewall and sister of Chief Justice Sewall. He enlisted as an ensign in the ill-fated expedition to Canada, and was drowned at Anticosti, in 1690. †

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* His daughter Anna was the wife of Joseph Gerrish, of Gerrish's Island, Kittery.

† His daughter Elizabeth was the wife of Benj. Woodman, of Byfield Parish, Newbury, Mass.

Recollections of Longfellow

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