HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW

THE SONG OF HIAWATHA

ILLUSTRATED &
ANNOTATED EDITION

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Henry W. Longfellow

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Introductory To Hiawatha

The Red Man in North America has alternately been the victim of the poet and the politician. The wrongs suffered through the emissaries of the State may be of a more vital character than those inflicted by the Muse, yet they cannot be more real; for it has been the custom of the poet to clothe the Red Man in a histrionic garb, and invest him with exaggerated action. In literature he has, therefore, on

the whole, had more than his due. The " Noble " overshadows the '' Poor Indian.'' Still there have been exceptions to the general rule, and thus a great character has occasionally been allowed to stand far below the true level. This, perhaps, has been the case with Hiawatha, the Sage of the Iroquois.

In saying this, however, I have no desire to reflect upon the course adopted by the author of the beautiful poem of " Hiawatha." His representations are, in the main, founded on Indian traditions. He has drawn the character of Hiawatha as the Red Men themselves have often represented it. Besides, he had a perfect right to choose his own point of observation. The liberty that the circumstances of the case afford has not been abused. He has simply selected those aspects best adapted for pictorial effect. Yet while this is an age in which we are accustomed to view a story on its most winning side, we are nevertheless entitled to the right of independent judgment, and to the use of the same liberty as is accorded to the Poet, in an effort to present what appears to be a more probable view of the history of the great Iroquois Chief.

At a time like the present, it may appear a somewhat unpromising task to present Hiawatha as anything like a historic person, or seek to preserve the name from the atmosphere of grotesque fable. Yet this, perhaps, is a task that might be undertaken; for when we remember how easily, with the lapse of time, an individual, even in civilized society, becomes invested with an air of romance, we shall hardly feel inclined to question the existence of the tendency among rude and uncivilized tribes.

It has already been remarked that Mr. Longfellow was perfectly justified in presenting that view of the Indian Sage which he has given in his poem; still it will perhaps

prove interesting to employ our liberty in making a brief comparison of the Indian who appears on his page with the Indian found among the better class of Algic traditions; that is, a comparison of Hiawatha as his character is popularly conceived, and Hiawatha as he possibly was.

How, then, does the character of Hiawatha appear in the poem of Mr. Longfellow?

First, however, let us hear what Mr. Schoolcraft says of the sources of the poet's information.

In speaking of the legends upon which Mr. Longfellow has relied, the historian says, in substance, that they represent Hiawatha on the whole, as an impersonation of evil. The evil is not, indeed, without mitigation, yet the essential badness of Hiawatha is combined with low cunning, ineffable weakness, and the paltriest ambition. Consequently we find that the character which the poet represents, continually reminds us of its origin. Certain qualities may be depressed, and some may be exaggerated, while others may be left out altogether, and yet the feeble trickster is always there, holding himself up to view amid all the affluence of rhythm and imagery and art, as a compound of opposite and often contemptible qualities. This, once more let it be remembered, I state, not as a fault, but as a *fact*.

I might, perhaps, have been told at the outset that similar characters abound everywhere in history. There, for instance, is Josheka of the Algonquins; who finds a parallel, in turn, among the mythical creations of the distant South. Why not, then, place the story of Hiawatha with his? To this it may be replied that, while found among them, it is not of them. The story of Hiawatha evidently belongs to a more modern age, and is not by any means to be properly

included in the class of myths at all. The story is essentially of the nature of a legend. It does not deal with a quality. It sets forth no transcendental truth. It rather tells the story of a life, and gives, seemingly, amid all its wild exaggerations, a modicum of historic truth. Let us, therefore, endeavor to make this more apparent.

In dealing with the native tribes of America, the historian has generally given almost exclusive prominence to the two branches that so strongly established themselves in Mexico and Peru. And yet the famous Confederacy of the Iroquois or Five Nations, was established not more than one or two centuries after the Mexican and Peruvian monarchies, and is quite as worthy, in many respects, of high consideration. Especially does this appear to be the case in connection with the present subject, for the reason that this Confederacy of the Iroquois was founded through the agency of Hiawatha, a fact that Mr. Longfellow's poem does not set forth. This brings the hero within comparatively modern times, somewhere near the thirteenth century.

Until about this period the five nations composing the league were widely scattered over large portions of the country. But an invasion from the north led them, under the guidance of Hiawatha, to unite for the extirpation of the common foe. The League of the Iroquois was fashioned after the Greek Amphictyonic League, and while the union was real and practical, each of the five banded tribes was left with its separate and sovereign right. And so conscious were the Indian leaders of the wisdom and advantages of their system, that in the year 1774, they gravely urged it upon the representatives of the Colonies for the acceptance of the American people. Republicanism did not begin with Greece, nor was it the exclusive issue of the American Revolution. The white man may be slow to recognize the fact, yet it is nevertheless not too much to affirm, that

essential republicanism in this country began with the League of the Five Nations, who were taught the advantages of the system by Hiawatha; all of which is worthy of finding expression in a peculiarly American poem.

What we may call the historic character of Hiawatha forms a distinct point which the writer desires to present and keep in view; and yet there is the separate inquiry, namely, whether we have ground for claiming a loftier character for Hiawatha, and one everyway more dignified and pure, than the conception now before the people.

The eccentric Thoreau used sometimes to wonder what it was in the character of Christ that made a certain bishop so bigoted. But Thoreau was not sure of his fact. There was not anything in the great heart of the Galilean to make a man bigoted. We may nevertheless inquire what there was in the character of Hiawatha to secure the Red Man's universal veneration. They certainly paid no respect to a quality under the form of a person, and therefore are we at liberty to infer that it was the person himself, in whom certain great qualities were found.

The versions of the Indian legend which has heretofore been followed come from every quarter of North America, and are marked by all that is puerile, extravagant and ridiculous; yet we have another version which is the peculiar product of the Iroquois mind, and therefore characterized by the same degree of superiority that must be confessed as attending the thoughts of the people of that Confederacy. This version of the story of Hiawatha is free from all that is low, puerile, sensual and absurd, and commands respect by its dignity, consistency and general effect. The style of the narrative is comprehensive, the contents brief, and thus the story is soon told.

From a consideration of the facts of the case, it would seem, therefore, as if there were room for a new Hiawatha. Yet when Hiawatha comes he must not be too historical. He must speak to us a long way off. His voice must come sounding down from distant times. Here, then, might be suggested a substantial improvement on the present Hiawatha, where we have the Jesuits introduced without authority, and where they appear almost as inappropriate as a band of Pilgrim Fathers in one of the Books of Virgil. As Longfellow's Hiawatha is about to ascend to heaven, we read:

From the distant Land of Wabun,
From the farthest realm of morning,
Came the Black-Robe chief the Prophet,
He the Priest of Prayer, the Pale face.
With his guides and his companions.

"And the noble Hiawatha,
With his hands aloft extended.
Held aloft in sign of welcome,
Waited, full of exultation.
Till the birch canoe with paddles
Grated on the shining pebbles,
Stranded on the sandy margin.
Till the Black-Robe chief, the Pale face
With the cross upon his bosom,
Landed on the sandy margin."

This certainly is an anachronism, the flavor being too modern. The statement of Mr. Schoolcraft has been cited where he claims that the legend followed by Mr. Longfellow represents Hiawatha largely as an embodiment of evil. And the Iroquois chief does not escape this taint even in passing through the alembic of the Poet. At the same time his

positive religious character is everyway overstated. Hiawatha " fasting " in Longfellow's pages is one thing, and Hiawatha fasting in the legend is quite another. In the one case he is rigidly devout, and in the other he is overflowing with characteristic mischief and fun, stealing jovially away from his secluded praying lodge, to watch his grandmother, who surreptitiously, in his absence from home, entertains a huge black bear. The legend paraphrased in the verses that follow this introduction do not treat of that matter at all.

In the Iroquois legend used in the present case, we look in vain for anything that essentially detracts from his dignity, goodness and worth; and, at the same time, the legend is free from anachronisms. Hiawatha does not enter into the thoughts of the seventeenth century, when the Jesuit roamed the American woods, and bought at any price the privilege of sending an Indian child to heaven with a drop of dew. The date of Hiawatha's death is synchronous with the perfect establishment of the Iroquois League, which had already arrived at the height of its glory, and was the dominant Indian power on the North American continent before the white man encroached upon the soil. The Iroquois tradition, indeed, confounds Hiawatha with the more uncertain Tarenyawago, yet he soon emerges in the narrative with a new name, and appears before the antiquary, as he probably was, bearing a lofty, consistent character, shedding equal luster upon himself and upon the fortunes of his tribe. Such a character hardly deserves to be buried under the debris of ridiculous fable, or stand in the rank with Yennadizze the Idle. The Indian annals show only one such comprehensive and beneficent character, and, therefore, why not let the Red Man enjoy its benefit?

It may indeed be said that the character of Hiawatha, even as given by the Iroquois, is unreal; yet it should be remembered that a thirteenth-century myth could not well

found a government, or administer laws. There must have been somewhere a powerful organizing mind — a real personality; for the work done was both permanent and great. All this implies a great worker. And may not that worker have been Hiawatha?

The conception of Hiawatha embodied in the following lines, is therefore offered as more consistent and dignified than that popularly entertained, and which makes the heaven-born Hiawatha appear contemptible, by reducing him, without reason, to all the ordinary straits of the Red Man, and leads him to desire conflicts he cannot support and dangers before which he quails. In the Iroquois version, the character of Hiawatha and the incidents of his life are always invested with unity and dignity. He never appears childish, but always bears himself with the aspect and temper of the sage. Indeed, the character is drawn so true to nature, that we ai*e led to the conclusion that such a person of Hiawatha once lived, and that his course as a public teacher and benefactor in the after times led the Five Nations to invest him with supernatural wisdom and power, and to assign him a fitting end. Thus it was with the Northman's Odin, who, after dying in his bed, like an ordinary mortal, was nevertheless, in course of time, invested with the character and attributes of a god. And it is probable that Hiawatha was no more a myth than Odin, but that both were historical characters; Indian tradition having left the latter elevated high above the common walks of life, as given, beyond the ordinary race of mortals, to wise, heroic and beneficent deeds. Those persons inclined to doubt this, should endeavor to tell us who it was that formed the American Amphictyonic League; who gave the Iroquois legislation and laws; who, by the power of his genius, banded the Five Nations into one; and who, by the force of his example and the purity of his precepts, cemented the great fabric which stood for many

generations in the heart of America as a refuge for those people not exactly included within the League, but who, nevertheless, as history declares, found it as refreshing in their day as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow – A Primer

By Thomas Davidson

H. W. Longfellow was an American poet, born on the 27th of February 1807, at Portland, Maine. His ancestor, William Longfellow, had immigrated to Newbury, Massachusetts, in 1676, from Yorkshire, England. His father was Stephen Longfellow, a lawyer and United States congressman, and his mother, Zilpha Wadsworth, a descendant of John Alden and of “Priscilla, the Puritan maiden.”

Longfellow's external life presents little that is of stirring interest. It is the life of a modest, deep-hearted gentleman, whose highest ambition was to be a perfect man, and, through sympathy and love, to help others to be the same. His boyhood was spent mostly in his native town, which he never ceased to love, and whose beautiful surroundings and quiet, pure life he has described in his poem “My Lost Youth.” Here he grew up in the midst of majestic peace, which was but once broken, and that by an event which made a deep impression on him — the War of 1812. He never forgot

“the sea-fight far away,
How it thundered o'er the tide,
And the dead captains as they lay
In their graves o'erlooking the tranquil bay,

Where they in battle died.”

The “tranquil bay” is Casco Bay, one of the most beautiful in the world, studded with bold, green islands, well fitted to be the Hesperides of a poet's boyish dreams. At the age of fifteen Longfellow entered Bowdoin College at Brunswick, a town situated near the romantic falls of the Androscoggin river, about 25 m. from Portland, and in a region full of Indian scenery and legend. Here he had among his classfellows Nathaniel Hawthorne, George B. Cheever and J. S. C. Abbott. During the latter years of his college life he contributed to the United States Literary Gazette some half-dozen poems, which are interesting for two reasons — (1) as showing the poet's early, book-mediated sympathy with nature and legendary heroisms, and (2) as being almost entirely free from that supernatural view of nature which his subsequent residence in Europe imparted to him. He graduated in 1825, at the age of eighteen, with honours, among others that of writing the “class poem” — taking the fourth place in a class of thirty-eight. He then entered his father's law office, without intending, however, it would appear, to devote himself to the study of the law. For this profession he was, both by capacity and tastes, utterly unfitted, and it was fortunate that, shortly after his graduation, he received an offer of a professorship of modern languages at Bowdoin College. In order the better to qualify himself for this appointment, he went to Europe (May 15th, 1826) and spent three years and a half travelling in France, Italy, Spain, Germany, Holland and England, learning languages, for which he had unusual talent, and drinking in the spirit of the history and life of these countries. The effect of Longfellow's visit was twofold. On the one hand, it widened his sympathies, gave him confidence in himself and supplied him with many poetical themes; on the other, it traditionalized his mind, coloured for him the pure light of nature and rendered him

in some measure unfit to feel or express the spirit of American nature and life. His sojourn in Europe fell exactly in the time when, in England, the reaction against the sentimental atheism of Shelley, the pagan sensitivity of Keats, and the sublime, Satanic outcastness of Byron was at its height; when, in the Catholic countries, the negative exaggerations of the French Revolution were inducing a counter current of positive faith, which threw men into the arms of a half-sentimental, half-aesthetic medievalism; and when, in Germany, the aristocratic paganism of Goethe was being swept aside by that tide of dutiful, romantic patriotism which flooded the country, as soon as it began to feel that it still existed after being run over by Napoleon's war-chariot. He returned to America in 1829, and remained six years at Bowdoin College (1829-1835), during which he published various text-books for the study of modern languages. In his twenty-fourth year (1831) he married Miss Mary Story Potter, one of his “early loves.” In 1833 he made a series of translations from the Spanish, with an essay on the moral and devotional poetry of Spain, and these were incorporated in 1835 in Outre-mer: a Pilgrimage beyond the Sea.

In 1835 Longfellow was chosen to succeed George Ticknor as professor of modern languages and belles-lettres in Harvard. On receiving this appointment, he paid a second visit of some fifteen months to Europe, this time devoting special attention to the Scandinavian countries and Switzerland. During this visit he lost his wife, who died at Rotterdam, on the 29th of November 1835.

On his return to America in December 1836, Longfellow took up his residence in Cambridge, and began to lecture at Harvard and to write. In his new home he found himself amid surroundings entirely congenial to him. Its spaciousness and free rural aspect, its old graveyards and

towering elms, its great university, its cultivated society and its vicinity to humane, substantial, busy Boston, were all attractions for such a man. In 1837-1838 several essays of Longfellow's appeared in the North American Review, and in 1839 he published Hyperion: a Romance, and his first volume of original poetry, entitled Voices of the Night. Hyperion, a poetical account of his travels, had, at the time of its publication, an immense popularity, due mainly to its sentimental romanticism. At present few persons beyond their teens would care to read it through, so unnatural and stilted is its language, so thin its material and so consciously mediated its sentiment. Nevertheless it has a certain historical importance, for two reasons — (1) because it marks that period in Longfellow's career when, though he had left nature, he had not yet found art, and (2) because it opened the sluices through which the flood of German sentimental poetry flowed into the United States. The Voices of the Night contains some of his best minor poems, e.g. “The Psalm of Life” and “Footsteps of Angels.” In 1842 Longfellow published a small volume of Ballads and other Poems, containing some of his most popular pieces, e.g. “The Skeleton in Armour,” “The Wreck of the Hesperus,” “The Village Blacksmith,” “To a Child,” “The Bridge,” “Excelsior.” In the same year he paid a third brief visit to Europe, spending the summer on the Rhine. During his return-passage across the Atlantic he wrote his Poems on Slavery (1842), with a dedication to Channing. These poems went far to wake in the youth of New England a sense of the great national wrong, and to prepare them for that bitter struggle in which it was wiped out at the expense of the lives of so many of them. In 1843 he married again, his wife being Miss Frances Elizabeth Appleton of Boston, a daughter of Hon. Nathan Appleton, one of the founders of Lowell, and a sister of Thomas G. Appleton, himself no mean poet.

About the same time he bought, and fixed his residence in, the Craigie House, where he had formerly only been a lodger, an old “revolutionary house,” built about the beginning of the 18th century, and occupied by General Washington in 1776. This quaint old wooden house, in the midst of a large garden full of splendid elms, continued to be his chief residence till the day of his death. Of the lectures on Dante which he delivered about this time, James Russell Lowell says: “These lectures, illustrated by admirable translations, are remembered with grateful pleasure by many who were thus led to learn the full significance of the great Christian poet.” Indeed, as a professor, Longfellow was eminently successful. Shortly after the Poems on Slavery, there appeared in 1843 a more ambitious work, The Spanish Student, a Play in Three Acts, a kind of sentimental “Morality,” without any special merit but good intention. If published nowadays it would hardly attract notice; but in those gushing, emotion-craving times it had considerable popularity, and helped to increase the poet's now rapidly widening fame. A huge collection of translations of foreign poetry edited by him, and entitled The Poets and Poetry of Europe, appeared in 1845, and, in 1846, a few minor poems — songs and sonnets — under the title The Belfry of Bruges. In 1847 he published at Boston the greatest of all his works, Evangeline, a Tale of Acadie. It was, in some degree, an imitation of Goethe's Hermann and Dorothea, and its plot, which was derived from Hawthorne's American Note-Books, is even simpler than that of the German poem, not to say much more touching. At the violent removal by the British government of a colony of French settlers from Acadie (Nova Scotia) in 1755, a young couple, on the very day of their wedding, were separated and carried in different directions, so that they lost all trace of each other. The poem describes the wanderings of the bride in search of her lover, and her final discovery of him as an old man on his death-bed, in a public

hospital which she had entered as a nurse. Slight as the story is, it is worked out into one of the most affecting poems in the language, and gives to literature one of its most perfect types of womanhood and of “affection that hopes and endures and is patient.” Though written in a metre deemed foreign to English ears, the poem immediately attained a wide popularity, which it has never lost, and secured to the dactylic hexameter a recognized place among English metres.

In 1849 Longfellow published a novel of no great merit, Kavanagh, and also a volume of poems entitled The Seaside and the Fireside, a title which has reference to his two homes, the seaside one on the charming peninsula of Nahant, the fireside one in Cambridge. One of the poems in this collection, “Resignation,” has taken a permanent place in literature; another, “Hymn for my Brother's Ordination,” shows plainly the nature of the poet's Christianity. His brother, the Rev. Samuel Longfellow, was a minister of the Unitarian Church.

Longfellow's genius, in its choice of subjects, always oscillated between America and Europe, between the colonial period of American history and the Middle and Romantic Ages of European feeling. When tired of the broad daylight of American activity, he sought refuge and rest in the dim twilight of medieval legend and German sentiment. In 1851 appeared The Golden Legend, a long lyric drama based upon Hartmann von Aue's beautiful story of self-sacrifice, Der arme Heinrich. Next to Evangeline, this is at once the best and the most popular of the poet's longer works, and contains many passages of great beauty. Bringing his imagination back to America, he next applied himself to the elaboration of an Indian legend. In 1854 he resigned his professorship. In the following year he gave to the world the Indian Edda, The Song of Hiawatha, a

conscious imitation, both in subject and metre, of the Finnish epic, the Kalevala, with which he had become acquainted during his second visit to Europe. The metre is monotonous and easily ridiculed, but it suits the subject, and the poem is very popular. In 1858 appeared The Courtship of Miles Standish, based on a charming incident in the early history of the Plymouth colony, and, along with it, a number of minor poems, included under the modest title, Birds of Passage. One of these is “My Lost Youth.”

Two events now occurred which served to cast a gloom over the poet's life and to interrupt his activity, — the outbreak of the Civil War, and the tragic fate of his wife, who, having accidentally allowed her dress to catch fire, was burnt to death in her own house in 1861. It was long before he recovered from the shock caused by this terrible event, and in his subsequent published poems he never ventured even to allude to it. When he did in some measure find himself again, he gave to the world his charming Tales of a Wayside Inn (1863), and in 1865 his Household Poems. Among the latter is a poem entitled “The Children's Hour,” which affords a glance into the home life of the widowed poet, who had been left with five children two sons, Ernest and Charles, and three daughters,

“Grave Alice, and laughing Allegra,
And Edith with golden hair.”

A small volume entitled Flower de Luce (1867) contains, among other fine things, the beautiful “threnos” on the burial of Hawthorne, and “The Bells of Lynn.” Once more the poet sought refuge in medieval life by completing his translation of the Divina Commedia, parts of which he had rendered into English as much as thirty years before. This work appeared in 1867, and gave a great impulse to the study of Dante in America. It is a masterpiece of literal translation. Next came the New England Tragedies (1868)

and The Divine Tragedy (1871), which found no large public. In 1868-1869 the poet visited Europe, and was everywhere received with the greatest honour. In 1872 appeared Three Books of Song, containing translated as well as original pieces, in 1873 Aftermath and in 1875 The Mask of Pandora, and other Poems. Among these “other poems” were “The Hanging of the Crane,” “Morituri Salutamus” and “A Book of Sonnets.” The Mask of Pandora is a proof of that growing appreciation of pagan naturalism which marked the poet's later years. Though not a great poem, it is full of beautiful passages, many of which point to the riddle of life as yet unsolved, a conviction which grew ever more and more upon the poet, as the ebulliency of romanticism gave way to the calm of classic feeling. In the “Book of Sonnets” are some of the finest things he ever wrote, especially the five sonnets entitled “Three Friends of Mine.” These “three friends” were Cornelius Felton, Louis Agassiz and Charles Sumner, whom he calls

“The noble three,
Who half my life were more than friends to me.”

The loss of Agassiz was a blow from which he never entirely recovered; and, when Sumner also left him, he wrote: —

“Thou hast but taken thy lamp and gone to bed;
I stay a little longer, as one stays
To cover up the embers that still burn.”

He did stay a little longer; but the embers that still burnt in him refused to be covered up. He would fain have ceased writing, and used to say, “It's a great thing to know when to stop”; but he could not stop, and did not stop, till the last. He continued to publish from time to time, in the magazines, poems which showed a clearness of vision and

a perfection of workmanship such as he never had equalled at any period of his life. Indeed it may be said that his finest poems were his last. Of these a small collection appeared under the title of Keramos, and other Poems (1878). Besides these, in the years 1875-1878 he edited a collection of Poems of Places in thirty-one small volumes. In 1880 appeared Ultima Thule, meant to be his last work, and it was nearly so. In October 1881 he wrote a touching sonnet on the death of President Garfield, and in January 1882, when the hand of death was already upon him, his poem, Hermes Trismegistus, in which he gives utterance, in language as rich as that of the early gods, to that strange feeling of awe without fear, and hope without form, with which every man of spotless life and upright intellect withdraws from the phenomena of time to the realities of eternity.

In the last years of his life he suffered a great deal from rheumatism, and was, as he sometimes cheerfully said, “never free from pain.” Still he remained as sunny and genial as ever, looking from his Cambridge study windows across the Brighton meadows to the Brookline hills, or enjoying the “free wild winds of the Atlantic,” and listening to “The Bells of Lynn” in his Nahant home. He still continued to receive all visitors, and to take occasional runs up to Castine and Portland, the homes of his family. About the beginning of 1882, however, a serious change took place in his condition. Dizziness and want of strength confined him to his room for some time, and, although after some weeks he partially recovered, his elasticity and powers were gone. On the 19th of March he was seized with what proved to be peritonitis, and he died on the 24th. The poet was buried two days afterwards near his “three friends” in Mount Auburn cemetery. The regret for his loss was universal; for no modern man was ever better loved or better deserved to be loved.

Longfellow was made an LL.D. of Bowdoin College in 1828,. at the age of twenty-one, of Harvard in 1859 and of Cambridge (England) in 1868, and D.C.L. of Oxford in 1869. In 1873 he was elected a member of the Russian Academy of Science, and in 1877 of the Spanish Academy.

In person, Longfellow was rather below middle height, broad shouldered and well built. His head and face were extremely handsome, his forehead broad and high, his eyes full of clear, warming fire, his nose straight and graceful, his chin and lips, rich and full of feeling as those of the Praxitelean Hermes, and his voice low, melodious and full of tender cadences. His hair, originally dark, became, in his later years, silvery white, and its wavy locks combined with those of his flowing beard to give him that leonine appearance so familiar through his later portraits. Charles Kingsley said of Longfellow's face that it was the most beautiful human face he had ever seen. A bust to his memory was erected in the Poet's Corner in Westminster Abbey in 1884.

In Longfellow, the poet was the flower and fruit of the man. His nature was essentially poetic, and his life the greatest of his poems. Those who knew only the poems he wrote could form but a faint notion of the harmony, the sweetness, the manliness and the tenderness of that which he lived. What he would have been as a poet, if, instead of visiting Europe in early life and drinking in the spirit of the middle ages under the shadows of cathedral towers, he had, like Whittier, grown old amid American scenery and life, we can only guess from his earlier poems, which are as naturalistic, fresh and unmystical as could be desired; but certain it is that, from his long familiarity with the medieval view of nature, and its semi-pagan offspring, the romantic view, he was brought, for the greater part of his life, to look

upon the world of men and things either as the middle scene of a miracle play, with a heaven of rewarding happiness above and a purgatory of purifying pain below, or else as a garment concealing, while it revealed, spiritual forms of unfathomed mystery. During this time he could hear “the trailing garments of the night sweep through her marble halls,” and see “the stars come out to listen to the music of the seas.” Later on, as he approached his second youth (he was spared a second childhood), he tended to a more pagan view. About the time when he was writing The Mask of Pandora, he could see “in the sunset Jason's fleece of gold,” and hear “the waves of the distracted sea piteously calling and lamenting” his lost friend. But through all the periods of his life his view of the world was essentially religious and subjective, and, consequently, his manner of dealing with it hymnal or lyric. This fact, even more than his merits as an artist, serves to account for his immense popularity. Too well-informed, too appreciative and too modest to deem himself the peer of the “grand old masters,” or one of “those far stars that come in sight once in a century,” he made it his aim to write something that should “make a purer faith and manhood shine in the untutored heart,” and to do this in the way that should best reach that heart. This aim determined at once his choice of subjects and his mode of treating them.

The subjects of Longfellow's poetry are, for the most part, aspects of nature as influencing human feeling, either directly or through historical association, the tender or pathetic sides and incidents of life, or heroic deeds preserved in legend or history. He had a special fondness for records of human devotion and self-sacrifice, whether they were monkish legends, Indian tales, Norse drápas or bits of American history. His mode of treatment is subjective and lyric. No matter what form his works assume, whether the epic, as in Evangeline, The Courtship

of Miles Standish and Hiawatha, the dramatic, as in The Spanish Student, The Golden Legend and The Mask of Pandora, or the didactic, as in The Psalm of Life and many of the minor poems; they are all subjective. This is not the highest praise that can be given to works of art; but it implies less dispraise in Longfellow's case than in almost any other, by reason of his noble subjectivity.

If we look in Longfellow's poetry for originality of thought, profound psychological analysis or new insights into nature, we shall be disappointed. Though very far from being hampered by any dogmatic philosophical or religious system of the past, his mind, until near the end, found sufficient satisfaction in the Christian view of life to make it indifferent to the restless, inquiring spirit of the present, and disinclined to play with any more recent solution of life's problems. He had no sympathy with either scepticism or formal dogmatism, and no need to hazard rash guesses respecting man's destiny. He disliked the psychological school of art, believing it to be essentially morbid and unhealthy. He had no sympathy with the tendency represented by George Eliot, or with any attempt to be analytic in art. He held art to be essentially synthetic, creative and manifesting, not analytic, destructive or questioning. Hence he never strove to draw from nature some new secret, or to show in her relations never discovered before. His aim was to impress upon her familiar facts and aspects the seal of his own gracious nature. A man in intellect and courage, yet without conceit or bravado; a woman in sensibility and tenderness, yet without shrinking or weakness; a saint in purity of life and devotion of heart, yet without asceticism or religiosity; a knight-errant in hatred of wrong and contempt of baseness, yet without self-righteousness or cynicism; a prince in dignity and courtesy, yet without formality or condescension; a poet in thought and feeling, yet without