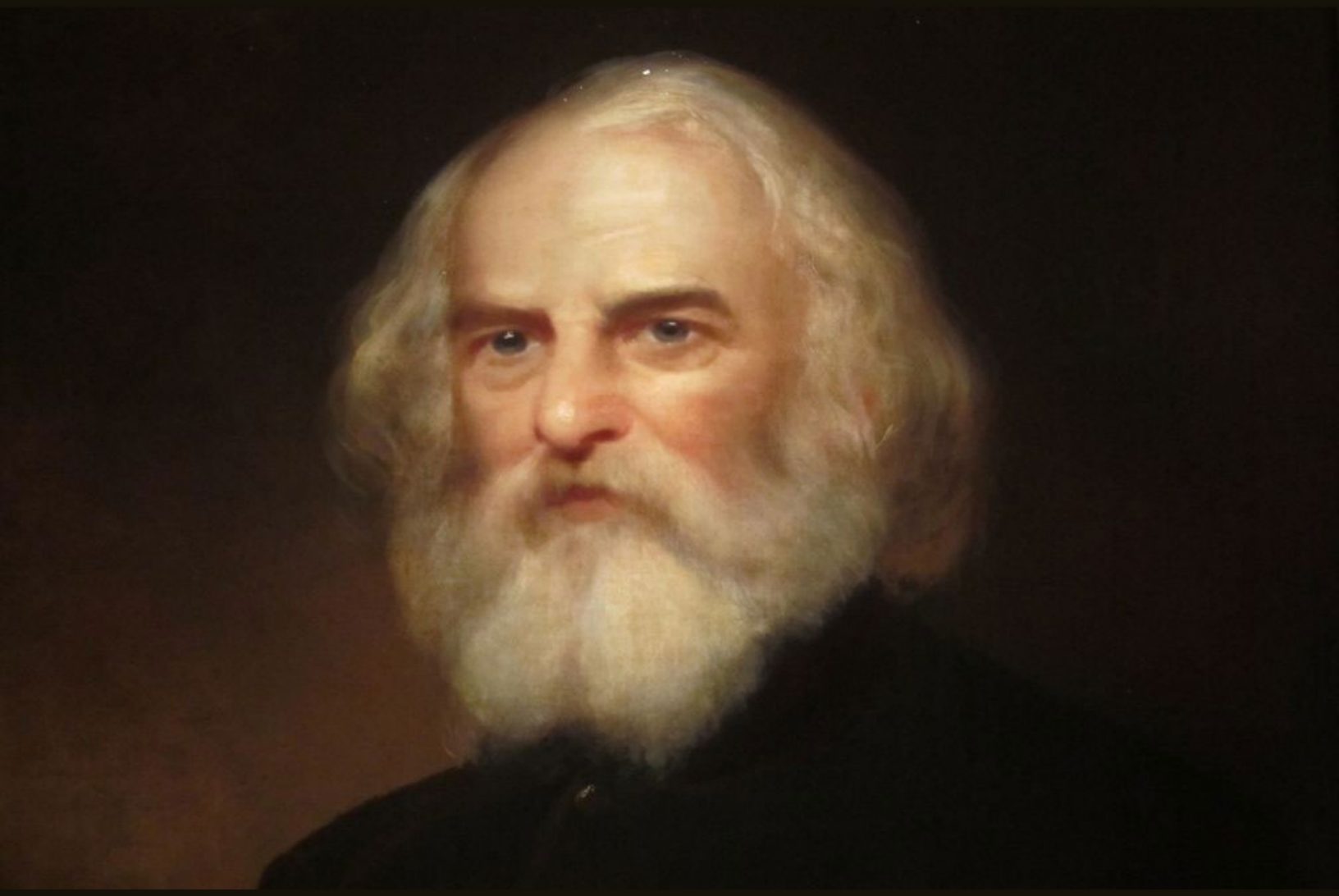
HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW
- ANNOTATED STUDENT'S EDITION -



HYPERION

Hyperion

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

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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 jealousy or affectation; a scholar in tastes and habits, yet without aloofness or bookishness; a dutiful son, a loving husband, a judicious father, a trusty friend, a useful citizen and an enthusiastic patriot, — he united in his strong, transparent humanity almost every virtue under heaven. A thoroughly healthy, well-balanced, harmonious nature, accepting life as it came, with all its joys and sorrows, and living it beautifully and hopefully, without canker and without uncharity. No man ever lived more completely in the light than Henry Wadsworth Longfellow.

Perhaps the most remarkable traits in Longfellow's character were his accessibility and his charity. Though a great worker, he seemed always to have time for anything he was asked to do. He was never too busy to see a caller, to answer a letter, or to assist, by word or deed, any one that needed assistance. His courtesy to all visitors, even to strangers and children who called to look at him, or who, not venturing to call, hung about his garden-gate in order to catch a glimpse of him, was almost a marvel. He always took it for granted that they had come to see Washington's study, and, accordingly, took the greatest interest in showing them that. He never, as long as he could write, was known to refuse his autograph, and so far was he from trying to protect himself from intruders that he rarely drew the blinds of his study windows at night, though that study

was on the ground floor and faced the street. His acts of charity, though performed in secret, were neither few nor small. Of him it may be said with perfect truth, “He went about doing good”; and not with his money merely, but also with his presence and his encouragement. To how many sad hearts did he come like an angel, with the rich tones of his voice waking harmonics of hope, where before there had been despair and silence? How many young literary people, disappointed at the unsuccess of their first attempts, did he comfort and spur on to renewed and higher efforts! How careful he was to quench no smoking flax! How utterly free he was from jealousy or revengefulness! While poor, morbid Edgar Allan Poe was writing violent and scurrilous articles upon him, accusing him of plagiarism and other literary misdemeanours, he was delivering enthusiastic lectures to his classes on Poe's poetry. His charity was unbounded. Once, when the present writer proposed to the president of the Harvard University Visiting Committee that Longfellow should be placed on that committee, the president replied: “What would be the use? Longfellow could never be brought to find fault with anybody or anything.” And it was true. His whole life was bathed in that sympathy, that love which suffers long and envies not, which forgives unto seventy times seven times, and as many more if need be. Even in his last years, when loss of friends and continual physical pain made life somewhat “cold, and dark and dreary” for him, he never complained, lamented or blamed the arrangements of nature, and the only way in which it was possible to know that he suffered was through his ever-increasing delight in the health and strength of younger men. His whole nature was summed up in the lines of his favourite poet: —

“ intellettual, piena d'amore,
Amor di vero ben, pien di letizia,
Letizia che trascende ogni dolzore.”

See his Life . . . with Extracts from his Journals and Correspondence, by Samuel Longfellow, and the “Riverside” edition of the prose and poems (Boston, 11 vols., 1886-1890). An enlarged edition of the Life (3 vols., 1891) included the journals and correspondence, 1866-1882, published in 1887 as Final Memorials (Boston and New York). Also the volume by T. W. Higginson in the “American Men of Letters” series (1902); E. C. Stedman's criticism in Poets of America; and an article in W. D. Howells' My Literary Friends and Acquaintance (New York, 1900) which contains a valuable account of Longfellow's later life.

Introductory Note To Hyperion

Hyperion as a book was begun in September, 1838, pursued vigorously during the fall, worked at more slowly through the winter, and finally put into the printer's hands in June, 1839. It was finished by the end of July, and published the second week in August. The material, however, out of which the book was made took shape earlier. The basis of it was the experience of Mr. Longfellow in Europe in 1835 and 1836. He left New York in the spring of 1835, accompanied by his wife and two friends; spent the summer in England and Northern Europe, but went to Rotterdam in the fall. There his wife died at the end of November. He travelled thence alone to Heidelberg, where he passed the winter, and in the following summer was in the Tyrol and Switzerland, returning to America in October, 1836. His recently published Life, enables us to trace his journey step by step, and the route from Rotterdam to Heidelberg is precisely that of Paul Flemming, while the studies of his hero in Heidelberg, his friendships and his

excursions in the coming summer, correspond substantially with Mr. Longfellow's own course, as indicated in his diary and letters.

Mr. Samuel Longfellow points out the identity of characters in the book with certain persons whom the author fell in with, and the whole tale is a rescript, only slightly disguised, of the poet's spiritual as well as external experience. He himself clearly indicated the relation which he held to his work in a letter to Mr. George Washington Greene, in which he says:

" I have written a Romance during this past year. The feelings of the book are true; the events of the story mostly fictitious. The heroine, of course, bears a resemblance to the lady, without being an exact portrait. There is no betrayal of confidence, no real scene described. Hyperion is the name of the book, not of the hero. It merely indicates that here is the life of one who in his feelings and purposes is a ' son of Heaven and Earth,' and who, though obscured by clouds, yet ' moves on high.' Further than this the name has nothing to do with the book, and in fact is mentioned only once in the course of it. I expect to be mightily abused. People will say that I am the hero of my own romance, and compare myself to the sun, to Hyperion Apollo. This is not so. I wish only to embody certain feelings which are mine, not to magnify myself."

In writing Hyperion Mr. Longfellow easily wrought into the fabric material which he -had previously used in other forms. In the summer before he began the active preparation of the book, he delivered before his classes at Cambridge a course of lectures upon the Lives of Literary Men, and from these he took the chapters on Jean Paul, on the Lives of Scholars, and on Literary Fame in the first Book; the sketch of an artist's life in Rome and the picture

of the Middle Ages, given in the third Book; and the chapter on Hoffmann and his writings, in the fourth Book. From The Blank Boole of a Country Schoolmaster, also, which he contributed to The Knickerbocker in 1834 and 1835, he drew some passages.

His diary indicates the eagerness with which he set about the book, the impatience with which he bore interruptions, and the severity of the criticism to which he subjected his work. He had at first intended to name his hero Hyperion, then he gave him the name of St. Clair, and finally abandoned that for Paul Flemming. The occasional notes in his diary intimate the hold which the book had upon his mind:

" October 18, 1838. Wrote a chapter hi Hyperion. Thus slowly goes on the work. Well, or ill, I must work right on, and wait for no happier moments.

" October 23. Worked at Hyperion again. Wrote chapter six of Book IV., a touch at philosophical dreamery. But I have so many interruptions! No matter, onward! If it be but one chapter a week, it would complete the book within a year. That 's too long.

" November 5. A rainy day, and now a rainy night, for a chapter in Hyperion! Let me see what I can do at a dash! Come out of thy drawer, thou thin, marbled portfolio! Open thy lips, and speak of Heidelberg and the Baron! And out of this flourish came nothing but revision of my work and meditation. And as I sat and meditated deep into the night, I resolved to suppress one entire book; namely, St. Clair's DayBook.

" November 8. A rainy day. Passed the greater part of it at work on Hyperion, retouching and writing. Wrote a new

chapter one to Book III.; namely, the short chapter on Spring.

" December 10. Company till noon.... After they had gone, sat down to Hyperion. Went without my dinner and wrote till dark; the Baron and Heidelberg; and the arrangement of the last chapter of Book I. The first volume is now ready for the press.

"December 18. Contrived to write a short chapter in Hyperion, chapter eight, Book IV. Hope to get into train again soon, and go on gallantly as before. So much for breaks.

" April 5, 1839. Confined to my chamber with a bad cold and feverish unrest. Worked at Hyperion like a hero.

" April 6. An exact counterpart of yesterday; and I at work upon my Romance, changing and arranging and writing out various portions. Wrote the last chapter, though others remain to be written."

He wrote to his father, under date of June 16, 1839:

" I have begun to print Hyperion, and have three men at work upon it, setting type. I hope to have it out in about a month; and shall, unless Colman delays. As to the money part of the business, he is to pay me three hundred and seventy-five dollars, by his notes, on the day of publication; said notes payable in three and six months.... At all events, I get the book very handsomely printed and widely circulated; and this is a great point. As to its success, I am very sanguine. I look upon the work of my hands with a very complacent smile; and it will take a great deal of persuasion to convince me that the book is not good. This is my candid opinion."

After the book had been out a few weeks he wrote again to his father:

" Hyperion attracts great attention, and excites very strong and opposite feelings. Some praise, and others condemn in no measured terms; and the book sells with a rapidity far beyond my expectations. I hear that a new edition will soon be called for; which, if so, will be a triumph, considering the nature of the book. People seem to be much puzzled about it, and some are quite angry because they cannot see through it as easily as their a b c. But I have the approbation of those whose approbation I most desire, and of course do not much care how others abuse. What delights me is that it calls forth very strong and decided opinions. I am free for once from the laudatur et alget"

" See what ill-luck with Hyperion " [he wrote to Mr. Greene, January 2, 1840]. " The publisher fails; half the edition (that is, twelve hundred copies) is seized by creditors and locked up; and the book has been out of the market for four months. No matter. I had the glorious satisfaction of writing it.... I called it Hyperion, because it moves on high, among clouds and stars, and expresses the various aspirations of the soul of man. It is all modeled on this idea, style and all. It contains my cherished thoughts for three years. Pardon my saying so much. In offset, I will send you the ' horrible dispraise ' I spoke of, though the papers that uttered it have since nearly come round, and have even praised some parts of it. How victorious is silence! "

The publisher who failed was Samuel Colman, of New York. The book came out in two volumes in boards, with pale olive-colored paper sides. The author's name was not printed on the title-page, but the book was announced as by the author of Outre-Mer. Mr. Longfellow took the

opportunity afforded by subsequent editions to revise the text, but the structure of the work remains unchanged. The motto, which in the first edition was placed on the title-page, is a translation from an inscription which he read upon a funeral tablet in the churchyard of St. Gilgen in the Tyrol, as described in Book IV., chapter viii. It is curious that ten years later, in 1849, when he had completed Kavanagh, he meditated a continuation of Hyperion, intending in it to bring his hero to America.

These two works were not the only contributions which Mr. Longfellow made to fiction in prose, but they were the only ones which he cared to preserve. He mentions in a letter to Mr. Greene that he has published a tale in The Token for 1832, and another in the same annual for 1833. The former of these was entitled The Indian Summer; the latter was The Bald Eagle, and may have been the accomplishment of a design, mentioned in his note-book in 1829, of a sketch based on the reception of Lafayette in a country village.

Hyperion

BOOK I.

Epigraph

"Who ne'er his bread in sorrow ate,
Who ne'er the mournful, midnight hours
Weeping upon his bed has sate,
He knows you not, ye Heavenly Powers."

CHAPTER I. THE HERO.

In John Lyly's Endymion, Sir Topas is made to say; "Dost thou know what a Poet is? Why, fool, a Poet is as much as one should say,--a Poet!" And thou, reader, dost thou know what a hero is? Why, a hero is as much as one should say,--a hero! Some romance-writers, however, say much more than this. Nay, the old Lombard, Matteo Maria Bojardo, set all the church-bells in Scandiano ringing, merely because he had found a name for one of his heroes. Here, also, shall church-bells be rung, but more solemnly.

The setting of a great hope is like the setting of the sun. The brightness of our life is gone. Shadows of evening fall around us, and the world seems but a dim reflection,--itself a broader shadow. We look forward into the coming, lonely night. The soul withdraws into itself. Then stars arise, and the night is holy.

Paul Flemming had experienced this, though still young. The friend of his youth was dead. The bough had broken "under the burden of the unripe fruit." And when, after a season, he looked up again from the blindness of his sorrow, all things seemed unreal. Like the man, whose sight

had been restored by miracle, he beheld men, as trees, walking. His household gods were broken. He had no home. His sympathies cried aloud from his desolate soul, and there came no answer from the busy, turbulent world around him. He did not willingly give way to grief. He struggled to be cheerful,--to be strong. But he could no longer look into the familiar faces of his friends. He could no longer live alone, where he had lived with her. He went abroad, that the sea might be between him and the grave. Alas! betweenhim and his sorrow there could be no sea, but that of time.

He had already passed many months in lonely wandering, and was now pursuing his way along the Rhine, to the south of Germany. He had journeyed the same way before, in brighter days and a brighter season of the year, in the May of life and in the month of May. He knew the beauteous river all by heart;--every rock and ruin, every echo, every legend. The ancient castles, grim and hoar, that had taken root as it were on the cliffs,--they were all his; for his thoughts dwelt in them, and the wind told him tales.

He had passed a sleepless night at Rolandseck, and had risen before daybreak. He opened the window of the balcony to hear the rushing of the Rhine. It was a damp December morning; and clouds were passing over the sky,--thin, vapory clouds, whose snow-white skirts were "often spotted with golden tears, which men call stars." The day dawned slowly; and, in the mingling of daylightand starlight, the island and cloister of Nonnenwerth made together but one broad, dark shadow on the silver breast of the river. Beyond, rose the summits of the Siebengebirg. Solemn and dark, like a monk, stood the Drachenfels, in his hood of mist, and rearward extended the Curtain of Mountains, back to the Wolkenburg,--the Castle of the Clouds.

But Flemming thought not of the scene before him. Sorrow unspeakable was upon his spirit in that lonely hour; and, hiding his face in his hands, he exclaimed aloud;

"Spirit of the past! look not so mournfully at me with thy great, tearful eyes! Touch me not with thy cold hand! Breathe not upon me with the icy breath of the grave! Chant no more that dirge of sorrow, through the long and silent watches of the night!"

Mournful voices from afar seemed to answer, "Treuenfels!" and he remembered how others had suffered, and his heart grew still.

Slowly the landscape brightened. Down therushing stream came a boat, with its white wings spread, and darted like a swallow through the narrow pass of God's-Help. The boatmen were singing, but not the song of Roland the Brave, which was heard of old by the weeping Hildegund, as she sat within the walls of that cloister, which now looked forth in the pale morning from amid the leafless linden trees. The dim traditions of those gray old times rose in the traveller's memory; for the ruined tower of Rolandseck was still looking down upon the Kloster Nonnenwerth, as if the sound of the funeral bell had changed the faithful Paladin to stone, and he were watching still to see the form of his beloved one come forth, not from her cloister, but from her grave. Thus the brazen clasps of the book of legends were opened, and, on the page illuminated by the misty rays of the rising sun, he read again the tales of Liba, and the mournful bride of Argenfels, and Siegfried, the mighty slayer of the dragon. Meanwhile the mists had risen from the Rhine, and the whole air was filled with golden vapor, through which hebeheld the sun, hanging in heaven like a drop of blood.

Even thus shone the sun within him, amid the wintry vapors, uprising from the valley of the shadow of death, through which flowed the stream of his life,--sighing, sighing!

CHAPTER II. THE CHRIST OF ANDERNACH.

Paul Flemming resumed his solitary journey. The morning was still misty, but not cold. Across the Rhine the sun came wading through the reddish vapors; and soft and silver-white outspread the broad river, without a ripple upon its surface, or visible motion of the ever-moving current. A little vessel, with one loose sail, was riding at anchor, keel to keel with another, that lay right under it, its own apparition,--and all was silent, and calm, and beautiful.

The road was for the most part solitary; for there are few travellers upon the Rhine in winter. Peasant women were at work in the vineyards; climbing up the slippery hill-sides, like beasts of burden, with large baskets of manureupon their backs. And once during the morning, a band of apprentices, with knapsacks, passed by, singing, "The Rhine! The Rhine! a blessing on the Rhine!"

O, the pride of the German heart in this noble river! And right it is; for, of all the rivers of this beautiful earth, there is none so beautiful as this. There is hardly a league of its whole course, from its cradle in the snowy Alps to its grave in the sands of Holland, which boasts not its peculiar charms. By heavens! If I were a German I would be proud of it too; and of the clustering grapes, that hang about its temples, as it reels onward through vineyards, in a triumphal march, like Bacchus, crowned and drunken.