

Germany, took charge of his school for young ladies in Boston. He wrote long after: 'I was nineteen, had grown up without sisters, and, in my solitary and secluded way of living, had no acquaintance with girls. I still recall my terrors at entering the school.' It was on the occasion of his weekly escape from these 'terrors' to his home in Roxbury, which was then the country (and not at his retirement to Concord, as has often been said), that he wrote the poem 'Good-bye, proud world.'

He soon entered the Divinity School at Harvard, where he studied under Dr. W. E. Channing and Professor Andrews Norton; and was 'approbated to preach' in October, 1826. He had no settled parish, and had not as yet much confidence in himself, his doctrines, or his power to speak. 'Whatever Heaven has given me or withheld,' he wrote at this time, 'my feelings, or the expression of them, is very cold, my understanding and my tongue slow and ineffective.' His feelings were soon to be roused and quickened, however, and his expression vivified. In December, 1827, he was preaching at Concord, N. H., and met there Miss Ellen Tucker, then sixteen years old, to whom he became engaged just a year later. Of the beautiful lyrics written for her, one, beginning 'And Ellen, when the graybeard years,' which was written in 1829, but remained unpublished for seventy-five years, deserves to stand beside anything even of Landor's for its simplicity and condensation, and for that peculiar feeling of the eternal which a brief and perfect poem can give.

In 1829 he was appointed assistant pastor of the Hanover Street Church, Boston (the church of the Mathers). In September he was married. His wife was already frail from consumption, and she died two years later. Emerson found even the liberal doctrines and simple forms of the Unitarian Church somewhat too strict for him, and felt himself compelled, in the following year, 1832, to give up his pastorate. He still preached occasionally for a few years, but for the rest of his life the public lecture platform was his chief pulpit; for he never ceased to be, in a way, a preacher.

In December, 1832, Emerson sailed for Europe, going by the then unusual southern route, and visited first Sicily and Italy. The fragments 'Written in Naples,' and 'Written at Rome,' are significant of his mood and thoughts at this time. The first, with its remembrance of

beauty in the fogs  
Of close low pinewoods in a river town,

foreshadows the idea which is primarily Emerson's, but for which Whittier found its most perfect expression in his

He who wanders widest, lifts  
No more of Beauty's jealous veils  
Than he who from his doorway sees  
The miracle of flowers and trees,

and reminds us that Emerson was to be the poet of 'Woodnotes,' and, after Bryant, the chief poet of Nature in America, with its own peculiar and distinctive beauties. The second, 'Written at Rome,' with its

And ever in the strife of your own thoughts  
Obey the nobler impulse; that is Rome,

shows that Emerson was already on the track of his answer to the Sphinx's riddle.

He sought in Europe not things but men, not relics of the past but living thoughts. For him Florence seems to have meant Landor, in his villa at the foot of the Fiesolan hill. He passed through France uncomprehending, thinking it a land 'where poet never grew,' and went to visit the almost unknown Carlyle on his Scotch hillside, and Wordsworth by his English Lakes. His friendship for Carlyle lasted till the end of his life, and he did Carlyle great service in introducing his works to America, taking charge of all the material details of their publication here. He seems to have been much amused at first to see Wordsworth pause in his garden walks and stand apart to declaim his own sonnets, but on second thought recollected that that was what he had come for, and listened with reverence.

On his return, Emerson settled in Concord. He had been through his *Lehrjahre* and

*Wanderjahre*, had found his own place, intellectually and spiritually, in the universe, and had acquired confidence in his own thought and his right and power to deliver a message to the world. He now abandoned, as unimportant, the negative side of his earlier Unitarianism and of his revolt from the forms and formal beliefs even of Unitarianism itself; and insisted on what is the positive side of Unitarianism, and, more broadly, of idealistic philosophy, — the thought that every man (as well as the Christ, though not in the same degree) has in himself something of the divine, is himself a part of the 'World-Soul,' and therefore has within himself, and himself is, the measure of all things; and so can meet fearlessly all the Sphinx-riddles of the universe. The other side of this conception is his thought that all Nature is but another manifestation, or another part of the same manifestation, of the 'World-Soul;' and that Nature is thus most closely related to the central reality in man. Hardly more than this need be said, I think, in elucidation of the so-called obscure and mystic poems of Emerson, and in elementary statement of his much-discussed 'transcendentalism.'

Strong in this belief in the intellectual independence of himself and of every individual man, Emerson prepared that famous address on 'The American Scholar,' which was given before the Phi Beta Kappa of Harvard University in 1837. That and his little book called *Nature*, published in the previous year, give us the two sides of his thought just stated. In the Phi Beta Kappa address, however, he stated this thought more especially as related to the intellectual attitude of America in 1837, and as a protest against its provincialism. 'Our day of dependence, our long apprenticeship to the learning of other lands, draws to a close . . . We will walk on our own feet; we will work with our own hands; we will speak our own minds . . . a nation of men will for the first time exist, because each believes himself inspired by the Divine Will, which also inspires all men.' This address was America's Declaration of Independence in the intellectual life. His Divinity School address, in the following year, was a spiritual declaration of independence: 'Let me admonish you, first of all, to go alone; to refuse the good models, even those which are sacred in the imagination of men, and dare to love God without mediator or veil . . . Thank God for these good men, but say, "I am also a man." . . . Yourself a new-born bard of the Holy Ghost, east behind you all conformity, and acquaint yourself at first hand with the Deity.' These two addresses aroused great opposition, but Emerson entirely disregarded it, and went quietly on his way. He seems to have regretted it only so far as he felt that opposition to him personally might injure the success in America of Carlyle's works, for which he stood sponsor.

In the years of this (as it then seemed) revolutionary thinking and speaking, Emerson was living a quiet, simple, practical life at Concord, taking his part in the affairs of the village, even accepting an election as hog-reeve of the township, delivering the Bi-Centennial Address in 1835, and writing the Hymn for the Completion of the Battle Monument in 1837. In 1834 his brother Edward died, and in 1836 his youngest brother, Charles. It was in 1838, 'at the mid-point of life's pathway,' as Dante expresses it in the first line of his *Divina Commedia*, that Emerson wrote the beautiful 'Dirge' for them: —

I reached the middle of the mount  
Up which the incarnate soul must climb,  
And paused for them, and looked around,  
With me who walked through space and time.

Five rosy boys with morning light  
Had leaped from one fair mother's arms,  
Fronted the sun with hope as bright,  
And greeted God with childhood's psalms.

The winding Concord gleamed below,  
Pouring as wide a flood  
As when my brothers, long ago,  
Came with me to the wood.

But they are gone, — the holy ones  
Who trod with me this lovely vale;  
The strong, star-bright companions  
Are silent, low, and pale.

My good, my noble, in their prime,  
Who made this world the feast it was,  
Who learned with me the lore of time,  
Who loved this dwelling-place!

They took this valley for their toy,  
They played with it in every mood;  
A cell for prayer, a hall for joy,—  
They treated Nature as they would.

They colored the horizon round;  
Stars flamed and faded as they bade,  
All echoes hearkened for their sound,—  
They made the woodlands glad or mad.

I touch this flower of silken leaf,  
Which once our childhood knew;  
Its soft leaves wound me with a grief  
Whose balsam never grew.

From this time on, Emerson's life was diversified only by home joys and sorrows. He married in 1835 Miss Lidian Jackson of Plymouth. In October, 1836, was born the beautiful boy who died in January, 1842, the 'wondrous child' of his 'Threnody.' Some of his most important poems were published in the *Dial* in 1840 and 1841, and he was editor of that short-lived transcendentalist magazine from 1842 to 1844. The first series of his *Essays* was published in 1841, the second in 1844, the second edition of *Nature* in 1849, *Representative Men* in 1850, and *English Traits* in 1856. He had taken a second brief trip to Europe in 1847-48. The only important collections of his verse during his lifetime were the *Poems* of 1846 (dated 1847), *May Day and Other Pieces*, 1867, and a selection in the *Little Classics* edition, 1876, including a few poems not previously collected. The editions of the *Poems*, 1883, and 1904 (*Centenary Edition*), both contain very important additions. His lecture field was extended in 1843 to New York and Philadelphia, in 1847-48 to England and Scotland, in 1854 to the States of the new Northwest, Michigan and Wisconsin, in 1862 to Washington, where Lincoln attended his lecture on 'American Civilization.' From 1854 to 1868 he gave many lecture courses in the West, and in 1871 went as far as the Pacific coast, but the larger part of his lectures were still given in New England, especially at Boston and Concord. In 1870 he gave a regular course in the Graduate School of Harvard, then just established. During these years his life in Concord was enriched by the friendships with Thoreau, Alcott, and Ellery Channing, as well as by his acquaintance in Boston and Cambridge with Longfellow, Agassiz, Holmes, and Lowell; he and Hawthorne were good neighbors, but never intimate friends. Concord became a shrine of pilgrimage, and many of the best and ablest minds of the time, as well as many unbalanced and vague idealists, made themselves, like Lowell, Emerson's faithful 'liegemen.'

Emerson always refused to be drawn into the anti-slavery contest as an active worker. He gives his reasons in full in the 'Ode to W. H. Channing.' He advocated the purchase of the slaves, for two billion dollars, — less than the war ultimately cost, in mere money expenditure, to the North alone. But though he did not identify himself with the abolitionists, he never hesitated on occasion to express his views clearly. His first speech on American Slavery was given at Concord in 1837, and his address on Emancipation in 1844; he voted with the Free-Soil party in 1850, joined in the mistaken opposition to Webster in 1851, denounced the Fugitive Slave Law and the assault on Charles Sumner, and took part in the memorial service for John Brown of Ossawatimie. In January, 1861, with Wendell Phillips, he was mobbed at the Tremont Temple in Boston. During the war he was a strong advocate of unconditional emancipation. But that he did wisely in keeping for the most part to 'his chosen work,' was proved by the outcome. His political idealism, his belief in man, which finds its perfect expression in the famous quatrain of 'Voluntaries,' became a pervading influence. To this influence, more than to anything else, said Lowell, 'the young martyrs of our Civil War owe the astounding strength of thoughtful heroism that is so touching in every record of their lives.' It was Emerson who was chosen

to give the address at the Harvard Commemoration for which Lowell's great Ode was written.

The last ten years of Emerson's life were somewhat clouded by a gradual failure of his mental powers, especially of the memory, but he was always, as Whitman has described him in his reminiscences, beautiful in old age. Holmes tells us of the last time he saw Emerson, at Longfellow's funeral, in 1882. Twice he rose, and looked intently on the face of the dead poet, and the last time turned and said to a friend near him, 'That gentleman was a sweet, beautiful soul, but I have entirely forgotten his name.' Emerson died just a month after Longfellow, April 24, 1882.

'I am born a poet,' wrote Emerson in 1835; 'of a low class, without doubt, yet a poet. That is my nature and vocation. My singing, to be sure, is very husky, and is for the most part in prose. Still, I am a poet in the sense of a perceiver and true lover of the harmonies that are in the soul and in matter, and specially of the correspondences between these and those.' At other times, Emerson said of himself, 'I am *not* a great poet.' On the other hand, Mr. Stedman calls him 'our most typical and inspiring poet.' It has often been said that he could not write poetry at all, and as often replied that he could write nothing else. Of course the question is largely one of definitions. Emerson's own dictum, 'The great poets are judged by the frame of mind they induce,' which has often been quoted in settlement of the question, is too vague to be of any real help. It would apply equally well as a standard for the judgment of great prose writers, or great orators. Confusion arises on the one hand from identifying poetry with whatever is noble and imaginative in thought or feeling, and on the other hand, from narrowing it to the mere singing faculty. The lyric is only one of the many poetic forms; and the lyric element in poetry is only one of its important elements. In the nineteenth century, to be sure, the lyric almost usurped to itself the whole domain and conception of poetry. But this error can be only a passing one. What lasts from century to century in poetry is even more often those words or phrases which condense thought or feeling or vision into simple and well-shaped rhythmic form, than the verse that merely appeals to the senses with easy-flowing or even haunting melody. We may even admit that Emerson was not a born singer, — many of the greatest poets have not been, in the narrow lyric sense of the word, — and still maintain, without falling into the opposite error of identifying poetry with that nobility of thought and originality of imagination which are merely possible material for poetry, that he was a born poet. For he proved himself a poet in the form as well as in the substance of his work. That he did not altogether lack the lyric note, the 'Earth Song' in 'Hamatreya,' a few passages in 'Woodnotes' and 'May Day,' and many stanzas of 'My Garden,' of 'Waldeinsamkeit,' and of the 'Concord Ode,' at once show. But, what is far more important, he has in a supreme degree the faculty of fitting thought to the form of verse rather than merely to its melody. Many a line, many a quatrain, many brief passages, and a few complete poems, stand, and are beginning more and more to stand out, in Emerson's work, like those lines of which Holmes said that a moment after they were written it seemed 'as if they had been carved on marble for a thousand years.'

## HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW

HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW was born at Portland, Maine, February 27, 1807, the second of eight children. He came of an old New England family. His father and his great-grandfather were graduates of Harvard College. On his mother's side he was descended from John and Priscilla Alden of Plymouth, and his maternal grandfather, General Peleg Wadsworth, was a distinguished officer in the Revolution. He spent a happy boyhood in Portland, the memory of which returns often in his poems, especially in 'My Lost Youth.' The first book that he remembered with delight was Irving's *Sketch Book*, which he read in numbers when it appeared. His first published verses, the 'Battle of Lovell's Pond,' were printed in the *Portland Gazette* when he was thirteen years old.

It might have been expected that he would go to Harvard College, as his father had

done. But his father was now a trustee of Bowdoin, the chief college of Maine, which had only recently been set apart from Massachusetts as a separate state. Longfellow entered the sophomore class at Bowdoin in 1822, and graduated in 1825, ranking second in his class. Hawthorne was in the same class; and Franklin Pierce, later President of the United States, and Hawthorne's close friend, was in the next preceding class.

In his last year at college, when the question of choosing a career in life became pressing, Longfellow wrote to his father (December 5, 1824): 'I take this early opportunity to write to you, because I wish to know fully your inclination with regard to the profession I am to pursue when I leave college. For my part, I have already hinted to you what would best please me. I want to spend one year at Cambridge for the purpose of reading history, and of becoming familiar with the best authors in polite literature; whilst at the same time I can be acquiring a knowledge of the Italian language, without an acquaintance with which I shall be shut out from one of the most beautiful departments of letters. The French I mean to understand pretty thoroughly before I leave college. After leaving Cambridge, I would attach myself to some literary periodical publication, by which I could maintain myself and still enjoy the advantages of reading. Now, I do not think that there is anything visionary or chimerical in my plan thus far. The fact is—and I will not disguise it in the least, for I think I ought not—the fact is, I most eagerly aspire after future eminence in literature; my whole soul burns most ardently for it, and every earthly thought centres in it. There may be something visionary in *this*, but I flatter myself that I have prudence enough to keep my enthusiasm from defeating its object by too great haste. Surely, there never was a better opportunity offered for the exertion of literary talent in our own country than is now offered. To be sure, most of our literary men thus far have not been professedly so, until they have studied and entered the practice of Theology, Law, or Medicine. But this is evidently lost time. . . . Whether Nature has given me any capacity for knowledge or not, she has at any rate given me a very strong predilection for literary pursuits, and I am almost confident in believing, that, if I can ever rise in the world, it must be by the exercise of my talent in the wide field of literature. With such a belief, I must say that I am unwilling to engage in the study of the law.'

On the last day of the year he wrote again: 'I am very desirous to hear your opinion of my project of residing a year at Cambridge. Even if it should be found necessary for me to study a profession, I should think a twelve-months' residence at Harvard before commencing the study would be exceedingly useful. Of divinity, medicine, and law, I should choose the last. Whatever I do study ought to be engaged in with all my soul,—for I *will be eminent* in something. The question then is, whether I could engage in the law with all that eagerness which in these times is necessary to success. I fear that I could not. . . . Let me then reside one year at Cambridge; let me study belles-lettres; and after that time it will not require a spirit of prophecy to predict with some degree of certainty what kind of a figure I could make in the literary world.' His father answered: 'A literary life, to one who has the means of support, must be very pleasant. But there is not enough wealth in this country to afford encouragement and patronage to merely literary men. And as you have not had the fortune (I will not say whether good or ill) to be born rich, you must adopt a profession which will afford you subsistence as well as reputation. I am happy to observe that my ambition has never been to accumulate wealth for my children, but to cultivate their minds in the best possible manner, and to imbue them with correct moral, political, and religious principles,—believing that a person thus educated will with proper diligence be certain of attaining all the wealth which is necessary to happiness. With regard to your spending a year at Cambridge, I have always thought it might be beneficial; and if my health should not be impaired and my finances should allow, I should be very happy to gratify you.' The letter goes on with a kindly criticism of some verses by Longfellow which had just been published.

Longfellow regretfully accepted his father's decision, choosing, among the three possible professions, the law. 'I can be a lawyer,' he says. 'This will support my real existence, literature my *ideal* one.' Just at the right moment, however, there came an

apparent solution of the difficulty in the shape of an offer from the trustees of Bowdoin to establish for Longfellow a professorship of modern languages, on condition that he should spend some time in Europe preparing for the position. His father provided the necessary money for foreign travel and study. The season of the year was not favorable for sailing, so it was not until the following May (1826), that he began the long voyage from New York to Havre. Meanwhile he spent some time in reading law in his father's office, and more in writing verses, some of which were printed in the *Atlantic Souvenir* of Philadelphia, and others in the *United States Literary Gazette* of Boston, to which he had already contributed during his last year in college. A few of these pieces were preserved in the section entitled 'Earlier Poems' of Longfellow's first volume of original verse, published fourteen years later.

On arriving in Europe, in June, 1826, he went first to Paris, and spent about eight months there; then to Spain (where he met Washington Irving), for nearly a year; then to Italy for almost another year (1828); and to Germany for his last six months, returning home in August, 1829. He had acquired a good practical knowledge of French, Spanish, and Italian, but had found German more difficult, and made comparatively little progress in it.

Longfellow entered on his work as a teacher of modern languages and literatures in September, 1829. The idea that study of the modern languages could form any serious part of a college curriculum was at that time a new one. Only one important professorship in the subject existed. There were not even any elementary text-books for English speaking students, and Longfellow had to begin by making his own. He published a translation of L'Homond's French Grammar; an elementary reading book in French, called *Manuel de Proverbes Dramatiques*; and a similar book for Spanish; he wrote in French a syllabus of the elements of Italian grammar, and edited a collection of extracts from Italian writers, writing his preface in Italian. He attended carefully and thoroughly to his work, hearing recitations, composing and correcting exercises, etc., and found time to write, outside of his text-books, only a few articles for the *North American Review*, dealing in elementary fashion with the French, Italian, and Spanish languages and literatures. He found the profession which he had chosen no less exacting than the law would have been, and almost more so; since, by employing him on work closely similar in kind to that which he most desired to do, it left him little freshness of mind for original composition. His work was well and faithfully done, however; he had the respect and liking of his students; and in 1834 the most important position within the field of his chosen work was offered to him, the 'Smith Professorship of the French and Spanish Languages and Literatures and of Belles Lettres,' at Harvard, previously held, since its foundation in 1816, by Ticknor. With the offer came a suggestion from the President of the University: 'Should it be your wish, previously to entering upon the duties of the office, to reside in Europe, at your own expense, a year or eighteen months, for the purpose of a more perfect attainment of the German, Mr. Ticknor will retain his office till your return.'

Longfellow eagerly accepted this offer. He had been married in 1831 to Mary Potter of Portland, and they sailed for Europe in April, 1835. They went first to England, then to Holland, where Mrs. Longfellow fell ill, and died in November. Longfellow was more than most men one for whom it was 'not good that he should be alone.' The rest of his year in Europe was spent in the shadow of sorrow and loneliness. He studied faithfully, mastered the German language, and buried himself in the reading of the modern German romantic literature, the influence of which is so strong in his prose romance, *Hyperion*. This romance was in part inspired by Miss Frances Appleton, whom he met the following summer in Switzerland, and who appears in it as Mary Ashburton.

On his return to America in the autumn (1836), he entered on the duties of his professorship at Harvard. He had somewhat less of routine work to do than at Bowdoin, and more lecturing. He had one assistant for each of the foreign languages taught, but still retained personal oversight of the work of each student, and often was confined to his classroom

work for three whole days in each week. He now formed broader and richer friendships than he had known before, particularly with Charles Sumner, then teaching in the Harvard Law School, with C. C. Felton, professor of Greek, and later President, with George S. Hillard, and others; and renewed his college friendship with Hawthorne. He had grown with the experiences of life, and now found the mechanical duties which filled so much of his time more irksome than before. 'Perhaps the worst thing in college life,' he wrote in his *Journal*, 'is this having your mind constantly a playmate for boys, constantly adapting itself to them, instead of stretching out and grappling with *men's* minds;' and again: 'Lecturing is all well enough, and in my history is an evident advance upon the past. But now one of my French teachers is gone, and this dragooning of schoolboys in lessons is like going backward.' On the whole, however, he believed in his work: 'Have I been wise to give up three whole days (in the week) to college classes? I think I have; for thus I make my presence felt here, and have no idle time to mope and grieve;' and again: 'After all Cambridge delighteth my heart exceedingly. I have fallen upon books with a most voracious appetite; . . . no doubt, if I could bring myself to give up all my time to the college . . . I could get along very comfortably, but the idea of standing still or going backward is not to be entertained.' Constantly the memory of his early ambitions, and of how little he has done to achieve them, returns to him: 'I could live very happily here if I could chain myself down to college duties and be nothing but a professor. I should then have work enough, and recreation enough. But I am too restless for this. What should I be at fifty? A fat mill-horse, grinding round with blinkers on. . . . This will not do. It is too much for one's daily bread when one can live on so little.'

These extracts are from his *Journal* of 1838-39; and it is in these same years that he is writing the few brief and simple poems that are the real beginning of his poetical work: the 'Psalm of Life,' the 'Light of Stars,' the 'Hymn to the Night,' 'Footsteps of Angels,' and the 'Beleaguered City.' These five poems and four others almost equally well known, with seven 'Earlier Poems,' were collected and published in a slender volume called *Voices of the Night*, in 1839. *Hyperion* was published in the same year. Two years later he published another small collection entitled *Ballads and Other Poems*, containing the 'Skeleton in Armor,' the 'Wreck of the Hesperus,' the 'Village Blacksmith,' 'Eudymion,' the 'Rainy Day,' 'Maidenhood,' and 'Excelsior.' In 1842 the 'Spanish Student' appeared, as a serial, in *Graham's Magazine*.

Longfellow was now thirty-five years old. His health was somewhat impaired by his years of close work, and he found himself compelled to take a half-year's leave of absence, which he spent mostly at Marienberg, in Germany. Here began his lasting friendship with Freiligrath, who later translated 'Hiawatha.' On his way home he passed through England, met Landor and Dickens, read Dickens's *American Notes*, and was particularly impressed with 'the grand chapter on slavery,' as he calls it. During the return voyage, being confined to his cabin for about a fortnight, he wrote the seven brief *Poems on Slavery*. These, with one additional poem, were published in a little volume of thirty-one pages, in December, 1842, and were hailed with delight by the abolitionists, who felt that a very strong ally had joined their forces. Longfellow, however, declined to accept the congressional nomination which was offered him through Whittier by the Liberty party, or to take any further part in the anti-slavery contest. He even omitted the poems on slavery from the first collected edition of his poems, an act for which he has been severely blamed. Yet even Lowell, ardent abolitionist as he was at the time, and uncompromising as he was on the question of omitting any of his own anti-slavery poems, felt that Longfellow was justified in doing so, since he might well consider these poems to be the least valuable part of his work. It is probable, also, that the gentle Longfellow, who did not lack courage, but who did lack 'the fighting edge,' omitted the poems rather from a genuine desire to avoid wounding any of his readers than from mere policy. In any case, the poems are unimportant. 'I have attempted only to invest the subject with a poetic coloring,' wrote Longfellow to John Forster; and that is all he succeeded in doing; many will say, with a false poetic coloring. The *Poems on Slavery* have none of the deep

conviction and intensity of Whittier's or Lowell's, and are more closely related to German literary romanticism than to American social conditions.

Longfellow had not even yet 'found himself,' and had barely begun, in a few ballads, his real poetical work. He had written in his *Journal* in 1840, speaking of a visit to Mr. Norton: 'There I beheld what perfect happiness may exist on this earth, and felt how I stood alone in life, cut off for a while from those dearest sympathies for which I long.' It was at Marienberg that he wrote the sonnet 'Mezzo Cammin,' oppressed with a feeling that, though he was the author of a few brief and popular poems, yet he had spent half of man's allotted years without having begun that 'tower of song with lofty parapet,' which it had been his ambition to build. He was almost entirely dependent upon home life and home affection; and when he at last found these, in his marriage with Miss Frances Appleton, in 1843, his maturity and the creative period of his life really began. He finished his work as a mere editor and compiler (except for the *Poems of Places*, much later) with the *Poets and Poetry of Europe*, in 1845. At the end of that year was published the *Belfry of Bruges and Other Poems*, dated 1846, which closes the first period of his work, and already shows a great advance in artistic quality over the crude moralizing and vaguely romantic commonplace of his earliest work. The first collected edition of his poems had been published in a sumptuous volume by Carey and Hart of Philadelphia, in 1845, and 'Evangeline' was just begun.

The characteristics of all Longfellow's work, which are especially marked in its first period, are not such as appeal either to the intellectual critic or to the lover of art for art's sake. A good deal of its romantic imagery strikes us now as false, and its simplicity as bathos. 'Excelsior' is a truly imaginative conception, but in expression it degenerates into 'A tear stood in his bright blue eye. But still he answered with a sigh,' etc. The expression is truly imaginative in that French passage from which he took the idea of the 'Old Clock on the Stairs,' yet Longfellow makes of it such lines as 'Some are married, some are dead,' which is almost as bad as the line that Tennyson declared to be typical Wordsworthian blank verse, 'A Mr. Wilkinson, a clergyman.' But it is the very triumph of these early poems that most of their lines seem more commonplace than they really are, because they have become, by their simplicity and genuineness, a part of the universal feeling of the race. Simple and genuine they are, except for the false romantic imagery already spoken of, such as is found in the 'Reaper and the Flowers.' Their appeal is universal; and to each individual it may at some time be new, as it was to all the young America of 1840. Even in our sophisticated times, it would be a pretty poor sort of youth who would not still be thrilled at his first reading of the 'Psalm of Life.' 'The Day is Done,' hackneyed as it is, is still full of simple and restful beauty.

On the last day of 1845, Longfellow wrote in his *Journal*: 'Peace to the embers of burnt-out things; fears, anxieties, doubts, all gone! I see them now as a thin blue smoke, hanging in the bright heaven of the past year, vanishing away into utter nothingness. Not many hopes deceived, not many illusions scattered, not many anticipations disappointed; but love fulfilled, the heart comforted, the soul enriched with affection!' The first period of his life and writing was in fact finished, and his next fifteen years were to contain the largest and the most important part of his poetical work. In the earlier period he had been growing, experimenting, prelude; in the third and last period, which was to follow 1861, he touched deeper notes sometimes, and attained to greater artistic beauty and condensation; but he produced no such large body of lasting work as in the middle period.

This middle period, from the end of 1845 to the beginning of 1861, contains 'Evangeline' (1847); 'Hiawatha' (1855); the 'Courtship of Miles Standish' (1858); the 'Building of the Ship,' and other poems, especially of the home, in *The Seaside and the Fireside* (dated 1850, published 1849); the *Golden Legend* (1851); the 'Saga of King Olaf' and others of the best *Tales of a Wayside Inn*, not published until later; 'My Lost Youth'; the 'Fiftieth Birthday of Agassiz'; and some of Longfellow's most beautiful poems of childhood, including 'Children,' and 'The Children's Hour.' Longfellow's own home was made complete in these years by the coming of his five children, three girls and two boys,

and his outside life was broadened by his growing friendship with Agassiz, Lowell, and Mr. Charles Eliot Norton, and by his continued close relations with Sumner. The duties of his professorship, however, were becoming more and more irksome to him. 'What vexes me most,' he wrote in 1847, 'is being cribbed and shut up in college, not that I dislike work, but that I have other work to do than this;' and again later: 'I seem to be quite banished from all literary work save that of my professorship. . . . I am tired, not of work, but of the sameness of work . . . these hours in the lecture-room, like a schoolmaster! It is pleasant enough when the mind gets engaged in it, — but "art is long and life is short."' In 1853 he wrote nothing except the brief poem to Lowell, 'The Two Angels.' In 1854, realizing that his means were quite adequate for his support without a college salary, — they had been so since his second marriage, — he finally decided to resign his professorship and devote himself entirely to literature. The next few years were full of work. 'Hiawatha' was written immediately after his retirement from the professorship, the *Courtship of Miles Standish and other Poems* was published in 1858, and in the next three years were written many of his best shorter poems and some of the *Tales of a Wayside Inn*.

Longfellow had his greatest success as a narrative poet. For the average reader 'the tale's the thing,' and Longfellow possessed the surprisingly rare faculty of telling a simple story well. For him too the tale was the thing; he realized by instinct the simple and essential first point that it must be constantly interesting, and he had the faculty of making it so. In local flavor and truth of detail his work is vastly inferior to Whittier's. Some score of years after he wrote the 'Wreck of the Hesperus,' he still vaguely wondered just where the Reef of Norman's Woe might be, though it was not fifteen miles from his own summer home. He knew the country of 'Hiawatha' only through books, and for 'Evangeline' he formed his ideas of the Mississippi from reading (perhaps mostly in Chateaubriand), and from a pictorial diorama which was exhibited at Boston while he was writing the poem, and which he enthusiastically welcomed as a great help. Yet his narrative, as such, is better even than Whittier's, whether in the ringing ballads of the Northland, from the 'Skeleton in Armor' to the 'Saga of King Olaf,' or in the gentler, easily flowing tales that are more characteristic of his own mood, from 'Evangeline' to 'King Robert of Sicily' or the 'Birds of Killingworth.' And in 'Hiawatha,' by some wondrous alchemy due to the true simplicity of his own mind, he did catch the true local color, even in detail as well as in mood, of a life that he had never seen. 'Hiawatha' has won surprisingly well, and has stood the test of being judged even by the people whose life and legends it describes. It stands out, more and more, as Longfellow's most important work. This is anything but the fate predicted for it by those intellectual critics who (with the exception of Emerson) judged it so severely at its first appearance. In the 'Courtship of Miles Standish,' Longfellow was dealing with a life that he knew more intimately, by its partial survival and by its traditions living all about him, as well as from books; though he did not take the trouble to visit Plymouth until the poem had been completed. His treatment of this theme is entirely happy and true. The 'Golden Legend' is naturally much less so, though it is by far the best part of the ambitious trilogy which he planned, under the title of *Christus: a Mystery*. It has charm and the glamour of mediæval story, but Longfellow was manifestly unfitted for any real dramatic composition, or for the broad picturing of a great period like the Middle Ages.

In 1861 came the tragic break in Longfellow's life. It was in July. Mrs. Longfellow's light summer dress caught fire, and she was so severely burned that she died the next morning. Longfellow also was seriously burned in trying to smother the flames, and could not leave his room on the day of her funeral, — the anniversary of their wedding day.

The story of his next few years is completely told in the first of the 'Divina Commedia' sonnets. That of the later years is suggested in the 'Cross of Snow.' 'I have taken refuge in this translation of the Divina Commedia,' he wrote to his friend Freiligrath. For a while he wrote little else, except to complete and publish, at the end of 1863, the first part of *Tales of a Wayside Inn*; the second and third parts were published in

1872 and 1873. The two *New England Tragedies*, the first of which had been written in 1856-57, were published in 1868, the *Divine Tragedy* was written and published in 1871, and the completed *Christus* in 1872. He wrote 'Morituri Salutamus,' for the fiftieth anniversary of his college class, and this was published in 1875, in the *Masque of Pandora and Other Poems*, together with the 'Hanging of the Crane,' which was written for Thomas Bailey Aldrich, and which holds a peculiar place in Longfellow's work, as summing up within itself so many of the different aspects of home life, of all of which he was the poet laureate.

During this last period of his life, he wrote often in a form which he had hardly more than once or twice tried before, except for translations, — the sonnet. In much of the work of this period, especially the sonnets, his feeling is deeper and stronger (it could not be truer), and his expression richer and more condensed, than before. Longfellow was always a true artist and careful of the form of his work, as few of our American poets, except Poe, have been. The little lyric 'Sea-Weed,' of an earlier period, shows how carefully and well he could fit the form of his idea to a somewhat intricate stanza. But his art was never rich or varied, and he lacked most of all that tenseness of expression which is the mark of any very strong artistic or imaginative feeling for language. In the sonnets, however, his feeling, now deepened and strengthened by the experiences of his constantly growing life, and by his communion with Dante, was confined within the narrow walls of a form that did not allow it to flow out thin over the marshes of the commonplace, as it had so often done before, and as it did still in the 'Hanging of the Crane.' There is much of this same strength and condensation in his noble 'Morituri Salutamus.'

Longfellow's last years were made happier by the devotion of his own children, and by the love of all children who knew him — and it would seem that few in America, or even in England or Germany, did not know him. The story of his gift from the Cambridge schoolchildren on his seventy-second birthday, and of their constant visits to his home, is too well known to be repeated. His seventy-fifth birthday was celebrated in the schools throughout the United States, and was made memorable also by Whittier's poem, 'The Poet and the Children.' He died not quite a month later, March 24, 1882.

Longfellow's life was that of a simple, faithful, true man and gentleman, kindly and home-loving. And that is what he has put into his verse. He has been well called 'the laureate of the common human heart.' He is first and most of all the poet of the home. There is not an aspect of home life that he has not touched and beautified. If much of his poetry is mere commonplace, it is always the making beautiful of the commonplace. Bryant's poetry often — as in the well-known lines from 'The Battle-Field,' — and Emerson's still oftener, are the making noble of the commonplace. Whittier's is the simple and true rendering of it. Whitman's is the apotheosis of it. Poe is the only one of our chief elder poets who is not commonplace, who detests and despises the commonplace.

Next, Longfellow is the only American who has successfully written poems of any considerable length. The long poem is different from the short poem, as the novel is from the short story, not only in quantity, but in kind. For those who can conceive only that kind or class of poetry which finds fit expression in the short poem, Poe's dictum that 'there is no such thing as a long poem' is true; for the poem which by its nature belongs to the short poem class, yet tries to extend itself to greater length, is, as Poe saw, inevitably a failure. The long poem is an entirely different literary class or genre. It is Longfellow's distinctive glory that he had the patience and the sustained artistic power to win success in this difficult form, — a kind of success which is almost the rarest in literature, and second only to success in the true dramatic presentation of character and life. Without comparing Longfellow's achievement in this field with that of greater foreign poets, we may say that it alone would give him an unanswerable claim to the largest space in any fully representative collection of our chief American poets.