

GLIMPSSES OF LONGFELLOW IN SOCIAL LIFE.

"To live in hearts we leave behind is not to die."

THIS sketch of Longfellow, done from life, will preserve, we trust, in spite of its unstudied lines, some features of the man which might be lost in a more labored or more important work. He was himself so simple in the plan and habit of his life that it is well to recall him as he lived and walked among us, before his statue is placed on the pedestal of his just fame.

From his early youth Longfellow was a scholar, and his acquisition of foreign languages was most unusual.

As his reputation widened, he was led to observe this to be a gift as well as an acquirement. It gave him the convenient and agreeable power of entertaining the foreigners who sought his society. He said one evening, late in life, that he could not help being struck with the little trouble it was to him to recall any language he had ever studied, even though he had not spoken it for years. He had found himself talking Spanish, for instance, with considerable ease a few days before. He said he could not recall having even read anything in Spanish for many years, and it was certainly thirty since he had given it any study. Also it was the same with German. "I cannot imagine," he continued, "what it would be to take up a language and try to master it at this period of my life. I cannot remember how or when I learned any of them;—to-night I have been speaking German, without finding the least difficulty."

Hawthorne once said in speaking of his own early life and the days at Bowdoin College, where he and Longfellow were in the same class, that no two young men could have been more unlike. Longfellow, he explained, was a tremendous student, and always carefully dressed, while he himself was extremely careless of his appearance, no student at all, and entirely incapable at that period of appreciating Longfellow. Later in life a warm friendship grew up between them, and I find a little note from Longfellow in which he says he has had a sad letter from Hawthorne, and adds: "I wish we could have a little dinner for him, of two sad authors and two jolly publishers, nobody else!"

Of Longfellow's student-days Mr. Fields once wrote: "I hope they keep bright the little room numbered twenty-seven in Maine Hall in Bowdoin College, for it was in that pleasant apartment, looking out on the pine

groves, that the young poet of nineteen wrote many of those beautiful earlier pieces, now collected in his works. These early poems were all composed in 1824 and 1825, during his last years in college, and were printed first in a periodical called 'The United States Literary Gazette,' the sapient editor of which magazine once kindly advised the ardent young scholar to give up poetry and buckle down to the study of law! 'No good can come of it,' he said; 'don't let him do such things; make him stick to prose!' But the pine-trees waving outside his window kept up a perpetual melody in his heart, and he could not choose but sing back to them."

One of the earliest pictures I find of the every-day life of Longfellow when a youth is a little anecdote told by him in humorous illustration of the woes of young authors. I quote from a brief diary.—"Longfellow amused us to-day by talking of his youth, and especially with a description of the first poem he ever wrote, called 'The Battle of Lovell's Pond.' It was printed in a Portland newspaper one morning, and the same evening he was invited to the house of the Chief Justice to meet his son, a rising poet just returned from Harvard. The Judge rose in a stately manner during the evening and said to his son: 'Did you see a poem in to-day's paper upon the Battle of Lovell's Pond?' 'No, sir,' said the boy, 'I did not.' 'Well, sir,' responded his father, 'it was a very stiff production. G——, get your own poem on the same subject, and I will read it to the company.' The poem was read aloud, while the perpetrator of the 'stiff production' sat, as he said, very still in a corner."

Nor did the young author find a speedy pecuniary value accorded to his labors. He amused his friends one day by confessing that Mr. Buckingham paid him one year's subscription of the "Boston Courier," for his translation of the "Coplas de Manrique," and several prose articles. After this he sent his poems to Messrs. Little and Brown, who presented him the volume in which they appeared and sundry other books as compensation.

What a singular contrast was this beginning to his future literary history. Late in life his publisher wrote: "I remember how instantaneously in the year 1839 'The Voices of the Night' sped triumphantly on its way! At

present Longfellow's currency in Europe is almost unparalleled. Twenty-four publishing houses in England have issued the whole or a part of his works. Many of his poems have been translated into Russian and Hebrew. 'Evangeline' has been translated three times into German, and 'Hiawatha' has not only gone into nearly all the modern languages, but can now be read in Latin. I have seen translations of all Longfellow's principal works, in prose and poetry, in French, Italian, German, Spanish, Portuguese, Dutch, Swedish, and Danish. The Emperor of Brazil has himself translated and published 'Robert of Sicily,' one of the poems in 'Tales of a Wayside Inn,' into his native tongue, and in China they use a fan which has become immensely popular on account of the 'Psalm of Life' being printed on it in the language of the Celestial Empire. Professor Kneeland, who went to the national millennial celebration in Iceland, told me that when he was leaving that far-away land, on the verge almost of the Arctic circle, the people said to him: 'Tell Longfellow that we love him; tell him we read and rejoice in his poems; tell him that Iceland knows him by heart.' To-day there is no disputing the fact that Longfellow is more popular in the best sense than any other living poet; that his books are more widely circulated, command greater attention, and bring more copyright money than those of any other author, not excepting Tennyson, now writing English verse!"

There was always a striking contrast between the perfect modesty and simplicity of Longfellow and the blare of popularity which beset him. Though naturally of a buoyant disposition and fond of pleasure, he lived as far as possible from the public eye, especially during the last twenty years of his life. The following note gives a hint of his natural gayety, and details one of the many excuses by which he always declined to speak in public; the one memorable exception being that beautiful occasion at Bowdoin, when he returned in age to the scenes of his youth and read to the crowd assembled there to do him reverence his poem entitled "Morituri Salutamus." After speaking of the reasons which must keep him from the Burns festival, he adds:

"I am very sorry not to be there. You will have a delightful supper, or dinner, whichever it is; and human breath enough expended to fill all the trumpets of Iskander for a month or more.

"I behold as in a vision a friend of ours, with his left hand under the tails of his coat, blowing away like mad; and, alas! I shall not be there to applaud. All this you must do for me; and also eat my part of the haggis, which I hear is to grace the feast. This shall be your duty and your reward."

The reference in this note to the trumpets of Iskander is the only one in his letters

regarding a poem which was a great favorite of his, by Leigh Hunt, called "The Trumpets of Dookarnein." It is a poem worthy to make the reputation of a poet, and is almost a surprise even among the varied riches of Leigh Hunt. Many years after this note was written, Longfellow used to recall it to those lovers of poetry who had chanced to escape a knowledge of its beauty.

In spite of his dislike of grand occasions, he was a keen lover of the opera and theater. He was always the first to know when the opera season was to begin and to plan that we might have a box together. He was always ready to hear "Lucia" or "Don Giovanni," and to make a festival time at the coming of Salvini or Neilson. There is a tiny notelet among his letters, with a newspaper paragraph neatly cut out and pasted across the top, detailing the names of his party at a previous appearance at a theater, a kind of notoriety which he particularly shuddered at; but in order to prove his determination in spite of everything, he writes below:

"Now for 'Pinafore,' and another paragraph! Saturday afternoon would be a good time."

He easily caught the gayety of such occasions, and in the shadow of the box-curtains would join in the singing or the recitative of the lovely Italian words with a true poet's delight. The strange incidents of a life subject to the taskmaster Popularity are endless. One day he wrote:

"A stranger called here and asked if Shakspeare lived in this neighborhood. I told him I knew no such person. Do you?"

Day by day he was besieged by every possible form of interruption which the ingenuity of the human brain could devise; but his patience and kindness, his determination to accept the homage offered him in the spirit of the giver, whatever discomfort it might bring himself, was continually surprising to those who watched him year by year. Mr. Fields wrote: "In his modesty and benevolence I am reminded of what Pope said of his friend Garth: 'He is the best of Christians without knowing it.'"

In one of Longfellow's notes he alludes humorously to the autograph nuisance:

"Do you know how to apply properly for autographs? Here is a formula I have just received on a postal card:

"DEAR SIR: As I am getting a collection of the autographs of all honorable and worthy men, and think yours such, I hope you will forfeit by next mail. Yours, etc."

And of that other nuisance, sitting for a portrait, he laughingly wrote one day: "'Two or three sittings'—that is the illusory phrase. Two or three sittings have become a standing

joke." And yet how seldom he declined when it was in his power to serve an artist! His generosity knew no bounds.

When a refusal of any kind was necessary, it was wonderful to see how gently it was expressed. A young person having written from a Western city to request him to write a poem for her class, he said: "I could not write it, but tried to say 'No' so softly that she would think it better than 'Yes.'"

He was distinguished by one grace which was almost peculiar to himself in the time in which he lived—his tenderness toward the undeveloped artist, the man or woman, youth or maid, whose heart was set upon some form of ideal expression, and who was living for that. Whether they possessed the power to distinguish themselves or not, to such persons he addressed himself with a sense of personal regard and kinship. When fame crowned the aspirant, no one recognized more keenly the perfection of the work, but he seldom turned aside to attract the successful to himself. To the unsuccessful he lent the sunshine and overflow of his own life, as if he tried to show every day afresh that he believed noble pursuit and not attainment to be the purpose of our existence.

In a letter written in 1860 Longfellow says:

"I have no end of poems sent me for candid judgment and opinion. Four cases on hand at this moment. A large folio came last night from a lady. It has been chasing me round the country; has been in East Cambridge and in West Cambridge, and finally came by the hands of Policeman S— to my house. I wish he had waived examination, and committed it (to memory). What shall I do? These poems weaken me very much. It is like so much water added to the Spirit of Poetry."

And again he writes:

"I received this morning a poem with the usual request to give 'my real opinion' of it. I give you one stanza."

After quoting the verse and giving the subject of the poem, he continues:

"In his letter the author says, 'I did so much better on poetry than I thought I could as a beginner, that I really have felt a little proud of my poems.' He also sends me his photograph 'at sixty-five years of age,' and asks for mine 'and a poem' in return. I had much rather send him these than my 'real opinion,' which I shall never make known to any man, except on compulsion and under the seal of secrecy."

His kindness and love of humor carried him through many a tedious interruption. He generously overlooked the fact of the subterfuges to which men and women resorted in order to get an interview, and to help them out made as much of their excuses as possible. Speaking one day of the people who came to see him at Nahant, he said: "One man, a perfect stranger, came with an omnibus full of ladies. He descended, introduced himself, then returning to the omnibus took out all

the ladies, one, two, three, four, and five, with a little girl, and brought them in. I entertained them to the best of my ability, and they staid an hour. They had scarcely gone when a forlorn woman in black came up to me on the piazza, and asked for a dipper of water. 'Certainly,' I replied, and went to fetch her a glass. When I brought it she said, 'There is another woman just by the fence who is tired and thirsty; I will carry this to her.' But she struck her head as she passed through the window and spilled the water on the piazza. 'Oh, what have I done!' she said. 'If I had a floor-cloth, I would wipe it up.' 'Oh, no matter about the water,' I said, 'if you have not hurt yourself.' Then I went and brought more water for them both, and sent them on their way, at last, refreshed and rejoicing." Once Longfellow drew out of his pocket a queer request for an autograph, saying "that the writer loved poetry in most any style, and would he please copy his 'Break, break, break' for the writer?" He also described in a note a little encounter in the street, on a windy day, with an elderly French gentleman in company with a young lady, who introduced them to each other. The Frenchman said:

"Monsieur, vous avez un fils qui fait de la peinture."

"Oui, Monsieur."

"Il a du mérite. Il a beaucoup d'avenir."

"Ah," said I, "c'est une belle chose que l'avenir."

"The elderly French gentleman rolled up the whites of his eyes and answered:

"Oui, c'est une belle chose; mais vous et moi, nous n'en avons pas beaucoup!"

"Superfluous information!"

H. W. L."

It would be both an endless and unprofitable task to recall many more of the curious experiences which Longfellow's popularity brought down upon him. There is a passage among Mr. Fields's notes, however, in which he describes an incident during Longfellow's last visit to England, which should not be overlooked. Upon his arrival, the Queen sent a graceful message, and invited him to Windsor Castle, where she received him with all the honors; but he told me no foreign tribute touched him deeper than the words of an English hod-carrier, who came up to the carriage door at Harrow, and asked permission to take the hand of the man who had written the "Voices of the Night."

There are many letters belonging to the phase of Longfellow's life dwelt upon in this sketch, but they belong more properly to his biography. There is a brief note, however, written in 1849, which gives a pleasant idea of the close relation already existing between him and his publisher. He writes:

"MY DEAR FIELDS: I am extremely glad you like the new poems so well. What think you of the enclosed instead of the sad ending of 'The Ship'? Is it

better? . . . I send you also 'The Lighthouse' once more; I think it is improved by your suggestions. See if you can find anything more to retouch. And finally, here is a letter from Hirst. You see what he wants, but I do not like the idea of giving my 'Dedication' to the 'Courier.' Therefore I hereby give it to you, so that I can say it is disposed of.

"Am I right or wrong?"

There was no break nor any change in this friendship during the passing of the years; but in 1861 there is a note containing only a few words, which shows that a change had fallen upon Longfellow himself, a shadow which never could be lifted from his life. He writes:

"MY DEAR FIELDS: I am sorry to say No instead of Yes; but so it must be. I can neither write nor think; and I have nothing fit to send you but my love, which you cannot put into the magazine."

For ever after the death of his wife he was a different man. His friends suffered for him and with him, but he walked alone through the valley of the shadow of death. They were glad when he turned to his work again, and still more glad when he showed a desire for their interest in what he was doing.

It was not long before he began to busy himself continuously with his translation of the "Divina Commedia," and in the journal of 1863 I find:

"August.—A delightful day with Longfellow at Nahant. He read aloud the last part of his new volume of poems, in which each one of a party of friends tells a story. Ole Bull, Parsons, Monti, and several other characters are introduced."

"September 1st.—A cold storm by the seashore, but there was great pleasure in town in the afternoon. Longfellow, Paine, Dwight, and Fields went to hear Walcker play the great new organ in the Music Hall for the first time since its erection. Afterwards they all dined together. Longfellow comes in from Cambridge every day, and sometimes twice a day, to see George Sumner, who is dying at the Massachusetts General Hospital."

"September 19th.—Longfellow and his friend George W. Greene, Charles Sumner, and Dempster the singer, came in for an early dinner. A very cozy, pleasant little party. The afternoon was cool, and everybody was in kindly humor. Sumner shook his head sadly when the subject of the English ironclads was mentioned. The talk prolonged itself upon the condition of the country. Longfellow's patriotism flamed. His feeling against England runs more deeply and strongly than he can find words to express. There is no prejudice nor childish partisanship, but it is hatred of the course she has pursued at this critical time. Later, in speaking of poetry and some of the less known and younger poets, Longfellow recalled some good passages in the

poems of Bessie Parkes and Jean Ingelow. As evening approached we left the table and came to the library. There in the twilight Dempster sat at the piano and sang to us, beginning with Longfellow's poem called 'Children,' which he gave with a delicacy and feeling that touched every one. Afterwards he sang the 'Bugle Song' and 'Turn, Fortune,' which he had shortly before leaving England sung to Tennyson; and then after a pause he turned once more to the instrument and sang 'Break, break, break.' It was very solemn, and no one spoke when he had finished, only a deep sob was heard from the corner where Longfellow sat. Again and again, each time more uncontrolled, we heard the heart-rending sounds. Presently the singer gave us another and less touching song, and before he ceased Longfellow rose and vanished from the room in the dim light without a word."

"September 27th.—Longfellow and Greene came in town in the evening for a walk and to see the moonlight in the streets, and afterwards to have supper. . . . He was very sad, and seemed to have grown an old man since a week ago. He was silent and absent-minded. On his previous visit he had borrowed Sidney's 'Arcadia' and Christina Rossetti's poems, but he had read neither of the books. He was overwhelmed with his grief, as if it were sometimes more than he could endure."

"Sunday, October.—Took five little children to drive in the afternoon, and stopped at Longfellow's. It was delightful to see their enjoyment and his. He took them out of the carriage in his arms and was touchingly kind to them. His love for children is not confined to his poetic expressions or to his own family; he is uncommonly tender and beautiful with them always."

I remember there was one little boy of whom he was very fond, and who came often to see him. One day the child looked earnestly at the long rows of books in the library, and at length said:

"Have you got 'Jack the Giant-Killer'?"

Longfellow was obliged to confess that his library did not contain that venerated volume. The little boy looked very sorry, and presently slipped down from his knee and went away; but early the next morning Longfellow saw him coming up the walk with something tightly clasped in his little fists. The child had brought him two cents with which he was to buy a "Jack the Giant-Killer" to be his own.

He did not escape the sad experiences of the war. His eldest son was severely wounded, and he also went, as did Dr. Holmes and other less famous but equally anxious parents, in search of his boy.

The diary continues:

"December 14th.—Went to pass the afternoon with Longfellow, and found his son able to walk about a little. He described his own arrival at a railway station south of Washington. He found no one there but a rough-looking officer, who was walking up and down the platform. At each turn he regarded Longfellow, and at length came up, and taking his hand said:

"Is this Professor Longfellow? It was I who translated "Hiawatha" into Russian. I have come to this country to fight for the Union."

In the year 1865 began those Wednesday evenings devoted to reading the new translation of Dante. They were delightful occasions. Lowell, Norton, Greene, Howells, and such other Dante scholars or intimate friends as were accessible, made up the circle of kindly critics. Those evenings increased in interest as the work progressed, and when it was ended and the notes written and read, it was proposed to reread the whole rather than to give up the weekly visit to Longfellow's house. In 1866 he wrote to Mr. Fields:

"Greene is coming expressly to hear the last canto of 'Paradiso' to-morrow night, and will stay the rest of the week. I really hoped you would be here, but as you say nothing about it I begin to tremble. Perhaps, however, you are only making believe and will take us by surprise. So I shall keep your place for you.

"This is not to be the end of all things. I mean to begin again in September with the dubious and difficult passages; and if you are not in too much of a hurry to publish, there is still a long vista of pleasant evenings stretching out before us. We can pull them out like a spy-glass. I am shutting up now to recommence the operation."

In December of the same year he wrote:

"The first meeting of the Dante Club Redivivus is on Wednesday next. Come and be bored. Please not to mention the subject to any one yet awhile, as we are going to be very quiet about it."

"January, 1867.—Dante Club at Longfellow's again. They are revising the whole book with the minutest care. Lowell's accuracy is surprising and of great value to the work; also Norton's criticisms. Longfellow stands apart at his desk taking notes and making corrections, though of course no one can know yet what he accepts."

Longfellow's true life was that of a scholar and a dreamer; and everything besides was a duty, however pleasurable or beautiful the experience might become in his gentle acceptance. He was seldom stimulated to external expression by others. Such excitement as he could express again was always self-excitement; anything external rendered him at once a listener and an observer. For this reason it is peculiarly difficult to give any idea of his lovely presence and character to those who

have not known him. He did not speak in epigrams. It could not be said of him:

"His mouth he could not ope,
But out there flew a trope."

Yet there was an exquisite tenderness and effluence from his presence which was more humanizing and elevating than the eloquence of many others.

Speaking one day of his own reminiscences, Longfellow said, "that however interesting such things were in conversation, he thought they seldom contained legitimate matter for bookmaking; and ——'s life of a poet, just then printed, was, he thought, peculiarly disagreeable, chiefly because of the unjustifiable things related of him by others. This strain of thought brought to his mind a call he once made with a letter of introduction, when a youth in Paris, upon Jules Janin. The servant said her master was at home, and he was ushered immediately into a small parlor, in one corner of which was a winding stairway leading into the room above. Here he waited a moment while the maid carried in his card, and then returned immediately to say he could go up. In the upper room sat Janin under the hands of a barber, his abundant locks shaken up in wild confusion, in spite of which he received his guest, quite undisturbed, as if it were a matter of course. There was no fire in the room, but the fire-place was heaped with letters and envelopes, and a trail of the same reached from his desk to the grate. After a brief visit Longfellow was about to withdraw, when Janin detained him, saying: 'What can I do for you in Paris? Whom would you like to see?'

"I should like to know Madame George Sand."

"Unfortunately that is impossible! I have just quarreled with Madame Sand!"

"Ah! then, Alexandre Dumas—I should like to take him by the hand!"

"I have quarreled with him also, but no matter! *Vous perdriez vos illusions.*"

"However, he invited me to dine the next day, and I had a singular experience; but I shall not soon forget the way in which he said, 'wous perdriez vos illusions.'

"When I arrived on the following day I found the company consisted of his wife and himself, a little red-haired man who was rather quiet and cynical, and myself. Janin was amusing and noisy, and carried the talk on swimmingly with much laughter. Presently he began to say hard things about women, when his wife looked up reproachfully and said, 'Déjà, Jules!' During dinner a dramatic author arrived with his play, and Janin ordered him to be shown in. He treated the poor fellow brutally, who in turn bowed low to the great power. He

did not even ask him to take a chair. Madame Janin did so, however, and kindly too. The author supplicated the critic to attend the first appearance of his play. Janin would not promise to go, but put him off indefinitely, and presently the poor man went away. Longfellow said he tingled all over with indignation at the treatment the man received, but Janin looked over to his wife, saying, 'Well, my dear, I treated this one pretty well, didn't I?'

"'Better than sometimes, Jules,' she answered."

Altogether it was a strange scene to the young American observer.

"*July, 1867.*—Passed the day at Nahant. As Longfellow sat on the piazza wrapped in his blue camlet cloak, he struck me for the first time as wearing a venerable aspect. Before dinner he gathered wild roses to adorn the table, and even gave a careful touch himself to the arrangement of the wines and fruits. He was in excellent spirits, full of wit and lively talk. Speaking of the use and misuse of words, he quoted Chateaubriand's mistake (afterwards corrected) in his translation of 'Paradise Lost,' when he rendered

'Siloa's brook that flowed
Fast by the oracle of God'

as

'Le ruisseau de Siloa qui coulait rapidement.'

In talking about natural differences in character and temperament, he said of his own children that he agreed with one of the old English divines who said, "Happy is that household wherein Martha still reproves Mary!"

In February, 1868, it was decided that Longfellow should go to Europe with his family. He said that the first time he went abroad it was to see places alone and not persons; the second time he saw a few persons, and so pleasantly combined the two; he thought once that on a third visit he should prefer to see people only; but all that was changed now. He had returned to the feeling of his youth. He was eager to seek out quiet places and wayside nooks, where he might rest in retirement and enjoy the beautiful country sights of Europe undisturbed.

The following year found him again in Cambridge, refreshed by his absence. The diary continues: "He has been trying to further the idea of buying some of the low lands in Cambridge for the colleges. If this can be done, it will save much future annoyance to the people from wretched hovels and bad odors, besides holding the land for a beautiful possession forever. He has given a good deal of money himself. This might be called 'his latest work.'"

"*January, 1870.*—Longfellow and Bayard Taylor came to dine. Longfellow talked of

translators and translating. He advanced the idea that the English from the insularity of their character were incapable of making a perfect translation. Americans, French, and Germans, he said, have much larger adaptability to and sympathy in the thought of others. He would not hear Chapman's Homer or anything else quoted on the other side, but was zealous in enforcing this argument. He anticipates much from Taylor's version of Faust. All this was strikingly interesting, as showing how his imagination wrought with him, because he was arguing from his own theory of the capacity of the races and in the face of his knowledge of the best actual translations existing to-day, the result of the scholarship of England.

"Longfellow speaks of difficulty in sleeping. In his college days and later he had the habit of studying until midnight and rising at six in the morning, finding his way as soon as possible to his books. Possibly this habit still prevents him from getting sufficient rest. However light may be the literature in which he indulges before going to bed, some chance thought may strike him as he goes up the stairs with the bedroom candle in his hand which will preclude all possibility of sleep until long after midnight.

"His account of Jules Janin during this last visit to Europe was an odd little drama. He had grown excessively fat, and could scarcely move. He did not attempt to rise from his chair as Longfellow entered, but motioned him to a seat by his side. Talking of Victor Hugo and Lamartine, 'Take them for all in all, which do you prefer?' asked Longfellow.

"'Charlatan pour charlatan, je crois que je préfère Monsieur de Lamartine,' was the reply.

"Longfellow amused me by making two epigrams:

"What is autobiography?
It is what a biography ought to be.'

And again:

"When you ask one friend to dine,
Give him your best wine!
When you ask two,
The second best will do!"

"He brought in with him two poems translated from Platen's 'Night-Songs.' They are very beautiful.

"'What dusky splendors of song there are in King Alfred's new volume,' he said. 'It is always a delight to get anything new from him. His "Holy Grail" and Lowell's "Cathedral" are enough for a holiday, and make this notable.'"

When Longfellow talked freely as at this dinner, it was difficult to remember that he was not really a talker. The natural reserve of his nature made it sometimes impossible for him to express himself in ordinary inter-

course. He never truly made a confidant of anybody except his Muse.

"I never thought," he wrote about this time, "that I should come back to this kind of work. It transports me to my happiest years, and the contrast is too painful to think of." And again in calmer mood: "The 'ruler of the inverted year' (whatever that may mean) has, you perceive, returned again, like a Bourbon from banishment, and is having it all his own way, and it is not a pleasant way. Very well, one can sit by the fire and read, and hear the wind roar in the chimney, and write to one's friends, and sign one's self 'yours faithfully,' or as in the present instance, 'yours always.'"

His sympathetic nature was ever ready to share and further the gayety of others. He wrote one evening:

"I have been kept at home by a little dancing-party to-night. . . . I write this arrayed in my dress-coat with a rose in my buttonhole, a circumstance, I think, worth mentioning. It reminds me of Buffon, who used to array himself in his full dress for writing 'Natural History.' Why should we not always do it when we write letters? We should, no doubt, be more courteously and polite, and perhaps say handsome things to each other. It was said of Villemain that when he spoke to a lady he seemed to be presenting her a bouquet. Allow me to present you this postscript in the same polite manner, to make good my theory of the rose in the buttonhole."

How delightful it is to catch the intoxication of the little festival in this way. In his endeavor to further the gayeties of his children he had received again a reflected light and life which his love for them had helped to create.

"December 14, 1870.—Taylor's 'Faust' is finished, and Longfellow is coming with other friends to dinner to celebrate the ending of the work. . . .

"A statuette of Goethe was on the table. Longfellow said Goethe never liked the statue of himself by Rauch, from which this copy was made. He preferred above all others a bust of himself by a Swiss sculptor, a copy of which Taylor owns. He could never understand, he continued, the story of that unpleasant interview between Napoleon and Goethe. Eckermann says Goethe liked it, but Longfellow thought the Emperor's manner of address had a touch of insolence in it. The haunts of Goethe in Weimar were pleasantly recalled by both Longfellow and Taylor, to whom they were familiar; also that strange portrait of him taken standing at a window, and looking out over Rome, in which nothing but his back can be seen.

"I find it impossible to recall what Longfellow said, but he scintillated all the evening. It was an occasion such as he loved best. His *jeux d'esprit* flew rapidly right and left, often setting the table in a roar of laughter, a most unusual thing with him."

There was evidently no such pleasure to Longfellow as that of doing kindnesses. One of many notes bearing on such subjects belongs to this year, and begins:

"A thousand thanks for your note and its inclosure. There goes a gleam of sunshine into a dark house, which is always pleasant to think of. I have not yet got the senator's sunbeam to add to it; but as soon as I do, both shall go shining on their way."

"January, 1871.—Dined at Longfellow's, and afterwards went upstairs to see an interesting collection of East Indian curiosities. Passing through his dressing-room, I was struck with the likeness of his private rooms to those of a German student or professor; a Goethean aspect of simplicity and space everywhere, with books put up in the nooks and corners and all over the walls. It is surely a most attractive house!"

Again I find a record of a dinner at Cambridge: "The day was spring-like, and the air full of the odors of fresh blossoms. As we came down over the picturesque old staircase, he was standing with a group of gentlemen near by, and I heard him say aloud unconsciously, in a way peculiar to himself, 'Ah, now we shall see the ladies come downstairs!' Nothing escapes his keen observation — as delicate as it is keen."

And in the same vein the journal rambles on:

"Friday.—Longfellow came in to luncheon at one o'clock. He was looking very well; . . . his beautiful eyes fairly shone. He had been at Manchester-by-the-Sea the day before to dine with the Curtises. Their truly romantic and lovely place had left a pleasant picture in his mind. Coming away by the train, he passed in Chelsea a new soldiers' monument which suggested an epigram to him that he said, laughingly, would suit any of the thousand of such monuments to be seen about the country. He began somewhat in this style:

"The soldier asked for bread,
But they waited till he was dead,
And gave him a stone instead,
Sixty and one feet high!"

"We all returned to Cambridge together, and being early for our own appointment elsewhere, he carried us into his library and read aloud 'The Marriage of Lady Wentworth.' E——, with pretty girlish ways and eyes like his own, had let us into the old mansion by the side door, and then lingered to ask if she might be allowed to stay and hear the reading too. He, consenting, laughingly lighted a cigar and soon began. His voice in reading was sweet and melodious, and it was touched with tremulousness, although this was an easier poem to read aloud than many others, being strictly narrative. It is full of New England life and a beautiful addition to his works. He has a fancy for

making a volume, or getting some one else to do it, of his favorite ghost stories, 'The Flying Dutchman,' 'Peter Rugg,' and a few others."

On another occasion the record says:

"Passed the evening at Longfellow's. As we lifted the latch and entered the hall-door, we saw him reading an old book by his study lamp. It was the 'Chansons d'Espagne,' which he had just purchased at what he called the massacre of the poets; in other words, at the sale that day of the library of William H. Prescott. He was rather melancholy, he said: first, on account of the sacrifice and separation of that fine library; also because he is doubtful about his new poem, the one on the life of our Saviour. He says he has never before felt so cast down.

"What an orderly man he is! Well-ordered, I should have written. Diary, accounts, scraps, books—everything where he can put his hand upon it in a moment."

"December, 1871.—Saturday Mr. Longfellow came in town and went with us to hear twelve hundred school children sing a welcome to the Russian Grand Duke in the Music Hall. It was a fine sight, and Dr. Holmes's hymn, written for the occasion, was noble and inspiring. Just before the Grand Duke came in I saw a smile creep over Longfellow's face. 'I can never get over the ludicrousness of it,' he said. 'All this array and fuss over one man!' He came home with us afterwards, and lingered awhile by the fire. He talked of Russian literature—its modernness, and said he had sent us a delightful novel by Tourguéneff, 'Liza,' in which we should find charming and vivid glimpses of landscape and life like those seen from a carriage window. We left him alone in the library for a while, and returning found him amusing himself over the 'Ingoldsby Legends.' He was reading the 'Coronation of Victoria,' and laughing over Count Froganoff, who could not get prog enough, and was found eating underneath the stairs. He wants to have a dinner for Bayard Taylor, whose coming is always the signal for a series of small festivities. His own 'Divine Tragedy' is just out, and everybody speaks of its simplicity and beauty."

"April.—In the evening Longfellow came in town for the purpose of hearing a German gentleman read an original poem, and he persuaded me to go with him. The reader twisted his face up into frightful knots, and delivered his poem with vast apparent satisfaction to himself if not to his audience. It was fortunate on the whole that the production was in a foreign tongue, because it gave us the occupation, at least, of trying to understand the words—the poem itself possessing not the remotest interest for either of us. It was in the old sentimental German style familiar to the readers

of that literature. Longfellow amused me as we walked home by imitating the sing-song voice we had been following all the evening. He also recited in the original that beautiful little poem by Platen, 'In der Nacht, in der Nacht,' in a most delightful manner. 'Ah,' he said, 'to translate a poem properly it must be done into the meter of the original, and Bryant's "Homer," fine as it is, has this great fault, that it does not give the music of the poem itself.' He came in and took a cigar before walking home over the bridge alone. . . .

"Emerson asked Longfellow at dinner about his last visit to England, of Ruskin and other celebrities. Longfellow is always reticent upon such subjects, but he was eager to tell us how very much he had enjoyed Mr. Ruskin. He said it was one of the most surprising things in the world to see the quiet, gentlemanly way in which Ruskin gave vent to his extreme opinions. It seems to be no effort to him, but as if it were a matter of course that every one should give expression to the faith that is in him in the same unvarnished way as he does himself, not looking for agreement, but for conversation and discussion. 'It is strange,' Ruskin said, 'being considered so much out of harmony with America as I am, that the two Americans I have known and loved best, you and Norton, should give me such a feeling of friendship and repose.' Longfellow then spoke of Mrs. Matthew Arnold, whom he liked very much—thought her, as he said, 'a most lovely person.' Also of the 'beautiful Lady Herbert,' as one of the most delightful of women. . . .

"Longfellow came in to an early dinner to meet Mr. Joseph Jefferson, Mr. William Warren, and Dr. Holmes. He said he felt like one on a journey. He had left home early in the morning, had been sight-seeing in Boston all day, was to dine and go to the theater with us afterwards. The talk naturally turned upon the stage. Longfellow said he thought Mr. Charles Mathews was entirely unjust in his criticisms upon Mr. Forrest's *King Lear*. He considered Mr. Forrest's rendering of the part as very fine and close to nature. He could not understand why Mr. Mathews should under-rate it as he did. Longfellow showed us a book given him by Charles Sumner. In it was an old engraving (from a painting by Giulio Clovio) of the moon, in which Dante is walking with his companion. He said it was a most impressive picture to him. He knew it in the original; also there is a very good copy in the Cambridge Library among the copies of illuminated manuscripts."

There is a little note belonging to this period full of poetic feeling and giving more than a hint at the wearifulness of interrupting visitors:

"I send you the pleasant volume I promised you yesterday. It is a book for summer moods by the seaside, but will not be out of place on a winter night by the fireside. . . . You will find an allusion to the 'blue borage flowers' that flavor the claret-cup. I know where grows another kind of bore-age that embitters the goblet of life. I can spare you some of this herb, if you have room for it in your garden or your garret. It is warranted to destroy all peace of mind, and finally to produce softening of the brain and insanity.

"Better juice of vine
Than berry wine!
Fire! fire! steel, oh, steel!
Fire! fire! steel and fire!"

The following, written in the spring of the same year, gives a hint of what a festival season it was to him while the lilacs which surround his house were in bloom:

"Here is the poem, copied for you by your humble scribe. I found it impossible to crowd it into a page of note-paper. Come any pleasant morning, as soon after breakfast or before as you like, and we will go on with the 'Michael Angelical' manuscript. I shall not be likely to go to town while the lilacs are in bloom."

The rambling diary continues: "To-day Longfellow sent us half a dozen bottles of wine, and after them came a note saying he had sent them off without finding time to label them. 'They are wine of Avignon,' he added, 'and should bear this inscription from Redi:

"Benedetto
Quel claretto
Che si spilla in Avignone."

About this period Longfellow invited an old friend, who had fallen into extreme helplessness from ill health, to come and make him a visit. It was a great comfort to his friend, a scholar like himself, "to nurse the dwindling faculty of joy" in such companionship, and he lingered many weeks in the sunshine of the old house. Longfellow's patience and devoted care for this friend of his youth was a signal example of what a true and constant heart may do unconsciously, in giving expression and recognition to the bond of a sincere friendship. Long after his friend was unable to rise from his chair without assistance or go unaccompanied to his bedroom, Longfellow followed the lightest unexpressed wish with his sympathetic vision and performed the smallest offices unbidden. "Longfellow, will you turn down my coat-collar?" I have heard him say in a plaintive way, and it was a beautiful lesson to see the quick and cheerful response which would follow many a like suggestion.

In referring to this trait of his character, I find among the notes made by Mr. Fields on Longfellow: "One of the most occupied of all our literary men and scholars, he yet finds time for the small courtesies of existence, those minor attentions that are so often neglected. One day, seeing him employed in cutting something from a newspaper, I asked him

what he was about. 'Oh,' said he, 'here is a little paragraph speaking kindly of our poor old friend Blank; you know he seldom gets a word of praise, poor fellow, nowadays, and thinking he might not chance to see this paper, I am snipping out the paragraph to mail to him this afternoon. I know that even these few lines of recognition will make him happy for hours, and I could not bear to think he might perhaps miss seeing these pleasant words so kindly expressed.'"

"*May Day, 1876.*— Longfellow dined with us. He said during the dinner, when we heard a blast of wintry wind howling outside, 'This is May day enough; it does not matter to us how cold it is outside.' He was inclined to be silent, for there were other and brilliant talkers at the table, one of whom said to him in a pause of the conversation, 'Longfellow, tell us about yourself; you never talk about yourself.' 'No,' said Longfellow gently, 'I believe I never do.' 'And yet,' continued the first speaker eagerly, 'you confessed to me once——' 'No,' said Longfellow, laughing, 'I think I never did.'"

And here is a tiny note of compliment, graceful as a poet's note should be:

"I have just received your charming gift, your note and the stately lilies; but fear you may have gone from home before my thanks can reach you.

"How beautiful they are, these lilies of the field; and how like American women! Not because 'they neither toil nor spin,' but because they are elegant and 'born in the purple.'"

There is a brief record in 1879 of a visit to us in Manchester-by-the-Sea. Just before he left he said, "After I am gone to-day, I want you to read Schiller's poem of the 'Ring of Polycrates,' if you do not recall it too distinctly. You will know then how I feel about my visit." He repeated also some English hexameters he had essayed from the first book of the *Iliad*. He believes the work may be still more perfectly done than has ever yet been achieved. We drove to Gloucester wrapped in a warm sea-fog. His enjoyment of the green woods and the sea-breeze was delightful to watch. "Ay me! ay me! woods may decay," but who can dare believe such life shall cease from the fair world!

Seeing the Portland steamer pass one night, a speck on the horizon, bearing as he knew his daughter and her husband, he watched it long, then said, "Think of a part of yourself being on that moving speck."

The Sunday following that visit he wrote from Portland:

"Church-bells are ringing; clatter of church-going feet on the pavement; boys crying 'Boston Herald'; voices of passing men and women; these are the sounds that come to me at this upper window, looking down into the street.

"I contrast it all with last Sunday's silence at Man-

chester-by-the-Sea, and remember my delightful visit there. Then comes the thought of the moonlight and the music and Shelley's verses,

"As the moon's soft splendor
O'er the faint, cold starlight of heaven
Is thrown ;"

and so on

"To some world far from ours,
Where moonlight and music and feeling
Are one."

"How beautiful this song would sound if set to music by Mrs. Bell, and chanted by her in the twilight."

Later he inclosed the song, which is as follows, and I venture to reprint it because it is seldom found among Shelley's poems :

AN ARIETTE FOR MUSIC.

To a lady singing to her accompaniment on the guitar.

As the moon's soft splendor
O'er the faint, cold starlight of heaven
Is thrown,
So thy voice most tender
To the strings without soul has given
Its own.

The stars will awaken,
Though the moon sleep a full hour later
To-night ;
No leaf will be shaken,
Whilst the dews of thy melody scatter
Delight.

Though the sound overpowers,
Sing again, with thy sweet voice revealing
A tone
Of some world far from ours,
Where music and moonlight and feeling
Are one.

He added :

"I find the song in my scrap-book, and send it to save you the trouble of hunting for it.

"H. W. L."

It was first reprinted in "The Waif," a thin volume of selections published by Longfellow many years ago. "The Waif" and "The Estray" preserved many a lovely poem from oblivion, till it should find its place at length among its fellows.

Already in 1875 we find Longfellow at work upon his latest collection of poems, which he called "Poems of Places." It was a much more laborious and unrewarding occupation than he had intended, and he was sometimes weary of his self-imposed task. He wrote at this period :

"No politician ever sought for Places with half the zeal that I do. Friend and Foe alike have to give Place to
Yours truly "H. W. L."

Again he says :

"What evil demon moved me to make this collection of 'Poems of Places' ? Could I have foreseen the time it would take, and the worry and annoyance it would bring with it, I never would have undertaken it. The worst of it is, I have to write pieces now and then to fill up gaps."

More and more his old friends grew dear to him as the years passed and "the goddess Neuralgia," as he called his malady, kept him chiefly at home. He wrote in 1877 :

"When are you coming back from your Cottage on the Cliffs ? The trees on the Common and the fountains are calling for you.

"Thee, Tityrus, even the pine trees,
The very fountains, the very
Copses are calling."

Perhaps also your creditors. At all events I am, who am your debtor."

The days were fast approaching when the old things must pass away. He wrote tenderly :

"I am sorry to hear that you are not quite well yourself. I sympathize with you, for I am somebody else. It is the two W's, Work and Weather, that are playing the mischief with us. . . . You must not open a book ; you must not even look at an inkstand. These are both contraband articles, upon which we have to pay heavy duties. We cannot smuggle them in. Nature's custom-house officers are too much on the alert."

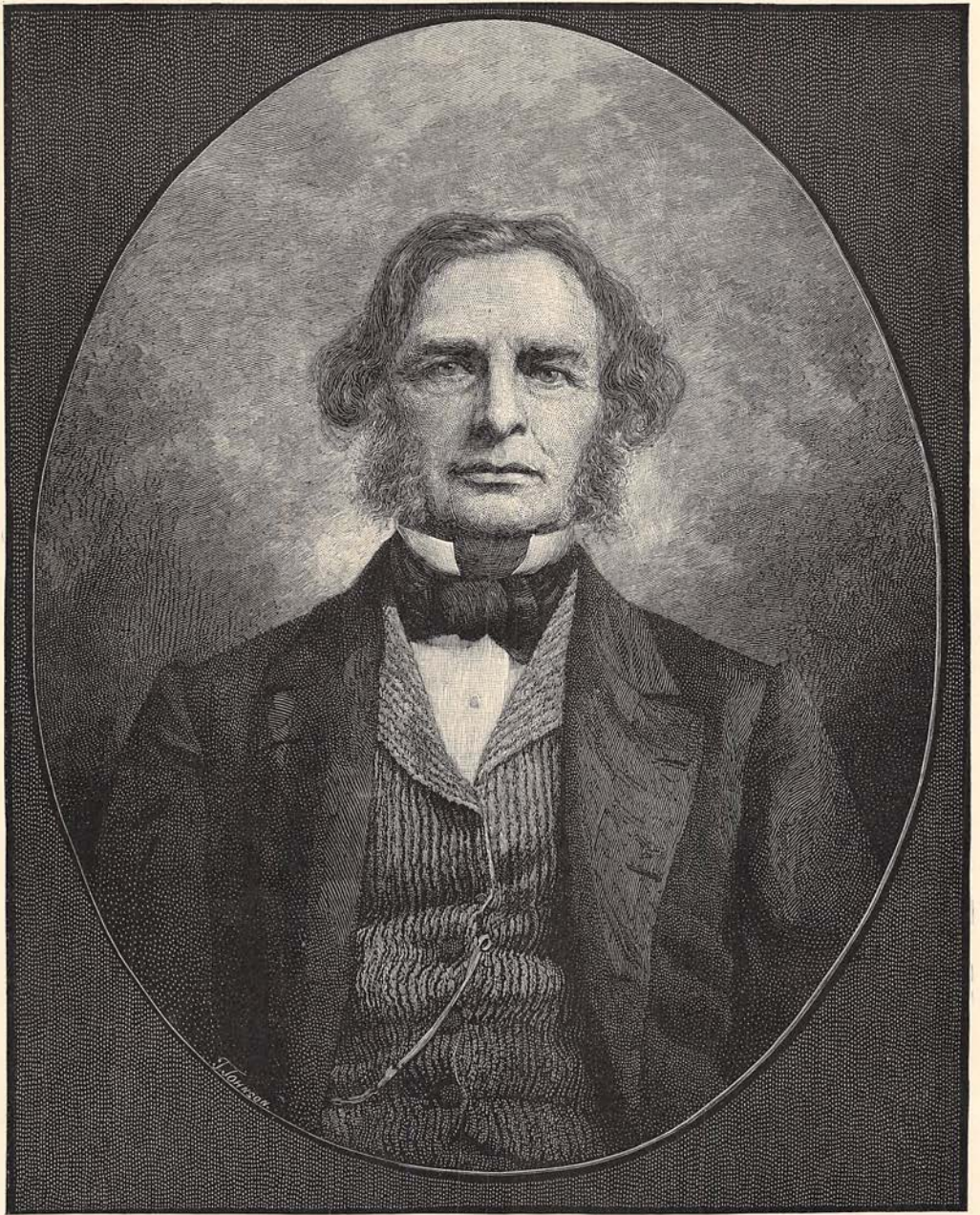
In 1880 he again wrote, describing the wedding of the daughter of an old friend :

"A beautiful wedding it was ; an ideal village wedding, in a pretty church, and the Windmill Cottage of our friend resplendent with autumnal flowers. In one of the rooms there was a tea-kettle hanging on a crane in the fire-place.

"So begins a new household. But Miss Neilson's death has saddened me, and yesterday Mrs. Horsford came with letters from Norway, giving particulars of Ole Bull's last days, his death and burial. The account is very touching. All Bergen's flags at half-mast ; telegrams from the King ; funeral oration by Björnson. The dear old musician was carried from his island to the mainland in a steamer, followed by a long line of other steamers. No Viking ever had such a funeral."

And here the extracts from letters and journals must cease. It was a golden sunset, in spite of the increasing infirmities which beset him ; for he could never lose his pleasure in making others happy, and only during the few last days did he lose his own happiness among his books and at his desk. The influence his presence gave out to others, of calm good cheer and tenderness, made those who knew him feel that he possessed, in larger measure than others, what Jean Paul Richter calls "a heavenly unfathomableness which makes man godlike, and love towards him infinite." Indeed this "heavenly unfathomableness" was a strong characteristic of his nature, and the gracious silence in which he often dwelt gave a rare sense of song without words. Therefore, perhaps on that day when we gathered around the form through which his voice was never again to utter itself, and heard his own words upon the air saying, "Weep not, my friends ! rather rejoice with me. I shall not feel the pain, but shall be gone, and you shall have another friend in heaven," it was impossible not to believe that he was with us still, the central spirit, comforting and uplifting the circle of those who were most dear to him.

Annie Fields.



Henry W. Longfellow