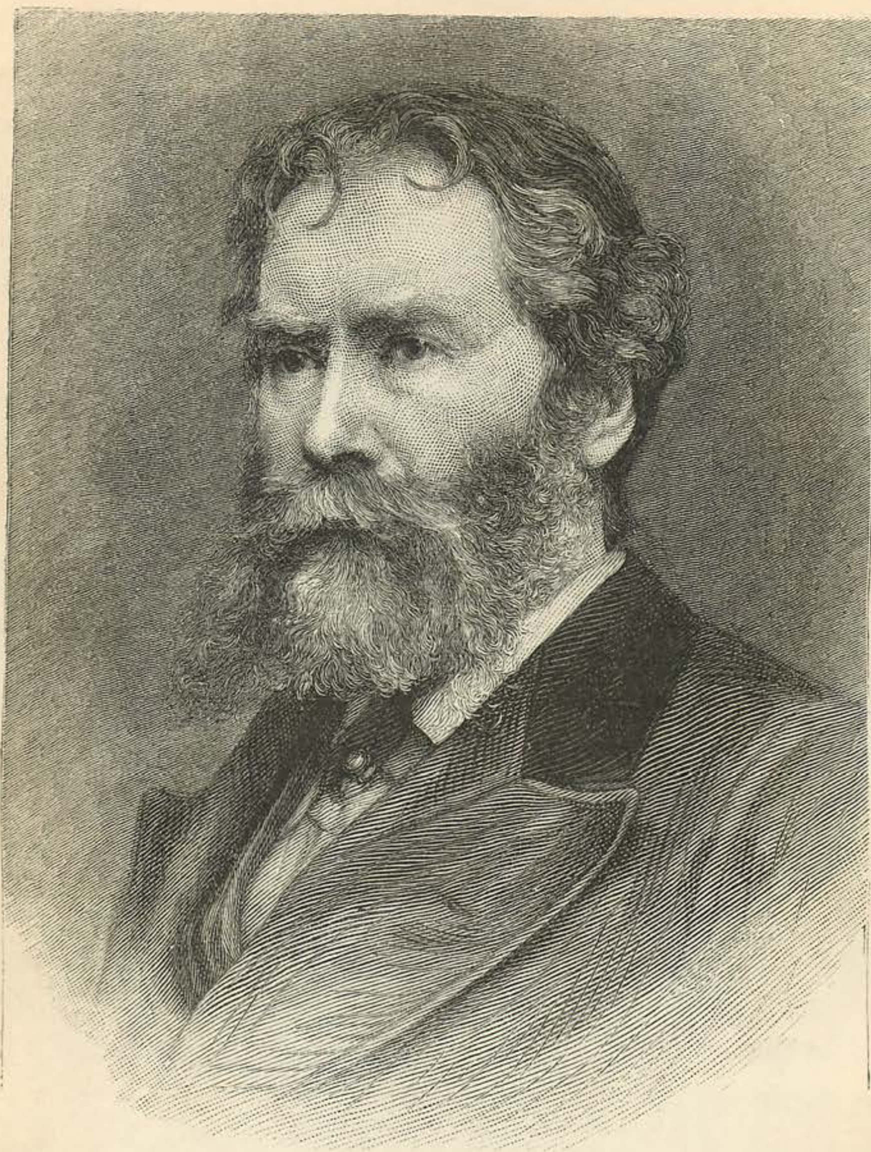
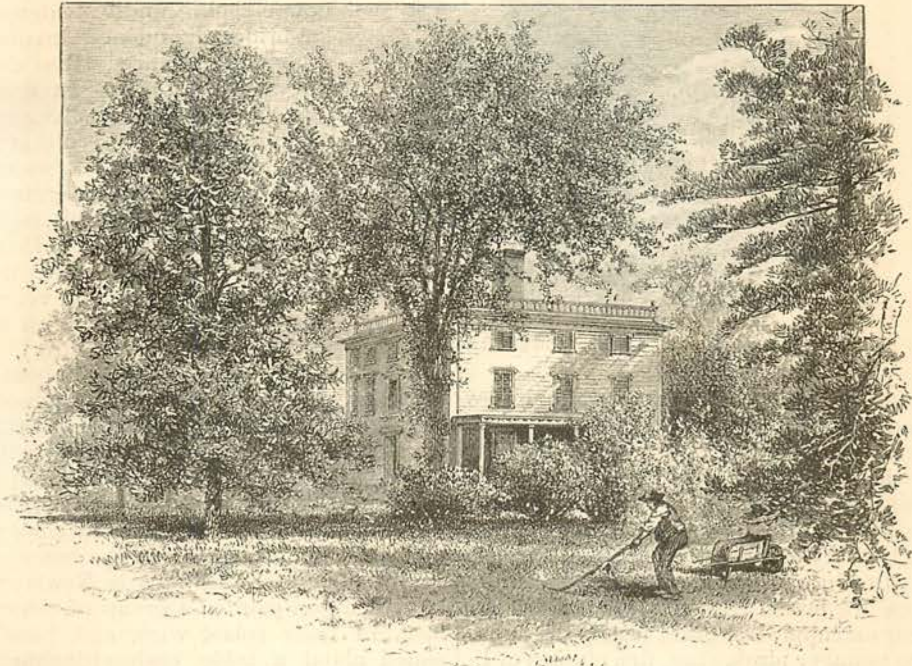


JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL.

THE Lowells are descended from Percival Lowell, of Bristol, England, who settled in Newbury, Massachusetts, in 1639. In the ancient records of the colony the name is written Lowle. The family has been distinguished in every generation. Francis Cabot Lowell, for whom the city of Lowell was named, was among the first to perceive that the wealth of New England was to come from manufactures. His son, John Lowell, Jun., who died at the age of thirty-seven, left a bequest of $250,000 to establish the Lowell Institute, in Boston. The father of the poet was Dr. Charles Lowell, an eminent clergyman (1782–1861); his grandfather, John Lowell (1743–1802), was an eminent judge, and the author of the section in the Bill of Rights by which slavery was abolished in Massachusetts.

Dr. Charles Lowell married Harriet Spence, a native of Portsmouth, New Hampshire, belonging to a Scotch family, descended, according to tradition, from the Sir Patrick Spens of the well-known ballad. The mother of Harriet Spence was named Traill, a native of one of the Orkneys. Mrs. Harriet Spence Lowell had a great memory, an extraordinary aptitude for languages, and a passionate fondness for ancient songs and ballads. She had five children: Charles, Robert (the Rev. Robert Traill Spence Lowell, an author and poet), Mary Lowell Putnam (a lady of singular ability and learning), Rebecca, and James Russell, the subject of this sketch, who was the youngest, born February 22, 1819. The children were nurtured with romances and minstrelsy. The old songs were sung over their cradles, and repeated in early school-days, until poetic lore and taste—foreign grafts in many minds—were as natural to them as the bodily senses.

It seldom happens in this country that a lifetime is passed without change of residence; but, except during his visits abroad, Lowell has always lived in the house in which he was born.



HOME OF JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL, CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS.

Elmwood, though not very ancient, has an interesting history. The house was built by Peter Oliver, who was stamp-distributer just before the outbreak of the Revolution. It will be remembered that, being waited upon by a Boston committee "of about four thousand," and requested to resign his obnoxious office, Oliver hurriedly complied, and shortly after left the country. The house was next occupied by Elbridge Gerry, an eminent man in his day, from whose crooked plan of districting, the political term "gerrymandering" was derived. After his death it became the property of Dr. Lowell, about a year before the birth of the poet. It is of wood, three stories high, and stands on the base-line of a triangle of which the apex reaches nearly to the gate of Mount Auburn Cemetery. The ample grounds have an abundant growth of trees, most of them planted by the prudent doctor as a screen from the winds. There are a few native elms, but those which give the name to the estate are English, sturdy as oaks, standing in front of the house. In front, also, are large and beautiful ash-trees.

In the deep space at the rear there is perfect seclusion: it seems like the still-

ness of the woods. The slopes of Mount Auburn, beautiful with native growths, are separated only by a narrow street. Dwellings are not numerous or near. All around the inclosure a gigantic hedge stands like a jagged silhouette against the sky. This lofty hedge is made up of a great variety of trees: it bristles with points of tufted pines; it is set at mid-height with thrifty and elbowing willows and dense horse-chestnuts; and beneath, it is filled in with masses of shrubs. In the area are broad grassy levels, with a few pear and apple trees, and nearer the house are younger pines, elms, firs, clumps of lilacs, syringas, fleur-de-lis, gorgeous rugs of striped grass, and other ornamental growths disdained by modern gardeners, but immortal in the calendars of poets.

JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL, IN HIS THIRTY-SIXTH YEAR.

Elmwood is full of birds—robins and their homelier cousins, the brown thrushes, swallows, bluebirds, flaming orioles, yellow-birds, wrens, and sparrows. The leafy coverts are inviolate, and some of the tenants, even the migratory robins, keep house the year round. All are perfectly at home, and they appear to sing all day. On summer evenings, after the chatter of the sparrows has ceased, and the robins have sung for curfew, you may hear the *pée-ad* of night-hawks, and the screams of herons and other aquatic birds, as they fly over from the neighboring waters.

During the lifetime of his father the poet occupied as a study the west front room in the upper story. The distant view from the study windows is broad and panoramic, comprising portions of Brighton, Brookline, and Roxbury, and ending on the left with the dome of the State-House in Boston. The nearer view, over the neighboring lawns, includes the Charles and the marshes. The sluggish river winds through tracts of salt-meadow, now approaching camps of meditative willows, now creeping under "caterpillar bridges," and now turning away from terraced villas and turfy promontories. In summer the long coils of silver are set in a ground of green that is vivid and tremulous, like watered silk; in autumn the grasses are richly mottled purple, sage, and brown; and the play of sunlight and shadow, while the winds are brushing the velvet this way and that, gives an inimitable life to the picture.

This study contained about a thousand volumes of books, a few classic engravings, water-color paintings by Stillman, Roman photographs, a table with papers and letters in confusion, and a choice collection of pipes. Over the mantel was a panel, venerable and smoky, that had been brought from the house of one of the ancient Lowells in Newbury, on which was painted a group of clergymen, in their robes, wigs, and bands, seated about a table, each enjoying a long clay pipe. On an arch above an alcove was this legend in Latin: "In essentials, unity; in non-essentials, liberty; in all things, charity." This picture, though scarcely a work of art, is interesting for the light it throws upon the social customs of the clergy of the last century. This room was for many years the delightful resort of a few friends, especially on Sunday afternoons.

After the death of Dr. Lowell the libraries were brought together in two connected rooms on the lower floor. The new study was more spacious and convenient, but the precious associations and the beautiful outlook belonged to the upper chamber.

The house throughout was a study of

the picturesque. In the hall were ancestral portraits (one bearing the date of 1582), busts of Dr. Charles Lowell and his father, a stately Dutch clock, and Page's Titianesque portraits of the poet and his wife in their youthful days. The prevailing tone of the rooms was sombre, but the furniture was antique, solid, and richly carved, such as would make a covetous virtuoso unhappy for life. Books were everywhere, mostly well-chosen standard works in various languages, including a liberal proportion of plays and romances.

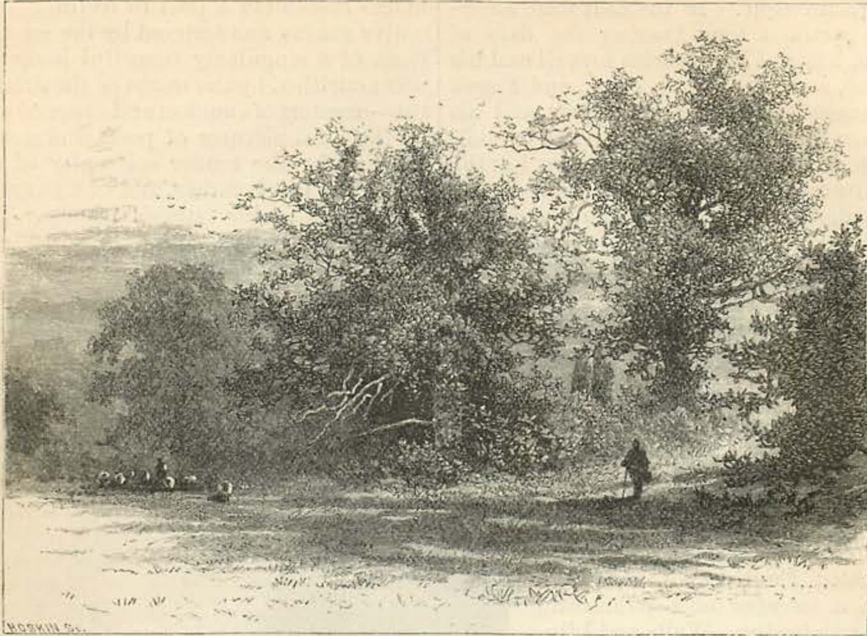
The nearest neighbor to Elmwood in 1825 was William Wells, who kept a boys' school, and from him the poet got most of his early education; he was for a time, however, pupil of a Mr. Ingraham, who had a classical school in Boston. Mr. Wells was a thoroughly educated Englishman, who had been a member of a publishing house in Boston—Wells and Lily.

Lowell entered Harvard College in his sixteenth year, and was graduated in 1838. Among his classmates and friends were—Charles Devens, a general in our late war, afterward a Judge of the Supreme Court of Massachusetts, and now the Attorney-General of the United States; Rev. Rufus Ellis; the late Professor Nathan Hale; Hon. George B. Loring, M. C.; William W. Story, the sculptor and poet; Rev. J. I. T. Coolidge; Professor W. P. Atkinson; and others less known to fame. The Rev. E. E. Hale was in the class following.

His rank in scholarship was not a matter of pride. He has been used to say that he read almost everything—*except* the text-books prescribed by the faculty. To certain branches of study, especially to mathematics, he had an invincible repugnance; and his degree was perhaps a tribute to his known ability, bestowed as an incentive to future diligence, and partly in deference to his honored father. His vast and multifarious reading was the efficient fertilization of his mind. Learning, in its higher sense, came later. His was the nurture of Cervantes, Boccaccio, Spenser, and Shakspeare. Though eminent and able in many ways, Lowell remains absolutely a poet in feeling. His native genius was fostered by the associations of a singularly beautiful home; it was nourished by the works of the dramatists—masters of emotion and expression—by the ideal pictures of poets and novelists, and by the tender solemnity of the discourses of his father, and of Channing and others of his father's friends. Nature and the early surroundings had been alike favorable; and though he was not a rhyming prodigy like Pope, lisping in numbers, his first effusions, as he came to manhood, were in poetic form.

BEAVER BROOK.—[SEE PAGE 262.]

After leaving college, Lowell entered the law school, and having finished the prescribed course, took his degree of LL.B. in 1840. He opened an office in Boston, but it does not appear that he ever seriously engaged in the practice of law. The Rev. Mr. Hale says that his



THE WAVERLEY OAKS.—[SEE PAGE 262.]

brilliant future was prefigured in his youth—that his original genius was evident from the first.

A little before his twenty-second birthday he published a small volume of poems, entitled *A Year's Life*. The motto was from Goethe: *Ich habe gelebt und geliebet;* concerning which it may be said that most young men appear to have reached the maturity of having "lived and loved" at a comparatively early period. The poems are naturally upon the subject that inspires youths of one-and-twenty; and though they do not appear in the author's "complete" collection, they are worthy of consideration. They bear a favorable comparison with the "Hours of Idleness" and other first-fruits of genius. The unnamed lady who is celebrated in the poet's verse, and who afterward became his wife, was Miss Maria White, a person of delicate and spiritual beauty, refined in taste, sympathetic in nature, and the author of several exquisite poems. Notwithstanding the recollections of *A Year's Life* have been set aside by the severe judgment of the poet, the student will discover in them many intimations of the genius that shone out more clearly in later days.

WHEEL OF THE OLD MILL ON BEAVER BROOK.—[SEE PAGE 262.]

WELLESLEY PUBLIC LIBRARY

In the domain of letters, dead magazines are the ruins, if wrecked air castles ever leave any ruins behind. Nearly every author has at some time felt a shock at the downfall of his castle, and happy is he who is not crushed thereby. In Lowell's case the name of the periodical was the *Pioneer*. He was associated in the editorship with Robert Carter, of whom mention is made further on. The *Pioneer* survived but three months. Lowell's chief contributions were some articles upon song-writers. Previous to this he had written some very striking literary essays for the Boston *Miscellany*, conducted by his classmate and intimate friend Nathan Hale.

About three years after *A Year's Life*, another volume of poems appeared, well known to readers of to-day. The "Legend of Brittany" and "Prometheus" are the longest, but the most popular are "Rhoecus," "The Shepherd of King Admetus," "To Perdita Singing," "The Forlorn," "The Heritage," "A Parable," etc.

The matter and the manner of this volume were new, and not wholly pleasing to the public of 1844. As we look back, and consider the taste of that public, we can not indulge in any great pride. There were a few names held in honor then that are still more honored now. Longfellow was in the first flush of well-won fame. Men had begun to name him in the same breath with Bryant, the recognized chief of the bards. Holmes was thought to be a witty young man of considerable promise; Whittier to be prostituting his Muse in the service of fanatics. His lyrics had some fire, but an Abolitionist could not be a poet. The retributive tar kettle would befit him rather than the exhilarating tripod. Pierpont's odes were shouted by school-boys, and the din of the rhymes on Public Saturdays was like the riveting of steam-boilers. Poe was as supreme a magician as Prospero; Halleck was the American Campbell. John Neal and Richard H. Dana were great poets, and were sure some day to do something worthy of their fame. "Woodman, Spare that Tree," "The Old Oaken Bucket," and "Home, Sweet Home," had filled the national cup of glory full. Mrs. Sigourney, Mrs. Hale, Miss Gould, and Mrs. Welby were quoted with Mrs. Barbauld and Mrs. Hemans. Philadelphia editors were the final arbiters in criticism; and their magazines, in which music strove with millinery, and poetry was entangled with crochet-work, and plates were fine enough for perfumery labels, represented a power and influence which the sober *Atlantic* and the versatile *Harper* have never since wielded. Poems admitted into those elegant repositories of the arts were already classic. The revolution in letters had not then begun.

In Lowell's verse there was something of Wordsworth's simplicity, something of Tennyson's sweetness and musical flow, and something more of the manly earnestness of the Elizabethan poets. But the resemblances were external; the individuality of the poet was clear. The obvious characteristic of the poems is their high religious spirit. It is not a mild and passive morality that we perceive, but the aggressive force of primitive Christianity.

There are several of the poems in this collection which now seem prophetic. They were bold utterances at the time, and were doubtless considered as the wild rhapsodies of a harmless enthusiast. The ode beginning,

"In the old days of awe and keen-eyed wonder,
The Poet's song with blood-warm truth was rife,"

may be regarded as a confession of faith. In force of thought and depth of feeling, and in the energy of its rhythmic movement, it is a remarkable production, whether for a poet of twenty-five or older. He decries the bards who seek merely to amuse, and deplores their indifference to human welfare.

"Proprieties our silken bards environ:
He who would be the tongue of this wide land
Must string his harp with chords of sturdy iron,
And strike it with a toil-embrownèd hand."

This stirring ode was a fit prelude to the part our poet was to perform. If there were any doubt as to the application, the grand sonnet to Wendell Phillips in the same volume gives it emphasis.

There are poets whose verse has no relation to time. "Drink to me only with thine eyes" might have been sung by any lyrist from King Solomon to Algernon Swinburne. Others, like Dante, Milton, Marvell, and Dryden, who live in times when strong tides of feeling are surging to and fro, when vital principles are in controversy, and the fate of a people hangs upon the sharp decision of the hour, find themselves, whether they would or no, in the place of actors—at once causes and products of the turmoil in which they are born.

Probably there were never greater changes in the principles, training, habits, tastes, and welfare of any civilized people than were brought about in the Northern States during the fifty years from the date of the poet's birth. This appears at first sight an unnecessarily strong statement, but it will bear scrutiny. That half-century witnessed the astounding changes which followed the application of steam, electricity, and the arts to practical affairs. In the same period the bulk of all our literature was produced, and the press, too, became a power before unknown in this or any country. Legislation and jurisprudence were lifted into the light of morals. Organized benevolence, taking upon itself the burdens of society, began to make the golden rule an active principle in human affairs. In fifty years the United States had outrun the usual progress of centuries.

The function of the critic, as Mr. Stedman has pointed out, is to anticipate the solid and dispassionate judgment of posterity upon the works of to-day—a task sufficiently difficult, for the critic himself may be enslaved by the literary fashions which he ought to resist and deplore. No one can say what may be the standard of taste a century hence, for it can not be known what direction it will receive from some unborn master-spirit who will dominate his age. But in regard to the fundamental laws of ethics there can not be any retrogressive movement: so much is sure.

And to a man in the twentieth century, looking back, what will appear the great fact of our time? Indubitably the abolition of African slavery. It is the most important event since the discovery of America. Yet the time has been when such an opinion would not have been tolerated in polite society. Like its kindred oppressions, monarchy and aristocracy (for which tardy Fate is preparing a similar bloody overthrow), slavery was adorned by the fictile graces of romance and the false glamour of poesy. The antislavery movement is still called an *ism* by those who see no deeper than the surface of things. But it was such an *ism* as Christianity, or democracy, or human brotherhood.

The position of Lowell was fixed from the beginning. The teachings of Channing and of his father, the example of his illustrious grandfather, and the nobility of his own nature, all pointed in one direction. He was an abolitionist when the name signified a fanatic and fool. He did not, however, continue long with the destructive theorists like Garrison, but joined with those who meant to extirpate the evil by legal means within the Constitution. The sincerity and the unflinching zeal of the antislavery leaders are not to be questioned, but in the nature of things they were scarcely entertaining.

It is noticeable that in the first two volumes of Lowell's poems there is not a single witticism, nor a hint of the comic power that was to place him among the first of humorists and satirists. In his *Conversations on the Poets*, now out of print and scarce, there are many keen strokes and ludicrous comparisons, like those in later books with which the public has become familiar. In the *Conversations*, we see more of the natural man; in the early poems, we see the decorous bard in the proprieties of ceremonial robes. One might believe that the brilliant raillery which Lowell afterward turned upon the supporters of slavery had its origin in a reaction from the monotonous oratory of some of his associates.

The Mexican war was in progress, and the Abolitionists declared (what is now accepted as the truth of history) that it was waged to obtain new territory for the extension of slavery, and thereby to counterbalance the growing power of the Northern States. President Polk had been elected to carry out the scheme. The appeal was to Congress, through the conscience of the nation, to stop the supplies.

Mr. Lowell wrote a letter to the Boston *Courier*, purporting to come from Ezekiel Biglow, inclosing a poem in the Yankee dialect, written by his son Hosea, in which the efforts to raise volunteers in Boston were held up to scorn:

> "Thrash away! you'll hev to rattle
> On them kittle-drums o' yourn;
> 'Tain't a knowin' kind of cattle
> That is ketched with mouldy corn."

Society was puzzled. Critics turned the homely quatrains over with their claws as kittens do beetles, and doubted. Politicians thought them vulgar. Reverend gentlemen, who had not been shocked at the auction of "God's images in ebony," considered the poet blasphemous. For the first time in the history of the movement the laugh was on the side of the reformers. The peculiarities of some of the more ec-

centric had furnished the wags heretofore with material for abundant gibes. The long curls of Absalom Burleigh, the sledge-hammer action of Henry C. Wright (perhaps the original of Hawthorne's Hollingsworth?), the white woollen garments, patriarchal beard, and other-world looks of Father Lamson, and the pertinacity of the meek lunatic Abby Folsom, had made every meeting of the New England Anti-slavery Society as rare a show for the baser sort as a circus or a negro concert. Now the leading men in church and state were stung by pestilent arrows. The unanswerable arguments of Garrison, and the magnificent invectives which Wendell Phillips had hurled at well-dressed mobs, were now supplemented by the homeliest of proverbial phrases, set to the airiest lilting rhythm, adorned with the choicest and most effective slang, and tingling with the free spirit that had animated a line of fighting Puritans since the time of Naseby. The antislavery music was in the air, and everybody had to hear it.

The more cultivated of the abolitionists were in ecstasies. Some, however, did not quite understand the levity of tone. When Charles Sumner saw the first Biglow poem in the *Courier* he exclaimed to a friend: "This Yankee poet has the true spirit. He puts the case admirably. I wish, however, he could have used good English."

Hosea Biglow kept up the warfare, and each poem was furnished with a preface and notes by an imaginary Parson Wilbur. First a Mexican war recruit gave his amusing experiences from the field. Then came "What Mr. Robinson Thinks." This tickled the public amazingly, and

> "John P.
> Robinson he
> Sez he wunt vote for Guvener B."

was in every one's mouth, like the "What, never?" of *Pinafore*.

Mr. Robinson was a refined and studious man, unhappily on the wrong side of a moral question, and was not a little annoyed by his "bad eminence"; but he is preserved in the Biglow amber like an ante-Pharaonic fly. He went abroad, perhaps to get out of hearing, but as soon as he landed at Liverpool and got to his hotel, he heard a child in an adjoining room idly singing. He listened. Yes, it was true; the detested refrain had got across the ocean. It was

> "John P.
> Robinson he"

that the baby-ruffian was trolling. He sailed to the Mediterranean, and stopped at Malta. While looking at the ruins of the works of the Templars, he observed a party of English not far distant, and presently another infantile voice sang,

> "But John P.
> Robinson he
> Sez they didn't know everythin' down in Judee."

About this time Dr. Palfrey, the historian, then an able and eloquent member of Congress, had refused to vote for Mr. Winthrop, the Whig candidate for Speaker. Hosea Biglow gave expression to the party wrath in a burlesque version of a speech supposed to have been delivered at an indignation-meeting in State Street. This was the opening:

> "No? Hez he? He hain't, though? Wut? voted agin him?
> Ef the bird of our country could ketch him, she'd skin him."

"A Debate in the Sennit, sot to a Nusry Rhyme," followed; then "The Pious Editor's Creed," and a burlesque of General Taylor's letter accepting the nomination for the Presidency. The most musical, adroit, and effective of the series was the second letter from Birdofredum Sawin, the Mexican volunteer. He had been sadly mutilated and ill-treated and disillusionèd. He had imagined Mexico as a country

> "Ware propaty growed up like time, without no cultivation,
> An' gold was dug ez taters be, among our Yankee nation—
> Ware nateral advantages were pufficly amazin'—
> Ware every rock there waz about, with precious stuns waz blazin'—
> Ware mill sites filled the country up ez thick ez you could cram 'em,
> An' desput rivers run about a-beggin' folks to dam 'em."

The volunteer finally descants upon his own rare merits and available qualities, and offers himself as a candidate for President under the sobriquet of "The One-eyed Slarterer." In a third letter, the last of the first series, Mr. Sawin withdraws in favor of Ol' Zack.

The poems were finally gathered into a volume, which in comic completeness is without a parallel. The "work" begins with "Notices of the Press," which are delightful travesties of the perfunctory style both of "soft-soaping" and of "cutting up." There happening to be a vacant page, the space was filled off-hand by the first sketch of "Zekel's Courtship":

"Zekel crep' up quite unbeknown,
An' peeked in thru the winder,
An' thare sot Huldy all alone,
With no one nigh to hender."

This is the most genuine of our native idyls. It affects one like coming upon a new and quaint blossoming orchid, or hearing Schumann's "Einsame Blume." Its appearance in the *Biglow Papers* was purely an accident; but it had the air of being an extract, and it was so greatly admired that the poet afterward added new stanzas to fill out the picture. In the original sketch there were six stanzas; there are now twenty-four.

The title itself is a travesty, reminding one of the days of black-letter quartos. The head-line is "MELIBŒUS HIPPONAX," as much as to say, "This is a horse-eclogue." A note informs us of the position of Mr. Wilbur in the learned world, and refers us to some scores of (imaginary) societies to which he belongs. The introduction gives some account of the poet, Hosea Biglow, and quotes specimens of his serious verse.

The notes and comments of the grave and erudite parson are difficult to characterize. One sees that he is professionally solemn and pedantic, and often ridiculous in adhering to obsolete modes of spelling and to old-fashioned ways. In every page there are striking thoughts, as well as a profusion of imagery and an affluence of learning; but there is also a quaint flavor of antiquity, as if the honey of his periods had been gathered from the flowers of Jeremy Taylor, Sir Thomas Brown, and holy George Herbert. Nothing finer or more characteristic is to be found in any of Lowell's varied and splendid writings.

The *Biglow Papers* end appropriately with a comic glossary and index. It must be repeated, by way of emphasis, that from the first fly-leaf to the colophon this is the only complete and perfect piece of grotesque comedy in existence.

As the Yankee peculiarities of the *Biglow Papers* are evidently fresh studies, it might appear strange that they could be wrought out by a resident of Cambridge. For that city, though rural, is not in the least rustic. The primeval Yankee has become scarce everywhere; he is hardly obtainable as a rare specimen; he is a tradition, like the aurochs or the great bustard; he and his bucolic manners and speech are utterly gone. There is not the echo of a *haöw* in any of the pretentious Italian villas, nor even the heavy-timbered mansions like that of Lowell's friend G. N., dating from 1656. Oxen are as strange as camels, and if there were a milkmaid to be found, her hands would smell of mille-fleurs or patchouli. As soon expect the return of Jacob and Rachel as to see again the originals of the poet's Zekel and Huldy. The old town as it was in Lowell's boyhood is sketched with rare humor and fine touches in an article by him published in *Putnam's Monthly* in 1853, entitled "Cambridge Thirty Years Ago."

This charming essay, brimming with feeling, and full of the graces that delight cultivated readers, shows Lowell himself, in his early maturity, in the most striking way. Later essays may be more profound, but none of them are so full of the sunshine of the heart. In this masterly picture we see a country village, silent and rural. There are old houses around the bare common, "and old women, capped and spectacled, still peered through the same windows from which they had watched Lord Percy's artillery rumble by to Lexington." One coach sufficed for the travel to Boston. It was "sweet Auburn" then, a beautiful woodland, and not a great cemetery. The "Old Road" from the square led to it, bending past Elmwood. Cambridgeport was then a "huckleberry pastur'," having a large settlement of old-fashioned taverns with vast barns and yards on the eastern verge. "Great white-topped wagons, each drawn by double files of six or eight horses, with its dusty bucket swinging from the hinder axle, and its grim bull-dog trotting silent underneath,.......brought all the wares and products of the country to Boston. These filled the inn yards, or were ranged side by side under broad-roofed sheds, and far into the night the mirth of the lusty drivers clamored from the red-curtained bar-room, while the single lantern swaying to and fro in the black cavern of the stables made a Rembrandt of the group of hostlers and horses below."

Commencement was the great day, to which the Governor came in state, with military escort. The annual muster of the militia, which took place sometimes at Cambridge and sometimes in other neighboring towns, brought together all the boys of the county to see the various shows, and the hilarious sport called a "Cornwallis."

The provincial tone was evident. You

have only to talk with an old Bostonian even now to see how it was. But the main thing was that up to 1830 the manners and speech of ordinary folk were those of the seventeenth century. The rustic Yankee was then a fact. In fifty years, by the aid of steam and electricity, Boston became a modern city, on equal terms with the Old World, a centre of itself, and Cambridge was developed into a highly cultivated suburb. The rusticity was gone. The changes of two hundred years went by in a lifetime.

Recalling old Cambridge by the aid of Lowell's reminiscences, we see how the vernacular idioms and the humorous peculiarities of the people are so naturally reproduced in his comic verse.

Mr. Lowell was married December 26, 1844. His domestic life at Elmwood, like the "peace that passeth understanding," could be described only in simile. It was ideally beautiful. And nothing was wanting to perfect happiness but the sense of permanence. Mrs. Lowell was never very strong, and her ethereal beauty seemed too delicate for the climate of New England. Children were born to them, but all died in infancy excepting a daughter (now Mrs. Edward Burnett). Friends of the poet who were admitted to the study in the upper chamber remember the pairs of baby shoes that hung over a picture-frame. From the shoes out through the west window to the resting-place of the dear little feet in Mount Auburn there was but a glance—a tender, mournful association, full of unavailing grief, but never expressed in words. Poems written in this period show the depth of parental feeling. Readers remember "The Changeling," and "She came and went:"

> "As a twig trembles which a bird
> Lights on to sing, then leaves unbent,
> So is my memory thrilled and stirred:
> I only know she came and went."

Mrs. Lowell, as has been mentioned, was a writer of sweet and beautiful verse. One of her poems, "The Alpine Sheep," addressed to a sorrowful mother, was suggested by her own bereavement.

Mr. and Mrs. Lowell went to Europe in a sailing vessel in the summer of 1851, and spent a year, visiting Switzerland, France, and England, but living for the most part in Italy. They returned in the autumn of 1852. Mrs. Lowell was slowly, almost imperceptibly, declining. Her fine powers were almost spiritualized, and the loveliness of her nature suffered no change by disease. The end came in October, 1853, when like a breath her soul was exhaled.

On the day of Mrs. Lowell's death a child was born to Mr. Longfellow, and his poem "The Two Angels"—perhaps as perfect a specimen of his genius as can be cited—will remain forever as a most touching expression of sympathy:

> "'Twas at thy door, O friend, and not at mine,
> The angel with the amaranthine wreath,
> Pausing, descended, and with voice divine
> Whispered a word that had a sound like Death.
>
> "Then fell upon the house a sudden gloom,
> A shadow on those features fair and thin,
> And softly, from that hushed and darkened room,
> Two angels issued, where but one went in."

Mrs. Lowell's poems were collected and privately printed in a memorial volume, with a photograph from Page's portrait; many of them have been widely copied, and have become a part of our literature.

After the brilliant success of the *Biglow Papers*, it might have been supposed that Lowell would have continued to produce comic verses; but it would seem that he had not been satisfied with his early serious poetry, and was conscious of the power of accomplishing better results. His next important effort was "The Vision of Sir Launfal"—a noble poem, full of natural beauty, and animated by high Christian feeling. This was composed in a kind of fury, substantially as it now appears, in the space of about forty-eight hours, during which time the poet scarcely ate or slept. It was almost an improvisation, and its effect upon the reader is like that of the outburst of an inspired singer. The effect upon the public was immediate and powerful; the poem needed no herald nor interpreter.

About the same period came "The Present Crisis"—an ardent poem, in a high prophetic strain, and in strongly sonorous measure. This has been often quoted by public speakers, and many of its lines are as familiar as the most trenchant of the Proverbs:

> "By the light of burning heretics Christ's bleeding feet I track."
>
> "Truth forever on the scaffold, Wrong forever on the throne."
>
> "Then to side with Truth is noble when we share her wretched crust."
>
> "For Humanity sweeps onward: where to-day the martyr stands,
> On the morrow crouches Judas with the silver in his hands."

But the whole poem is a Giant's-Causeway group of columnar verses. It is a pity to pry out specimens; they stand better together.

Mention should be made of "Ambrose," a beautiful legend with a lesson of toleration; of "The Dandelion" and "The Birch-Tree," both charming pictures, and already hung in the gallery of fame; and of "An Interview with Miles Standish," a strong piece of portraiture, with a political moral.

But of the poems of this period, the most artistic is "Beaver Brook." There is no finer specimen of an ideal landscape in modern verse—a specimen rich enough in its suggestions to serve as an object lesson upon the poetic art. Beaver Brook, whose valley was a favorite haunt of the poet, is a small stream in the present limits of the town of Belmont, a few miles from Elmwood, not far from Waverley Station. The mill exists no longer, but one of the foundation walls makes a frame on one side for the pretty cascade of

"Armfuls of diamond and of pearl"

that descends into the "valley's cup." The wheel fell in 1876. Our engraving on page 255 is from a picture furnished by Mr. Handyside, near whose house the brook flows. Not far below is a pasture, in which are the well-known Waverley Oaks, the only group of aboriginal trees, probably, standing on the Massachusetts coast. If a bull be permitted, the largest of the oaks is an elm, now unhappily dying at the roots. This tree has a straight-out spread of one hundred and twenty feet—sixty feet from the giant trunk each way. The oaks are seven or eight in number, as like as so many stout brothers, planted on sloping dunes west of the brook. They have a human, resolute air. Their great arms look as if ready to "hit out from the shoulder." Elms have their graceful ways, willows their pensive attitudes, firs their loneliness, but the aboriginal oaks express the strength and the rugged endurance of nature.

Mr. Lowell's next venture was again in the field of satire. "A Fable for Critics"—

"A Glance at a Few of our Literary Progenies
(Mrs. Malaprop's word) from the tub of Diogenes"

was

"Set forth in October the thirty-first day,
In the year '48, G. P. Putnam, Broadway."

As one looks back—for 1848, though it seems but yesterday to some of us, was really a great while ago—one hardly knows whether to be more amazed at the audacity or the brilliancy of this elaborate *jeu d'esprit.*

To bring up the representative authors of a vain and touchy people for censure was an undertaking of some difficulty and delicacy. But when allowance is made for the humorous and sportive tone of the "Fable," and we get at the real critical opinions, either singly or in mass, it is surprising to see how the poet anticipated the taste of the coming generation, and how sound and appreciative, according to present standards, his judgments are. Naturally there may be undue warmth here, and a shade of coolness there, but there is a general equity and candor. It will be found hereafter that Lowell's Apollo was perhaps more generous than severe in his comments upon the literary procession.

The "Fable" is as full of puns as a pudding of plums. The good ones are the best of their kind, strung together like beads, and the bad ones are so "atrocious" as to be quite as amusing. The successive pages seem like a series of portraits done by an artist who knows how to seize upon the strong points of likeness, and avoid caricature; and that is to produce living pictures in the style of the masters.

The "Fable" appeared anonymously, but such a secret could not be kept. When people had time to think about it, it was evident that no other American could have written it. No poem of the kind in the language equals it in the two aspects of vivid genius and riotous fun. The "Fable" careers like an ice-boat. Breezes fill the light sails as if toying with them; but the course is like lightning, and every movement answers to the touch of the helm.

In 1849 Mr. Lowell's poems were collected in two volumes. "The Biglow Papers," "A Fable for Critics," and "A Year's Life" were not included. In 1853, and for some years afterward, he was a frequent contributor to *Putnam's Monthly*, conducted by George William Curtis and Charles F. Briggs. Some of his finest productions, both in prose and verse, appeared in that brilliant periodical. In the winter of 1854-55 he delivered a course of twelve lectures on English poetry in the Lowell Institute. The lectures made a deep impression upon cultivated audi-

tors, and full reports of them were printed in the Boston *Advertiser*.

It is probable that by this time our poet had begun to think of some connection with the university. The illustrious professor of *belles-lettres*, it was known, desired to retire from the chair, and public opinion pointed to Lowell as a proper person for his successor. In the summer of 1855 Mr. Longfellow resigned, and Mr. Lowell was appointed in his place, with leave of absence for two years. He went to Europe to pursue his studies, and remained abroad, chiefly in Dresden, until the spring of 1857, when he returned, and began his courses of lectures. No professor was ever more popular with his classes.

The germs of his literary criticism are to be found in his *Conversations on the Poets*, published in his twenty-fifth year. The book is a valuable part of his literary biography. The sentences give an impression of prolixity at first, not so much of words as of teeming, struggling thought. They attest the yet untrained luxuriance of genius. The style at times runs riot in every form of poetic illustration. The doctrines are of the modern school, in opposition to the formal antithesis and the superficial glitter of Pope and his French masters, and in favor of the simplicity and vigor of the Elizabethan authors and of Chaucer.

The volume of *Fireside Travels* deserves mention. It was published in 1864. The articles were written when Lowell was thirty-four—a mature young man, chastened and thoughtful, but still joyously young. It was the period when fresh feeling was in the ascendant, and when the poet had no inclination to exchange the creative pencil for the scalpel of the critic. There is a tide in the soul of man, and it comes neither too early nor too late in life—a time when the poet or artist is at his best, hand and brain and heart at one. *Fireside Travels*, among prose works, is the product of Lowell's best days. Pages appear like the soil of hot-house beds, with thoughts, serious, jocose, learned, allusive, sprouting everywhere. It does not matter where the reader opens, for every sentence has some salient or recondite charm. One often wonders, after reading for the twentieth time, where there is to be found another essay like it. In Thackeray's essays there are points of resemblance. The *Roundabout Papers*, *The Four Georges*, and the *English Humorists*, though totally different in matter and in style, give a similar inward satisfaction.

Two important events occurred in 1857. Mr. Lowell was married in September to Miss Frances Dunlap, of Portland, Maine—a lady of attractive presence and sterling character, who had had charge of the education of his only daughter during his residence abroad. For a time he resided in Kirkland Street, Cambridge, with Dr. Estes Howe, who had married a sister of Maria White Lowell, but not long after he returned to Elmwood. In November the *Atlantic Monthly* was started, under the auspices of the chief authors of New England, with Mr. Lowell as editor-in-chief. One purpose of the magazine was to give the active support of letters to the antislavery cause, and in this respect its position was decided. The editor's contributions were not numerous, but were conspicuous for their force and pungent wit.

In less than two years from the time the *Atlantic* was started both the senior members of the publishing house, Messrs. Phillips and Sampson, died, and the magazine passed into the hands of Messrs. Ticknor and Fields. Mr. Lowell edited it until 1862, when he was succeeded by Mr. Fields. Several fine poems appeared in the first volume, among them "The Nest," of which a stanza is here given in fac-simile:

Then from the honeysuckle gray
The oriole, with experienced quest,
Twitches the fibrous bark away,
The cordage of his hammock-nest,
Nor fails by times to pour a note
Rich as the orange of his throat.

FAC-SIMILE OF STANZA FROM LOWELL'S POEM, "THE NEST."

As Lowell was never given to the production of merely fanciful verses—the very lightest of his thistle-downs having some seed in them—and as his mind always moved to the tides in the ocean of human thought and feeling, it will not appear strange that the great events following the election of President Lincoln gave a new direction to his active faculties. In feeling, as before observed, he is primarily a poet, but he is also, like Milton, a thinker, with a fund of uncommon practical sense, and as much of a man of action as any refined and cultured scholar can be. The topsails may fill or flutter in celestial airs while the hull struggles in the heaving sea.

The poetry of the new school was as pure as the gospels, and as uncompromising as the early church. Brook Farm, with its æsthetic communism, had been one of the signs of the times—a precursor, it was hoped, of Arcadian days to come. Plainness in dress prevailed even among the rich and delicately bred. Lowell's youthful portrait by Page represents him in a coarse brown coat, with his broad shirt collar turned down, and with long hair parted at the centre of the forehead, and hanging in careless grace upon ruddy and wind-tanned cheeks. The poetry of the picture is in the calm and dreamy eyes looking out of a shadow of bronze mist.

But the time of boundless hope for humanity went by, and after the reaction the conservatives were stronger than ever before. The passage of the Fugitive Slave Bill was the answer to the efforts of the Abolitionists. When the contest between the North and South was settled, as far as ballots could do it, by the election of Lincoln, the struggle was immediately transferred to the field, and for four years the power and endurance of the two sections were tried to the uttermost.

The *Atlantic* had a number of vigorous political articles in prose, and a few months after the outbreak Lowell again set up the simple Biglow stage with the old *dramatis personæ*, to ridicule secession. The first attempt was an epistle in rhyme from the veteran Birdofredum Sawin to Hosea. The hero of the Mexican war had become a Southerner, had been tarred and feathered by way of acclimatization, had been in the State-prison on a groundless charge, and on his release had married a widow, the owner of slaves. He had, therefore, reached an eminence from which he could look down on the "mud-sills" of his native State.

The light and mocking tone of this epistle is in strong contrast to the deep and almost passionate feeling that breathes in the later poems of the series. In the summer and autumn of 1861 people thought the campaign was to be something like a picnic excursion.

The capture of the rebel commissioners Mason and Slidell by Commodore Wilkes—a resolute and truly British proceeding—though in violation of the law of nations, will forever endear his name to the American people. Lowell has probably better than any one expressed this feeling in his famous "Yankee Idyl." The preface, by the Rev. Mr. Wilbur, shows that gentleman at his best. It is worth all the starched formality of the state papers on the subject.

In the stern idyl that follows, the talk between Concord Bridge and Bunker Hill Monument sounds like the click between flint and steel. Concord expresses the natural wrath of the nation; Bunker Hill its calm reason and wise policy. The Bridge calls up old grievances:

"*I* recollect how sailors' rights was won—
Yard locked in yard, hot gun-lip kissin' gun....
Better that all our ships an' all their crews
Should sink to rot in ocean's dreamless ooze....
Than seek such peace ez only cowards crave:
Give me the peace of dead men, or of brave."

Those who lived as mature men and women in those times well remember the thrilling apostrophe with which the poem concludes:

"O strange New World! that yit wast never young,
Whose youth from thee by gripin' need was wrung;
Brown foundlin' of the woods, whose baby bed
Was prowled roun' by the Injun's cracklin' tread,
An' who grew'st strong thru shifts an' wants an' pains,
Nussed by stern men with empires in their brains;....
Thou, skilled by Freedom an' by gret events
To pitch new States ez Old-World men pitch tents;
Thou, taught by Fate to know Jehovah's plan,
Thet man's devices can't unmake a man,
An' whose free latch-string never was drawed in
Against the poorest child of Adam's kin—
The grave's not dug where traitor hands shall lay
In fearful haste thy murdered corse away."

Then came the impressive ballad, in which all the force of the preceding argument is fused into a passionate deprecation:

"It don't seem hardly right, John,
When both my hands was full,
To stump me to a fight, John—
Your cousin tu, John Bull!

Ole Uncle S. sez he, 'I guess
We know it now,' sez he.
The lion's paw is all the law,
Accordin' to J. B.,
Thet's fit for you an' me.

"Shall it be love or hate, John?
It's you thet's to decide.
Ain't *your* bonds held by Fate, John,
Like all the world's beside?
Old Uncle S. sez he, 'I guess
Wise men forgive,' sez he,
But not forget; an' some time yet
Thet truth may strike J. B.
Ez wal ez you an' me."

The satires of Hosea Biglow had been appreciated by antislavery men and by judges of poetic art—a very select company in any age—but the ballad "Jonathan to John," appealing to a natural patriotic pride, became immediately popular.

The author, who had patiently waited for recognition, could now be satisfied, if fame had been his desire. Many literary reputations have been built up with as much forethought and tact as go to the making of fortunes. Lowell would not be human if he did not relish a good word better than an ill one; but he never asked for the one or deprecated the other.

Mr. Sawin was next heard from in a letter to Hosea detailing his "conversion," descanting upon the superior strain of Southern blood, and anticipating the creation of a batch of nobles as soon as secession should be established. His new wife, he says, was a Higgs, the "first fem'ly" in that region—

"On her ma's side all Juggernot, on pa's all Cavileer."

After some ridicule of "Normal" blood and Huguenot descent, we have an inside view of secession—salt selling by the ounce, whiskey getting "skurce," and sugar not to be had. Meantime the corner-stone of the new state is a powder cask, and Jeff Davis is "cairn the Constitooshun roun' in his hat." The ironical compliments of Mr. Sawin to the national Congress conclude the letter.

One of the most justly celebrated of the series was entitled "Sunthin' in the Pastoral Line." It is wonderful to see how the dialect is moulded by the thought. When the sights and sounds and odors of spring come to mind, the crabbed speech becomes poetical, as a plain face glows into beauty on the sudden impulse of the heart.

So in this unique pastoral we pause over the loveliest images and hints of tantalizing likeness, and while the pleasure still lingers we find that Hosea has gone on whittling away at some problem, and using his mother-wit with unconscious and aphoristic art.

After a while Hosea, declaring himself "unsoshle as a stun" because his "innard vane" has been "p'intin' east" for weeks together, starts off to lose himself in the pine woods. He comes to a small deserted "school'us'," a favorite resort when in a bluish reverie, and sitting down, he falls asleep. A Pilgrim Father appears.

"He wore a steeple hat, tall boots, and spurs
With rowels to 'em big ez chesnut burrs."

This was Hosea's remote ancestor, once a colonel in the Parliamentary army. He makes himself known, and tells his descendant that he had

"worked roun' at sperrit-rappin' some,
An' danced the tables till their legs were gone,
In hopes of larnin' what was goin' on.
But mejums lie so like all split,
Thet I concluded it was best to quit."

In his youth, he tells Hosea, he had youth's pride of opinion:

"Nothin', from Adam's fall to Huldy's bonnet,
That I warn't full cocked with my judgment on it."

He makes a parallel between the cause of the loyal North and that of the Commonwealth against King Charles, and exclaims:

"'Slavery's your Charles, the Lord has gin the exe—'
'Our Charles,' sez I, 'has got eight million necks.'"

He likens the rebellion to the rattle of the snake, and adds:

"It's slavery thet's the fangs an' thinkin' head,
An' ef you want selvation, cresh it dead."

In the preface to the next poem the death of the Rev. Mr. Wilbur is announced, and shadow though he be, the reader feels his loss like that of a friend.

The thought of grief for the death of an imaginary person is not quite so absurd as it might appear. One day, while the great novel of *The Newcomes* was in course of publication, Lowell, who was then in London, met Thackeray on the street. The novelist was serious in manner, and his looks and voice told of weariness and affliction. He saw the kindly inquiry in the poet's eyes, and said, "Come into Evans's, and I'll tell you all about it. *I have killed the Colonel.*" So they walked

in and took a table in a remote corner, and then Thackeray, drawing the fresh sheets of MS. from his breast pocket, read through that exquisitely touching chapter which records the death of Colonel Newcomb. When he came to the final *Adsum*, the tears which had been swelling his lids for some time trickled down his face, and the last word was almost an inarticulate sob.

Let us go on with Mr. Wilbur.

In the letter which gives the news of his death the writer declares that the good clergyman's life was shortened by our unhappy civil war.

The poem sent with the good parson's last letter is a vigorous appeal for ending the war—a protest against vacillation and half-heartedness. The prelude shows the heart's desire:

"Ef I a song or two could make,
Like rockets druv by their own burnin',
All leap an' light, to leave a wake,
Men's hearts an' faces skyward turnin'."

The key-note of the poem is in the last couplet of the first stanza:

"Wut's wanted now's the silent rhyme
'Twixt upright Will and downright Action."

If the test of poetry be in its power over hearts, the tenth in this series must be placed in the highest rank. The beginning is quaint, simple, and even humorous, but with a subdued tone: there is no intimation of the coming pathos; nor are we conscious of the slow steps by which we are led, stanza by stanza, to the heights where thought and feeling become one.

It is with some apprehension that the present writer ventures to quote a stanza in the native dialect; though full of delicate feeling, expressed with the inimitable art of a great poet, the unlettered style suggests only what is ridiculous "to the general," who can see nothing touching in the sentiment of a rustic, and are not softened by tears unless shed into a broidered handkerchief:

"Sence I begun to scribble rhyme,
I tell ye wut, I hain't ben foolin';
The parson's books, life, death, an' time
Hev took some trouble with my schoolin';
Nor th' airth don't git put out with me,
That love her 'z though she wuz a woman;
Why th' ain't a bird upon the tree
But half forgives my bein' human."

The poet goes on recalling

"Sights innercent as babes on knee,
Peaceful as eyes o' pastured cattle";

the "yaller pines,"

"When sunshine makes 'em all sweet-scented,
An' hears among their furry boughs
The baskin' west wind purr contented";

then

"The farm smokes, sweetes' sight on airth,
Slow thru' the winter air a-shrinkin',
Seem kin' o' sad, an' roun' the hearth
Of empty places set me thinkin'."

This brings to mind the poet's slain nephews:

"Why, hain't I held 'em on my knee?
Didn't I love to see 'em growin'—
Three likely lads ez wal could be,
Hahnsome an' brave an' not tu knowin'?

"Wut's words to them whose faith an' truth
On War's red tech-stone rang true metal,
Who ventered life an' love an' youth
For the gret prize o' death in battle?
To him who, deadly hurt, agen
Flashed on afore the charge's thunder,
Tippin' with fire the bolt o' men
That rived the rebel line asunder?"

In this last stanza the direct, weighty words, the intensity of feeling, and the force of the bold images create a sensation that is nothing less than sublime. It refers, as readers perhaps know, to the poet's nephew, General Charles Russell Lowell, at the battle of Winchester, who, though he had received a wound which he knew must be mortal, mounted his horse and led his troops in a brilliant charge, was again mortally wounded, and shortly after expired.

Here the sorrowing Hosea exclaims,

"'Tain't right to hev the young go fust,
All throbbin' full of gifts an' graces."

But the lines are palpitant like naked nerves, and every word is like the leaf plucked by Dante, which trickled blood.

The last of the Biglow papers is a speech of Hosea in the March town-meeting. The preface is by the Melibœus Hipponax himself, and is a delightful *ragout* of Yankee phrases peppered with pungent wit. His summary, or "argymunt," of a popular speech has been often copied, and has done service in many comic readings, but its irresistible drollery keeps it fresh.

"THE ARGYMUNT.

"Interduchshin, w'ich may be skipt. Begins by talkin' about himself: thet's jest natur', an' most gin'ally allus pleasin', I b'lieve I've notist, to *one* of the cumpany, an' thet's more than wut you can say of most speshes of talkin'. Nex' comes the gittin' the good-will of the orjunce by lettin' 'em gather from wut you kind o' ex'dentally let drop thet they air about East, A one, an' no mistaik; skare 'em

up, an' taker 'em as they rise. Spring interdooced with a fiew approput flours. Speach finally begins, witch nobuddy needn't feel oblygated to read, as I never read 'em, an' never shell this one agin."

In the course of the speech Mr. Biglow observes:

"N.B.—Reporters gin'lly git a hint
To make dull orjunces seem 'live in print,
An' ez I hev t' report myself, I vum
I'll put the applauses where they'd *ough to* come."

Little did the orator of Jaalam suppose that his shrewd plan would be copied years afterward by a great lecturer.

The President, Andrew Johnson, comes in for the hardest hits:

"'Nobody ain't a Union man,' sez he,
''Thout he agrees, thru thick an' thin, with me.'....
Is this 'ere pop'lar gov'ment that we run
A kin' o' sulky, made to kerry one?....
Who cares for the Resolves of '61,
Thet tried to coax an airthquake with a bun?....
He thinks secession never took 'em out,
An' mebby he's correc', but I misdoubt;
Ef they warn't out, then why, 'n the name o' sin,
Make all this row 'bout lettin' of 'em in?....
[*Derisive cheers.*]
O did it seem 'z ef Providunce
Could ever send a second Tyler?
To see the South all back to once,
Reapin' the spiles of the Free-s'iler,
Is cute ez though an ingineer
Should claim th' old iron for his sheer
Coz 'twas himself that bust the b'iler."
[*Great laughter.*]

From this comparatively long but really brief and inadequate synopsis the reader may infer the high aim and definite moral purpose of the *Biglow Papers*, and their intimate connection with our national history. Poetry seldom needs comment; the lightning flash explains itself; and, in truth, comment rarely carries admiration along with it into the mind of the reader. But the *Biglow Papers* are in a foreign tongue for all city folk, and even in the country the *patois* has for a long time been faithfully grubbed up by schoolma'ams, like the Canada thistle.

As at the beginning Lowell was mentioned as one of the forces and products of the age, an actor and sympathizer in its moral and political movements, it has been deemed essential to dwell more upon the works which have become a part of our history. The usual topics of poetry, nature and man, have been illustrated in many graceful and noble poems by many loved and honored poets, by Lowell also; but in the ordinary acceptation of the meaning and use of poetry he is but one of several eminent masters, each having his own great merits, while in this new field he is wholly without a rival, the sole laureate of the native unlettered speech, and the shining exemplar of the motherwit of New England.

The introduction to the series is a learned and masterly account of the dialect, as a legitimate derivative of the spoken English of the Elizabethan age, and a protest against the prevalent "fine writing" as tending to weaken prose and stifle poetry. The whole essay is pervaded by the intense individuality of genius.

"Fitz-Adam's Story" was printed in the *Atlantic* for January, 1867, but has not yet been included in any "complete" edition. A note informs us that it was intended as a part of a longer poem to be called "The Nooning." It stands like the wing of a projected edifice, waiting for the main structure to give it countenance.

This poem has many traits in common with the best of the *Biglow Papers*. Like them, it is exuberant in feeling and secular in tone, and its movement is breezy, out-of-doors, and natural. The portrait of Fitz-Adam himself is a masterpiece, an instantaneous view of a complexity of character and motive, genius and whim, kneaded together, and made real flesh and blood.

Fitz-Adam tells us,

"Without a Past you lack that southern wall
O'er which the vines of Poesy should crawl."

He pays his homage to our great romancer:

"You have one story-teller worth a score
Of dead Boccaccio's—nay, add twenty more,
A hawthorn asking spring's most southern breath,
And him you're freezing pretty well to death."

He takes us to Shebagog County, where the summer idlers

"Dress to see Nature in a well-bred way,
As 'twere Italian opera, or play,
Encore the sunrise (if they're out of bed),
And pat the Mighty Mother on the head."

Fond of the frontiersmen and their natural ways, he puts them in a line:

"The shy, wood-wandering brood of character."

He paints the landlord of the rustic inn. The picture seems as deep-lined and lasting as one of Chaucer's. We see the tanned cheeks and the "brambly breast," and how

"a hedge of gray
Upon his brawny throat leaned every way
About an Adam's-apple that beneath
Bulged like a bowlder from a furzy heath."

The landlord gives an axiom for the kitch-

en for which the epicure will hold him in affectionate remembrance:

"Nothin' riles me (I pledge my fastin' word)
Like cookin' out the natur' of a bird."

The bar is painted as if by Teniers, with its great wood fire, and the coals in which was heating

"the loggerhead whose hissing dip,
Timed by nice instinct, creamed the mug of flip."

Then follows the encounter of teamsters' wits, and the sketch of Deacon Bitters, a mean and avaricious wretch, whose tricks brought him to a sulphureous end. The audacity of the story is forgotten in its absurdly comic keeping. It is the only approach to a Canterbury Tale we remember.

The period in which Lowell's most popular works appeared ended with the late war. They can not be classified, however, in a chronological order, because he sometimes allowed a considerable period to pass before giving a poem to the public. The collection entitled *Under the Willows*, published in 1869, contains "A Winter-Evening Hymn to my Fire," printed originally in *Putnam's Monthly* fifteen years before. "Fitz-Adam's Story," which has just been considered, belongs to a similar period, as do the gay and characteristic acknowledgment of Mr. John Bartlett's trout, and the well-known pathetic ballad, "The First Snow-Fall."

As a critic Lowell has been more unsparing upon his own productions than upon the works of others. Genius and Taste are twin-born; the one creates, the other tests. Many a day Genius produces nothing that Taste will allow. Taste corrects or blots out, so as to leave nothing that Time will destroy. Happy is the Genius with whom Taste continues to dwell as a friend and helper. Too often he goes over to the enemy, and sits in judgment with the reviewers.

The original traits of Lowell's genius are unmistakable; and in spite of the gravity of his later poems, the reader often comes upon the turns of thought which marked his verse twenty years before. But along with the continued likeness there has been a slowly growing divergence. In the development of a scholar and poet we expect to see the evidences of maturing powers, varied experience, and mastery of expression: that is to say, force, wisdom, and skill are the natural gains of twenty years. This is true in the case of Lowell; but what is more remarkable is the steady lifting of his intellectual horizon, and the spiritualizing of thought, so that, as in the celestial mechanics, words become the symbols of ideas that reach toward the infinite.

In "The Foot-Path" the reader begins with a view that is within his not infrequent experience:

"It mounts athwart the windy hill
Through sallow slopes of upland bare,
And Fancy climbs with footfall still
Its narrowing curves that end in air."

But the poet's aerial way only begins where mortal vision ends. The mind follows clews and glimpses, conscious of sensations for which there are no words, and of an upward motion into a realm where ideas are as fluent as air, and as impalpable.

Humboldt said that the vegetation upon the sides of Chimborazo exhibits at successive elevations all the characteristic flora from the equator to the arctic circle: the boundless luxuriance of the tropics at the base, and the eternal ice of the pole at the summit. Poetry likewise comprehends many zones. Its lower level is in scenes of lavish beauty, and it concerns itself in the joy of the senses in external nature. Higher up there are fewer flowers and hardier growths, "but purer air and broader view." Still higher are the brown and lichened steeps that tax strength and demand self-denial. Above, and reaching into the infinite sky, is the silent peak, inaccessible, eternal.

The "Commemoration Ode" (July 21, 1865) naturally succeeds the poignant grief of the later Biglow papers. The dedication is one that only a poet could have written: "To the ever sweet and shining memory of the ninety-three sons of Harvard College who have died for their country in the war of nationality." In the privately printed edition of the poem the names of eight of the poet's kindred are given. The nearest in blood are his nephews, General Charles Russell Lowell, killed at Winchester, Lieutenant James Jackson Lowell, at Seven Pines, and Captain William Lowell Putnam, at Ball's Bluff. Another relative was the heroic Colonel Robert G. Shaw, who fell in the assault upon Fort Wagner. The commemoration services took place in the open air in the presence of a great assembly. Prominent among the speakers were Major-General Meade, the hero of Gettysburg, and Ma-

jor-General Devens. The wounds of the war were still fresh and bleeding, and the interest of the occasion was deep and thrilling. The summer afternoon was drawing to its close when the poet began the recital of the ode. No living audience could for the first time follow with intelligent appreciation the delivery of such a poem. To be sure, it had its obvious strong points, and its sonorous charms; but, like all the later poems of the author, it is full of condensed thought, and requires study. The face of the poet, always singularly expressive, was on this occasion almost transfigured, glowing as if with an inward light. It was impossible to look away from it. Our age has furnished many great historic scenes, but this commemoration combined the elements of grandeur and pathos, and produced an impression as lasting as life. Of the merits of the ode it is perhaps too soon to speak. In nobility of sentiment and sustained power it appears to take rank among the first in the language. To us, with the memories of the war in mind, it seems more beautiful and of a finer quality than the best of Dryden's. What the people of the coming centuries will say, who knows? We only know that the auditors, scholars and soldiers alike, were dissolved in admiration and tears.

The writer remembers that, as the people were dispersing, a fresh-looking, active, and graceful man, of middle age, in faultless attire, met the poet with an outstretched hand. There was a hearty greeting on both sides, so hearty that one wonders how it could have happened between two Bostonians, whose marble manners the public knows from our fashionable novels. It was not the formal touch of gloved hands, but an old-fashioned, energetic "shake"; and it was accompanied by spontaneous, half-articulated words, such as the heart translates without a lexicon, while eager and misty eyes met each other. The new-comer was William W. Story, the sculptor and poet.

"When did you come?"

"I reached Boston this morning. I heard you were to read a poem; there was just time to make the trip, and here I am."

"And so you have come from Rome merely to hear me recite an ode? Well, it is just like you."

"The Cathedral" is a profound meditation upon a great theme. A poet is not held to the literal meaning of the motto he selects, but the lines prefixed to this poem (Euripides, Bacchæ, 196–199) are strongly significant of a growing conservatism in thought: "Not at all do we set our wits against the gods. The traditions of the fathers, and those of equal date which we possess, no reasoning shall overthrow; not even if through lofty minds it discovers wisdom." This is perhaps a fair indication of the feeling of the poem. The incidents of the day at Chartres are unimportant except in connection with the poet's admiration for Gothic architecture, and his musings upon the associations of the cathedral, the old worship, the old reverence, and the old ways.

It would seem that the intellectual movement in which the poet had been borne on for so many years was latterly becoming too rapid and tumultuous, according to his thinking—ready to plunge into an abyss, in fact. In particular, it may be observed that though the physical aspect of evolution had engaged his attention, as it has that of all intellectual men, and had commanded perhaps a startled and dubious assent, yet his strong spiritual nature recoiled in horror from the materialistic application of the doctrine to the origin of things. Force could never be to him the equivalent of spirit, nor law the substitute for God. In conversation once upon the "promise and potency" phrases of Tyndall he exclaimed, with energy, "Let whoever wishes believe that the idea of Hamlet or Lear was developed from a clod; I will not."

A couplet from "The Foot-Path" makes a similar protest against the theory of the universe which leaves out a Creator:

> "And envy Science not her feat
> To make a twice-told tale of God."

Intimations of the Berkeleyan theory appear in "The Cathedral," not as matters of belief, but of speculation. But the granitic basis of the poem is the generally received doctrine of the being of God, of His works, and His dealings with men. The clear purpose is seen by the attentive reader, although at times through a haze of poetic diction. Its strong points are in the simplicity and suggestiveness of its illustrations, its strong hold upon the past, and its tranquil repose in the care of Divine Providence. The style is for the most part scholastic, nervous, and keen-edged. There are some lovely rural pic-

tures near the beginning, so characteristic that if they were done in color we should not need to look at the corner for the "J. R. L. pinx[t]."

Two instances of the harmony of sound and sense are quite remarkable. One is the description of the falling of an ash leaf—

"Balancing softly earthward without wind"—

an inimitably perfect line. The other suggests the swinging of a bell blossom—

"As to a bee the new campanula's
Illuminate seclusion swung in air."

True to its name, "The Cathedral" is a grand poem, at once solid and imaginative, nobly ornate, but with a certain austerity of design, uplifting and impressive. These edifices are perhaps the most wonderful productions of mind, but they are gloomy also, and in some moods strike a chill to the very marrow.

Three odes have since appeared, written for important occasions, all characterized by a lofty tone of sentiment and grand poetic diction. First is the one read at Concord, April 19, 1875; the next is that read at Cambridge under the Washington Elm, July 3, in the same year; the third an ode for the Fourth of July, 1876. The Concord ode contains the most exquisite music, and shows the most evident inspiration. The Cambridge ode is remarkable for its noble tribute to Washington, and to the historic commonwealth of Virginia. The last is beautiful also, and strong, but scarcely so clear and fortunate as the others. But these with the Commemoration Ode are an Alpine group, an undying part of our national literature.

The prose works of Lowell consist of the *Fireside Travels*, already referred to, and three volumes of essays, published in 1870, 1871, and 1876. Of these the one entitled *My Study Windows* will be found most interesting to general readers. The other two are entitled *Among My Books*, and are of a purely literary character. A large number of his essays have appeared in magazines and reviews, and have not been as yet reprinted.

It is a common but baseless supposition that the poetic faculty must exist singly, as if the brain, like a flower-pot, could hold but one plant. It is true, great poets are rarely men of affairs, but every genius is an absolutely new combination of traits and powers, and no one knows the possibilities. Four arts owned Michael Angelo master, and he was almost equally great in all. We have seen that in the mind of Lowell there is an unfailing spring of analogy and suggestion, and a power of illustrating subtle and profound thoughts. And side by side with this undeniable poetic power is to be seen the solid understanding, the ready wit, and the practical sagacity that are more commonly the birthright of unpoetic men. It is as if the souls of Shelley and Ben Franklin had blended.

The prose of a true poet, if one reflects upon it, must have some marked peculiarities. That which is of the essence of poetry is not in its musical cadence, not in its shining adjectives and epithets; it is in substance as well as in form different from the ordinary productions of mind. And as the power of appreciation is really rare, though often assumed, the distinctive prose of a poet is necessarily quite removed from general apprehension. The difficulty lies in following the movement of the poetic mind, which is by nature erratic, if measured by prose standards—taking many things for granted which the slower-footed expect to see put down in order, and often supplying the omission of a premise in a logical statement, or the want of a formal description, by a single flashing word. Those people who need to have poetry expounded to them will require similar help to understand the prose of poets. Certain of Lowell's essays—especially those upon Shakspeare, Dante, and Milton—will be fully appreciated by only a limited number of readers in any generation.

The prose essays of Lowell (*Among my Books*, two volumes; *My Study Windows*, one volume) cover a wide range of thought and observation, but all have the inevitable family likeness. Mention has been made of the delightful "Fireside Travels." Of a similar tone are "My Garden Acquaintance," "A Good Word for Winter," and "On a Certain Condescension in Foreigners." The last is a specimen of pure irony, keen as a Damascus blade, and finished to the utmost. It is doubtful if there is another essay in modern English superior in power, wit, and adroitness. The essay upon Lessing is a charming piece of writing, full of bright passages, but interesting mainly to scholars. "New England Two Centuries ago" is a powerful historical article, in which the Puritans

and Pilgrims are boldly sketched—neither unduly flattered nor summarily condemned.

Bookish men will delight more in the literary essays. They are redolent of learning. They have an incommunicable flavor. The essay on Shakspeare is the best. There will always be some new light radiating from the works of that great poet, and each succeeding generation will be satisfied only with its own estimate; but the most comprehensive estimate to-day is Lowell's.

In general it may be said that the quality which prevents the general appreciation of Lowell's prose is its exceeding richness. It is like cloth of gold, too splendid and cumbrous for every-day wear.

It is upon his poems that the sure foundation of Lowell's fame will rest. Some of them are the clear and fortunate expression of the noblest modern thought, and others are imbedded in the history of an eventful time.

In person Lowell is of medium height, rather slender, but sinewy and active. His movements are deliberate rather than impulsive, indicating what athletes call staying qualities. His hair at maturity was dark auburn or ruddy chestnut in color, and his full beard rather lighter and more glowing in tint. The eyes of men of genius are seldom to be classified in ordinary terms, though it is said their prevailing color is gray. Colonel Higginson mentions Hawthorne's gray eyes; while the present writer, who once studied them attentively, found them mottled gray and brown, and at that time indescribably soft and winning. That they were sometimes *accipitral* we can readily believe. Lowell's eyes in repose have clear blue and gray tones with minute dark mottlings. In expression they are strongly indicative of his moods. When fixed upon study, or while listening to serious discourse, they are grave and penetrating; in ordinary conversation they are bright and cheery; in moments of excitement they have a wonderful lustre. Nothing could be finer than his facial expression while telling a story or tossing a repartee. The features are alive with intelligence, and eyes, looks, and voice appear to be working up dazzling effects in concert, like the finished artists of the Comédie Française.

The wit of Hosea Biglow is the native wit of Lowell—instantaneous as lightning; and Hosea's common-sense is Lowell's birthright too. When the same man, moreover, can extemporize chuckling puns, and blow out a breath of poetical reverie as naturally as the smoke from his pipe, the combination becomes almost startling. Other men may have been as witty, though we recall but three or four in our day; some may have had a similar fund of wisdom mellowed with humor; others have talked the staple of idyls, and let off metaphors like soap-bubbles; but Lowell combines in conversation the varied powers of all. His resources are inexhaustible. It is no wonder that he has been admired, for at his best he is one of the most fascinating of men. There is but one compeer—the immortal "Autocrat"—and it would be difficult, and perhaps impossible, to draw a parallel between them.

Steele said of a lady that to have known and loved her was a liberal education. More than one man who enjoyed Lowell's society found that the wise and witty converse of years did much to supply lamented defects in his own study and training, and perhaps warmed even late-flowering plants into blossom and fruitage. This also should be said, that every man who has known Lowell well considers him much greater than the aggregate of his works. He always gives the impression of power in reserve.

He used to enter upon the long walks which have aided in making him one of the poets of nature with the keenest zest. There was no quicker eye for a bird or squirrel, a rare flower or bush, and no more accurate ear for the songs or the commoner sounds of the forest. Evidences of this the reader will find in the *Study Windows*. But those who have visited Fresh Pond, Clematis Brook, Love Lane, or the Waverley Oaks in his company remember an acuteness of vision and a delight in every form of beauty of which the essay gives no conception.

His habits were scarcely methodical—reading, correspondence, composition, exercise, and social converse coming often hap-hazard; yet, being incapable of idleness, he accomplished much. His works show the effective use he has made of the intellectual treasures of the world.

Mrs. Hawthorne relates that before her husband completed *The Scarlet Letter* there was a visible *knot* in the muscles of his forehead, caused by the intensity of thought. When a great theme was in

mind, Lowell has always gone to his desk with all his might. Like Sir Walter Raleigh, he could "toil terribly." It has been already mentioned that "Sir Launfal" was written in about two days. The production of a poem like "The Cathedral" or the "Commemoration Ode" taxed his faculties to the utmost, and always left him exhausted in body and mind.

Between 1850 and 1860 Lowell was not much in society, in the present restricted sense of the word. The dinner parties and receptions of the fashionable appeared to have little attraction for him. He never enjoyed being lionized. In Cambridge there were several men with whom he was on intimate terms, and to them he gave his society ungrudgingly. Chief among these was his brother-in-law Dr. Estes Howe, a man of liberal education and delightful social qualities. He is "the Doctor" referred to in the preface to the "Fable for Critics." "The Don" was a pleasant nickname for Mr. Robert Carter, formerly Lowell's coadjutor in the short-lived *Pioneer*, and employed at that time as secretary by Mr. Prescott, the historian. Carter was a remarkable man, principally on account of his great reading and retentive memory. He was an able writer also; and he had read more out-of-the-way things than any man living. Lowell used to say that he would back Carter on a wager to write off-hand an account of a journey in the fifth century B.C. from Rome to Babylon or Pekin, with descriptions of all the peoples on the way. Carter lived at first in a modest house near the Willows (celebrated in Lowell's verse), and afterward in Sparks Street, not far from the Riedesel house. The Sparks Street house has associations such as belong to the tavern of Kit North's friend Ambrose, lacking, however, the overplus of toddy and the coarseness which smirched the discourse of the *Blackwood* coterie. Carter's house was often a rendezvous for whist parties; but whist was the least of the business or pleasure of the evening. The new books—or old ones—magazines, pictures, reminiscences, and stories occupied the available intervals. The silence and severity of Mrs. Battles were unknown. Charles Lamb and his venerable dame were often quoted by Lowell; but the "rigor of the game" was a transparent joke. When a story came to mind, or an epigram, or double-shotted pun, the cards might wait. When the story was told, or the puns had coruscated amid roars of laughter, the Professor would blandly ask, "What are trumps?"

Other players must rest in shadow. Two of them may be named in whom the reading world has an interest. One was John Bartlett, author of the book of *Familiar Quotations*, a charming companion, and a man of refined taste. The other, who was the delight of all companies, was John Holmes, brother of the poet-professor. He was the songless poet, the silent Autocrat. It is difficult to say what he might have done if shut up with pen, ink, and paper; for he had the rarest humor, and a genius for the unexpected. He always had the art of showing the *other side* of a statement, and of bringing a joke out of the impossible, like a conjurer.

Changes in the whist parties occurred, as was natural, owing to illness or absence, but they continued for several years. The members are all living except Carter, who died in Cambridge about a year ago, universally regretted. May he rest in peace! The recollections of that period form a bond not to be sundered while life and thought continue.

Of other intimate friends of Lowell much might be said if there were room. Some of them are named in his books.

The edition of poems published in 1849 was affectionately dedicated to the eminent painter William Page. The second series of the *Biglow Papers* was appropriately inscribed to E. R. Hoar, who is

"the Jedge, who covers with his hat
More wit an' gumption an' shrewd Yankee sense
Than there is mosses on an ole stone fence."

Fireside Travels is a series of letters addressed to Story the sculptor. *Under the Willows* bears the name of Charles E. Norton, Professor of the History of Art at Cambridge. *The Cathedral* is inscribed to Mr. James T. Fields; *Three Memorial Poems* to Mr. E. L. Godkin, editor of *The Nation; My Study Windows* to Francis J. Child, Professor of English Literature; *Among my Books* to the present Mrs. Lowell; the second volume of the same series to the illustrious Emerson. The chief honor appears to have been paid to George William Curtis, to whom the complete edition of the poetical works is dedicated.

Arthur Hugh Clough, an English scholar and poet, lived in Cambridge for about

a year (1855), and appears to have made a deep impression upon Lowell. The public knows little of Clough, but all poets know the author of "The Bothie" and "Qua Cursum Ventus." He had a beautiful, spiritual face and delicate, shy manners: such a face and such manners as are dimly seen in morning dreams. One may be sure that such a rare being, if real flesh and blood, would at some time be found at Elmwood. Clough strongly advised Lowell to continue and develop the Yankee pastorals. In the introduction to the *Biglow Papers* Lowell says, apropos of the approval of friends: "With a feeling too tender and grateful to be mixed with any vanity, I mention as one of these the late A. H. Clough, who more than any one of those I have known (no longer living), except Hawthorne, impressed me with the constant presence of that indefinable thing we call genius."

The artists Stillman and Rowse were frequent visitors. Many of their pictures and sketches adorn Lowell's house. President Felton was a stanch friend, and had great delight in Lowell's society. He and his brother-in-law, Agassiz, were alike hearty and natural men, fond of social pleasure, and manifesting the unaffected simplicity of children.

Longfellow's house is but a short distance from Elmwood, perhaps a quarter of a mile; and the relations of the two poets have always been intimate, as every observant reader knows. Holmes lived in Boston, but he was a frequent visitor in Cambridge at the old house near the college, especially while his mother lived. Lowell always paid tribute to the consummate art and finish of his friendly rival's verses, and to the vigor and freshness of his style. The father of Dr. Holmes was a stout orthodox clergyman; Lowell's father was a mild and conservative Unitarian. The Autocrat has developed into a liberal, and our poet has been growing more conservative, until now the relative positions of the sons are nearly the reverse of those of their fathers.

The historian Motley and the genial essayist Edmund Quincy were among Lowell's firm friends; but there is no room even for these incomparable persons.

In the course of this sketch there has been little attempt to follow order. The events of Lowell's life since 1860 have been few. The important dates are the dates of his books. One year has been like another, passed at the same residence, cheered by the same friends, engrossed in the same studies and pleasures. He visited Europe with Mrs. Lowell in 1873. He had never held office, not even that of justice of the peace; and though he has always had a warm interest in public affairs, he has not been a politician. It was therefore with some surprise as well as gratification that his friends heard of his appointment as Minister to Spain. He had been offered the Austrian mission, and had declined it; but a good spirit (or Mr. Howells, a relative of the President) suggested that Vienna was, perhaps, not the place to attract a scholar and poet, and that Madrid would be preferable, even with a smaller salary. After the retirement of Mr. Welsh, Mr. Lowell was transferred to London. His reception in the metropolis of letters has been in the highest degree flattering to him, and a matter of just pride to his countrymen.

He still holds his rank as professor at Cambridge, evidently expecting to resume his duties there.

Perhaps in the Indian summer of his life he may put his heart into a poem that will be even more worthy of his genius than any he has yet written.

DOES LIFE-INSURANCE INSURE?

I.—THE AMOUNT OF THE AMERICAN BUSINESS.

CHANCELLOR KENT said, in 1828: "Nothing can appear to an English or American lawyer more idle than the alarm of the French jurist, or more harmless than an insurance upon life, which operates kindly and charitably in favor of dependent families."

Chancellor Kent had in mind the idea of a life-insurance business which should be strictly confined to life-insurance, which should be built upon just arithmetic, and managed honestly, wisely, and economically by upright and able men. "Life-insurance," wrote a Massachusetts commissioner in 1873, "consists mainly in receiving premiums, investing them at compound interest, and out of the accumulation paying the sums when deaths occur." Surely nothing could be more harmless or more beneficial in the way of a public trust than life-insurance; and the trust has grown to proportions which indeed call for upright and able men in its management. During the fifty years