

Longfellow With His Children.

By MISS ALICE LONGFELLOW.



My father came to Cambridge to live in 1837. He was then thirty years old, and had received his appointment as Professor at Harvard College only a short time before. He had completed his preparation for this position by a year and a half in Europe, where he had studied foreign languages and literature, and had freely drunk of all the beauty, romance, and poetry of the past.

The delicacy and purity of his thought was manifested in all his habits of life, his surroundings, his personal appearance. There seemed to be no contradictions in his nature, but a complete unity of development. There was a sense of constant activity and preparation in his manner and bearing, although he was really deliberate and careful in both judgment and action. His step was light and elastic, and his carriage perfectly erect, even when an old man. The fair complexion and deep blue eye lost none of their delicacy and colour as age advanced.

An old lady told me she remembered meeting him at a tea-party at Brunswick during his professorship in Bowdoin College. After his departure, she said: "Why did Professor Longfellow wear white kid gloves all the evening?" The other guests were much amused, and explained it was only the natural whiteness of his skin.

My father's habits of life were very simple and regular. Indeed, order and regularity were essential to him in every way, and anything like hurry and confusion most distasteful. Everything he touched fell into order at once, and he lived in an atmosphere of serenity that was felt by all who approached him. This certainly was true of him in

middle life, however much he may have felt the pressure of restlessness and impatience in his youth.

He was punctilious and careful about his dress, never appearing at home in anything that was at all untidy or unattractive, nor would he allow this in his family. He was fond of elegance, and very observant and appreciative of the dress and appearance of all women. In his youth, when men also indulged in bright colours, he was very fond of gay waistcoats, and a jaunty hat and cane.

He liked to rise early, and for many years took a long walk every day before breakfast. Later the walk came after breakfast, and for some reason my earliest recollections seem

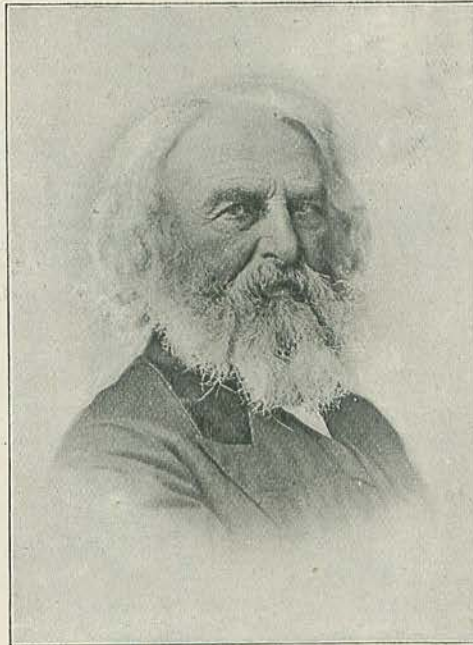
to centre about this daily morning walk to the post-office, stopping at a book store in Harvard Square, where all the newspapers spread out on large stands were read and discussed, and friends met for pleasant morning chat; and then continuing on to the college.

When my father's life at Harvard College began, Cambridge was a small village, with an "hourly" stage running to Boston. The professors in the college were like a circle of friends, and the students comparatively few in number. There was time for much pleasant social intercourse, as well as

work, and my father instinctively gathered a congenial circle about him.

The old Colonial House on Brattle Street, known as "Washington's Head-quarters" or the "Craigie House," had immediately attracted and fascinated my father, with his love of the antique and picturesque. The historical interest was also very great.

The house was built in 1759 by Colonel Vassal, a rich Tory, who was forced to fly to the provinces at the beginning of the revolu-

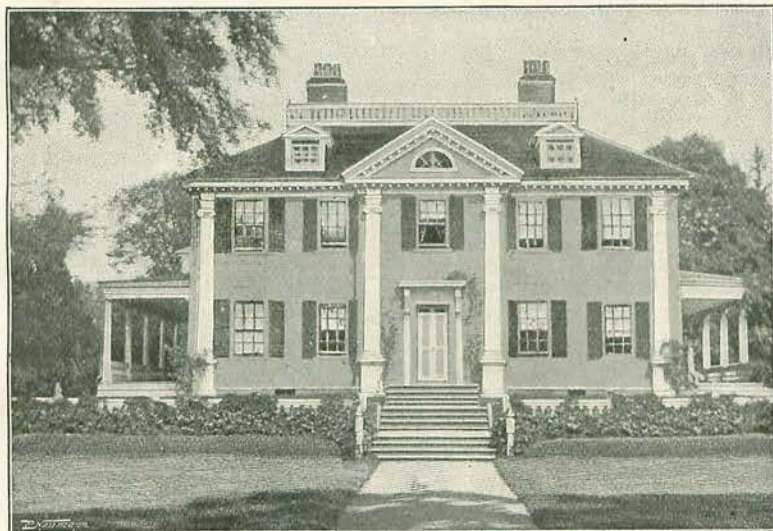


PORTRAIT OF LONGFELLOW.
From a Photo. by Elliott & Fry.

tion. The property was confiscated by the Continental Government, and after being used for a short time for troops, was placed at the disposal of General Washington, when he was called to take command of the American Army in July, 1775. One of the first items in General Washington's carefully-kept accounts is the amount paid for cleaning

stretch of marsh land, often converted into a lake by flooding tides, and in winter glittering with ice, reflecting the glowing sunset. These pictures, constantly before his eyes, often recur in his earlier poems, written during these years.

After his marriage in 1843, my father obtained possession of the whole house, gradually furnishing one room at a time. When the children were born, the sunny study upstairs was given up for a nursery, and the desk and books transferred to the room directly below, so that the familiar outlook might not be changed. The seclusion of the room upstairs was thus lost, and the children became double gainers, for the new study was mercilessly invaded by them at all hours, and



From a]

CRAIGIE HOUSE—LONGFELLOW'S HOME.

[Photograph.

the house after its occupation by a Marble-head regiment.

When my father first saw the house it was occupied by the Widow Craigue, a handsome and eccentric old lady, whose husband, Andrew Craigue, had bought the house and estate, which then covered about 150 acres, at the close of the war. Lavish expenditure and speculation had brought him to bankruptcy. After his death, Mrs. Craigue still clung to her grand home, but was forced to share it with others.

These various human histories gave the house a great interest in my father's eyes, in addition to its being a fine specimen of Colonial architecture, and a connecting link with pre-revolutionary days. Mrs. Craigue decidedly objected at first to the youthful appearance of the applicant for her rooms; but, finding that he was a professor and not a student, she relented, and he was soon installed in two large rooms upstairs. Here he lived for six years, busy with his college work, the spare hours given to poetry and friendly gatherings.

His desk stood by a window facing the south, and overlooking the Charles River and wide green fields. Beyond the river was a

everything about the room seemed to have a special charm, invested as it was with the atmosphere of repose, serenity, and kindness.

In a corner stood an old clock, its steady ticking a soothing accompaniment to many an hour of delightful reading or dreaming; and over the fire-place an old-fashioned convex mirror reflected the room in miniature, an enchanting abode, with always the vague hope to a childish mind that some day one might find the way to enter in and take possession.

In a drawer of one of the bookcases was a collection of little pictures drawn by my father in pencil, which he used with great facility, "The Wonderful Adventures of Mr. Peter Piper." These were a constant source of delight, as new adventures would suddenly appear from time to time, and we never knew what the wonderful Peter Piper would do next. He went travelling, with adventures in foreign lands; he went hunting, and fell from his horse; he went to sea, and was chased by a shark, and rode on a whale, and went down in a diving-bell, and all the possibilities of life were before him.

In another bookcase were delightful books of German songs with captivating pictures,

and a tiny little book of negro melodies, and the marvellous Jim Crow. One drawer was especially dedicated to small cakes of chocolate for cases of extreme need, and rarely did the supply fail, although no other kind of sweetmeat was encouraged.

One corner of the study was usurped for marbles, as the pattern of the carpet seemed arranged on purpose for the game. How all this was endured is hard to understand, but I am sure it was not only my father's patience that permitted these interruptions, but a true insight into, and sympathy with, all phases of children's life.

His presence was a constant attraction, and our first move in the morning was to his dressing-room, where the neatly arranged drawers and shelves and orderly toilet articles were looked at with envy and delight, contrasted with the turmoil of the nursery, where he was always a welcome and restful visitor. Taking a fretful and tired child in his arms, he would walk up and down quickly, singing some little rhyme, and peace and happiness were soon restored.

His inventive genius was constantly in demand. In addition to drawings and

the West being still undeveloped, was made by rubbing bits of tinfoil over coins; and the paper money came from the covering of old-fashioned matches with a picture of Mr. E. Byam, and the following inscription, which constituted it legal tender:—

For quickness and sureness
The public will find
These matches will leave
All others behind.

Without further remark
We invite you to try 'em;
And remember all good
That are signed by E. Byam.

A much-valued member of the very youthful household was a gay little fellow, called little "Merrythought." He was a wishing-bone, with head and feet made of sealing-wax, so that he could stand alone, dressed in a cape of red flannel, with a feather in his cap—quite a hero of romance.

There was in ours, as in most families, a succession of pets: dogs, rabbits, hens, and turtles in a tub in the garden. A Scotch terrier, named "Trap," was a most important member of the family for twelve years, a constant companion of my father in every walk and expedition by land or sea, and celebrated for his fine manners. My father writes of him:—

"The last and greatest of all the dogs was 'Trap'; Trap, the Scotch terrier; Trap, the polite, the elegant, sometimes—on account of his deportment—called Turveydrop, sometimes Louis XIV."

This dog's devotion to my eldest brother was so great that, when he started to cross the ocean in a small yacht, Trap, although sick and

frightened on the water, stowed himself secretly away in the cabin. After two days a returning fisherman brought him ignominiously home, with a card tied to his collar, and looking utterly dejected and woe-begone.

The summers were always passed at the seaside, where my father went mainly for the



From a]

LONGFELLOW'S STUDY.

[Photograph.

valentines, there were wooden moulds of various shapes, in which figures were made with melted lead. There were scales made from orange-peel, with string and a bit of wood, much needed by amateur shop-keepers. There was also a plentiful supply of money, both silver and paper. The silver money,

children's sake, and he must have passed many dull hours exiled from his large, comfortable library and his books. He used to row patiently with the little girls, as the boys soon grew beyond his gentle manner of handling an oar. There was also an occasional picnic of an adventurous nature, nearly a mile from home, with all the flavour and excitement of foreign travel.

Very seldom could my father be persuaded to join in any of the sailing expeditions, and then only for a very short time. He was

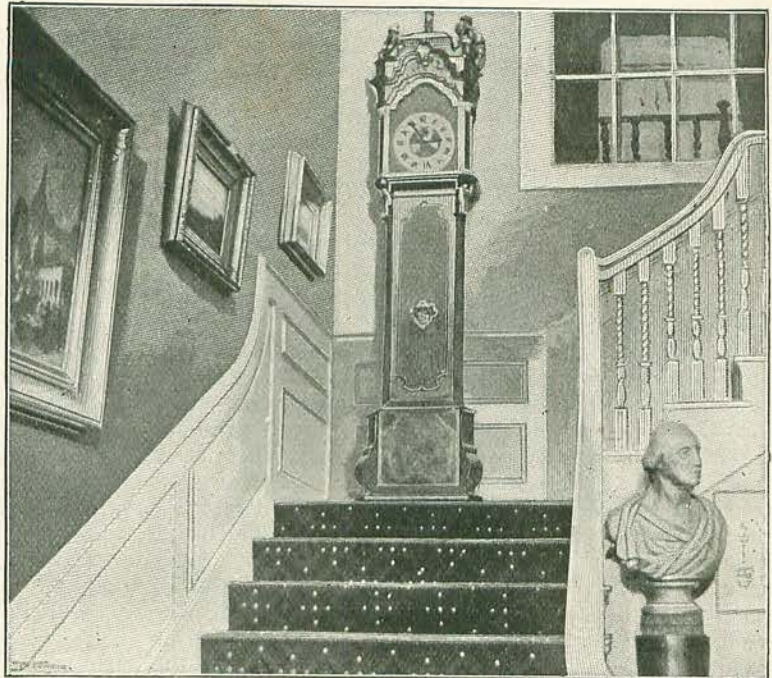
always well and active, but never cared for any great amount of exercise, and was quickly satisfied, and very moderate in whatever he was doing, often a disappointment to the insatiable desires of youth.

In truth, my father was very reserved with his children, in spite of his sympathy and understanding. He preferred to instil certain fundamental principles by habit and the example of his own life, and then leave them free to shape their own course. He believed entirely in self-reliance, and in any uncertainty always said, "You must decide that for yourself."

He very rarely made any requests; and his own preferences must often have been unobserved.

He felt more at home, I think, with little children than with growing youths and girls, where a certain extreme delicacy of reserve interfered; but with the youngest he made friends at once.

All through my father's daily journal, which he kept for many years, was an undertone of the children's life—a walk to Fresh Pond, a shopping expedition to Boston, an afternoon building a snow-house, and a note of keen distress at any misfortune. The children were constantly in his thoughts. He says any illness or accident entirely



From a

"THE OLD CLOCK ON THE STAIRS" AT CRAIGIE HOUSE.

[Photograph.]

upset him, and seemed more than he could bear.

He never endured any sarcastic word to a child, especially from a teacher, and considered it most dangerous and blighting to any originality or imagination. Sympathy first, and then criticism when needed, but a criticism that cleared away difficulties and showed the right path; never a criticism that left merely discouragement and bewilderment behind.

To show how fully he understood the constant forbearance and encouragement needed by children, I will quote, in closing, from a little record he kept of the early life of his own family.

Speaking of some childish quarrel, he says: "What was the matter, the cause of this despair? A trifle, a nothing. At last the little fellow said, amid sobs—'I will be good. Help me to be good, papa!' Ah, yes, help him to be good! That is what children most need. Not so much chiding and lecturing, but a little more sympathy, a little help to be good. You can see through their transparent faces the struggle that is going on within. A soft, gentle word often decides the victory. The children were reconciled in a few minutes. How quick it was all over—that great despair! Ah, me,"