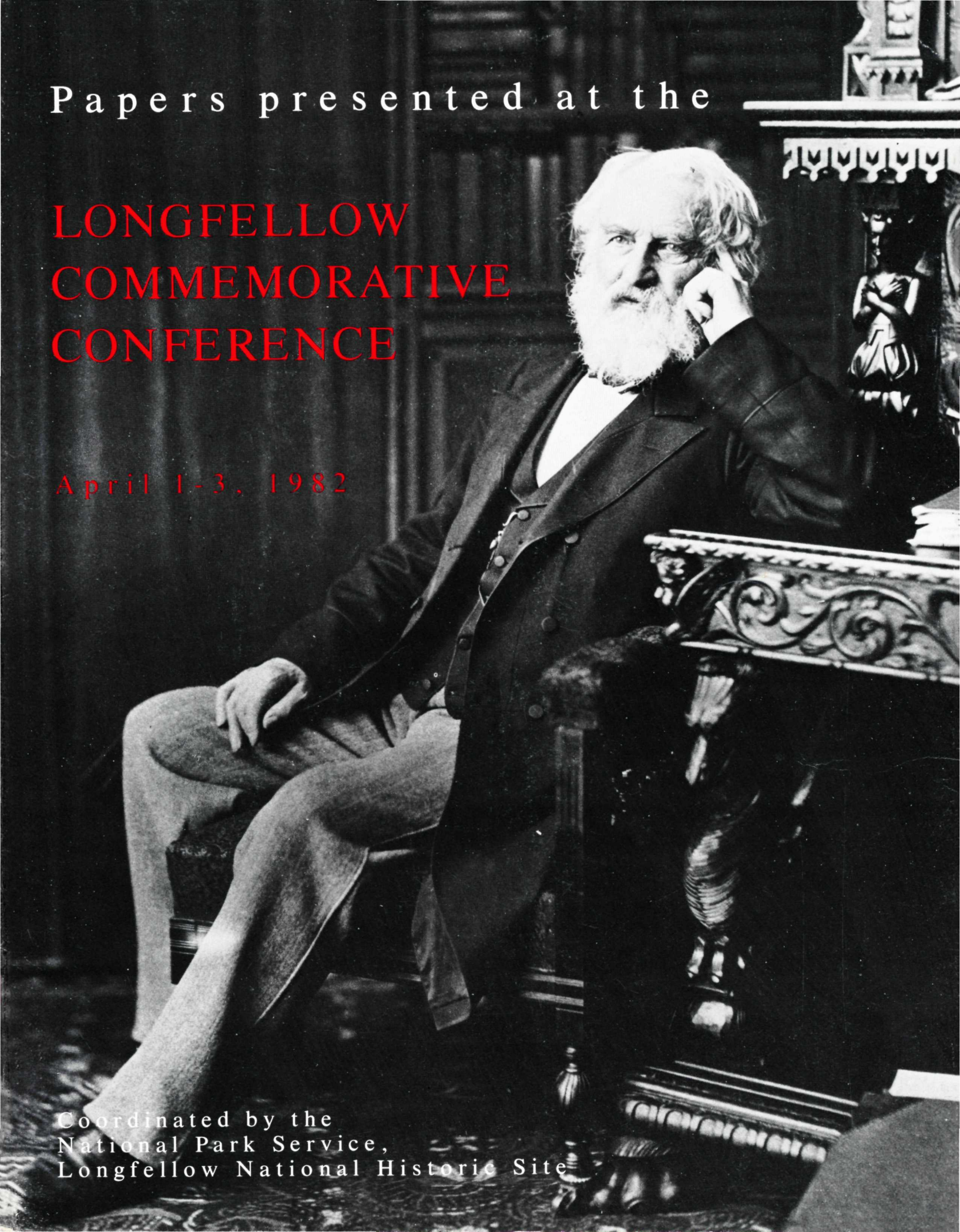
Papers presented at the

LONGFELLOW COMMEMORATIVE CONFERENCE

April 1-3, 1982



Coordinated by the
National Park Service,
Longfellow National Historic Site



Full-plate daguerreotype of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807-1882) possibly by Southworth & Hawes, Boston, ca. 1849.

Cover: Photograph of Longfellow by Notman & Campbell, Boston, 1880. Longfellow NHS Collection.

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LONGFELLOW AND SCANDINAVIA REVISITED

By

Andrew Hilen

When I was asked to speak on the subject of Longfellow and Scandinavia, I agreed hastily, foolishly confident that I would have something new to say on an old subject. When one revisits the scenes of one's youth, objects once sharply etched seem strangely altered by time and memory; and the prospect of revisiting my forty-year-old study of Longfellow's relationship with the northern languages and literature encouraged me to believe that I would be obliged to smile indulgently at the dated quality of my youthful work. A sad happiness, however, if you will permit the oxymoron, requires me to say that the long interval between my first preoccupation with the subject and the present moment has not served to make me more enlightened, only less long-winded. What I have prepared, therefore, is a condensation of the facts and theories that I first collected as a graduate student, fresh with the enthusiasm of exploring an original subject and with admiration for Longfellow as a kindred scholar. Thus I break no new trails, make no new claims, alter no old conclusions. I simply revisit an old interest.

Some years ago a distinguished reviewer of the first two volumes of the Longfellow Letters, Mr. Louis Untermeyer, called me to task for remarking in my introduction that Longfellow had a "keen and expansive mind." "Expansive--never!" he thundered in the Saturday Review, implying that the poet, if not narrow-minded, was nevertheless unduly restrained by the religious, political, and literary perimeters of his day. It is perhaps presumptuous of me to argue with Untermeyer's judgment, particularly as he is no longer with us to defend himself, but "expansive," in the sense of intellectual breadth, is, I think, a proper adjective to use in any attempt to define a New England literary mind that became involved with Scandinavia 150 years or so ago.

In the 1820s and 1830s Scandinavia was as little known in the United States as, one might say, Siberia is today. Its population was small (Sweden in 1835 had half as many people as Massachusetts today), its history was only vaguely known to Americans, its literary personalities generally unfamiliar. Northern Europe was an Ultima Thule to most New Englanders if, indeed, they gave it a thought. That Longfellow should become motivated to make the difficult journey to Scandinavia, learn Swedish and Danish, translate poetry from these languages, write original poetry on Nordic themes, and accumulate a unique library of Scandinavian literary works, is, it seems to me, an example of an expansive mind at work.

Until his death in May 1982, Dr. Hilen was Professor of English, Emeritus, at the University of Washington in Seattle. He was the author of Longfellow and Scandinavia, as well as the editor of The Diary of Clara Crowninshield and The Letters of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (6 volumes).

How Longfellow developed his interest in this remote region is a subject filled with ironies. It involved Rome in 1828; the Palazzo Crispoldi, at No. 21 Piazza Navona, where Longfellow boarded with the family of a druggist named Innocenzo Persiani; and Giula, Persiani's eldest daughter, a twenty-five-year-old widow of provocative charms. Here in Rome, against a backdrop of animated conversazioni, music, and youthful infatuations, he made the acquaintance of Karl August Nicander, a Swedish poet of modest fame, eight years his senior, who shared his enthusiasm for the Palazzo Crispoldi and his romantic interest in the lovely Giula. Nicander introduced him to various members of the Scandinavian colony in Rome--writers, artists, sculptors, wealthy expatriates, and minor diplomats--and began painting idealized pictures of his northern homeland, perhaps secure in the belief that his new American friend would never test the reality of his descriptions. Thus Longfellow became indoctrinated with notions of Scandinavia as a land of long summer nights, pastoral refinement, and literary and artistic innovations. He returned to Bowdoin College in 1829 with the belief that Scandinavia represented a kind of northern Italy, cooler perhaps, and less spirited, but certainly worth a voyage of discovery, should the opportunity present itself.

For six years Longfellow nourished a plan to visit Scandinavia while he served his apprenticeship as a teacher of modern languages at Bowdoin. Having been made more acutely aware of the northern languages and literature by his friend Nicander, he now studied with increased interest the occasional articles on Scandinavian subjects in the Foreign Quarterly Review, the North American Review, and other journals that came to his attention. He had acquired, furthermore, a small collection of Old Norse sagas in German translation which one may assume he read carefully, given his predilection for the past and for heroic tales. When therefore, in December 1834, the invitation came to succeed George Ticknor as Smith Professor at Harvard, he had convinced himself that Scandinavia offered a field of study which he might cultivate with little competition from his academic peers, provided he could obtain some first-hand knowledge of the subject. He thus determined to do the unusual and to give to Scandinavia a part of the "year or eighteen months" that President Quincy of Harvard allowed him for "a more perfect attainment of the German." He knew he was a linguist of more than ordinary ability, he was confident that he could learn Swedish and Danish in a few weeks of concentrated effort, and he looked forward to a delightful social experience in the company of Nicander and his literary friends.

Longfellow's summer in Sweden in 1835 was a failure, however, if measured against his expectations. He himself was responsible for a large part of this failure. He had not kept in touch with Nicander over the years, and he had neglected to inform him of his plan to visit Sweden. Thus, when he arrived in Stockholm on June 28 he found to his dismay that his former friend, on whom he depended for his introduction into the literary circles of the capital, was some sixty miles away in Nyköping. When he heard from Longfellow by letter, Nicander did not rush to the rescue, perhaps because even a short journey in those days was made long by the primitiveness of Swedish roads, but more likely because he found no difficulty in preferring the pleasures of his

holiday to the demands of a friendship he had almost forgotten. He may also have been put off by Longfellow's confession that he was tethered to three females--his wife Mary and her two friends, Mary C. Goddard and Clara Crowninshield.

There was another difficulty that made the Swedish summer disagreeable, one never mentioned in Longfellow's letters or journal of this period. Mary Longfellow was pregnant, languishing in morning sicknesses and wishing she were anywhere but where she was. Although there is no evidence that she sought medical advice, Mary Longfellow was obviously in need of it. Three months after leaving Sweden, she died in Rotterdam as a result of infection following a miscarriage. Her constant malaise during three months in Sweden did much to cast a pall over Longfellow's summer in the North.

In a letter to his friend George Washington Greene, dated August 10, 1835, Longfellow provides the best evidence of his disillusionment with Sweden.

> We have now been about two months in Sweden; and shall leave it without regret in about a fortnight, to return no more forever--I trust. From which pious ejaculation you will infer, that I have not been much pleased with my "Summer in the North." It is indeed so. Stockholm is a very pretty city;--"et quand on a dit cela, on a tout dit." There is no spirit--no life--no enterprise--in a word--"no nothing." Literature is in an abject condition; and notwithstanding the many great names, that adorn the armorial bearings of Sweden, you cannot help seeing all around you, that "la stupidite est d'uniforme." And then it is so cold here! It is August--but it is not summer. The rain it raineth every day; and the air is like November. I was simple enough to go out yesterday without a great-coat and umbrella; for which scandalous conduct I was drenched through by a tremendous rain; and pelted for fifteen minutes with hail-stones as large as peas. I was on the water, in an open boat. "O for a beaker full of the warm south!" I shall seek one soon. I wish it were to-day.

Still, despite these strictures, he accomplished much during the three long summer months. He studied the Swedish language diligently enough to merit his wife's proud remark that "Henry has become quite learned in the Swedish." Later, Gustaf Mellin, a minor novelist who befriended him, gave perhaps a more accurate appraisal of his progress when he wrote to Nicander that "Longfellow was well enough at home in reading the Swedish language when he left, but I thought that he took too much upon himself. I had to present him with my Finnish Bible and give him a couple of lessons in the pronunciation of the Finnish language. He pondered a great deal over old Latin dissertations concerning the Dalecarlian dialect and other things."

The fact is, therefore, that he worked hard to overcome the difficulties presented by Nicander's failure to renew his friendship in person, by the domestic and social demands of his unhappy entourage, and by the miserable weather. In addition to his language study, he indulged in a favorite occupation--the buying of books for his own and for the Harvard library; he visited the university town of Uppsala and ventured northward to the famous iron mine of Dannemora; and he met and was entertained by a number of the Swedish literati of Stockholm as well as by several members of the Anglo-American colony in the city. If he left Sweden without regret, he also left it with the satisfaction that he had carried out his plan to the best of his ability.

The following two weeks in Denmark were happy by comparison with the three months in Sweden. Copenhagen was a more cosmopolitan city than Stockholm in 1835, and he found in Carl Rafn, the great Danish philologist and historian, the kind of literary guide he had hoped to have in Nicander. The result was a fortnight of intense but pleasurable activity. He attacked the Danish language vigorously, attended the theater, lost himself among the Viking artifacts in the Oldnordisk Museum, began several translations from Danish literature, and scoured the antiquarian bookshops on his mission for the Harvard library. When the time came for his departure, he regretted that he had to leave Denmark; he realized too late that he should have used Copenhagen instead of Stockholm as his base of operations during the Scandinavian summer. Had he done so, he might have come away with a deeper knowledge of the northern languages and literature. He would certainly have retained a more pleasant memory of the experiment.

During his young manhood in France, Spain, and Italy during 1826-1829, Longfellow so immersed himself in the cultures of these countries that we can with little hesitation call him a scholar of romance languages. By comparison, his knowledge of Scandinavian life, literature, and languages was superficial. He made no attempt to understand the economic conditions that were soon to send great waves of Scandinavian emigrants to America, and he consequently found the Swedes wanting in the social graces which he accepted as necessary in cultivated life. Furthermore, he let impatience rule his attempts to learn; and that impatience led him to the perusal of exotic dialects and literary works before he was ready to study them with ease. Under the circumstances, however, given the brevity of his sojourn in Sweden and Denmark, the logistic difficulties of his itinerary, and the fact that he was weighed down with the responsibility for a pregnant wife and two complaining companions, one can only be impressed that he learned as much as he did.

How Longfellow subsequently made use of his experience in Scandinavia is perhaps more interesting than the trials and tribulations of the experience itself. He had seen a good deal of the physical aspect of Sweden, having traveled from Gothenburg to Stockholm in a lumbering, Russian-built coach and from Stockholm to Gothenburg by cramped steamer on the Göta Canal; and he had filled his journal with impressions, not always commendatory, of dark forests, poor inns, hand-hewn log houses, peasants in native dress, village churches, and long summer twilights.

During the next several years, as he gradually submerged his narrow scholarly interests beneath a desire to appeal to a wider audience, so, too, did he abandon his early enthusiasm for Dalecarlian dialects and old Swedish tomes in favor of exploiting an idealized Swedish countryside in prose and poetry. This metamorphosis from philological scholar to creative author and poet is illustrated by his essay on the Swedish poet Esaias Tegnér in the North American Review and, oddly enough, by his narrative poem on the French Acadians, Evangeline.

Longfellow introduced his review of Tegnér's Frithiofs Saga with a romanticized description of Swedish life, concocted from his journal notes and from a book entitled Ett År i Sverge (A Year in Sweden) by Christian Forssel. "The prose style," as I have written earlier, "betrays a conscious imitation of Irving, his first important literary model. With its correct proportions of Irvingesque sentimentality, quaintness, and gentle moralizing, the piece might well have been another chapter of Outre-Mer; the village church and pastor, lifeless babes, coffins, psalm books, a country wedding are all portrayed in the best Sketch Book tradition."[1] His picture of Sweden had only a marginal basis in the reality he had experienced in 1835. It was, in fact, what he had hoped to see when he made up his mind to visit the North. In time it came to replace in his mind the more mundane and disappointing events of his actual experience.

One of the most interesting parts of the essay is a description of the Swedish landscape.

> In the vast solitudes around him /the anciend Skald/, the heart of Nature beat against his own. From the midnight gloom of groves the deep-voiced pines answered the deeper-voiced and neighboring sea . . .
>
> He /the modern Skald/ dwells in that land, where the sound of the sea and the midnight storm are the voices of tradition, and the great forests beckon to him, and in mournful accents seem to say, "Why has thou tarried so long?"
>
> Almost primeval simplicity reigns over this Northern land--almost primeval solitude and stillness . . . Around you are forests of fir. Over head hang the long, fan-like branches, trailing with moss, and heavy with red and blue cones.

When one remembers that Longfellow had never been in Nova Scotia, it is not surprising that this impression of a Swedish countryside became, in hexameters, the famous introduction to Evangeline.

> This is the forest primeval. The murmuring pines and
> the hemlocks,
> Bearded with moss, and in garments green, indistinct
> in the twilight,
> Stand like Druids of eld, with voices sad and prophetic,

Stand like harpers hoar, with beards that rest on
their bosoms.
Loud from its rocky caverns, the deep-voiced neighboring
ocean
Speaks, and in accents disconsolate answers the wail of
the forest.

Thus Sweden became Acadia, an example not only of poetic license, but also of the influence of Scandinavia on an American skald.

If a minor poet, Karl August Nicander, motivated Longfellow to explore the possibilities of the northern languages and literature, a major poet, Bishop Esaias Tegnér, became the dominant Scandinavian influence on his literary career. Longfellow did not meet Tegnér in Sweden, but within a week of his arrival in Stockholm he acquired a copy of Frithiofs Saga and of the bishop's minor poems. As the weeks passed and his knowledge of Swedish improved, Longfellow came to recognize in Tegnér a kindred spirit, a romantic idealist whose poetical theory embraced the freedom of the past and the law of love while eschewing the "deeds of blood" that had characterized his Viking ancestors. Thus, in Frithiofs Saga, a tale of Vikings, Tegnér idealized a violent and lawless age, much as Longfellow, in Evangeline, romanticized the fate of lovers who had been subjected to a cruel and terrible oppression. The two poets, so unlike in background, profession, and habit, were nevertheless unusually compatible in their attitudes toward the past and its delineation in poetry.

Longfellow left evidence of his admiration for Tegnér in his letters and journal, in his appreciative essay in the North American Review, in a poem--"Tegnér's Drapa"--on the occasion of the poet's death, in a number of abortive translations from his poetry, and in his only complete translation of a Swedish poem, "The Children of the Lord's Supper." In his essay on Tegnér he illustrated his remarks with several translated excerpts from Frithiofs Saga. These fragments won Tegnér's praise as the best he had seen in English, and they caused a number of his admirers to regret that he did not translate the entire heroic poem. As translations they show a high technical skill and a remarkable fidelity to the original Swedish, for Longfellow had already formed his opinion that literalness in translation was the key to success. Nevertheless, he chose not to continue with Frithiofs Saga, possibly because there were already several English translations in print, and decided instead to turn Tegnér's "Nattvardsbarnen"--"The Children of the Lord's Supper"--into comparable English hexameters.

"The Children of the Lord's Supper" deserves emphasis, in any consideration of Longfellow's development as a poet, as a testing ground for the measure, unorthodox in English, that he was later to employ in Evangeline and The Courtship of Miles Standish. One must say in the beginning that Swedish, with its greater proportion of words that are natural dactyls, lends itself more easily than English to the composition of hexameter lines. Longfellow's translation, therefore, while it is successful as an exercise in capturing the mood and meaning of the Swedish poem, is less successful in reproducing its hexameters. That Longfellow

recognized the difficulty is apparent from his initial reluctance to publish the poem. In the end, however, he overcame his misgivings, moved by the encouragement of friends and by his own admiration of the original, and permitted the translation to appear in Ballads and Other Poems in 1842. Discriminating readers will recognize that "The Children of the Lord's Supper" can be merged with Evangeline with little alteration of its tone, meter, or spirit. Thus did a Swedish bishop contribute to Longfellow's first great success in narrative poetry.

Denmark provided no literary figure comparable to Tegnér as a catalyst in Longfellow's poetical career. A case could be made, however, for his preferring Danish literature to Swedish, just as he preferred Copenhagen to Stockholm. From the moment he began his fortnight's residence in the Danish capital, he found himself fascinated by old Danish ballads, and he was not to lose interest in them for the rest of his life. In "To an Old Danish Songbook," written in 1845, he recalled the

> Days departed, half-forgotten,
> When in dreamy youth I wandered
> By the Baltic,--
> When I paused to hear
> The old ballad of King Christian
> Shouted from suburban taverns
> In the twilight.

And he went on to imagine how

> Once some ancient Scald
> In his bleak, ancestral Iceland,
> Chanted staves of these old ballads
> To the Vikings.

This fascination with Danish ballads led him to a number of well-turned translations--"King Christian," "The Elected Knight," and "The Mother's Ghost"--as well as several experimental translations that remained in manuscript. In the back of his mind, during the years when he was still searching for the key to poetical achievement, he entertained the notion of trying to create an American ballad literature on the model of the Danish. Thus one can say, I believe, that Ballads and Other Poems, published six years after his sojourn in Scandinavia, had at least part of its genesis in the Danish ballad collections that Longfellow treasured in his personal library.

It is ironic that the two works for which Longfellow is best known for his exploitation of Scandinavian themes--"The Skeleton in Armor" and "The Saga of King Olaf"--were only tenuously connected with his actual experience in Sweden and Denmark. They might have been written, indeed, had he never visited Scandinavia, for they are the products of imaginative voyages in his own library among translated sagas and runic poems, mostly in English and German. They represent, furthermore, the basic qualities of his creative talent: his ability to conjure up the past, to refine and romanticize events, to narrate in poetic form.

Longfellow's knowledge of the Old Norse language and literature was rudimentary, and although he seems to have lectured on the subject at Harvard, he made no claim of being an authority on the subject. "My knowledge of Icelandic Literature," he wrote in 1879, "is limited to the two Eddas, the Heimskringla, and some of the Sagas." If this is not enough to establish him as a scholar of Old Norse, it was certainly adequate to enable him to imagine landscapes he had not actually seen, Vikings he had not met in the paler images of their descendants, and events that had no counterparts in his own experience. What he did have, in large measure, was a fascination with the sea, an interest in the Norse explorations of the New England coast, and a creative philosophy, shared with Tegnér, that enabled him to "draw a curtain on the violence and brutal reality of the ancient legends of the North at the same time that he brought to full poetic bloom the wild freedom, the vigor of life, and the emotions of the heart which were potential in the saga literature."[2]

In 1838, during his first months as a Harvard professor, Longfellow entertained the notion of composing "a series of ballads, or a Romantic poem on the deeds of the first bold Viking, who crossed to this western world; with storm spirits and devil machinery under water."[3] Sixteen months later he refined the idea by constructing an outline for a poem in nine cantos to be called "The Saga of Hakon Jarl," referring to it as one of the "great literary plans" in his brain. Nothing came of it. Perhaps he lacked a catalyst for his inspiration. If so, it is interesting to speculate what might have happened if his muse had been provoked into action by news of the discovery of the Kensington Stone, a spurious rune stone found sixty years later in the wilds of Minnesota. That clever forgery, by a sly Swedish-American farmer with a runic dictionary, recounts the adventures of a Viking party which crossed Hudson's Bay to Lake Winnipeg and then traversed the wilderness by a series of lakes and portages to central Minnesota. Longfellow, indulging in a fantasy similar to that of the Minnesota farmer, might have given the infamous stone a poetic legitimacy that would have delighted romanticists to this day.

Denied the inspiration of the Kensington Stone by the simple fact of chronology, Longfellow was moved, however, by two questionable contemporary "relics" of Viking colonization in the New World, the Round Tower at Newport and the Fall River Skeleton. Both tower and skeleton had captured the imagination of historical buffs and Norsophiles, although neither has ever been convincingly established as of Viking origin. For Longfellow, they supplied new incentives for pursuing his idea of a Viking poem. In December 1839 he reduced his plan of an heroic treatment of the theme to that of a simple ballad, and the result was "The Skeleton in Armor." The poem was an amalgam of literary influences: a rhyme scheme borrowed from Michael Drayton's "Battle of Agincourt"; an invocation to the "fearful guest" with "hollow breast" taken from his own translation of Uhland's "Der Schwarze Ritter"; details from Tegnér's Frithiofs Saga, the Heimskringla, Campbell's "Lord Ullin's Daughter," and Shelley's "The Fugitive"; and marginal notes, in the Knickerbocker Magazine version of the poem, in the manner of The Rime of the Ancient Mariner. Nevertheless, Longfellow was undoubtedly correct in his opinion that he had succeeded "in giving the whole a Northern air,"[4] and for once he received a compliment from Poe, who called the ballad the "only true poem" in Ballads and Other

Poems. Longfellow's reputation as a poet had not yet improved his bargaining power in the market place, however, and he sold the ballad to Lewis Gaylord Clark of the Knickerbocker for $25.

The popular success of "The Skeleton in Armor" encouraged Longfellow in the belief that he should make further poetic voyages into the misty world of dragon ships and berserkers, and the idea of an epic treatment of the subject lay in the back of his mind for the next several years. On October 18, 1848, he recorded a variation on the theme in his "Book of Suggestions": "Ymer. A poem on the Giants of the Northern Mythology. The subject is very grand. It should be in blank verse." Shortly afterwards he wrote an experimental 111 lines, describing the genesis of the Giants of the Frost in the Chaos of the Odinic mythology, and ending with the creation of the earth and of man by Odin, Vili, and Ve. The experiment could only have been disappointing to him. His pentameters were prosaic and lacked the resonance and vitality that the subject demanded. He knew he was not ready for the clarions, kettle drums, and bassoons of such a Wagnerian opus and perhaps never would be. He laid the fragment aside and it remained forgotten among his papers.

On February 25, 1859--the subject of a major poem on a Scandinavian theme having now lain in his mind for over twenty years--Longfellow remarked in his journal that "a very good Poem might be written on the 'Saga of King Olaf,' who converted the North to Christianity." The time had now come for a final assault on the project. He returned to Samuel Laing's translation of the Heimskringla, reviewed Tegnér's Frithiofs Saga, consulted the collection of Icelandic sagas in the Harvard library, and outlined a poem which would narrate, in a series of inter-connected ballads, the coming of Christianity to the heathen pirates of the North. In six weeks, between October 24 and December 9, 1860, he wrote twenty-one of the poem's twenty-two parts (the first, "The Challenge of Thor," having been composed as early as 1849). The finished poem lay unpublished until 1863 when it appeared as the Musician's first tale in Tales of a Wayside Inn.

"The Saga of King Olaf" is without doubt the most ambitious and the most successful of Longfellow's poems on a Scandinavian theme. Young Theodore Roosevelt, preparing for Harvard, read it with his brand of strenuous enthusiasm; George William Curtis commended it in the pages of the Atlantic Monthly; and strangers and friends from far and near wrote to praise and congratulate. The reason for the poem's popularity is not hard to find. "For once the gentler side of [Longfellow's] nature was subordinated," wrote Professor George Rice Carpenter, "and he sang gladly of fighting and rapine." It may be somewhat off the mark to imply that Longfellow's "gentler side" was always an inhibiting factor in his poetry, but it can hardly be denied that "The Saga of King Olaf" is the better for the robustness of its subject matter. It is a hale and hearty poem.

> The guests were loud, the ale was strong,
> King Olaf feasted late and long;

The hoary Scalds together sang;
O'erhead the smoky rafters rang.

As a narrative poet, Longfellow had an unquestionable talent which he applied with vigor to such typically Scandinavian conceptions as "The Skerry of Shrieks," iron beards and forked beards, war horns, death drinks, and long serpents. Those who think of Longfellow as merely the purveyor of moral tags and sentimental effusions need only read "The Saga of King Olaf" to be disabused.

And yet the "Saga," despite its success, is also a reminder to us of the poet's major weakness. For years he had dreamed of an epic poem on a subject which he, of all American poets, was best qualified by virtue of his experience and knowledge to bring to fruition. But in the final analysis he could respond only with ballads.

Longfellow's knowledge of Swedish and Danish, his extensive but random reading in the literature of Scandinavia, and his summer in the North in 1835 made him as much of an authority on Scandinavia as one would be likely to find in New England before the Civil War. In the beginning, as I have said, his interest was a scholarly one, as evidenced by his study of dialects and old manuscripts and by his membership in the Nordiske Oldskriftsselskab (The Society of Northern Antiquaries). In the end, indeed shortly after he assumed his Harvard professorship, that interest evolved into a strictly literary one in which he made use of his knowledge in a creative, poetic way. Thus the actual experience in Sweden and Denmark--lands where he found no picturesque ruins, no spectacular scenery (it is to be remembered that he did not visit Norway), no cheerful peasantry, and only inclement weather--was of minor significance in his life. The fact is that he gradually came to ignore it as an unpleasant interlude associated in his mind with the illness and death of his first wife.

But this is not to say that the idea of Scandinavia was unimportant to him. As we have seen, he developed in his imagination two distinct conceptions of the North. He transformed contemporary Scandinavia into what he had expected before he traveled there. This mental image was the land of Nicander's patriotic and inflated descriptions, a misty, pastoral land, a Baltic Spain, quite removed from the poverty, harsh climate, and ignorant peasantry of actuality. He made use of his idealized reconstruction in his essay on "Life in Sweden," in Evangeline, and in his nostalgic lyric "To an Old Danish Songbook." Eventually, as I have previously written, "he came to accept this impression as part of his own experience and, . . . Scandinavia was blended into his general concept of Europe as a modern Arcadia of legend and romance."[5] If he preferred the wines of France and Italy, he also enjoyed, on occasion, the aquavit of Scandinavia.

Longfellow's other conception was of historical Scandinavia, of Vikings and long ships, rocky headlands, and the churning sea. Since he had never been to Norway or Iceland, this Scandinavia was strictly a world of his imagination, stimulated by the forceful prose of the ancient sagas. This world, too, he altered for poetic reasons.

Sharing the literary philosophy of Tegnér, that the heroic element in the saga literature should be retained while the raw, savage, and barbaric elements ought to be eliminated or at least softened, Longfellow closed his eyes to the grosser and yet well-founded facts of Viking life. "The Saga of King Olaf," for all its atmosphere of masculine heroics, is in reality an expurgated poem. Perhaps we would not have it otherwise, but it is important to remember that Longfellow refined his material in accordance with his creative instincts.

The "Scandinavian Connection," if I may borrow a modern expression, runs like a bright thread through Longfellow's life. Removing it would not change the basic pattern of his literary achievement, although it is difficult to disassociate Longfellow from "The Skeleton in Armor," "The Saga of King Olaf," even of "The Children of the Lord's Supper." The "connection" also served another useful purpose in that Longfellow's exploitation of it brought Scandinavia to the attention of his thousands of admirers. His correspondence reveals that he was frequently appealed to as an authority on the northern languages and literature; and there can be no doubt that his interest in the subject stimulated the interest of others.

The "Scandinavian Connection" was, as I have said, a life-long relationship. On January 5, 1881, fourteen months before his death, Longfellow thanked a correspondent for the gift of the Orkneyinga Saga, translated from the Icelandic. "This is my most valuable New Year's present," he wrote, "and I value it very highly." An interest begun in the exhuberant days of his youth had persevered into his old age.

NOTES

[1]Andrew Hilen, Longfellow and Scandinavia (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1947), p. 35.

[2]Ibid., p. 61.

[3]Henry W. Longfellow, MS Journal, May 3, 1838. Houghton Library, Harvard University.

[4]Andrew Hilen, ed., The Letters of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1966), II, p. 269.

[5]Longfellow and Scandinavia, p. 107.

"STANDING ON THE GREEN SWARD: THE VEILED CORRESPONDENCE OF NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE AND HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW"

By
Rita K. Gollin

> Has the reader gone wandering, hand in hand with me, through the inner passages of my being, and have we groped together into all its chambers, and examined their treasures or their rubbish? Not so. We have been standing on the green sward, but just within the cavern's mouth, where the common sunshine is free to penetrate, and where every footstep is therefore free to come. I have appealed to no sentiment or sensibilities save such as are diffused among us all. So far as I am a man of really individual attributes, I veil my face.
> (Mosses from an Old Manse, pp. 32-33)

> A veil may be needful, but never a mask.
> (American Notebooks, p. 23)

If we try to define Hawthorne's relationship to Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, the short form is that they were classmates at Bowdoin; that twelve years later Hawthorne sent Longfellow a copy of Twice-told Tales, his first published book, whereupon Longfellow published an enthusiastic review of it; and that from then on they were warm friends who exchanged dozens of letters, dined together, counselled together, and congratulated each other on their publications. But this does not take into account the complexities of Hawthorne's self-presentations--neither the self-protective strategies of his requests, nor the many ways Hawthorne

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used Longfellow both as a yardstick and sounding board for his own professional ambitions. Even when Hawthorne's letters sound most relaxed and least ironic, when he rejoiced in his friend's latest literary triumphs, they hint at anxieties about his own role as writer and even question the value of reputation.

One way of coming to terms with the relationship that lasted more than forty years is to look at several points of professional juncture crucial to Hawthorne's career--the first centering on Twice-told Tales in 1837, the second on a projected collaboration between the two men a year later, and a third on Longfellow's publication of Evangeline in 1847. We must examine these junctures, but also determine what preceded and followed them.

On the seventh of March, 1837, the day after his first volume of short stories was published, Nathaniel Hawthorne wrote a brief and relatively formal note to a Bowdoin classmate who had already won literary acclaim. "Dear Sir," he began, "The agent of the American Stationers Company will send you a copy of a book entitled 'Twice-told Tales' of which, as a classmate, I venture to request your acceptance." With this request went another unstated one: Hawthorne hoped Longfellow, a Harvard Professor and author of language textbooks and the well-received travel sketches, Outre-Mer, might publicly praise the collection of tales and thus advance the career of its author. The tone of the note is humble and even apologetic. "We were not, it is true, so well acquainted at college, that I can plead an absolute right to inflict my 'twice-told' tediousness upon you," Hawthorne said, but immediately modified the apology to plead a relative if not an absolute right: "I have often regretted that we were not better known to each other, and have been glad of your success in literature, and in more important matters." Then he implicitly withdrew his concern about inflicting "tediousness" by stating that the tales had not only won publication before but seemed "worth offering to the public a second time." Hawthorne concluded gracefully with the hope that the tales would repay "some part of the pleasure which I have derived from your own Outre Mer" (under the guise of courteous modesty ranking his first book with Longfellow's), then signing himself "Your obedient servant."

In this letter, Hawthorne was at once courting Longfellow and asserting himself as an equal, trying to advance his career despite a modicum of anxiety about the merits of his case. And with the letter Hawthorne initiated a relationship that would serve him well in establishing and defining himself as a man of letters. In the thirty or more letters addressed to Longfellow in the course of the next twenty-seven years, Hawthorne often presented himself with self-denigration, whether ruefully or whimsically, even when little seemed at issue beyond an invitation to dinner. Particularly at the beginning of the correspondence, Hawthorne approached as a petitioner, directly or indirectly soliciting practical assistance, veiling his deep concerns or surrounding them with ironic disclaimers.

This is not to say that Hawthorne was a hypocrite; but in writing to Longfellow he adopted personae calculated to flatter the receiver and advance his career while protecting himself from embarrassment. Truth is laced with whimsy or projected with artful fantasy in these letters just as in the prefaces Hawthorne addressed to readers of his books: he presented himself honestly as a man of letters intent on pursuing an "intercourse with the world," yet determined to keep his "inmost me" concealed.

"Has the reader gone wandering, hand in hand with me, through the inner passages of my being," Hawthorne asked in the preface to Mosses from an Old Manse, "and have we groped together into all its chambers, and examined their treasures or their rubbish?" The answer is immediate and unequivocal. "Not so. We have been standing on the green sward, but just within the cavern's mouth, where the common sunshine is free to penetrate, and where every footstep is therefore free to come."[2] Hawthorne's correspondence with Longfellow takes the same position. "So far as I am really a man of individual attributes, I veil my face," Hawthorne said in the Mosses; and the veil is firmly in place in the letters to Longfellow. It must be said that Longfellow was evidently satisfied by this relationship, content to stand on the green sward without trying to penetrate the cavern. The two writers played roles with one another, but without dissembling. Hawthorne once commented in his notebook, "A veil might be needful, but never a mask";[3] and delicately but deliberately, he offered Longfellow moments of privileged insight. Even in his last letter to his old friend, in January 1864, after praising the newly published Tales of a Wayside Inn, he confessed his fear that his own career was nearly over, though he might yet write one last best book. Then he concluded poignantly, though with a characteristic note of mild flattery, "You can tell, far better than I, whether there is ever anything worth having in literary reputation, and whether the best achievements seem to have any substance after they grow cold."

At Bowdoin, as Hawthorne later recalled, "no two men could have been more unlike." The future poet and professor "was a tremendous student, and always carefully dressed, while he himself was extremely careless of his appearance, no student at all, and entirely incapable at that period of appreciating Longfellow."[4] The outlines of the contrast are valid. The two young men graduated together in 1825, members of a class that numbered only 38. They had worked under the same professors and satisfied the same requirements. But differences of age and (more important) of temperament explain their relative indifference to one another as undergraduates. Longfellow was only fifteen when he and his older brother Stephen entered Bowdoin as sophomores: he was a serious and well-disciplined young man, never tempted by such distractions as card-playing or wine-drinking. Predictably, he joined the more scholarly and politically conservative of Bowdoin's two literary societies, the Peucinian. Aiming at a distinguished literary career, he published poems and essays in such well-known periodicals as the American

Monthly Magazine; and at his classmates' request he composed a poem for their final social meeting. Graduating fourth in his class, Longfellow was elected to the just-formed chapter of Phi Beta Kappa; and even more gratifying, he was appointed to Bowdoin's new chair of modern languages, a position he would assume after studying languages abroad.[5] Professors and classmates could have made good guesses about the professional distinction Longfellow would achieve; but only an acute professor or an intimate friend could have predicted Hawthorne's.

At Bowdoin, Hawthorne was remembered as a reserved and independent young man who nonetheless made close friends and joined several social clubs as well as the Athenean literary society. It is clear that he had a low tolerance for regulations, amassing fines for such infractions as missing religious services and playing cards. Nevertheless, his essays and Latin translations were admired and his class rank of eighteen was respectable. But he was relieved to learn that because of what he called "neglect of Declamation," he would not be permitted to deliver a commencement address. Although he bragged to his sister Louisa about his "splendid appearance" on the only occasion when he declaimed in Chapel--speaking in Latin as did only one other of the fifteen participants, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow--public speaking was always a burden for him.[6] He would court public approval in a more solitary manner. But perhaps only his friend Horatio Bridge could have guessed that he would leave Bowdoin to write stories in Salem for what he would call his "twelve lonely years," or that he would later establish a remarkable career as a writer of fiction.

To the casual observer, Longfellow, the successful scholar graduating at eighteen, had little in common with the intractable if somewhat irresolute twenty-two year old Hawthorne. Regarded with the clarity of hindsight, by 1825 both had defined professional paths they would follow throughout their lives--Longfellow's straight, Hawthorne's meandering. Yet when Longfellow gave his commencement address predicting that "palms are to be won by our native writers," he adumbrated the direction of Hawthorne's career as well as his own, and established a base line for their mature friendship.

Although from a pragmatic perspective, Hawthorne's first letter to Longfellow is the most important, an invitation to the dance expressed with deferential assertiveness, his second letter is most artful (as well as the longest) and indirectly the most confessional. The letter that provoked it has not survived, but Hawthorne's response establishes that Longfellow had written a "kind and cordial" reply, expressing interest in Hawthorne's "situation", and referring to "troubles and changes" of his own (presumably the death of his wife and his new teaching position at Harvard). Reluctant "to burthen you with my correspondence," Hawthorne waited nearly two months before proffering his concerted effort at self-assessment.

Then, protesting that "your quotation from Jean Paul, about the 'lark-nest', makes me smile," he compared himself to a more dismal bird: "like the owl, I seldom venture abroad till after dusk," he said. The rest of the long first paragraph is a complaint about how lonely and insubstantial his life had been since they last met. At first he disavowed responsibility for his predicament: "By some witchcraft or other--for I really cannot assign any reasonable why and wherefore--I have been carried apart from the main current of life, and find it impossible to get back again." But then putting aside the notion of wholly innocent victimization, Hawthorne accepted blame for at least initiating his problem: "I have secluded myself from society; and yet I never meant any such thing, nor dreamed what sort of life I was going to lead. I have made a captive of myself and put me into a dungeon; and now I cannot find the key to let myself out--and if the door were open, I should be almost afraid to come out." He almost completely devalued himself and his past ten years: "I have not lived, but only dreamed about living"; the few pleasures of his dream life were neither substantial nor enduring.

The next paragraph continues the ambivalent self-denigration. Longfellow supposed he was studious, but he had merely "turned over a good many books"; and he made light of his writings without impugning them: "I do not think much of them--neither is it worth while to be ashamed of them." They would have been better if he had been more deeply involved in the real world; but the public was at least partly to blame because he never had "warmth of approbation, so that I have always written with benumbed fingers." Nonetheless he claimed credit for managing to capture glimpses of the real world in a few writings which "please me better than the others."

The first two paragraphs have received a lot of critical attention, and rightly so. They present in the fullest form Hawthorne's own self-dramatization as an idle dreamer deprived of the real existence that fiction requires (a dramatization that would recur in the courtship letters to Sophia and that turns up in the Oberon sketches as well as in the dedication of the Snow Image), intermixing self-pity, self-mockery, and self-exoneration.

But the next three paragraphs are also interesting and important, and furthermore almost devoid of self-pity. Here as in the first letter to Longfellow, Hawthorne presented himself not as a fragile isolato but as a practical man of letters. He announced himself committed to "scribble for a living," and willing to take on the drudgery of editing or of writing children's books. Then he responded to Longfellow's praise with a four step minuet: he was pleased that Longfellow had previously read and admired some of the stories; he felt inclined to discount this praise since "you could not well help flattering me a little"; but on the other hand he valued Longfellow's "praise too highly not to have faith in its sincerity"; and finally, the book was selling "pretty well."

Then, in the last paragraph, Hawthorne surrendered, if temporarily, the role of owl: he planned a summer excursion "somewhere in New England," which would make him feel "as young as I did ten years ago." In the last two sentences, self-effacement is once again followed by self-assertion. "What a letter am I inflicting on you!" he said, undercutting the entire bravura performance; but he ended confidently, "I trust you will answer it."

The third and last letter of this springtime exchange with Longfellow is as short as the first but wholly different in tone. Hawthorne wrote it two weeks later, immediately after reading with "huge delight" Longfellow's long and laudatory review of Twice-told Tales for the influential North American Review.[7] "I frankly own that I was not without hopes that you would do this kind office for the book," he admitted, "though I could not have anticipated how very kindly it would be done." There is no trace of the imagery of witchcraft or dreamland in his jocular assertion that "there are at least five persons who think you the most sagacious critic on earth--viz. my mother and two sisters, my old maiden aunt, and finally, the sturdiest believer of the whole five, my own self." Here the new persona is that of a brashly confident "scribbler," determined to doubt only "those who censure me," and "anxious to hold a talk" with his kind critic. The first letter had been a plea for help, the second a plea for sympathy, and the third an anticipation of friendship.

Longfellow's generous review is the key to the change, designed to unlock Hawthorne's dungeon and make him willing to come out. In response to his classmate's overture, Longfellow enthusiastically introduced him to readers of the most influential Whig journal as a major new American writer. Downplaying the dark strains in the narratives, Longfellow stressed Hawthorne's bright vitality.

The tone is established at the start by the lofty image of Hawthorne as a "new star in the heavens." In a mild burst of humor, Longfellow anticipated that other "star-gazers" would merely report on the new star's magnitude and assign it a constellation; but what he proceeded to offer is unstinted praise for this "sweet, sweet book" which "has the freshness of morning and of May." It is easy to dismiss Longfellow's diction and imagery as conventional, and it is true that his conception of Hawthorne's heart as peaceful and gentle is simplistic. Yet he was astute enough to recognize "deep waters" in Hawthorne's inner life, saying that "to him external form is but the representation of inner being," and warning readers that they could envisage on the "calm, thoughtful face" of the writer an occasional "strange and painful expression." But he did not otherwise prepare them for the blackness of such tales as "The Wedding Knell," "The Minister's Black Veil," or "The Hollow of the Three Hills," nor for the skeptical irony of "The Haunted Mind" or "The Gentle Boy." He presented Hawthorne to the genteel readers of The North American Review in terms they would value--as a "man of

genius," a loving poet, a friendly man with a "pleasant philosophy" and "quiet humor" who feels "a universal sympathy with Nature, both in the material world and the soul of man," one who "has wisely chosen his themes among the traditions of New England," and whose style is "as clear as running water." As a typical mid-century reviewer, Longfellow devoted most of his space to quotations, predictably from such accessible sketches as "A Rill from the Town Pump." Then, gracefully identifying himself as one of many admirers, he concluded, "Like children we say, 'Tell us more.'"

Fourteen years later, near the end of his preface to a new edition of Twice-told Tales, Hawthorne spoke of the "kindly feeling" of the book's first readers who regarded him "as a mild, shy, gentle, melancholic, and not very forcible man." He might have recalled Longfellow's review when he wrote that, and when he said some of his later writings might be construed as efforts "to fill up so amiable an outline." Certainly his self-definition was in part determined by what he saw mirrored in Longfellow's response. In 1837, Twice-told Tales had led "to the formation of imperishable friendships," he said; and Longfellow's wide-eyed pastoral enthusiasm helped define the terrain of their ongoing relationship.[8]

A year after the first letter to Longfellow, Hawthorne requested a different kind of professional assistance. His letter of 21 March 1838 centers on a project they had already discussed: collaborating on a collection of children's stories. Hawthorne's eagerness for the venture is evident beneath his equable and even business-like tone. He began with regret that Longfellow had "not come to dinner on Sunday" and ended with an intention to visit him soon; but the bulk of the letter urges the collaboration. Hawthorne mentioned his other literary projects and responsibilities only to urge that this one "need not impede any other labors." He referred to "your" book and invited Longfellow to shape out "your" plan, saying "you shall be the Editor, and I will figure merely as contributor," since "the conception and system of the work will be yours." But beneath this veil of deference, Hawthorne presented himself in the posture of an equal. He suggested that the stories be connected by a narrative thread (as he would later connect his own children's books); he suggested that they all be "either original or translated--at least, for the first volume"; and he even had a particular length in mind--two to three hundred pages of large print. Aware that he had more to gain than Longfellow, he temptingly predicted a new kind of fame: they would "twine for ourselves a wreath of tender shoots and dewy buds" at the same time that they would "perchance put money in our purses." He even offered to "get our baby-house ready by October."

Longfellow did visit Hawthorne in "dull, Sunday-looking Salem" on the following Sunday, and discussed "literary matters" with him. Although a hint of condescension is detectable in the journal entry--"he is much of a lion here, fed, and expected to roar"--Longfellow believed Hawthorne was "a man of genius and

fine imagination" who was "destined to fly high."[9] But if the collaboration was discussed, Longfellow did not think it worth recording.

Seven months later, in a letter of 12 October 1838, Hawthorne breezily yet earnestly raised the topic once more. He began by complaining "It is a dreadful long while since we have collogued together," then said he had enjoyed "rambling about since the middle of July"; but the next few sentences assert his main purpose. "Meantime, how comes on the 'Boy's WONDER-HORN?'" he asked. Then he punningly enlarged the question but self-protectively anticipated disappointment: "Have you blown your blast?--or will it turn out to be a broken-winded concern?" He claimed that he himself had no "breath to spare, just at present," then doubly retracted this objection: "I think it a pity that the echoes should not be awakened," he said, stressing that the venture would require little time or effort. His entire second (and last) paragraph concerns the possibility of Longfellow lecturing at the Salem Lyceum: the local lion Hawthorne promised to "set in motion all the machinery over which I have any control" and "puff--puff--puff--in the newspapers." Clearly, however, he was far less interested in a Lyceum lecture than in a financially profitable joint venture. The letter ends confidently with an unusually peremptory request. "Write forthwith," Hawthorne ordered, then signed, "Truly your friend."

Hawthorne's abrupt shifts of tone and stance might well have confused Longfellow. Shortly after receiving this letter, he told a friend he planned to see Hawthorne the following day; but he does not sound eager. Perhaps recalling Hawthorne's earlier self-definition, Longfellow reflected, "He is a strange owl; a very peculiar individual, with a dash of originality about him very pleasant to behold."[10] The word "behold" does not suggest a prospective collaborator.

Hawthorne had evidently given up hope for the collaboration by the time of his next letter, dated 12 January 1839. At this point Longfellow intended to assemble the children's book alone, though he never did complete it. Somewhat petulantly, Hawthorne said his imminent appointment as Inspector of the Boston Custom House made it "more tolerable that you refuse to let me blow a blast upon the 'Wonder-Horn,'" and he even warned that he might prepare a competing volume. But he downplayed his disappointment. Briefly he assumed a comic persona for his prospective governmental role: he had "as much confidence in my suitableness for it, as Sancho Panza had in his gubernatorial qualifications." That is, Hawthorne professed a robust optimism despite his total inexperience. With unwontedly hearty whimsy, he speculated that as "Port-Admiral," he might write sketches with such titles as "Trials of a Tide-Waiter."

At the same time he had another practical project in mind. If he renounced hope of one form of collaboration, he hinted at

another. He knew Longfellow had been thinking of establishing a literary newspaper, but not that the idea was already abandoned. Stressing that he would have a lot of free time when he came to Boston, he offered "whatever aid a Custom-House officer could afford." Somewhat coyly he even suggested a name for the journal: his own title--"The Inspector."

During the next few years while Hawthorne worked joylessly as Custom Inspector, his letters to Longfellow are relatively few, brief, and forthright. He urged a visit from Longfellow; he arranged to buy cigars for him. But concern about his vocation, never far beneath the surface, emerges painfully in his letter of 16 May 1839, which querulously begins, "Why do you never come and see me?" He was worried about publishing a second volume of stories, and more important, about surviving as a writer: "If I write a preface," he said, "it will be to bid farewell to literature; for, as a literary man, my new occupations entirely break me up."

Longfellow did not in fact visit Hawthorne until five months later, but he responded immediately to Hawthorne's implicit request by writing to his New York publisher, Colman, suggesting publication of two volumes of tales by "a great favorite with the public, . . . who is in future to stand very, very high in our literature." Colman was interested, but unfortunately he went bankrupt before anything could come of it. Again Longfellow had failed Hawthorne, though this time not for want of trying. After his long-deferred visit to his friend in October, Longfellow once again heartily praised Hawthorne in his journal (repeating the initial metaphor of his review of Twice-told Tales)--"He is a grand fellow, and is destined to shine as a 'bright particular star' in our literary heavens."[11] Yet evidently he felt no further inclination to give destiny a helping hand.

Hawthorne's letter two months later clearly establishes that at this time he measured himself as a literary failure in contrast to Longfellow. He earnestly praised Longfellow's two recent volumes, Hyperion and Voices of the Night: he read them "over and over . . . and they grow upon me at every re-perusal." But because his "heart and brain are troubled and fevered now with ten thousand other matters," he felt unable to write his planned review of them. Even his optimistic protestation, "but soon I will set about it," is undercut by the humility of his closing wish: "God send you many a worthier reviewer!" Characteristically, Hawthorne had even less to say about his state of mind in person: "Hawthorne is a taciturn youth," Longfellow noted on 5 April 1840. "He never speaks except in a tête-à-tête, and then not much."[12]

But the last letters of this period are quite cheerful. Not only was Hawthorne about to end his term as Inspector--"I have broken my chain and escaped from the Custom-House," he announced in October--but he had successfully re-entered the lists as a man of letters. His first children's book, Grandfather's Chair, was nearing

publication, and he already had another in mind. His letter of November 20 makes fun of himself as Grandfather, hyperbolically exaggerating his feeling of age, though the mockery is laced with complacency: "By occupying Grandfather's Chair, for a month past, I really believe I have grown an old man prematurely--and not very prematurely either," Hawthorne wrote. "My youthful ardor and adventurous spirit have left me, and I love to keep my feet on the hearth, and dread many shapeless perils, when I contemplate such a journey as from here to Cambridge. . . ." It is easy to detect a serious note beneath the conceit: for years Hawthorne had worried about his slow professional advancement, worried that he might grow old before he became famous. Thus it was important for him to relinquish the sedentary posture of "aged men." He would soon journey to Cambridge, and he invited Longfellow to visit him in Boston, where he generally walked out between twelve and three, "dining in the interim."

Two years later, Hawthorne had four volumes of children's stories in print, his expanded Twice-told Tales had been praised by Poe as well as Longfellow, and he was at last married to his beloved Sophia. Consequently, his few letters to Longfellow from the Old Manse sound remarkably contented. Indeed, the few requests they make of Longfellow can as easily be interpreted as favors to Longfellow. On 26 November 1842, soon after Longfellow's return from half a year abroad, Hawthorne good-naturedly invited congratulations on his marriage, and entreated a visit: a lecture at the Concord Lyceum would gratify Emerson and the other good people of Concord, including "my wife and me." The following month he wrote apologetically about his delay in answering Longfellow's letter, but almost braggingly explained, "I am very busy with the pen, and hate to ink my fingers more than is necessary." He was diligently producing tales and sketches as well as performing some editing tasks. Deferring the pleasure of dining with Longfellow in Cambridge, he again urged a visit to Concord: to counter the discomforts of Winter, he offered "the glow of felicity" and the sport of early morning ice-skating. He ended with a flattering comment: surprised to hear Longfellow had "poetized a practical subject" in Poems on Slavery, he nevertheless had "faith in their excellence."

Relations were even warmer after Longfellow remarried. He reported his delight with "The Birthmark" and urged "Hawthornius" to visit. Hawthorne did indeed dine at Craigie House and met the new Mrs. Longfellow; but the busy poet never made it to Concord.

Hawthorne's third letter to Longfellow from the Old Manse comes near the end of his three year tenancy, declining to visit Longfellow and his brother Stephen in Cambridge "for various weighty reasons." Cordially he invited Stephen to Concord but ironically commented he would no longer even bother to invite Longfellow himself. Then he hinted at his expectation of an exotic political appointment, warning that he might soon move "beyond the limits convenient for visiting--perhaps as far as Pekin."

Of course, Hawthorne did not go to Peking, but to Salem; and the letters to Longfellow during his term as Surveyor at the Salem Custom House reflect the increased intimacy between them. Apparently at this period (which I have called their third professional juncture), Hawthorne felt a new parity in their relationship. He had a respected political appointment, the stories he wrote were soon in print, and Mosses from an Old Manse was published and well-reviewed. Hawthorne was often a guest at Craigie House, feeling free to ask if he could bring along a guest of his own, while Longfellow enjoyed playing host. Although a meal with Hawthorne in a Salem hotel gave him no pleasure--"No German village with a dozen houses in it could have furnished so mean a one," he insisted in his journal--at his own table, matters were different. Two weeks after the unpleasant Salem dinner, he wrote in his journal that he was "more and more struck with Hawthorne's manly beauty and strange, original fancies," then noted Hawthorne's opinion that he should resign his professorship and devote "these golden years of life to literature alone."[13] The two men were easy companions, but usually at Longfellow's table and on his terms.

At this time, two episodes involving portraits dramatize this relative intimacy. The first letter Hawthorne sent Longfellow after settling in Salem, on 14 October 1846, ends with a promise: "If you will speak to Mr. Johnson, I will call on him the next time I visit Boston, and make arrangements about the portrait. My wife is delighted with the idea," he said. The idea was for Eastman Johnson, then a young artist specializing in crayon portraiture, to do crayon and chalk drawings of Longfellow and close members of his family as well as four literary friends--Ralph Waldo Emerson, Charles Sumner, C. C. Felton, and Hawthorne. (Figure 1) Longfellow commissioned and paid for them all, then displayed them prominently in Craigie House. Undoubtedly Hawthorne felt complimented.[14]

A second portrait venture suggests in another way that Hawthorne and Longfellow were publicly regarded as peers. On 23 January 1847, Hawthorne wrote Longfellow that he would be in Boston the following week "and will call on Mr. Martin, and arrange a sitting, either here or there." Four days earlier, Longfellow had noted that the English painter "made a full-length sketch of me for a newspaper." Hawthorne continued, "Since you do not shrink from the hazard of a newspaper wood-cut, I shall face it in my own person, though I never saw one that did not look like the devil."[15] (Unfortunately, neither the portrait sketches nor wood-cuts have surfaced.) Hawthorne always professed to dislike sitting for portraits, but perhaps because this one was a clear professional compliment, he was unusually good-natured about it, and comically wondered what he should wear. He could not wear his dressing-gown to Boston; he had given away the "blue woollen frock" he wore outdoors at Brook Farm and Concord; so he would choose the less formal of his only two options: "in a dress-coat, I should look like a tailor's pattern, . . . so that I think I shall show myself in a common sack, with my stick in one hand and hat in the other."

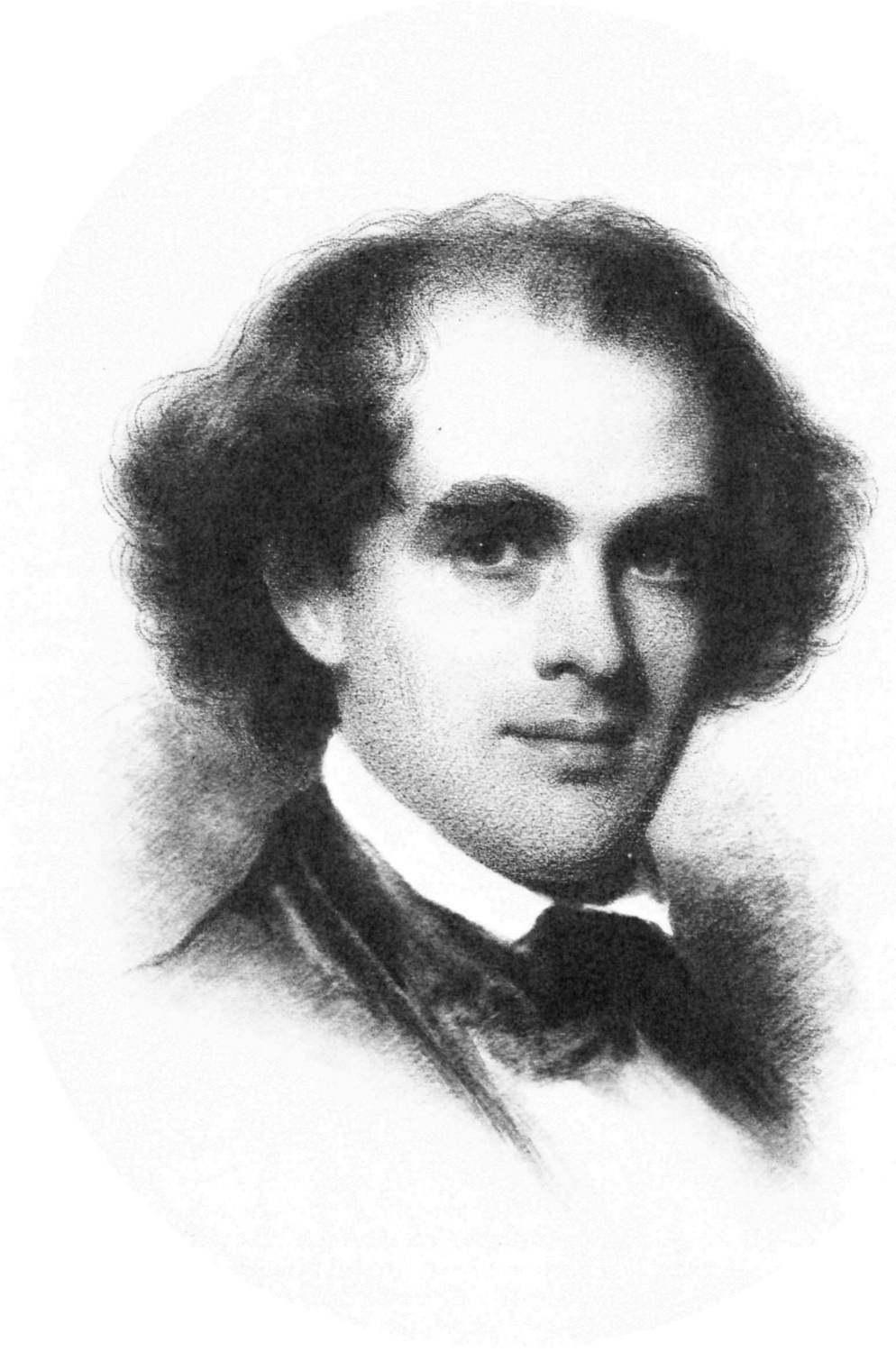


Figure 1. Nathaniel Hawthorne (1804-1864) by Eastman Johnson (1824-1906), Boston, 1846. Crayon and chalk on tan wove paper. Longfellow NHS Collection.

Right after this overflow of mock-vanity comes a serious comment about Longfellow's work on Evangeline: "I rejoice to hear that the poem is near its completion." Ten months later he wrote of his great pleasure in reading it. Possibly a sense of proprietorship in the subject of the poem contributed to his further feeling of intimacy with Longfellow. The poet had thought of Evangeline as Hawthorne's "generous gift" since 1841, when Horace Conolly had told him about the Acadians at Hawthorne's request; and Longfellow's letter of 29 November 1847 affirms that the success of Evangeline "I owe entirely to you, for being willing to forego the pleasure of writing a prose tale, which many people would have taken for poetry, that I might write a poem which many people take for prose."[16] Hawthorne's letter of November 11 praises Evangeline, predicts it would "prove the most triumphant of all your successes," and mentions his review which would appear two days later in "our democratic paper, which Conolly edits," the Salem Advertiser. The review itself is concise but enthusiastic, using some of the same images and criteria that Longfellow had used for Twice-told Tales over a decade before: it is a "sweet and noble" work "founded on American history" and written "as naturally as the current of a stream."[17]

But at the very moment that he unstintingly praised Evangeline, Hawthorne was wrestling with heavy problems. "How seldom we meet!" he complained: his responsibilities at the Custom House and home left him little leisure; and worse, he found himself unable to write. His letter to Longfellow states the problem: "I am trying to resume my pen; but the influences of my situation and customary associates are so anti-literary, that I know not whether I shall succeed. Whenever I sit alone, or walk alone, I find myself dreaming about stories, as of old; but these forenoons in the Custom House undo all that the afternoons and evenings have done. I should be happier if I could write--also, I should like to add something to my income, which though tolerable, is a tight fit." Then Hawthorne again asked Longfellow for help, more directly than before: "If you can suggest any work of pure literary drudgery I am the very man for it."

Longfellow tried to respond to this last request, but without addressing the deeper problem. Over two months later, thinking "with friendly admiration" of his friend's review of Evangeline, he suggested that Hawthorne might write a history of the Acadians before and after their expulsion, using documents that Felton had located in the state archives. But even though Hawthorne said he was willing to "talk it over," he did not feel the material was in any sense his.[18]

He had felt no compunctions about giving over his claims to the story of Evangeline. What now depressed him was his near paralysis as a writer of fiction. That he requested of Longfellow some "work of pure literary drudgery" is a measure of his new state of despondency.

A year and a half later, his problem was different and worse. He began his letter to Longfellow of 5 June 1849 by praising the newly published Kavanagh, using familiar pastoral imagery: "It is . . . as fragrant as a bunch of flowers, and as simple as one flower . . .--as true as those reflections of the trees and banks that I used to see on the Concord." But "political bloodhounds," he complained, made it impossible for him to write a review for the Democratic Advertiser.

Most of this unusually long letter expresses Hawthorne's furious response to the political vendetta that would soon remove him from office. He assumed the burlesque posture of a blameless victim intent on revenge: he might "immolate one or two" of his enemies, bury the treacherous monster Conolly "in oblivion," but "let fall one little drop of venom" on a worthier adversary to "make him writhe before the grin of the multitude," and pursue others with satire designed to poison even their bedchambers and their graves. Perhaps the fact that his two children had nearly died of scarlet fever intensified his black-humored malice, which would soon color the pages of "The Custom-House." But Hawthorne at once justified and modulated his rage by venturing a more exalted if more generalized self-definition. Without claiming to be a poet, he "cannot but feel that some of the sacredness of that character adheres to me, and ought to be respected in me." He insisted that the vengeance he contemplated was not merely personal but "in your behalf as well as mine," since what was violated is "the sanctity of the priesthood to which we both, in our different degrees, belong." As a writer he too was a holy man, though clearly he believed Longfellow's "degree" was higher.

Three days later he learned of his dismissal; and not long thereafter he wrote Longfellow a brief note that announces his equanimity despite political decapitation. "I feel pretty well since my head has been chopt off," he said wryly. "It is not so essential a part of the human system as a man is apt to think."[19]

The next few years were the great years of Hawthorne's rising fame, the years during which three major novels emerged in rapid succession, as well as new volumes of stories. Predictably, the correspondence with Longfellow is mellow, assuming mutual concern and abiding friendship. Now most of the compliments come from Longfellow. Right after The Scarlet Letter was published he noted in his journal, "a most tragic tragedy. Success to the book!" After reading Melville's anonymous review of Mosses from an Old Manse, he wrote Hawthorne to endorse every comment of the "appreciating and sympathizing critic," and a year later he told Hawthorne of his "intense interest" in The House of Seven Gables.[20] Rarely does Hawthorne even hint at inner problems during this period. He wrote on 8 May 1851 that he felt almost too comfortable in Lenox: "sometimes my soul gets into a ferment . . . and becomes troublous and bubblous with too much peace and rest." The two men were on a

relaxed plateau of friendship. They introduced each other to new admirers; Longfellow helped Hawthorne house hunt; then from his new Concord residence, Hawthorne wrote contentedly, "I am beginning to take root here, and feel myself, for the first time in my life, really at home." At the high point of this period of shared contentment, Longfellow gave a dinner to honor Hawthorne, who was about to assume the well-paid and well-respected post of American Consul in Liverpool. "The memory of yesterday sweetens today," Longfellow reported in his journal for 15 July 1853. "It was a delicious farewell to my old friend. He seemed much cheered."[21]

During the years Hawthorne was in Liverpool, they corresponded as cronies, with Hawthorne repeatedly urging Longfellow to come to England to bask in his fame. Hawthorne enjoyed being able to offer Longfellow the privileges of the diplomatic pouch, on one occasion venturing to tease him about a letter addressed to a young woman as "one of your flirtations."[22]

In several letters, Hawthorne examined his ambivalence about his native land, from the dual vantage point of England and established literary reputation. "America is a good land for young people," he told Longfellow, but "I have had enough of progress." Only occasionally did he feel at all homesick. He speculated that "we have so much country that we have really no country at all; and I feel the want of one, every day of my life. This is a sad thing."

It is not surprising that Hawthorne also shared with Longfellow some of his speculations about his future as a man of letters. As he wrote in May 1855, he expected that after leaving the Consulship, his savings would support his family for a few years "with everything but luxuries--and with those, I hope, my pen will not be too blunt or stiff to provide us, for some years yet to come." The year before, he had rejoiced that coming to England relieved him "from the tyranny of public opinion," presumably including opinions about his writings. But his concern went beyond money and reputation. "Don't you think that the autumn may be the golden age both of the intellect and the imagination?" he asked. There is a hint of envy in his praise of Longfellow: "You certainly grow richer and deeper at every step of your advance in life. I shall be glad to think that I, too, may improve--that, for instance, there may be something ruddier, warmer, and more genial, in my latter fruitage." Even more playfully, he said "Ale is an excellent moral nutriment; so is English mutton; and perhaps the effect of both will be visible in my next romance." Perhaps he recalled his letter to Longfellow of June 1837 worrying that his life was so secluded that his writings lacked substance. Now, twenty-eight years later, he still yearned to improve, to produce "ruddier, warmer" fruit.

When the Hawthornes returned to Concord in the summer of 1860, the two writers immediately resumed their affectionate

relationship. Hawthorne attended the monthly meetings of the Saturday Club in Boston, contriving to sit next to his old friend, who seemed younger if less well groomed than before.[23] But the following year after his beloved wife died horribly of burns, Longfellow no longer attended club dinners; and Hawthorne told his friend and publisher James T. Fields that he could not "reconcile this calamity to my sense of fitness. One would think that there ought to have been no deep sorrow in the life of a man like him; and now comes this blackest of shadows, which no sunshine hereafter can ever penetrate! I shall be afraid to meet him again. . . ."[24] He had thought Longfellow led a charmed life; but that idea was no longer tenable.

Perhaps his new response to Longfellow explains the unwonted solemnity in his letter of 2 January 1864. He expressed his "comfort and delight" in the Tales of a Wayside Inn, undoubtedly pleased that Longfellow mentioned him in the poem and assumed its readers were familiar with "My Kinsman, Major Molineux." But he concentrated on his own admixture of ambition and melancholy resignation: he hoped he might be able to write one last book "full of wisdom about matters of life and death . . . and yet it will be no deadly disappointment if I am compelled to drop it." Then he raised the question lurking beneath their correspondence of nearly three decades--"whether there is ever anything worth achieving in literary reputation."

Four months later Hawthorne would be dead. Longfellow would serve as one of his pallbearers and would stand bareheaded beside Holmes, Whittier, Lowell, Pierce, and Emerson as Mrs. Hawthorne's carriage left Sleepy Hollow Cemetery. In his poem entitled "Concord, May 23, 1864," he mourned the loss of Hawthorne's "magic power," saying, "The unfinished window in Aladdin's tower / Unfinished must remain!" Pastoral images, which had characterized their praise of each other's writings, now render homage to a departed friend: Hawthorne was buried on "that one bright day / In the long week of rain"; he lay "on the hill-top hearsed with pines," where a "tender undertone" expressed "The infinite longings of a troubled breast, / The voice so like his own."[25] The poet's deep affection would be expressed in yet another way: he hung in Craigie House a portrait of Hawthorne as he appeared in the 1860s.[26]

If we ask how well Longfellow knew Hawthorne, it seems fair to answer "as well as any but Sophia and such intimate friends as Bridge or Fields." Longfellow's comment on The Marble Faun--"A wonderful book; with the old, dull pain in it that runs through all Hawthorne's writings"[27]--suggests he understood his friend's dark fictions and responded appropriately to them in private, while confining public comment to the comfortable green sward. His 1837 review of Twice-told Tales had compared its author to a star, his style to running water; and though even at that point he glimpsed Hawthorne's anguish, he chose not to pursue it.

Today's readers, who recognize the great profundity of Hawthorne's writings, must wonder whether Hawthorne honestly shared his contemporaries' high opinion of Longfellow. The answer has to be yes. For the same reasons that he agonized over his own never-ending forays into life's darkest mysteries, he valued Longfellow's constant affirmations and his "grand old strains." As to the even more engrossing question of whether Hawthorne considered himself a superior writer--we can never be sure. Certainly not in the first dozen years of their friendship. But by the time he reached his stride as a novelist, he was surely at least intermittently aware of his own greater heights and depths.

Through the letters to Longfellow, we can enlarge our understanding of the lifelong play of contradictions in Hawthorne's definition of himself as a writer--the mix of self-pity, self-exoneration, and self-affirmation, all controlled by an ironizing skepticism and contained within an enduring commitment to his vocation as writer. Hawthorne was ambitious, and sometimes surprisingly aggressive in pursuing that ambition. Yet he always questioned the importance of his chosen role and his own merit, wondering if his writings could earn the fame, the personal satisfaction, or the money he required. The letters to Longfellow can be examined as artful autobiography: they express his ambition, render it ironic, then reaffirm it in a sequence of affirmation-recoil, or self-effacement and recoil, or flattery of Longfellow balanced by self-assertion. Hawthorne always expressed his will to succeed coupled with an expectation of failure calculated to shield him from disappointment. Thus his ironizing skepticism was itself a pragmatic stance.

Examining Hawthorne's correspondence with Longfellow does not give us a "new" Hawthorne, but we understand him better as a practical careerist who vouchsafed veiled glimpses of his deepest anguish. No serious student of Hawthorne can ignore his self-presentations as a lonely dreamer, as a consular official with thwarted imagination, as a priest-like Rumpelstiltskin cast out of office and anticipating revenge, or as an autumnal writer longing to ripen his last fruit. To no one else but Longfellow did he present himself in all those roles. Perhaps, at some level, he saw Longfellow as his double, his happier self--a literary success even before leaving Bowdoin; beloved on both sides of the Atlantic; and further, a man who never had to worry about making a living.

Finally, as we recognize how generous Hawthorne and Longfellow were with each other, personally and professionally, both seem enlarged. It is true that they both held back from directly sharing each other's deepest sorrows, from venturing into each other's innermost passages. But on the ample plain where they could share both professional achievements and domestic satisfaction, the relationship prospered. Although Hawthorne never did get Longfellow to collaborate on a single publication, he did succeed in scripting his collaboration as an ideal reader--"standing on the green sward, but just within the cavern's mouth."

NOTES

[1] Hawthorne's correspondence is cited from typescripts prepared for the forthcoming Centenary edition. I am grateful to L. Neal Smith and Thomas Woodson for providing me with them. Original manuscripts of Hawthorne's letters to Longfellow are at Harvard University except for the letter of 14 October 1846, which is in the collection of C. E. Frazer Clark, Jr.

[2] Mosses from an Old Manse (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1974), pp. 32-33.

[3] The American Notebooks (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1972), p. 23.

[4] Annie T. Fields, "Longfellow: 1807-1882," in Authors and Friends (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1897), p. 5.

[5] For information about Longfellow at Bowdoin, see Lawrence Thompson, Young Longfellow (New York: Macmillan, 1938), pp. 30-73 and Samuel Longfellow, ed., Life of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow with Extracts from His Journals and Correspondence (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1891), I, pp. 26-66.

[6] For information about Hawthorne at Bowdoin, see Arlin Turner, Nathaniel Hawthorne (New York: Oxford, 1980), pp. 34-44 and James Mellow, Nathaniel Hawthorne in his Times (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1980), pp. 25-34.

[7] North American Review, XLV (July, 1837), pp. 59-73.

[8] Twice-told Tales (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1974), p. 7.

[9] Journal entry for 25 March 1838, manuscript at the Houghton Library, Harvard University; and Longfellow, Life, I, p. 292f.

[10] Letter to George Washington Greene dated 22 October 1838, in Andrew Hilen, ed., The Letters of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1966), II, p. 107.

[11] Hilen, Letters, II, p. 148; journal entry for 10 October 1839 in Longfellow, Life, I, p. 334.

[12] Longfellow, Life, I, p. 363.

[13] Journal entries for 10 October and 27 October 1846, Houghton Library; and Longfellow, Life, II, pp. 59, 61. Both Longfellow and his wife several times noted in their journals their admiration of Hawthorne's tales and "manly beauty," but also their regret that he was rarely talkative or cheerful.

[14] See Hilen, Letters, III, p. 124; and Longfellow, Life, II, 56f.

[15] Harvard manuscript. The painter was Charles Martin, son of the celebrated English historical painter John Martin.

[16] Hilen, Letters, III, p. 145f. See Longfellow, Life, II p. 70f on the roles of Conolly and Hawthorne in conveying the story to Longfellow.

[17] Reprinted in Randall Stewart, "Hawthorne's Contribution to The Salem Advertiser," American Literature, V (January 1934), pp. 333-35.

[18] Hilen, Letters, III, p. 158. Hawthorne replied two days later.

[19] The letter is dated 19 June 1849. Longfellow wrote Sumner on the same day inviting him to dinner two days later, when he hoped Hawthorne would be there; but Hawthorne could not attend (Hilen, Letters, III, p. 204). At dinner on June 10, Longfellow and Sumner had "discussed Hawthorne's dismissal from the custom-house in terms not very complimentary to General Taylor and his cabinet." (Longfellow, Life, II, p. 153).

[20] Letters dated 24 August 1950 and 8 August 1851 in Letters, III, p. 266f. and 306. Longfellow commented that The House of the Seven Gables "has not the tragic simplicity of plot of 'The Scarlet Letter'; but nevertheless it is grander in its variety . . . ." Then he asserted, "I was a true prophet in predicting your success as a Romance Writer!" He closed reporting Field's praise of the Wonder-Book, to be published two months later.

[21] Longfellow, Life, II, p. 250. He had noted the previous day that the guests were Hawthorne, Emerson, Clough, Lowell, Charles Norton, and his brother Sam. Hawthorne's letter from Concord is dated 5 October 1852.

[22] Hawthorne's comments are from letters dated 30 August and 24 October 1854 and 11 May 1855. Longfellow wrote on 25 April 1855 that he was using Hawthorne "to an alarming extent. But then in return you are in a fair way of finding out all my flirtations" (Hilen, Letters, III, p. 476).

[23] Letter to his English friend Henry Bright, 17 December 1860.

[24] Letter dated 14 July 1860.

[25] See Turner, Nathaniel Hawthorne, pp. 392-94, Mellow, Nathaniel Hawthorne, p. 578f., and Longfellow, Life, III, pp. 36, 38f, and 40f. The threnody was first published in the August 1864 issue of the Atlantic Monthly.

[26] This is a photographic copy of a crayon drawing by the noted portrait artist Samuel Rowse, commissioned by James T. Fields in 1866 and based on a photograph taken by the well-known Boston photographer W.H. Getchell on 19 December 1861. See my forthcoming Portraits of Nathaniel Hawthorne: An Iconography (Dekalb, Illinois: Northern Illinois University Press, 1983).

[27] Longfellow, Life, II, p. 400. The entry is dated 1 March 1860.

LONGFELLOW IN HIS FAMILY RELATIONS

By

Edward Wagenknecht

When I came to the Boston area to live in 1947, I was deep in my Cavalcade of the American Novel for Henry Holt and Company. I soon made up my mind that my next substantial enterprise would be a series of books on the great New England writers which would enable me to make use of the rich literary deposits that were now all around me, and I decided to begin with Longfellow.

This was an almost inevitable choice, for Longfellow had been my introduction to Literature with a capital L. I clearly remembered, as a boy in grade school, walking down to the school book store one evening to buy, for fifteen cents, a copy of Evangeline, which was Number 1 in the Riverside Literature Series, and when I was in the sixth grade my mother and I went downtown one Saturday morning and at one of the Chicago department stores purchased a copy of Longfellow's Complete Poems in the Household Edition. These, I suppose, I may call my first "standard" books. I still have them both.

I knew that the poet's late grandson, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Dana, had brought together a great collection of manuscripts at the Longfellow House; so I applied there, and Thomas H. de Valcourt, who was then in charge, welcomed me royally. The Longfellow manuscripts were not moved to the Houghton Library until I had nearly finished my work, and in spite of the many happy hours I have spent at Houghton since in connection with other projects and the friends I have made there, I have always been glad that I became the last scholar to work with Longfellow's manuscripts in his own house.

I suppose I should blush to acknowledge that I repaid Mr. Longfellow's hospitality by falling in love with his wife. What I mean is that one of the first things I discovered was that an extensive collection of her letters and journals was available and that these furnished delightful, as well as, valuable material that so far had been almost completely overlooked. I made up my mind that these manuscripts must be published, not in their entirety (they were too repetitive for that) but in a volume of judicious selections. Fanny Appleton Longfellow died eight years before my mother was born; it was hard to believe that these materials should have been saved all through these years for me.

I ran a "card" in the book review journals. In those days we had not only The New York Times Book Review but the Herald-Tribune Books,

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and the Saturday Review was still The Saturday Review of Literature. My "card" was seen by John L. B. Williams, then an editor for Longmans, Green, who had previously published me for both Appleton's and Bobbs-Merrill. Williams wrote me to say that Longmans would be very glad to publish my book on Longfellow. I replied, "There are going to be two Longfellow books -- one about him and the other a selection from Mrs. Longfellow's letters and journals. If you are interested, you will have to contract for both." This I did with some qualms of conscience, since, though I was sure of the quality of Mrs. Longfellow's materials, I was less sure of her sales potential. Williams and Longmans accepted my terms without blinking, however, and I am sure that any feminists who may be present will be delighted to hear that Mrs. Longfellow performed in the book stores more impressively than her husband. She also got an English edition, a small book club selection, and sold serial rights to a metropolitan newspaper. Candor forces me to add, however, that Longfellow, A Full-Length Portrait was afterwards revised and republished by Oxford University Press as Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Portait of an American Humanist, and I suppose that, taking the two editions together, the poet finally overtook his wife. And now if there are any anti-feminists present and lying low, let them take whatever comfort they can find in this!

My subject is "Longfellow in his Family Relations." Men ordinarily spend their lives in two families -- that into which they are born and that which, through marriage, they establish. Longfellow wrote that "homekeeping hearts are the happiest," and so they were in his case, except upon those occasions when, through domestic calamities, they were the saddest.

His father, Stephen Longfellow, was a prominent lawyer and a member of the Hartford Convention who served in both the Massachusetts State Legislature and the Congress of the United States. His mother, Zilpah Wadsworth, who was related to John Alden and Priscilla Mullins, was the daughter of a Revolutionary War hero, General Peleg Wadsworth, and at General Wadsworth's house in Hiram, Maine, where the poet spent many happy boyhood days, he came as close to the frontier as Cooper did at Cooperstown or Mark Twain at Uncle John Quarles's farm near Hannibal, Missouri. The Longfellows had eight children, of whom two, both girls, died young.

Stephen Longfellow has sometimes been criticized for not encouraging his son's literary ambitions. This is most unfair, for he was never unsympathetic; he simply felt that the boy should have a profession, not staking his livelihood upon his pen. This is good advice even today, and it was better advice in his time, when the professional American man of letters was virtually non-existent. Zilpah Longfellow was an intelligent woman of courage, strong convictions, and deeply religious spirit. She had humor and sound common sense, as well as a mind of her own, which she did not hesitate to use. The daughter of a general, she had as little sympathy with the military life as her son was to manifest. In later years, when she was an invalid, she notified her children that she expected them to write to her but did not hold herself bound to answer their letters.

I think the fact that Longfellow seems to have written more letters to his father than to her has no particular significance. In those days, it seems, there was a species of indelicacy involved in sending a lady's name through the mails, so that even when you wrote to her, you addressed the letter to her husband, as one whose ruder nature might be better able to sustain the shock, though to avoid confusion you might endorse the missive "For Mrs. Longfellow" within protective parentheses.

I get the impression that Anne, afterwards Mrs. Pierce, was the sister who was closest to Longfellow, though since Mary (Mrs. Greenleaf) lived on Brattle Street in a house that still stands, he must have seen a good deal of her. His relations with his brother Alexander, who became an engineer, were perfectly cordial and friendly, but temperamentally he was closer to the youngest son Samuel, a clergy-man, who became his biographer. The only strain Alexander suffered from his relationship to Henry came when people assumed that, as the brother of a famous poet, he ought at least to be able to write valentine verses for them; on such occasions he reminded himself of the young man who, upon being asked whether he spoke German, replied in some confusion, "No, I do not, but I have a brother who plays the German flute." Longfellow's older brother Stephen was a very different story, for Stephen was the problem child of the family, and his life brought little but sorrow to anybody connected with him. "What can have made the difference between our two sons," Zilpah asked her husband in 1825, "educated as they were together and alike." The end of the story, which is terrible, need not be told here; worse still, Stephen passed on his characteristics to his son, and both persons caused the poet much sorrow.

Compared to Fanny Appleton, Longfellow's first wife, Mary Storer Potter, daughter of Judge Barrett Potter of Portland, is a shadowy figure. The couple were married on September 14, 1831, and the marriage lasted only a little over four years. We have few of Mary's letters, and Longfellow burned her journals after her death, which occurred in Rotterdam, after a miscarriage suffered during the trip which Longfellow had undertaken to prepare himself for the Smith Professorship at Harvard. As in the case of Theodore Roosevelt, he seems never to have spoken of his first wife in later years.

He must have seen her in Portland during his youth, but apparently he paid no attention to her until after his first return from Europe, when he was so impressed by her appearance at church one day that he followed her home, though without speaking to her. His very circumspect wooing was conducted through Sister Anne, and the letters he wrote home when Mary died sound unbelievably stiff and formal to modern ears (can any human being, we wonder, ever have been quite so proper in his inner abiding place as these letters sound). I am convinced, however, that this impression is unfair to Longfellow; we have other evidence which testifies to the deep, sincere grief he felt. For some time he went on seeing Mary in everything he tried to read, finding it impossible to center his mind upon anything else; and when he traveled through the Tyrol even

the mountains seemed sad. He was never a nature pantheist, however, and even then he was clear sighted enough to attribute this impression not to nature itself but to "my sick soul." In fairness to Mary, it should be noted that though she was only twenty-three when she died, she was no more in awe of her husband than Emerson's remarkable girl-wife, who was dead before she was twenty, was of him, for she calls him "a good little dear," and when, before the offer from Harvard came, he was making frantic efforts to get away from the position he did not like at Bowdoin, she wisely acted as a restraining influence. Longfellow stands at quite the opposite extreme from what is now known as a "confessional" poet; he did not wear his heart nor any other organ upon his sleeve. But Mary had promised him on her deathbed that she would never leave him, and though we do not know how close he ever came to a sense of mystical communion with her, he tells us that he felt "assured of her presence" with him afterwards. This clearly is what he refers to in "Footsteps of Angels," where he speaks of

> . . . the Being Beauteous,
> Who unto my youth was given,
> More than all things else to love me,
> And is now a saint in heaven.
>
> With a slow and noiseless footstep
> Comes that messenger divine,
> Takes the vacant chair beside me,
> Lays her gentle hand in mine.
>
> And she sits and gazes at me
> With those deep and tender eyes,
> Like the stars, so still and saint-like,
> Looking downward from the skies.

Yet when all is said and done, the great love of Longfellow's life was Fanny Appleton, the mother of his children, with whom he lived for eighteen years of happiness as perfect as it is given to human beings to know. As he wrote her sister after her tragic death, he still thanked God hourly "for the beautiful life we led together, and that I loved her more and more to the end . . . I never looked at her without a thrill of pleasure; she never came into a room where I was without my heart beating quicker, nor went out without my feeling that something of the light went with her. I loved her so entirely, and I know she was very happy."

To be sure she had given him seven years of pain as a prelude to the eighteen years of happiness. He met her in Switzerland the summer after Mary's death, when she was nineteen, a little more than ten and one-half years younger than he. Her father was the wealthy industrialist Nathan Appleton, and the family lived at 39 Beacon Street, in a house now the home of the Women's City Club; Louise Hall Tharp has told the story of the whole clan in her fine book, The Appletons of Beacon Hill.

She was generally considered beautiful, though there are



Figure 2. Carte-de-Visite photograph of Frances Appleton (1817-1861), possibly by Black & Batchelder, Boston, 1854-1861. Longfellow NHS Collection.

dissenting opinions. Longfellow called her "the Dark Ladie," and the portrait of her by Healy in the Longfellow House is much in the Spanish style, but the lock of hair still kept there is not black but a rich brown, very fine in texture and still radiating light and warmth after more than a hundred years. Her social position was of course higher than that of the Longfellows, and when the engagement was announced, his family seems at first to have been a little in awe of her, partly because she had kept him dangling so long but also because she was what later came to be called a "society girl," but her sweet friendliness and piety soon took care of that.

In Switzerland she seems to have enjoyed her association with "the Prof." as she then called him, but after their return to Boston and Cambridge she gave him no encouragement; aside from the fact that he certainly made the situation worse by writing and publishing Hyperion, in which everybody knew she was Mary Ashburton and he Paul Flemming, it is not easy to see why; indeed she herself seems never in retrospect to have understood it quite clearly. The Hyperion business was quite out of character for so reserved a man as Longfellow; it shows how his nature had been stirred to its depths and goes far toward invalidating the mild, quiet image of him that most persons have. "I shall win this lady," he cries, "or I shall die," and he did not exaggerate his feelings when in 1845 he wrote "The Bridge," looking back upon what he had experienced during those tortured days:

> How often, oh how often,
> In the days that had gone by,
> I had stood on the bridge at midnight
> And gazed on that wave and sky!
>
> How often, oh how often,
> I had wished that the ebbing tide
> Would bear me away on its bosom
> O'er the ocean wild and wide!
>
> For my heart was hot and restless,
> And my life was full of care,
> And the burden laid upon me
> Seemed greater than I could bear.

By 1840 he had pretty well made up his mind that it was impossible his hopes should be realized and had adjusted himself to his disappointment as best he could. Then, on an April evening in 1843, the lady who had laid the burden upon him abruptly lifted it, and did it in such a way as to make it clear that she had not read Romeo and Juliet for nothing. He encountered her at the Nortons', a night or two before the scheduled departure of her brother for Europe, and she told him how lonely she expected to be after Tom's departure and then added, "You must come and comfort me, Mr. Longfellow." Whereupon, if she were Juliet, he might have been the Othello who reported that "Upon this hint I spake." She accepted him in a note written on the tenth of May, and he walked forthwith, "with the speed

of an arrow," from Brattle Street to Beacon Street, because he was "too restless to sit in a carriage -- too impatient and fearful of encountering anyone!" walked "amid the blossoms and sunshine and songs of birds, with my heart full of gladness and my eyes full of tears!" They were married at 39 Beacon Street on July 13. Perhaps the most generous act of Fanny's life was her wedding gift to her husband. It was her European sketch book, inscribed "Mary Ashburton to Paul Flemming."

Their happiness made all other pleasures pale. "My whole life is bound up now in my home and children," she would write. "I am spoiled by it for society, which seems to me very barren and unsympathetic, giving us only glassy surface or sharp corners instead of the genial depth or lofty inspiration we crave." Not only was she completely in love with her husband but she entirely admired him and took as much interest in his work as he did himself, helping him with it in every possible way. Many wives could no doubt have served him quite as devotedly in this aspect, but not many could have done it so intelligently. Though she was far from being what is now known as a strong-minded woman, she took a keen interest in public affairs; it is noteworthy that, unlike many nineteenth century women who were adept at telling people what their husbands thought about this or that issue, Fanny always tells us what she thought. She hated war, and if she had to die young, she died at the right time, just as the Civil War was beginning; she would have suffered intensely because of it and her oldest son's participation and injury in it. Her religious faith was assured, and hers was a deeply devotional spirit, quite free of bigotry. The Appletons, like the Longfellows, were Unitarians, but you will derive no understanding of what she believed by reference to modern Unitarianism. Fanny's theology was Arian, and her Christ was a divine being, subordinate to the Father, but in no sense merely human.

Mrs. Longfellow bore her husband six children: Charles, Ernest, Fanny, Alice, Edith, and Annie Allegra. Everybody knows the names of the three younger girls --"grave Alice and laughing Allegra and Edith with golden hair" -- from "The Children's Hour," but most of Longfellow's readers are unaware of even the existence of Fanny, who endured for only a year upon this mortal plane. Yet her birth was notable, for it was when she came into the world that her mother became the first woman in the western world to bear a child under the influence of ether at the Massachusetts General Hospital. We have all heard enough and to spare of the courage of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, who introduced inoculation for smallpox into England by inoculating her own daughter, but here are the reputedly timid Longfellows doing an equally daring thing for which they have received no popular credit whatever. All the living Longfellow descendants derive from either Edith (Mrs. Richard Henry Dana III) or Annie Allegra (Mrs. J. G. Thorp). Neither Alice, who lived in the Longfellow House into a time that some of us can remember, nor Charles ever married. Ernest did, but had no children. Fanny loved them all and worried over them and cherished

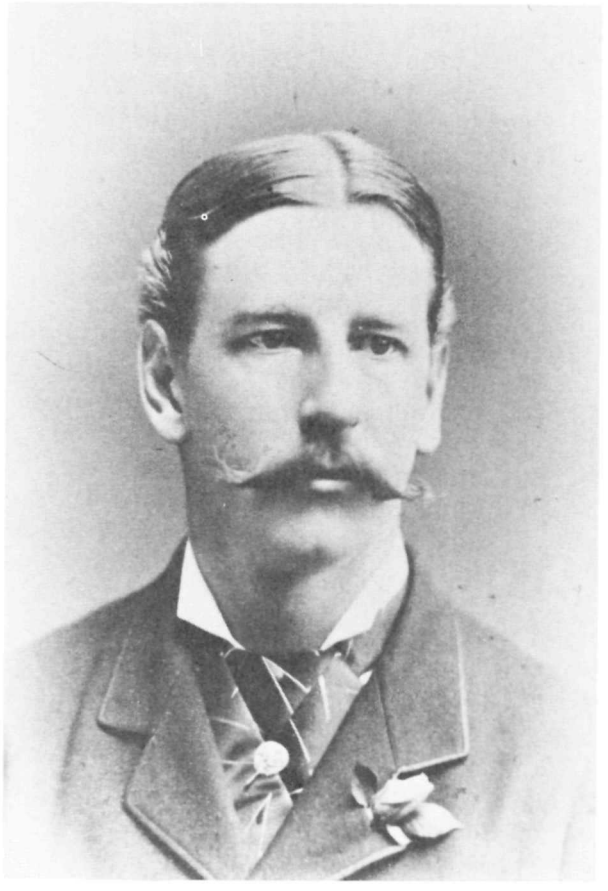






Figure 3. (above, left) Charles Appleton Longfellow (1844-1893), photograph by Allen & Rowell, Boston, ca. 1865.

Figure 4. (above, right) Ernest Wadsworth Longfellow (1845-1921), photograph by Whipple, Boston, 1865.

Figure 5. (below) Photograph of Longfellow's three daughters (left to right): Edith (1853-1915), Alice (1850-1928), Anne Allegra (1855-1934), by F. Gutekunst, Philadelphia, 1876.

their individualities and saw their limitations as clearly as if they had been somebody she was reading about. There is much material among her papers devoted to their childish doings; no mother can possibly have been more devoted nor guided her children more lovingly, more wisely, nor more unsentimentally.

Charley was the harum-scarum member of the family. As a boy he maimed his left hand by the explosion of a gun his father had foolishly permitted him to have, against his mother's advice; later he ran off to the Civil War, where he first came down with camp fever, then got himself dangerously wounded. On both occasions his father went to Washington to nurse him. Oliver Wendell Holmes made literary capital out of "My Search for the Captain," his best-known short piece of prose, written after the wounding of his namesake, the future Supreme Court justice, but Longfellow could never have dreamed of doing such a thing; his devotion, therefore, remains virtually unknown except to his biographers.

Charley Longfellow seems never to have caused his father the kind of anxiety inflicted upon him by his wayward brother and nephew, but his recklessness, extravagance, and disinclination to settle to anything did cause difficulties. There was one hilarious episode in his career. The Longfellows summered at Nahant, and one summer the formidable Jessie Fremont, who was also in residence, had Charley arrested for nude bathing. The case was dismissed when the defense attorney showed that he had bathed in a sufficiently secluded spot so that Mrs. Fremont's modesty could not have been offended without the aid of her binoculars.

I have moved on in my discussion of the children beyond Mrs. Longfellow's lifetime, perhaps because the end of her story is so painful that I have tried to postpone it as long as possible. Though it cannot be passed over, for it represented a turn of fortune's wheel as dramatic as any that mediaeval men ever chronicled, I will deal with it as briefly as I can. It all happened in a moment, in July 1861, just as the Civil War was getting under way. It was a hot, windy day, and Mrs. Longfellow was sitting by an open window in the library of the Longfellow House, "sealing up in paper packages some locks of her two younger daughters' hair." By some fluke, a lighted match or some burning wax fell upon her light summer dress, and in a moment she was enveloped in flames. Frightened, she ran for help to her husband in his adjoining study. He wrapped a rug about her and held her close, extinguishing the flames but burning his own face and hands so badly that he was obliged to grow the beard by which we know him best but which Fanny never saw. After a brief period of intense suffering, she was put to sleep with ether and slept into the night, when she awoke calm and free of pain. In the morning she was able to drink some coffee, but she soon fell into a coma from which she never awakened, and before the day was over, she was dead. She was buried at Mount Auburn on July 13, the eighteenth anniversary of her wedding, her head, unmarred by flames, crowned with a wreath of orange blossoms. Her husband, too badly burned to leave his bed, was unable to attend the funeral; half-delirous, he heard, through the open door, echoes of the service in

the library, where neither men nor women were able to control their sobs.

His mental sufferings were far greater than the physical, and he bore them as everybody who knew him must have been sure he would. Lowell said it best:

> Some suck up poison from a sorrow's core,
> As nought but nightshade grew upon earth's ground:
> Love turned all his to heart's-ease; and the more
> Fate tried his bastions, she but forced a door
> Leading to sweeter manhood and more sound.

I have said that Longfellow was not a "confessional" poet, and this is true, but, like all poets and all writers, he did build his writings out of the experiences life brought him, and his wife's death yielded one of his greatest sonnets, "The Cross of Snow." He wrote it on July 10, 1879 and put it away in his desk, where it was found after his death and first printed in Samuel Longfellow's biography. The catalyst was a picture in a book of Western scenery, showing a mountain so lofty that it carried a deposit of snow at its heart all summer long in the shape of a gigantic cross. Unlike the "confessional" poets of today, Longfellow freed his record of his own experience from unpleasant egotism and embarrassing exhibitionism by concentrating upon the essential universal humanity that was as significant for his readers as for himself.

> In the long, sleepless watches of the night,
> A gentle face -- the face of one long dead --
> Looks at me from the wall, where round its head
> The night-lamp casts a halo of pale light.
> Here in this room she died; and soul more white
> Never through martyrdom of fire was led
> To its repose; nor can in books be read
> The legend of a life more benedight.
> There is a mountain in the distant West
> That, sun-defying, in its deep ravines
> Displays a cross of snow upon its side.
> Such is the cross I wear upon my breast
> These eighteen years, through all the changing scenes
> And seasons, changeless since the day she died.

Mrs. Longfellow's death left her husband both father and mother to his children, and it is difficult to see how any man could have functioned more wisely and lovingly in these capacities. William Dean Howells wrote that "all men that I have known, besides, have had some foible, . . . or some meanness, or pettiness, or bitterness; but Longfellow had none, nor the suggestion of any." He was not the man to romp with children, and he seems to have been more at home with little ones than with growing boys and girls, but his sympathy and understanding never failed, and when comfort was needed, he was always there to give it. "It would be in vain for me to try to send you any news," he once wrote Annie Allegra when they were separated. "I can only send you my love, and that is anything but news. It is as old

as you are." When the children were small, he had an endless store of childish treasures to amuse them, and he never wearied of making up stories for them, some of which have survived in manuscript. Nor was his interest confined to his own offspring. Eleanor Hallowell Abbott, who was "little in Cambridge when everybody else was big," has recorded how she and the other children she knew would throw themselves into his "hospitable" arms when they met him on the street, and there is the delightful story of the boy who, shocked at Longfellow's admission that he had no copy of Jack and the Beanstalk in his library, went out and bought him one. Longfellow insisted on the child's autographing the little book and promised to keep it among his dearest treasures.

There is one bibliographical problem in this connection. Everybody knows the famous doggerel:

> There was a little girl
> And she had a little curl
> Right in the middle of her forehead.
> And when she was good
> She was very, very good,
> But when she was bad she was horrid.

Did Longfellow write this or did he not? His son Ernest claimed that he did, but none of the other members of the family seem to have agreed with him, and there is certainly no conclusive evidence. The one thing that is certain is that he did not write the other stanzas sometimes appended to it. There was a learned and probably conclusive discussion of the matter by Sidney Kramer in the 1946 volume of the Bibliographical Society of America Papers.

Longfellow was fifty-four years old when Fanny Appleton died, and he had twenty-one more years to live. Was he ever seriously interested in any other woman? Ambrose Bierce says that he who thinks he has loved twice has not loved once. However that may be, let us look at the record.

To begin with, completely proper as Longfellow's conduct always was, there can be no question that he was sensitive to the beauty of women. "You were ever an admirer of the sex," writes one who knew him early, "but they seemed to you something enshrined and holy, -- to be gazed at and talked with and nothing further," and Longfellow's brother Sam adds that it might have been said of him as of Villemain that "whenever he spoke to a woman it was as if he were offering her a bouquet of flowers." Even in his old age, Mrs. James T. Fields heard him say to himself, as he stood near the staircase at a formal entertainment, "Ah, now we shall see the ladies come downstairs!"

Longfellow enjoyed friendships with a number of women after his wife's death, most of them literary or musical ladies who had sought him out for his fame or in admiration for his work. I shall mention only three. I am quite sure that Longfellow was never immoderately attracted by Blanche Roosevelt, who appeared in the opera

made from The Masque of Pandora, but he welcomed her to his house and entertained her there, much to the displeasure of his daughters, who seem to have disliked her and suspected her of "using" him. After his death she published a rather silly book called The Home Life of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, which she claimed had been approved by him. Blanche Roosevelt may have been "a very nice person," as Longfellow told Edith, but I get the idea that she was quite capable of using her contacts with him to her own honor and profit. But she was not important enough in his life so that anything more needs to be said about her, nor, for that matter, can it be said authoritatively on the basis of the information we have.

In a sense, Sherwood Bonner, the Mississippi local color writer, "used" Longfellow too; unlike Blanche Roosevelt, she even enjoyed his financial bounty and that of his daughter Alice after his death, but this talented, restless, ambitious, unfortunate woman deserves considerable sympathy; after having suffered many sorrows and misfortunes, she died, at the age of thirty-four, only a year after Longfellow himself. There is said to be unpublished manuscript material bearing upon Longfellow's acquaintance with Sherwood Bonner, but nobody seems to know where it is. All I can say is that there is nothing in any of the letters I have read that could possibly be interpreted to indicate that he was ever anything to her except a kindly, affectionate, elderly patron and friend.

There is another woman, however, who deserves more serious consideration, a beautiful English girl named Alice Frere, the daughter of William Frere of Bitton, Judge of the High Court of Bombay, and later Mrs. Godfrey Clerk. She was thirty-four years Longfellow's junior, and he met her in Boston, when she was visiting there with her father in 1867. A number of letters passed between them while she was in Boston and others later. She lived with her husband, a major in the British army, in Egypt and India, bore at least one son, and in 1873 published a volume of tales translated from the Arabic, of which she sent Longfellow a copy. On the eighth of April in 1867, Alice Frere wrote Longfellow a letter in Boston in which she told him that she had been engaged to Clerk for three years but that financial difficulties had hitherto prevented their union, and his reply to this letter contains two postscripts which, to say the least of it, tease curiosity. The first reads:

> I keep very sacred and precious the memory of Monday evening. It was the revelation of a beautiful soul; a Song without Words, whose music I shall hear through the rest of my life.

And the second:

> The secret I told you I know is safe in your keeping. I could not help telling it to you. It was the cry of my soul. And yet I would not have told it had I known yours. Of that I beg you to tell me more. It interests me very deeply. Speak to me as frankly as I have spoken to you.

That is all we know. But if Longfellow knew any woman after Fanny's death who interested him deeply, Alice Frere has the best claim.

My mind goes back to a story Harry Dana used to tell about one of my predecessors among the researchers in the archives at the Longfellow House. This gentleman, a good scholar, whose name you would all recognize if I were to speak it, kept hoping against hope that in some letter or journal of Longfellow's he might find something lively. One day he came out from the room where he had been reading in high spirits. He had discovered Longfellow, during his first European sojourn, expressing enthusiasm over a "Frau Boudour"; here at last was something he could hang on to! "Frau Boudour"? said Dana. "I do not recall any such name in the Longfellow papers. It doesn't sound quite right. "Frau" is German, and "Boudour" sounds French. Better let me look at the passage." When he did, he found that what Longfellow was being enthusiastic about was the poetry of the Troubadours.

It makes one wonder, does it not, how many "Frau Boudours" have wormed their way into literary history because some scholar could not read the author's handwriting?

Longfellow's contacts and correspondence with Alice Frere were first made known in my Longfellow, A Full-Length Portrait, and I was much afraid that the reviewers would play it up and exaggerate its importance out of all proportion to its place in the book and in Longfellow's life. To my astonishment, not one reviewer (and there were many) even mentioned it. But after thinking the matter over, I concluded that this was what I ought to have expected after all. I had not dug up anything that was either discreditable to Longfellow and Alice Frere or that could be misconstrued as such. Had I done so, I might have created a legend comparable to that which has developed around Dickens and Ellen Ternan, whom one commentator parrots another in describing as his mistress, although nobody has ever ventured to reply to my book, Dickens and the Scandalmongers, in which all the extant evidence bearing upon this matter is weighed and shown to be inconclusive.

Whatever Longfellow may or may not have felt about Alice Frere, I am sure his association with her remained a fragrant memory during his last years. Did he think of her, I wonder, when he wrote these lines in Tales of a Wayside Inn:

> Ships that pass in the night, and speak each other
> in passing,
> Only a signal shown and a distant voice in the darkness;
> So on the ocean of life, we pass and speak one another,
> Only a look and a voice, then darkness again and a
> silence.

H. W. LONGFELLOW'S INTEREST IN DANTE

By

J. Chesley Mathews

By the summer of 1824, at the age of 17, Henry W. Longfellow had acquired a reading knowledge of Latin. In December of the same year he expressed the desire to acquire a knowledge of the Italian language. In Paris, late in 1826 or early in 1827, he began to take his first lessons in Italian; and just before the end of 1827 he wrote that he could read the language without much difficulty. Then he went into Italy to begin a stay that lasted for twelve months, during which time he read Italian and was much exposed to the speaking of it. By the time he left, at the end of 1828, he surely must have had a fair working knowledge of the language.

So, by the end of 1828, he was equipped to read both the Latin and Italian writings of Dante in their original language. And as a matter of fact he had already begun by that time to read at least in the Divina Commedia, as will appear presently. It is entirely possible, of course, that even a few years earlier, while still a college student, he had become somewhat acquainted with this work in translation, inasmuch as both Boyd's and Cary's translations were available to him in the Peucinian [Literary] Society's library at Bowdoin.

On April 11, 1828, in Rome, his friend George Washington Greene gave him a copy of the Divina Commedia in Italian, in three little pocket-size volumes. (Whether at that time he already had another copy of the work is not known.) Apparently he began to read the work soon thereafter, whether or not he had done so before; for in the chapter "Rome in Midsummer" of Outre-Mer, based upon his experiences of 1828, he wrote:

> At midnight, when the crowd is gone, I retire to my chamber, and, poring over the gloomy pages of Dante, or "Bandello's laughing tale," protract my nightly vigil till the morning star is in the sky.

And under the date of December 11, 1828, when he was at Rimini, on his way out of Italy, he recorded in his manuscript Journal of 1827-1829,

> Rimini--the very name recalls the melancholy fate of Francesca di Rimini--
>
> "Siede la terra dove nata fui
> Su la marina dove'l Po discende
> Per aver pace co' seguaci sui."
>
> Dante--l'Inferno. Canto V.

A Dante scholar, Dr. Mathews has published numerous articles on the interest in Dante shown by nineteenth century American writers. He is the recipient of the Harvard Dante Prize, and was awarded a gold medal by the Italian government. Professor of English, Emeritus, at the University of California at Santa Barbara, Dr. Mathews is presently working on an edition of Longfellow's Journals.

On the same date, or within two or three days of it, in another notebook, he filled two pages with a comment about one's thoughts upon entering Rimini, three quotations totaling 18 lines from the fifth canto of the Inferno, and a drawing which shows Paolo, Francesca, the murderer with a drawn dagger, and an open book lying on the floor. These two Journal entries of 1828 provide the first, or earliest, examples, out of all Longfellow's writings which are extant, of his quoting any passage from the literary works of Dante.

And just a few days later, on December 17, while in Venice, and somewhat sad at being alone at the Christmas season, and recalling that just a year before he had been happy in the company of Greene, he wrote in a letter to that friend,

> You will call to mind those expressive words of Dante in the melancholy little story of Francesca di Rimini
>
> "nessun maggior dolore
> Che ricordarsi del tempo felice
> Nella miseria."

This is the story, as well as it can now be pieced together, of the beginning of his reading of Dante. At that time Longfellow was twenty-one years old; and his interest in and serious study of Dante was to continue, and to grow, for all the rest of his life, a period of 54 years.

During the years Longfellow was teaching at Bowdoin (1829-1835) his interest in Dante manifested itself in several ways.

As Librarian of the College he acquired for the Library at least one edition of the Divina Commedia, and probably was responsible for the acquisition of a set of Dante's Opere and Arrivabene's Secolo di Dante.

In his inaugural address, in September 1830, he spoke of "the all immortal Dante, the father of Italian song," as the one who gave stability and permanency to the Tuscan dialect by building with it "an edifice whose foundations were as broad and deep as the foundations of the world itself, and whose top pierced the heaven of heavens." He said, further, that

> Dante gave life and beauty to the uncouth forms of his native language: conjured into being the shadowy creations of the invisible world, and made them to pass before him like the visible realities of an earthly pageant.
>
> Throughout the Divina Commedia of Dante it is easy to trace the workings of the political and religious character of his age. Whether he leads you to the peaceful shades of Paradise,

> and describes the immortal pleasures
> of the "house not made with hands eternal
> in the heavens," or enters that broad gate
> over which is inscribed
>
> > "Through me you pass into the city of woe,
> > Through me you pass into eternal pain:
> > Through me among the people lost for aye,"
>
> it is but a transcript of the stirring thoughts
> which agitated not only his own bosom, but the
> bosoms of the crowd around him, of his paternal
> city, of his native province, of all Italy.

These remarks of Longfellow's make it clear that by autumn of 1830 he was acquainted with the Divina Commedia as a whole, and had a good understanding of it. Moreover, this is the first time in his extant writing that he quoted Dante in translation--almost two years after he had first quoted him in Italian; and it is interesting to notice that he chose to use Cary's translation.

In his article on "The Defense of Poetry," written in 1831, and published in the North American Review of January 1832, he mentioned Dante as one who was both a poet and a man of action and strong mind.

In his Syllabus de la Grammaire Italienne, published early in 1832, he quoted again, in Italian, the famous lines 121-123 of Inferno V, and the last 31 lines of the same canto, which he introduced with these words: "C'est le bel episode de Francesca da Rimini, un des plus beaux morceaux de La Divina Commedia du Dante."

A few months later, in the preface to Saggi de' Novellieri Italiani d'Ogni Secolo, 1832, he quoted the phrase "come colui che piange e dice," from Inferno V, 126.

In his article on the "History of the Italian Language and Dialects, published in October 1832, he made comments which revealed his acquaintance with canto XV of Hell, canto XXVI of Purgatory, and with De Vulgari Eloquio (six chapters of which he summarized); and revealed his appreciation of several of Dante's achievements and of his place in literature. Also he quoted from Purgatory XXVI, Inferno V and XXXIII, and four times from De Vulgari Eloquio--twice in English and twice in Latin--17 lines altogether, from four different chapters of the work.

Into his manuscript Journal of 1829-1835, probably between May 1829 and 1831, he wrote, in Italian, from Paradiso XVII, the three lines beginning "Tu proverai . . . "; and on November 29, 1833, quoted Inferno II, 76-78 in Italian, gave Boyd's rendering, and criticized the latter unfavorably.

Then, in his manuscript notebook entitled The Literature

of the Dark Ages he once just mentioned Dante, and in a second place he filled a page with a statement about Dante which he dated November 30, 1833. Here he spoke of Viviani's edition of the Commedia, and quoted the two lines from Inferno IV beginning "Onorate l'altissimo poeta," applying them to Dante.

Mr. Longfellow's continuing and growing interest in, and knowledge of, Dante and Dante's writings are shown by records of his acquisition of books, his borrowing of books from the College library, his reading, his teaching, his translating, and reflections in his own writings of his intimate acquaintance with Dante's life and works.

The pocket-size edition of the Commedia received from Greene in 1828 has been mentioned. The set of Dante's Opere Poetiche which Longfellow had rebound with alternating blank leaves he acquired probably as early as 1830, and maybe earlier, while he was in Europe; certainly he was using it early in 1838. In 1833 Greene sent him another "3 volumes of Dante." In 1838 and 1840, respectively, Longfellow wrote to ask Greene to get for him "the Florence edition in 5 large 8vo volumes" and "the Padua edition of Dante in 5 large 8vo "; and in another letter of 1840 he asked his friend to send all he picked up about Dante that was worth sending, particularly Balbo's Vita di Dante. Greene did send that year at least a three-volume Commedia with Tommaseo's comment. In 1843 T. W. Parsons sent Longfellow a copy of The First Ten Cantos of the Inferno; and in 1844 Longfellow obtained a copy of Rossetti's L'Inferno, with comment, and recorded that he read it. So it went through the years; and there are still in the Longfellow House, among the books which belonged to him, well over a hundred volumes of works having to do with Dante.

He also drew upon the resources of the Harvard College Library. For example, late in 1837 he borrowed Cary's Dante, Dante's Divina Commedia, "Prose di Dante," "Poeti Italiani Majori," "Butler's Lives of the Saints," "Muratori Antiquitates Italicae Medii Aevi," "Rossetti," and "Cancellieri."

Bibliographical references in his writings, too, indicate the thoroughness with which he pursued his Dante studies. In the two Dante lectures of 1838, for example, he quoted from Boccaccio's Vita di Dante and Comment, Malaspini's Florentine History, and Dino Compagni's History of Florence; and referred to Missirini's Dell'Amore di Dante, Arrivabene's Commentary, Lani's Annotazioni, Rossetti's Sullo Spirito Antipapale, Flaxman's illustrations of Dante, the Vision of Frate Alberico, the Purgatory of St. Patrick, and the Zatta and the Romanis editions of Dante. Many more such references occur in later years--in his letters and journals, in the Poets and Poetry of Europe, and in his Notes for his translation of the Divine Comedy.

Moreover, there are in the journals and letters of Mr. Longfellow numerous indications that he read often and much in

the works of Dante. For example, he read in the Commedia in March and in May, 1838, and in March 1839. In January 1840 he read the entire Inferno. On March 4, 1847, he read canto I of the Inferno; and on the 7th, canto II. On September 8, 1850, he read Dante's "Vita Nova," and marked passages for use in his next Lecture. On August 7, 1853, he and his wife read to themselves a canto or two of Dante's "Paradiso." In February 1862 he was reading the Purgatory with his children. In January 1874 he finished reading the whole poem with Edith.

The records of his teaching at Harvard, where he was Professor from 1837 to 1854, indicate that he read through the entire Commedia, and through at least large portions of it, repeatedly, and from time to time read in other works of Dante, and also in numerous other works related to the study of Dante. He began his first course of lectures on Dante in January 1838, and he chose to give a Dante course at least eleven more times in the following sixteen years.

Near the end of 1837 he wrote to Mary Appleton:

> I . . . have no more Lectures till January, when I begin Dante . . . that is the Purgatorio and Paradiso, to please my imagination with sweeter visions than the Inferno; which with all its hor[r]ors I make over to Dr. Bachi forever. . . . I shall however write out, and very soon, . . . a Lecture upon the Faust. . . . There is only one impediment in the way. I was imprudent enough to take up Dante the other day; and he excites me more than any other poet. . . . how can I stop mid-way in an Introductory Lecture on Christian Dante to take up Heathen Göthe?

The class lectures on Dante were unwritten, what were called "oral lectures." The Professor read the book into English to his class, with a running commentary and illustration. For his purpose he had a copy of the author rebound with blank sheets alternating with the printed sheets, and the blank pages he gradually filled with notes and with translations of noteworthy lines or passages.

Some of his Journal entries on the subject of the Dante course are interesting. On March 1, 1847, he wrote that he had "this term" two classes in Moliere and one in Dante; "no college work could possibly be pleasanter." -- And this term he lectured on the Inferno; for on May 24 he wrote:

> Finished the Inferno with my class, and am not sorry. Painful tragedy, called by its author comedy! Full of wonderful pathos, horror, and never ending surprise.

On March 6, 1849, he wrote:

> Wonderful poet! What a privilege it
> is to interpret thee to young hearts!

During the first few years, he dealt mainly with the Purgatorio and somewhat with the Paradiso, and during the later years mainly with the Inferno. But Professor Longfellow did more than go over the text of the poem. He discussed Dante's biography, the backgrounds and sources of Dante's work, Dante's fame, commentaries and critical appraisals of Dante's work, editions and manuscripts, artistic illustrations of Dante's work and portraits of Dante, English translations, and poetic illustrations of Dante.

While he was teaching at Harvard, Longfellow wrote out two lectures, one entitled "[The Age of] Dante--Life of Dante" (published in 1857, slightly revised, as an essay "Dante"), and the other "Divina Commedia"; and an essay "Dante Alighieri" to introduce the selections from Dante's works included in his anthology The Poets and Poetry of Europe (published in 1845). This last essay is mainly drawn from the two lectures. It may be noted also that he wrote out a synopsis of the Purgatory, and that the Divina Commedia lecture includes a brief synopsis of the entire Commedia. We may briefly examine the lecture "Divina Commedia," for it is probably a fairly good sample of what Longfellow's college-course lectures on Dante were like.

In it he discusses the character of Dante (presents him as an author who wrote from inspiration; as a writer with delicate feeling, refined imagination, and strong passion; as an austere man of indomitable will, inflexible purpose, and great pride; as an advocate of right in an age of violence); speaks of commentators and illustrators of the Commedia, and of its sources or origins; points out things most worthy of regard in the poem (Dante's power of grasping subtle thought and expressing it distinctly and forcibly in poetic diction; his ability to mirror the age in which he lived, to image realistically and faithfully the principal historic events and persons and characteristics of the time); then gives a synopsis of the narrative of the poem. Next, he presents a number of observations about the work (there are great numbers of souls in Hell and relatively few in Purgatory; the souls in Hell seem more physical than those in Purgatory; the glory of the souls in Heaven is expressed in a great variety of ways; the souls in Hell desire to be remembered on earth, whereas those in Purgatory desire to be remembered and prayed for, and those in Heaven have no cares; there is great variety in the ways in which Beatrice's ever-increasing beauty is expressed, and the ways in which Dante's power, over and over again, rises equal to the magnificence of his theme; the Inferno is the most energetic, striking, gross, palpable, and terrific of the three parts of the poem, but not the most beautiful; in the Purgatory and Paradise the poet relies more upon imagination; Dante's style shows rude energy, hearty simplicity, distinctness, hard polish, wonderful power of description and use of figures of

speech). Finally, he gives some related passages from the poem to illustrate its beauties (the description of Lucifer seen through the twilight air; the comparison of Antaeus' stooping to the leaning tower of Bologna; the picture of spirits gazing at Dante and Virgil; the comparison of the soul to a little child; the description of the descent of Beatrice and Dante's feelings at her reproach; the descriptions of the motions of the spheres, and of the celestial rose; the manifold and beautiful forms under which Dante represents angels; the beautiful manner in which the approach of morning and evening, and all the changes of the day, are announced; exquisite scenes, like the description of the Earthly Paradise, and of the Empyrean, with its river of light, etc.)

Another manifestation of his interest in and serious study of Dante, and the carefulness with which he read, is his translating of the Commedia.

The earliest identifiable specimens of his translation of bits of this poem are approximately five lines in three quotations (two from the Inferno and one from the Paradiso) in the manuscript lecture on "Dante . . . ," which can with reasonable certainty be dated as having been written during the five or six weeks immediately preceding January 15, 1838.

The first considerable number of lines and passages which he translated and which also have a precise terminal date assigned to them are the 71 quotations for the Purgatory, totaling about 350 lines in his own rendition, which he included in his synopsis of the Purgatory, the manuscript of which was finished on March 22, 1838. However, some of the lines translated by him and written into his interleaved copy of Dante seem clearly to antedate the corresponding lines in the 1838 synopsis; therefore it is reasonably certain that he had begun to write bits of original translation into his interleaved Dante before March 22, 1838--probably he had done so about the time that he had begun teaching Dante at Harvard, in January of that same year, but possibly even earlier.

Next in time came the 28 quotations totaling 98 lines translated by Longfellow and included in his lecture "Divina Commedia," the manuscript of which was completed on May 22, 1838; nine of these quotations (totaling 29 lines) are from the Inferno, twelve (totaling 45 lines) are from the Purgatory, and seven (totaling 24 lines) are from the Paradise. On April 30, 1839, he sent one translated passage of 33 lines from the beginning of Purgatory XXVIII to R.H. Dana; but his translation of the same passage in the interleaved Dante clearly dates earlier.

Next, chronologically, came the first bits of his translation to be published: five passages (totaling 117 lines) from four cantos of the Purgatory, which appeared in December 1839 in Voices of the Night under the titles of "The Celestial Pilot," "The Terrestrial Paradise," and "Beatrice."

Then, for several weeks in the spring and early summer of 1843 he took up the work of translating with some regularity and continuity, and translated the first sixteen cantos of the Purgatorio. It seems that he was stimulated or urged to do so by Catherine Eliot Norton (the wife of Andrews Norton and mother of Charles), for in a letter postmarked March 9 of that year he wrote to her (who at the time was in New York): "I have been translating some Cantos of Dante for you, since you went away. If there is any merit in the work it is yours." She wrote back on the 17th: "I am delighted at the thought of seeing more of Dante in your language. I wish I had your translation here this moment." And four days later he wrote to her again, saying that with "the Divine Dante"

> I begin the morning! I write a few lines every day before breakfast. It is the first thing I do--the morning prayer--the key-note of the day. I am delighted to have you take an interest in it. But do not expect too much;--for I really have but a few moments to devote to it daily; yet daily a stone--small or great is laid on the pile.

Nearly all of the manuscript sheets of the sixteen cantos still exist. One package of them is labelled on the wrapper, in Longfellow's writing, "Ten Cantos of the Purgatorio. The first draft. To be bound." And on the first sheet of the translation (for canto I) he wrote "1843 / Purgatory / Canto I," and also the notation "Only a rough sketch, not to be printed on any account . . . . " After 63 lines he stopped the translation and wrote a note: "Conclusion of this Canto on blank leaves of my Dante." (Here is clear evidence that the long passage of Purgatory I, 64-136 in the interleaved Dante was written into the book by, or before, the time of writing this part of the manuscript, which time seems to have been shortly before March 9, 1843.) After giving five tercets of canto II he wrote another note: "See Voices of the Night p. 99." That book contains, on pages 99-101, lines 13-51 of canto II. Then the translation in the manuscript continues from that point and goes through canto X. Then there are sheets for cantos XI and XII, and at the end of canto XII the manuscript is dated May 10, 1843. Then there follow sheets for canto XIII, and parts of XIV and XV. Lines 64-75 of canto XV are written on the back of a half sheet of paper which contains a part of a letter by Longfellow dated June 15, 1843. Finally, in a letter dated November 24 of the same year, to Ferdinand Freiligrath, he mentioned that he had translated "sixteen Cantos of Dante."

After having completed the first sixteen cantos of Purgatory, apparently in June 1843, he laid the project aside, and did not return to it for nearly ten years. But he did return to it, on February 1, 1853, worked at it during a part of every day (or almost every day) for twenty-nine days, and completed his first draft of the whole cantica on March 1. Journal entries for sixteen days of the twenty-nine give a fairly complete record of his progress, and a few of the entries indicate that he enjoyed the work. But

again he laid the work aside for another long period, approximately nine years. There were other things that demanded his time and energies.

Then in July 1861 befell the tragic accident that took the life of Mrs. Longfellow, and cast Mr. Longfellow into the depths of sorrow. It was partly in an attempt to find relief from his despondency that in February 1862 he returned a third time to the translation, and this time there was almost no let-up until the work was completed, revised, and annotated, although it took a little over five years to bring the translation, with notes, to actual publication, in April, May, and June of 1867. During those five years Mr. Longfellow enjoyed having the advice of a few close friends (principally James Russell Lowell and Charles Eliot Norton) with whom he often conferred; and their frequent meetings led in October 1865 to the formation of "the Dante Club," which met once a week (except during the summer and fall of 1866) until May 1867 for the sake of discussing Dante--more precisely, to review critically Mr. Longfellow's translation before it should finally go to press for the regular first edition.

The translation is in English blank verse (i.e., unrimed iambic pentameter verses), a form which allows the translator enough freedom to render faithfully the meaning of the original, and yet at the same time allows him to achieve poetic qualities. (Those who choose a form of rimed verse often, for the sake of the rimes, distort the meaning of the original text.) Professor Norton wrote that Mr. Longfellow's translation was, of all the English translations, the most faithful to Dante's meaning. One additional feature of Mr. Longfellow's translation is the fact that he renders Dante's text line by line, an achievement which George Ticknor thought most remarkable. Longfellow referred to this feature in his third Dante Sonnet where he said, "I . . . strive to make my steps keep pace with thine."

It is fitting to observe that the Dante Club meetings were a kind of forerunner of the Dante Society, which was founded in Cambridge early in 1881, and which still exists and has become a national organization. Mr. Longfellow was elected and served as the Society's first president.

In order to show when Mr. Longfellow began to read in Dante, we have previously mentioned his quoting Dante. The frequency of his quoting gives additional evidence of his interest; and the source of the quotations suggests the extent of his reading. Excluding general references, and even references to specific passages (both of which are numerous), I have counted in his writings other than Hyperion, Kavanagh, and the Poems some 173 quotations from the Commedia, 16 from the Vita Nuova, 5 from the Canzonieri, 68 from the Convivio, 4 from the Epistolae, 1 from the Eclogae, 2 from De Monarchia, and 9 from De Vulgari Eloquio. I am not sure that I have counted all of them, but certainly there are more than enough to indicate that he was familiar with all of Dante's known works--

and that the Commedia he must have known almost by heart.

Finally, let us notice the echoes of Dante which appear in Mr. Longfellow's Hyperion, Kavanagh, and poems.

In Hyperion there are three passages which echo respectively passages in Paradiso III, Paradiso IX, and Purgatorio XXVIII, as well as a general reference to Dante's heaven, and the mentioning of Dante's name two more times.

In Kavanagh there are two passages which echo, respectively, a passage in Inferno IV and a line in Purgatorio XII.

Of Longfellow's poems there are at least nineteen, dating from 1842 to 1881, which show some kind of influence from Dante.

The title and opening words of the sonnet "Mezzo Cammin" obviously are echoes of the first line of the Inferno.

"The Spanish Student" contains three phrases which echo phrases in Inferno XXVI, Purgatorio XIII, and Purgatorio XXXI.

The sonnet "Dante" by its title indicates the source of its author's inspiration. Moreover, the first lines refer to Dante's journey through Hell, and particularly to Farinata and some of his words to Dante in Inferno X.

The poem "Prometheus" contains a general reference to Dante's suffering as an exile.

In "My Lost Youth" he used as an epigraph a line from Inferno V, and in the poem paraphrased part of the quotation.

"Hiawatha" contains an echo of Paradiso III, 123.

In "Birds of Passage" he used as an epigraph Inferno V, 46-47.

The poem "Hawthorne" contains an echo of Inferno I, 10-12, or Purgatorio XV, 85-123.

In his six sonnets on translating the Commedia Longfellow often, as one would expect, echoes or papaphrases or alludes to some passage of it, and once he refers to an incident narrated in the Vita Nuova. But even where Longfellow does not definitely borrow from Dante, he is still indebted in a general way for his inspiration. In Sonnet I there is no borrowing from Dante's text, but the cathedral of this sonnet (and of the others) is Dante's poem. Entering "here from day to day" (in Sonnet I, written in 1864) refers to Mr. Longfellow's translating a portion of the Inferno each day in March and April 1863. (In 1843, too, for a time, he had translated a part of the Purgatorio each day; and he seems to have done some translating each day in February and part

of March in 1853.) Leaving his burden at the minster gate refers to his finding consolation in the translating during the years immediately following his wife's death.

> Oft have I seen at some cathedral door
> A laborer, pausing in the dust and heat,
> Lay down his burden, and with reverent feet
> Enter, and cross himself, and on the floor
> Kneel to repeat his paternoster o'er;
> Far off the noises of the world retreat;
> The loud vociferations of the street
> Become an undistinguishable roar.
> So, as I enter here from day to day,
> And leave my burden at this minster gate,
> Kneeling in prayer, and not ashamed to pray,
> The tumult of the time disconsolate
> To inarticulate murmurs dies away,
> While the eternal ages watch and wait.

The other sonnets do echo specific passages of Dante's work. For example, Sonnet IV:

> With snow-white veil and garments as of flame,
> She stands before thee, who so long ago
> Filled thy young heart with passion and the woe
> From which thy song and all its splendors came;
> And while with stern rebuke she speaks thy name,
> The ice about thy heart melts as the snow
> On mountain heights, and in swift overflow
> Comes gushing from thy lips in sobs of shame.
> Thou makest full confession; and a gleam,
> As of the dawn on some dark forest cast,
> Seems on thy lifted forehead to increase;
> Lethe and Eunoë--the remembered dream
> And the forgotten sorrow--bring at last
> That perfect pardon which is perfect peace.

Under the title of Michael Angelo two lines of Paradiso XIII are written as an epigraph; and in the poem there is an echo of Purgatorio XXIV, 20-24, a translation of Paradiso XXIX, 91; mention of Dante, and of the pages of "the great master of the Tuscan tongue"; an echo of Paradiso XVII, 58-59; a reference to Dante's exile and his "song" (the Commedia), to Dante's journey through Hell, Purgatory, and Paradise, and to the heaven of Venus; a quotation of the phrase "il poema sacro", a reference to Phlegethon, the seventh ledge of Purgatory, the hyprocrites of Hell, and St. Peter's outburst against degenerate Popes in Paradiso XXVII; a translation of three lines from Paradiso XXVII, and an allusion to the Celestial Rose of Paradise which our Tuscan poet saw, with its petals and swarm of bees.

"Monte Cassino" contains a paraphrase of Purgatorio XX, 86-87, and a translation of Inferno XXVIII, 16-17.

"Morituri Salutamus" contains a reference to Dante's journey through Hell and his meeting with Brunetto Latini, and a translation of Inferno XV, 82-87.

"The Cross of Snow" contains an echo of Cacciaguida's words "E venni dal martiro a questa pace" (Paradiso XV, 148).

This same line was used as an epigraph for the poem "President Garfield," many details of which were drawn from Dante's description of the heaven of Mars and his account of Cacciaguida.

LONGFELLOW'S PLAY JOHN ENDICOTT

By

Edward L. Tucker

If I could see Mr. Longfellow for just one moment and could speak to him face to face, I think I know precisely what I would say, and it is this: "Mr. Longfellow, I am a scholar whose special delight is finding original manuscripts, some of them unpublished; transcribing them; and adding notes. And, Mr. Longfellow, there is one way in which you excel, that makes me very grateful to you. And that is the clarity of your handwriting."

Longfellow died in Cambridge one hundred years ago (on March 24, 1882), and we are here now honoring his memory. At this time may I speak directly to a future Longfellow scholar: "You may be uncertain about what path to take in your studies. May I suggest the following possibility: find a work by Longfellow that interests you; go to the original manuscript (and in all probability it is available), notice the alterations that he made as he revised the work; then look at the first and later editions published during his lifetime. If you keep a detailed record of all revisions and alterations, I believe that you will gain an insight into the way that this American artist was working. And please remember that, as you study the history of the composition and the publication of this work, Longfellow, so far as any original manuscript material is concerned, is there to help you: you can read what he has written."

For the past three years I have had the pleasure of studying the history of one specific work--the play John Endicott. Because Longfellow wrote many varied selections, the impression might be that he seldom had sufficient time for revisions or alterations. But such is not the case with my play. The period that he worked on it was a time of revision, revision, revision--of finding the correct words, of keeping the best passages, of eliminating much dear to his heart.

The original suggestion for John Endicott came from Professor Emmanuel Vitalis Scherb, from Switzerland originally, who had been teaching foreign languages in this country and who became one of Longfellow's friends. In an entry in his Journal for March 16, 1856, Longfellow wrote: "Scherb wants me now to write a poem on the Puritans and Quakers. Promise to think of it. A good subject for a Tragedy." And so he began work on the project in 1856; the play was in its final form, sixteen years later, in 1872.

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What were the different stages in the composition? After much research, Longfellow first produced a play written in prose, which he called The New England Tragedy, after discarding other titles such as The Old Colony and Scourged in Three Towns. This prose play, available in a holograph manuscript, has never been published, though Longfellow did have ten copies of it printed in 1860. And then in 1868, he made a drastic change: he converted this prose play into one written in verse. This holograph manuscript, which he called Wenlock Christison, has never been published, though again he had a few copies of it printed. In the same year, 1868, he finally published the play about the clash between the Puritans and the Quakers, but this time he used the title John Endicott, and he combined this work with a play about the Salem witchcraft trials entitled Giles Corey of the Salem Farms. The title of this published volume--consisting of the two plays about Puritan New England--was The New England Tragedies.

But there was also a final stage. In 1872 he made The New England Tragedies the third part of a trilogy which he called Christus, the other two parts being The Divine Tragedy and The Golden Legend.

Now let's go back to 1856. Put yourself in Longfellow's place. If you wanted to act on Scherb's suggestion but, unfortunately, knew little about the struggle between the Puritans and the Quakers, how in the world would you get your information for a play? Longfellow's solution was to go to books available: to Caleb Snow's A History of Boston, to Charles W. Elliott's The New England History, to Samuel Gardner Drake's The History and Antiquities of Boston. And then he turned to books centering on the Quaker sect--by George Fox, by John Lilburne, by William Dewsbury. One book in particular, however, caught his attention, and he recorded in his Journal for March 25, 1856: "Looking over books on Puritans and Quakers: particularly Besse's 'Sufferings of the Quakers'; a strange record of violent persecution for merest trifles."

The full title of this work by Joseph Besse is: A Collection of the Sufferings of the People Called Quakers for the Testimony of a Good Conscience from the Time of Their Being First Distinguished by That Name in the Year 1650, to the Time of the Act, Commonly Called the Act of Toleration, Granted to Protestant Dissenters in the First Year of the Reign of King William the Third and Queen Mary, in the Year 1689. The year 1650 in that long title refers to the time when members of the Society of Friends in England were being called "Quakers" in derision, probably an allusion to the admonition of George Fox, founder of the Society, for them "to tremble (or quake) at the word of the Lord." Longfellow's special concern was Chapter V of Book II, the section entitled "New England."

And the picture that he found there of the persecution of the Quakers was not a pretty one. The first Quakers who arrived in Boston in 1656--two women--had their possessions seized and their books burned publicly; they were put in prison, stripped, searched, put on a ship, and sent away. But when other Quakers continued to arrive at Boston and other places in New England, Massachusetts took definite steps: a law of 1656 stated they would be arrested and whipped; a second law of 1657 said they would be banished--if they returned, they would have their ears cropped and their tongues bored with a hot iron; a third law of 1658 stated that if they returned after banishment, they would be executed. And there was a later law,

the Cart and Whip Act of 1661, which said that condemned Quakers, either men or women, were to be stripped naked from the waist up, tied to the tail of a cart, and whipped through three towns; then they were to be banished and left in the wilderness among wild animals.

Many Quakers did receive these punishments. Some were kept for long periods of time in unheated prisons; some were beaten with three-cord knotted whips; some were chained to logs; two sympathizers with the Quakers, the Southwicks of Salem, were fined and banished, and two of their children were ordered to be sold into slavery; some lost an ear; some were tied to carts and beaten in at least three towns.

And four people--three men (William Robinson, Marmaduke Stephenson, William Leddra) and one woman (Mary Dyer)--were executed from an elm tree on Boston Common. Longfellow felt it essential to record their deaths in his play as follows: (the passage is spoken by a Quaker, one of their associates)

> William and Marmaduke, our martyred brothers,
> Sleep in untimely graves, . . .
> I saw their noble death. They to the scaffold
> Walked hand in hand. Two hundred armed men
> And many horsemen guarded them, for fear
> Of rescue by the crowd, whose hearts were stirred . . .
> When they tried to speak,
> Their voices by the roll of drums were drowned.
> When they were dead they still looked fresh and fair,
> The terror of death was not upon their faces.
> Our sister Mary, likewise, the meek woman,
> Has passed through martyrdom to her reward;
> Exclaiming, as they led her to her death,
> 'These many days I've been in Paradise.'
> And, when she died, Priest Wilson threw the hangman
> His handkerchief, to cover the pale face
> He dared not look upon . . .
> And Leddra, too, is dead. But from his prison,
> The day before his death, he sent these words
> Unto the little flock of Christ: 'Whatever
> May come upon the followers of the Light,-- . . .
> I am persuaded that God's armor of Light,
> As it is loved and lived in, will preserve you.

The above passage comes from the published verse version of the play of 1868. By that date Longfellow had arrived at a very simple plot: Governor John Endicott condemns the Quaker, Wenlock Christison, to death, and he also condemns the man's daughter, Edith, to be beaten in three towns and left in the wilderness. But the son of the Governor, also named John, aids Edith, falls in love with her, and in turn is denounced by his father. Before Christison can be executed, an order arrives from King Charles II of England, who has been informed about what has been taking place in the Massachusetts Bay Colony; this communication demands that there be no further persecutions of the Quakers. At the end of the play, Governor Endicott, broken in spirit because of the missive and also because of the loss of his son, dies a sorrowful man.

The simplicity of this plot is deceptive, and gives no hint of the problems that Longfellow faced during the composition. The rest of this paper presents some of these problems. We know that they existed because we have not only the prose manuscript of the play, written in pencil, and the printer's copy of the verse version, also in pencil, but also two manuscripts of working notes. All of these are in the Houghton Library.

The first problem was: Who would be the central figures in the play, especially those representing the two sides--that of the Quakers and that of the Puritans? For the Quaker side, Longfellow finally decided on Wenlock Christison, a fiery spirit who bitterly condemned the Puritans in passages in Besse. This man also was historically important because of the five people condemned to death, he alone was saved just in time. His daughter, called Edith in the 1868 verse version, who is not historical, had several earlier names in the working notes and the prose play: Angelica, Patience, Cassandra, Theophila. She became a synthesis of many Quaker women (and their punishments).

Three characters that Longfellow wanted to use were the Priest John Wilson, an Indian Corbitant, and the Priest John Cotton. The latter, John Cotton, was his special favorite to represent the Puritan side, but unfortunately this minister of the First Church in Boston lived a few years too early for the conflict.

The two that Longfellow finally chose were Governor John Endicott and the Priest John Norton; they would present the Puritan viewpoint. Norton, installed in 1656 at the First Church in Boston shortly after the death of John Cotton, became distinguished because of the fluency of his speeches and writings. According to Besse, he was "a principal Exciter of the Magistrates to persecute the Innocent and put them to death." In the play he urges Endicott on in the persecutions. Norton appears in only two scenes in the 1868 version, but they are vivid. Here is a passage in which an old man, Nicholas Upsall, who sympathizes with the Quakers, and John Norton discuss the treatment of a Quaker named William Brand:

> Norton. What is this gathering here?
> Upsall. One William Brand,
> An old man like ourselves, and weak in body,
> Has been so cruelly tortured in his prison,
> The people are excited, and they threaten
> To tear the prison down.
> Norton. What has been done?
> Upsall. He has been put in irons, with his neck
> And heels tied close together, and so left
> From five in the morning until nine at night.
> Norton. What more was done?
> Upsall. He has been kept five days
> In prison without food, and cruelly beaten,
> So that his limbs were cold, his senses stopped.
> Norton. What more?
> Upsall. And is this not enough?
> Norton. Now hear me.
> This William Brand of yours has tried to beat

Our Gospel Ordinances black and blue;
And, if he has been beaten in like manner,
It is but justice, and I will appear
In his behalf that did so. I suppose
That he refused to work.
Upsall. He was too weak.
How could an old man work, when he was starving?
Norton. And what is this placard?
Upsall. The Magistrates,
To appease the people and prevent a tumult,
Have put up these placards throughout the town,
Declaring that the jailer shall be dealt with
Impartially and sternly by the Court.
Norton. (tearing down the placard)
Down with this weak and cowardly concession,
This flag of truce with Satan and with Sin!
I fling it in his face! I trample it
Under my feet! It is his cunning craft,
The masterpiece of his diplomacy,
To cry and plead for boundless toleration.
But toleration is the first-born child
Of all abominations and deceits.
There is no room in Christ's triumphant army
For tolerationists. And if an Angel
Preach any other gospel unto you
Than that ye have received, God's malediction
Descend upon him! Let him be accursed!

A second problem was how to make the background realistic. Longfellow kept numerous notes from the histories mentioned earlier that might make his play seem authentic. For example, he needed a tavern. He jotted down the following names of taverns of the time: "The Three Mariners (Dock Square). The Admiral Vernon (King Street). The Anchor. The Blue Anchor. The Bunch of Grapes. The Castle Tavern. The George Tavern. The Green Dragon. The King's Head. The Lamb Tavern. The Lighthouse Tavern. The Red Lion Tavern. The Ship in Distress." The one that he finally selected was The Three Mariners of Dock Square.

A third problem was the setting. The place was to be Boston, but what would be the time? He finally decided on the year 1665, the date of Governor John Endicott's death. But if he selected 1665, he had to give the appearance that the following events happened in this year when actually they did not: the first law against the Quakers (actually 1656); the second law (1657); William Brand's punishment and John Norton's Reply (1658); the third law against the Quakers (1658); the return of Charles II to the throne (1660); the order for the execution of Wenlock Christison (1660-1661); the arrival of the King's Mandamus (1661).

And then there were three deaths, two of them a few years before that of Endicott, which claimed attention because many, especially the Quakers, thought they were judgments against the Puritans as a result of their harsh decisions. In the play, these deaths are recorded by Deputy-Governor Richard Bellingham. First there was the death of John Norton:

Bellingham. By his own fireside, in the afternoon
A faintness and a giddiness came o'er him;
And, leaning on the chimney-piece, he cried,
'The hand of God is on me!' and fell dead.

Next there was the death of Humphrey Atherton, one of the judges:

He is gone, and by a death as sudden,
Returning home one evening, at the place
Where usually the Quakers have been scourged,
His horse took fright, and threw him to the ground,
So that his brains were dashed about the street . . .
Endicott. I tremble lest it may have been
A judgment on him.
Bellingham. So the people think.
They say his horse saw standing in the way
The ghost of William Leddra, and was frightened.
And furthermore, brave Richard Davenport,
The captain of the Castle, in the storm
Has been struck dead by lightning.

This third man, Davenport, captain of a fortification called the Castle, strongly supported the persecution of the Quakers.

These deaths--actually in 1663, 1661, 1665--Longfellow allowed to happen--in addition to the other events listed above--in the year 1665. But the poet justified his method in the "Prologue" to the play:

Nor let the Historian blame the Poet here,
If he perchance misdate the day or year,
And group events together, by his art,
That in the Chronicles lie far apart;
For as the double stars, though sundered far,
Seem to the naked eye a single star,
So facts of history, at a distance seen,
Into one common point of light convene.

A fourth problem was the play's unrelieved gloom. To be certain, there is the attractive love of Edith and the young John Endicott. And in the 1868 version, a sea captain, named Kempthorn, adds a bit of humor by using nautical expressions and by telling Edward Butter, the Treasurer of the Commonwealth, to "spread" himself upon a chair. But for the most part, the play of 1868 is starkly serious. The prose version of 1860 has at least another light passage, an extended speech by a stern Puritan, Walter Merry, who is walking along a street on the Sabbath and who is planning to read a book written by the Priest John Norton:

All is quiet as a graveyard! Not a man, woman or child visible anywhere. Not a footfall up or down the street. It is perfectly beautiful. By punishment and perseverance and perseverance and punishment I have brought this disorderly town to a proper sense of the day. No gadding about now; no lounging at the corners; no smoking in the streets; not a barber's shop open. If it were not for

> those noisy pigeons on the roof, it would be perfectly silent. Ah, how I should like to wring your necks up there! I'd stop your billing and cooing! Well, it is almost sundown; and I will go home and read my book. "The Heart of New England Rent at the Blasphemies of the Present Generation, or a Brief Tractate Concerning the Doctrine of the Quakers." I cannot comprehend how they ever had the impudence to come back again, after having such a book written against them! It must be the Devil's doing. Hark! what's that? Somebody is pumping water at the town-pump. I'll pump you! [He cries as he runs out.]

But Longfellow decided to eliminate this scene from the 1868 version.

A final problem was the central character in the play. An earlier title was Wenlock Christison, after the Quaker who often shouts denunciations, many based on Biblical passages, such as:

> Woe to the city of blood! The stone shall cry
> Out of the wall: the beam from out the timber
> Shall answer it! Woe unto him that buildeth
> A town with blood, and stablisheth a city
> By his iniquity!

Or:

> Listen, ye Magistrates, for the Lord hath said it!
> The day ye put his servitors to death,
> That day the Day of your own Visitation,
> The Day of Wrath, shall pass above your heads,
> And ye shall be accursed forevermore!

The prose version of 1860 ends as Christison and his daughter Edith are waiting to be sold into slavery.

But by 1868 Longfellow had changed the emphasis from Christison to John Endicott. At times Longfellow shows the stern, unyielding side of this man. For him being a Quaker is "a heresy" that comes "from holding parley / With the delusions and deceits of Satan." He condemns the Friends to be banished, even to be executed. Here is a passage in which he bitterly confronts Edith Christison:

> Endicott. What is your name?
> Edith. 'Tis to the world unknown,
> But written in the Book of Life.
> Endicott. Take heed
> It be not written in the Book of Death!
> What is it?
> Edith. Edith Christison.
> Endicott (with eagerness). The daughter
> Of Wenlock Christison?
> Edith. I am his daughter.

Endicott. Your father hath given us trouble many times.
A bold man and a violent, who sets
At naught the authority of our Church and State,
And is in banishment on pain of death.
Where are you living?
Edith. In the Lord.
Endicott. Make answer
Without evasion. Where?
Edith. My outward being
Is in Barbadoes.
Endicott. Then why come you here?
Edith. I come upon an errand of the Lord.
Endicott. 'Tis not the business of the Lord you're doing;
It is the Devil's. Will you take the oath?
Give her the book. (MERRY offers the Book.)
Edith. You offer me this Book
To swear on; and it saith, 'Swear not at all,
Neither by heaven, because it is God's Throne,
Nor by the earth, because it is his footstool!'
I dare not swear.
Endicott. You dare not? Yet you Quakers
Deny this Book of Holy Writ, the Bible,
To be the Word of God.
Edith (reverentially). Christ is the Word,
The everlasting oath of God. I dare not.
Endicott. You own yourself a Quaker,--do you not?
Edith. I own that in derision and reproach
I am so called.
Endicott. Then you deny the Scripture
To be the rule of life.
Edith. Yea, I believe
The Inner Light, and not the Written Word,
To be the rule of life.
Endicott. And you deny
That the Lord's Day is holy.
Edith. Every day
Is the Lord's Day. It runs through all our lives,
As through the pages of the Holy Bible
'Thus saith the Lord.' . . .
Endicott. Are you a Prophetess?
Edith. Is it not written,
'Upon my handmaidens will I pour out
My spirit, and they shall prophesy'?
Endicott. Enough;
For out of your own mouth are you condemned! . . .
Edith Christison,
The sentence of the Court is, that you be
Scourged in three towns, with forty stripes save one,
Then banished upon pain of death!

Joseph Besse had absolutely no sympathy for Governor Endicott. But for Longfellow this picture of a blood-thirsty, cruel man was too one-sided. The poet knew that Endicott had been important in the history of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. Born in England, he had come to America in 1628 on the Abigail to prepare the way for others. After being

assistant and deputy-governor, he was governor in 1644, 1649, 1651-1653, and then during the crucial Quaker period of 1655-1665. Though his years in office had a few sensational events, such as his destroying a maypole established by fun-lovers and his cutting out of a cross on the English ensign (as speaking of too much popery), his rule was a dedicated but monotonous routine of doing the best he could for the colony. Interested in education, he wanted a free school at Salem and was one of the overseers of Harvard. He was honest and capable and devoted to the good of the public as he interpreted that good. Longfellow felt that he must present this other, very human side.

One way to show Endicott's humanity was through his attitude toward his son. The governor says to the boy:

> For when I hear your footsteps come or go,
> See in your features your dead mother's face,
> And in your voice detect some tone of hers,
> All anger vanishes, and I remember
> The days that are no more, and come no more,
> When as a child you sat upon my knee,
> And prattled of your playthings, and the games
> You played among the pear-trees in the orchard!

And just before his death, he is grief-stricken as he reflects:

> How many men are dragged into their graves
> By their rebellious children! I now feel
> The agony of a father's breaking heart
> In David's cry, 'O Absalom, my son!'

Another way to show his humanity was to have him question his actions. Early in the play he says to the Priest John Norton:

> I shrink
> From shedding of more blood. The people murmur
> At our severity.

And as his death approaches, he tries to rationalize what he has done:

> I did not put those wretched men to death.
> I did but guard the passage with the sword
> Pointed towards them, and they rushed upon it!
> Yet now I would that I had taken no part
> In all that bloody work . . .
> Ah, Richard Bellingham! I greatly fear
> That in my righteous zeal I have been led
> To doing many things which, left undone,
> My mind would now be easier.

Even the old Nicholas Upsall has sympathy as he tries to console the young John Endicott in the following passage:

> You know your father only as a father;
> I know him better as a Magistrate.
> He is a man both loving and severe;

A tender heart; a will inflexible.
None ever loved him more than I have loved him.
He is an upright man and just man
In all things save the treatment of the Quakers.

And at the end of the play in its final form, Endicott has died and Richard Bellingham delivers an appropriate epitaph for this troubled governor--so important in the history of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, but caught up in an intense emotional experience:

How bright this signet-ring
Glitters upon his hand, where he has worn it
Through such long years of trouble, as if Death
Had given him this memento of affection,
And whispered in his ear, 'Remember me!'
How placid and how quiet is his face,
Now that the struggle and the strife are ended!
Only the acrid spirit of the times
Corroded this true steel. O, rest in peace,
Courageous heart! Forever rest in peace!

LONGFELLOW, HIAWATHA AND SOME 19TH CENTURY AMERICAN PAINTERS

By

Rena N. Coen

When Henry Wadsworth Longfellow began to write Hiawatha in June of 1854, he was giving expression to an idea that had been in his mind for some time. He was also voicing an interest, common to the nineteenth century, in the fast vanishing Red Man, the savage but noble Indian of its plains and woodlands. In his literary and visual personification as a noble savage, the Indian represented for white America, a nostalgia for the past, a longing for a primitive innocence that embodied all that was good and pure in nature. Ultimately deriving from eighteenth century moral philosophy, especially but not exclusively that of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, the idea of the noble savage focused the social idealism and taste for exoticism of the age of enlightenment on the utopia which it thought it had discovered in the New World. Here corrupt governments and the evil ways of European society had not yet interfered with the natural order. Here, that child of nature, the savage Indian, could live out his life in innocent virtue and in simple harmony with his primitive surroundings. By the mid-nineteenth century, this idealized savage had become a familiar figure in American literature and art. James Fenimore Cooper and Washington Irving, on the one hand, and George Catlin and Seth Eastman on the other, are examples of a symbiotic relationship between the written and the painted word as it focused on images of the native American. In these artists, and others, the Indian represented the return to nature, the admiration for simple virtues, and the interest in the remote, the sentimental and the picturesque, all of which constitute a current of thought and feeling that is summed up in the term, romanticism.

Longfellow, as a poet and man of letters, sensitive to the cultural nuances of his time, could hardly have been unaware of the romantic interest in the noble savage that forms such an important component of the intellectual atmosphere of his time. He was well read, and, in a mild, gentlemanly way, was interested in art and artists.[1] It was their descriptions that supplied him with the setting of The Song of Hiawatha, for Longfellow himself never visited the upper Midwest and the locale of his poem. And, as far

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as his interest in the Indians was concerned, that had begun as early as his college years, when, under the date of November 9, 1823 he had written to his mother that he had just read the Rev. John Heckwelder's Account of the History, Manners and Customs of the Indian Nations of Pennsylvania and the Neighboring States. He remarked that, paradoxical as it might seem, he believed that the Indians were "a race possessing magnanimity, generosity, benevolence and pure religion without hyprocrisy."[2] This impression was strengthened and his interest quickened by his reading of Henry Rowe Schoolcraft's Algic Researches in 1839.[3] It was from Schoolcraft that Longfellow learned the legends of the Iroquois on which The Song of Hiawatha was based. In the poem the tribal legends are transferred from the Iroquois to the Ojibway of Saulte Ste. Marie and Lake Superior because Schoolcraft himself was more familiar with that particular group of Indians.[4] It was, of course, both Longfellow's and Schoolcraft's hope that their images of the Indian as nature's hero would compel a change in the superficial Indian stereotypes still prevalent in the popular mind -- that of the Indian as a bloodthirsty savage always looking for a white man's scalp. Their deeper knowledge of Indian character and customs led to a mutual admiration and respect, and in 1856, encouraged by the immediate success of The Song of Hiawatha, Schoolcraft reissued his Algic Researches in an expanded edition with a new title: The Myth of Hiawatha, and Other Oral Legends, Mythological and Allegoric, of the North American Indians. The volume was dedicated to Longfellow.

In view of Longfellow's relationship with Schoolcraft and his acknowledged debt to Schoolcraft's writings, it is interesting to note Schoolcraft's relationship in turn to Seth Eastman, soldier, artist, and commandant of Fort Snelling in the Minnesota Territory in the 1840's. Trained at West Point, where he later returned to teach art, Captain Eastman was a landscapist in the tradition of the Hudson River School when he arrived at Fort Snelling in 1841. There he began to paint the Sioux Indians of the area for military affairs as this frontier outpost left him plenty of time to indulge his passion for paintings and drawing. Indeed, the seventy-five or more oils and scores of drawings and water colors constituted one of the most important bodies of pictorial documents on Indian life at that time. It made Eastman Schoolcraft's choice for illustrating his monumental work on the Indian tribes of the United States, commissioned by Congress in 1847.[5] In a letter of June 30, 1854, Schoolcraft wrote to Charles E. Mix, Acting Commissioner for Indian Affairs, that Captain Eastman's "peculiar fitness . . . for the work arises from his skill and talent as an artist which is believed to be superior to any other within my knowledge. His long service on the frontier . . . enables him to apply his skill to the particular manner and customs and arts of the Indians with a truthfulness which a strange artist, whatever his talents, could not do."[6] Eastman received the commission, was temporarily relieved of his other army duties, and completed the oils, water colors and drawings which were engraved for Schoolcraft's book.

Eastman, as Schoolcraft's illustrator, and therefore one indirect source for Longfellow's visual image of the Indians, is important in another connection as well. Mary Henderson Eastman, his wife, was among the first to write down the legends of the Indians during the time she spent on the Minnesota frontier with her husband in the 1840's. Her first book on Indian lore, Dahcotah; or Life and Legends of the Sioux Around Fort Snelling, was published in New York in 1849.[7] This and subsequent collections of Indian legends were illustrated by her husband, some of the illustrations using the same plates that were engraved for Schoolcraft's work. And though a direct connection between Mary Eastman and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow has yet to be discovered, the mere coincidence of both of them writing about Indian legends within a five year period, and the connection of each of them in turn with Schoolcraft, points to a strong probability that they were, at least, aware of each other.[8]

In any event, a number of Eastman's works reproduced in Schoolcraft's book may well have served as visual models for the poet. The nineteenth century was, in fact, a period when literature and art were closely tied, writers frequently describing scenes in precise pictorial terms and artists often painting in a literal and descriptive manner. Thus, for example, Eastman's Indian Council (Figure 6), engraved as Plate 27 in Volume II of Schoolcraft's work, sets the stage, so to speak, for Longfellow's description of Hiawatha counseling his people. Ceremonially dressed in his feathered bonnet and wrapped in a great fringed robe, Eastman's hero seems to be declaiming with the same sense of solemn dignity typical of Hiawatha's addresses to his people.

The famous tribal council in Longfellow's poem in which Hiawatha preaches unity among the warring tribes: "All your strength is in your union, / All your danger is in discord" is actually laid in the Pipestone Quarry country of western Minnesota, painted by George Catlin in 1835 (Figure 7). The Indians associated this area with the coming of peace for the calumet, or peace pipe, was fashioned from the soft, reddish stone quarried there. Catlin, the great painter of Indians, had visited Pipestone and its sacred quarrying ground in the summer of 1835, one of the first white men permitted to do so. He not only painted it, but described it in some detail in his own monumental work on the Indian tribes of North America which was published in 1841.[9] From the description of the quarry alone, one gets the clear impression that Longfellow was familiar with Catlin's book as well as with Schoolcraft's.

There are other similarities as well between Longfellow's and Catlin's images. The monumental portrait of Mah-toh-to-pa, or Four Bears (Figure 8), second chief of the Mandan Indians among whom Catlin spent the winter of 1834, is the very model of picturesque and savage nobility. It aptly fits the description of the young Hiawatha about to leave the lodge of his grandmother, Nokomis, to seek his father, Mudjekeewis:

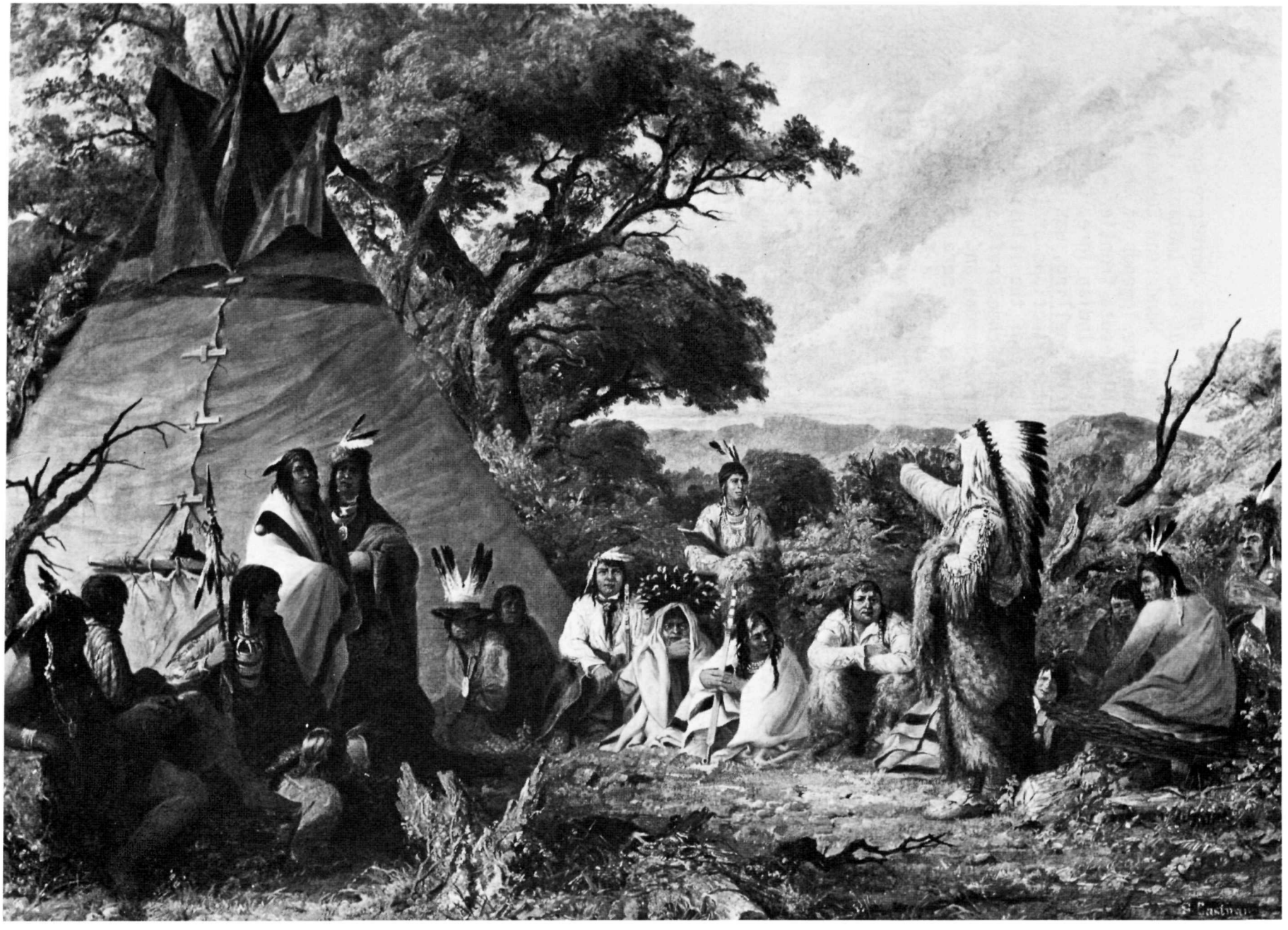


Figure 6. Indian Council by Seth Eastman (1808-1875), 1840's. Oil on canvas. The Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma.



Figure 7. Pipestone Quarry, on the Coteau des Prairies by George Catlin (1796-1872), 1836. Oil on canvas, 19 1/2 x 27 1/4 inches. National Museum of American Art (formerly National Collection of Fine Arts), Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.; gift of Mrs. Sarah Harrison.



Figure 8. Four Bears, Second Chief by George Catlin (1796-1872), 1832. Oil on canvas, 29 x 24 inches. National Museum of American Art (formerly National Collection of Fine Arts), Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.; gift of Mrs. Sarah Harrison.

From his lodge went Hiawatha,
Dressed for travel, armed for hunting;
Dressed in deer-skin shirt and leggings,
Richly wrought with quills and wampum;
On his head his eagle-feathers, . . .
In his hand his bow of ash-wood,
Strung with sinews of the reindeer;

In both the poetic and the painted images the emphasis is on strength, courage and the colorful and primitive natural man.

If the paintings of Catlin and Eastman were among the many influences on the imagery of Longfellow, the poet, in turn, especially after The Song of Hiawatha was published in 1855, exerted at least as strong an influence on two generations of American artists. Sometimes this influence was direct, in the sense of inspiring visual artists to attempt a portrayal of Hiawatha or to illustrate various passages from the Longfellow poem. Frequently, however, the influence was less tangible, leading not to visual quotations from the poem but rather to a desire to visit its locale and to record its scenery and its native inhabitants. Thus, from about 1855 to about 1885 the steamboat trip on the upper Mississippi River became a popular tourist pilgrimage, important for artists as well as for pilgrims of other talents.[10] The route went past Winona and Maiden Rock (from which, it was said, the Indian maiden, mother of Hiawatha, had thrown herself into the river far below) to the Falls of Minnehaha.[11] Among the artist pilgrims was John Kensett, who first visited the area in 1854, the same year that his friend Longfellow began to write The Song of Hiawatha. As a product of his visit he painted, in 1856, a view of Lake Pepin, a widening of the Mississippi River above the town of Winona, and also, possibly, a view of Minnehaha Falls as well (Figure 9). Though some question has been raised as to the identity of the latter picture, for the falls seem narrower and steeper than in other representations of them, nevertheless, an inscription on the verso of the frame in Longfellow's own hand reads: "Waterfall by Kensett, 1856." In view of the date, and also the fact that of the many paintings of waterfalls by Kensett, it was this particular one that the artist presented to his friend, the author of Hiawatha, I am inclined to believe that the Falls are correctly identified as Minnehaha. It is possible that Kensett, using perhaps quick sketches of the site made during his visit to it, merely excercised artistic license and deliberately exaggerated some aspects of the scene in order to dramatize its "wilderness" locale.

There were many other artists who made similar trips up the mighty Father of Waters "to the forests and the prairies and the great lakes of the Northland," finally reaching their destination at the Falls of Minnehaha, those laughing waters that:

Flash and gleam among the oak-trees,
Laugh and leap into the valley . . . .
Gleaming, glancing through the branches,
As one hears the Laughing Water
From behind its screen of branches?

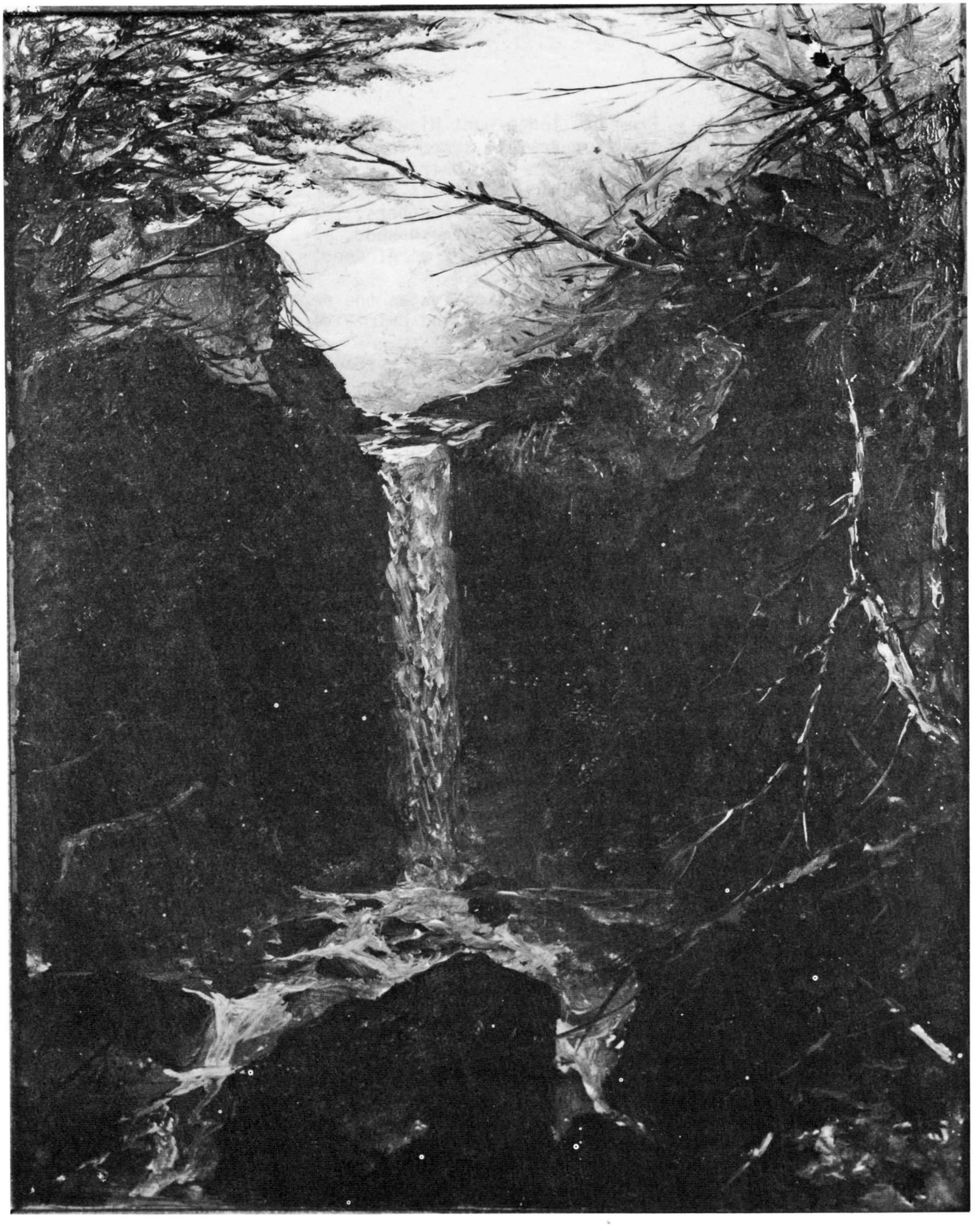


Figure 9. Waterfall by John Kensett (1816-1872), ca. 1856. Oil on prepared board, 11 3/4 x 9 3/8 inches. National Park Service, Longfellow National Historic Site, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Among these artists certain names stand out. They include Alfred T. Bricher, who got at least as far as Red Wing in 1856, and Ferdinand Reichardt, who painted the steamboats on the upper Mississippi in 1857. Others who painted the falls celebrated in Hiawatha include Gilbert Munger in 1860, Robert Duncanson in 1862, Jerome Thompson in 1870, Joseph Meeker in 1879 and Albert Bierstadt in 1886.

In the case of at least one young friend of the poet, Eastman Johnson, who, in 1846 had been engaged by Longfellow to draw portraits of himself and his family, the romantic appeal of the Hiawatha legend resulted in a trip to Minnesota in the summer of 1856 and a long sojourn there through the following winter. Johnson's brother and sister lived in the Duluth-Superior area, but one feels that it was more than family sentiment that drew the artist to this pioneer settlement. For, in 1857 Johnson travelled 150 miles beyond Duluth to the upper reaches of Lake Superior to live among the Ojibway along the shores of "Gitchee Gumee." At the village of Grand Portage, he drew their portraits, their settlements and their way of life (Figure 10). His series of drawings done in crayon and charcoal are striking studies of a proud and dignified people, vivid embodiments of the noble savage and typical of both Longfellow's and Johnson's image of idyllic primitivism. Their combination of the real and the ideal follow closely, in fact, on the poet's own analysis of the two schools of thought which he discerned in contemporary poetry, the "Ideal and the Actual." "The first," wrote Longfellow, "endeavors to invest ideal scenes and characters with truth and reality; the second, on the contrary, clothes the real with the ideal, and makes actual and common things radiant with beauty." At the same time he felt that simplicity and directness were also required for "every work of art should explain itself." If it required commentary, it had failed as a work of art.[12] Just so do the Johnson drawings fit into Longfellow's esthetic criteria for they are honest, direct, and able to "make actual and common things radiant with beauty." It is interesting that Johnson felt a particular attachment to these drawings for he kept them for himself, and though he showed them to friends, he never exhibited them during his lifetime.

There were, of course, artists who addressed the Hiawatha theme directly, not as an excuse for scenic paintings of the Falls of Minnehaha or the Indians of Lake Superior, but for the Hiawatha subject itself. This was so even when the Hiawatha figure was treated subjectively as a personal symbol of the romance of primitive life. Thus, in Ralph Albert Blakelock's Hiawatha (Shooting the Arrow) (Figure 11), a standing figure is seen drawing on a bow, as he emerges from the darkness of an undifferentiated background. The Indian, nude except for loin cloth and moccasins, is vague, but still individualized. Like Eastman Johnson's images, it combines Longfellow's criteria for the ideal and the actual, for as has been aptly said, the Indian "is real enough, but he is also somewhat unreal, wrapped in the emotion of an ideal concept, very close indeed to the concept of the 'noble savage.'"[13]



Figure 10. Kenne Waw Be Mint by Eastman Johnson (1824-1906), 1856-1857. Charcoal on paper, 8 x 8 inches. St. Louis County Historical Society, Duluth, Minnesota.

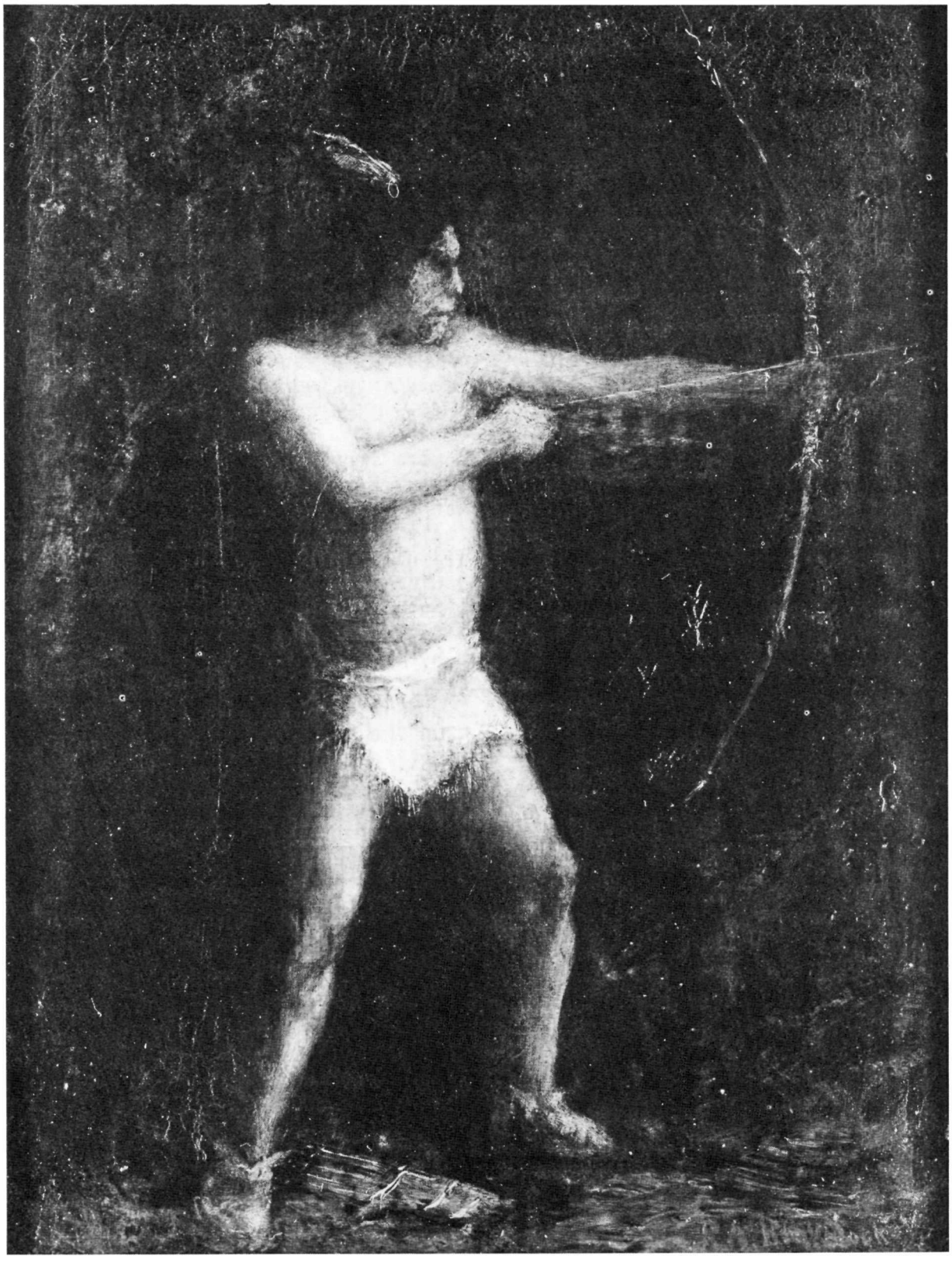


Figure 11. "Hiawatha" (Shooting the Arrow) by Ralph Blakelock (1847-1919), 4th qtr. 19th century. Oil on canvas, 8 3/16 x 6 3/16 inches. Worcester Art Museum, Worcester, Massachusetts.

Blakelock's painting entitled There Was Peace Among the Nations (Figure 12) seems close to Hiawatha in terms of the literary implications of the title. It shows a western scene in which two Indian women sit in the shade of an overarching tree. In the background figures move about among the tepees of an encampment. Nothing else happens. The Indians exist in a remote, romanticized setting that has more to do with a remembered dream than it does with ordinary life. This impression is heightened by the passivity of the women, the empty space of so much of the foreground, and the deep recession to a vast and distant horizon. It is again a picture of the idyllic primitivism which the artist remembered, or thought he remembered, from his travels in the west as a young man. His admiration for Longfellow's poem merely invested that memory with a new immediacy.

None of these painters were more imbued with the very spirit and soul of Hiawatha than Thomas Moran. From the time of its publication, The Song of Hiawatha was his favorite poem and its pictorial possibilities were more fully exploited by him than by any of his contemporaries. Its celebration of nature's nobleman amidst the scenic wilderness of his surroundings, its elements of myth and legend, its picturesque characters, both animal and human, led him, in the summer of 1860 to invade the haunts of its hero. On July 29th of that year, Moran began sketching by "the shores of Gitchee Gumee / By the shining big-sea water," less poetically known as Lake Superior.[14]

Moran's best known painting on the Hiawatha theme is a large oil entitled The Spirit of the Indian (Figure 13). Painted in 1869, it bears little resemblance to the actual home of the Ojibway described by Schoolcraft and sketched by Moran himself. Instead, like parts of Longfellow's poem, it conjures up a romantic fantasy in which towering crags and murky waters set the stage for dramatic action. It shows Hiawatha's arrival at the home of the great Pearl-Feather, Megissogwon, the Magician and spirit of wealth and wampum, who had, many years before, slain the father of Nokomis. The hero has steered his birch canoe through the waters infested with Megissogowon's guardian serpents:

> The Kenabeek; the great serpents,
> Lying huge upon the water,
> Sparkling, rippling in the water,
> Lying coiled across the passage, . . .
> Breathing fiery fogs and vapors,
> So that none could pass beyond them.

On the upland, above the beach appears the gigantic yet ghostly form of the Manito, the evil spirit, half hidden in the mountain mists:

> Tall of stature, broad of shoulder,
> Dark and terrible in aspect, . . .
> Crested with great eagle-feathers,
> Streaming upward, streaming outward.

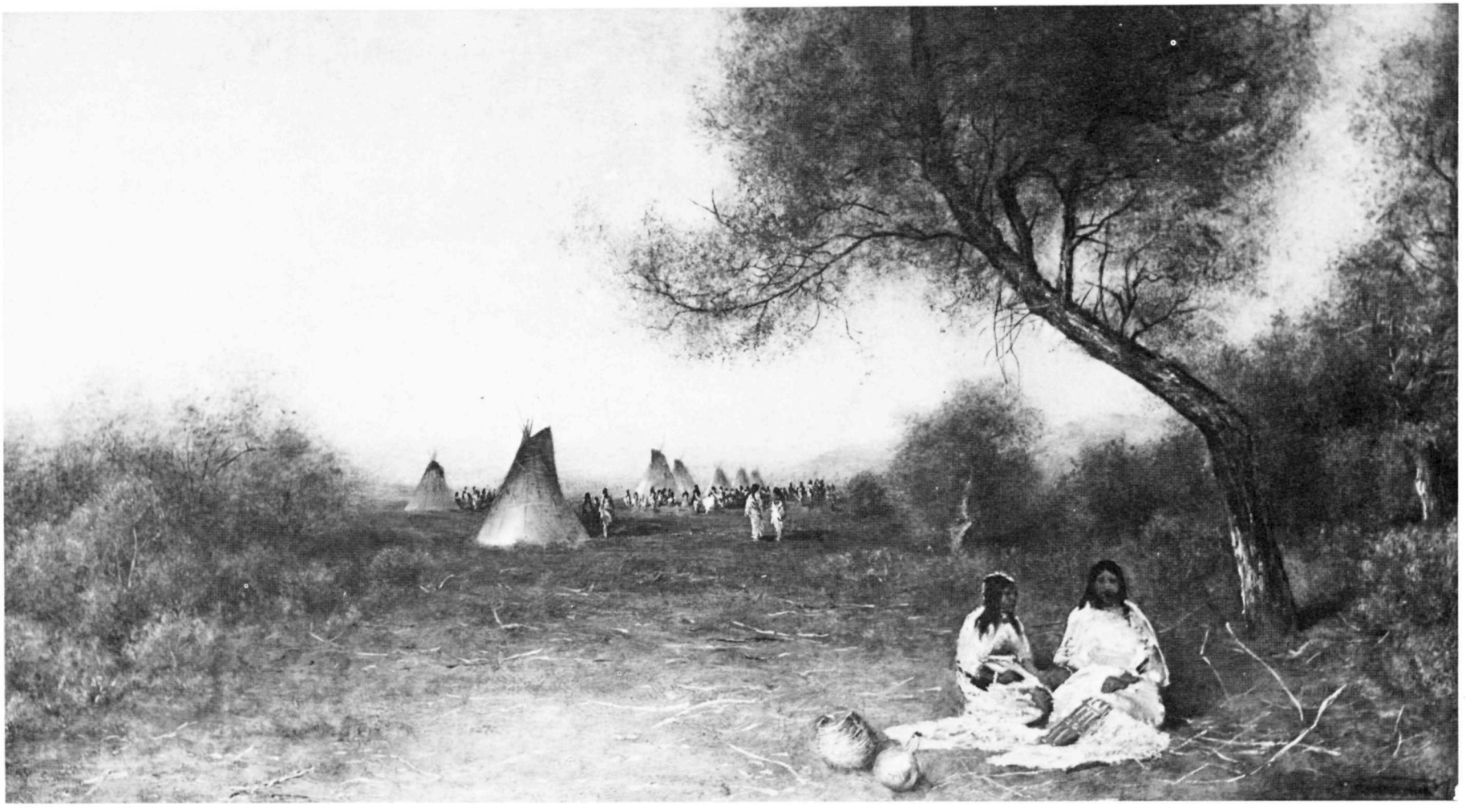


Figure 12. There Was Peace Among the Nations by Ralph Albert Blakelock (1847-1919), possibly the 1870s. Oil on canvas, 20 1/8 x 36 1/2 inches. The Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma.



Figure 13. Spirit of the Indian by Thomas Moran (1837-1926), 1869. Oil on canvas, 32 1/4 x 48 inches. Philbrook Art Center, Tulsa Oklahoma.

Then, with "bow of ash-tree" ready, Hiawatha engages the magician in

> . . . the greatest battle
> That the sun had ever looked on.
> That the war-birds ever witnessed.

The section in Hiawatha on the Pearl Feather seems to have held a special appeal for Thomas Moran for it is particularly rich in purple mists and brilliant sunsets. Such spectacular effects of fiery glory were a favorite motif of a painter who described the American West in precisely such terms. In 1875 Moran painted Fiercely the Red Sun Descending to portray the outset of Hiawatha's journey westward:

> To the purple clouds of sunset.
> Fiercely the red sun descending
> Burned his way along the heavens,
> Set the sky on fire behind him,
> As war-parties, when retreating,
> Burn the prairies on their war-trail; . . .

It was probably this painting, referred to in the Longfellow literature as "a sunset by Thomas Moran" that was used as an illustration in some later editions of Hiawatha.[15]

In the same year that he painted Fiercely the Red Sun Descending, Moran also began to work on a series of Hiawatha illustrations -- about twenty wash drawings, that his brother, Peter Moran, undertook to reproduce as steel engravings. These engravings were intended as a subscription project, and, though it was never completed, the Morans had Longfellow himself on their subscription list. When the Aldine ran a picture from the series, that of Hiawatha's friend, Kwasind, the Strong Man, the editor remarked that "Moran has caught the spirit of the original -- the wild and primitive feeling in which the old Indian traditions originated. His characteristic excellences -- power and imagination -- are represented as well as they can be without color, in which he excels. For what he is, he has no master in America."[16]

As a footnote to the relationship between the poet and contemporary artists, it is worth pointing out that in that same year of 1875, Moran sent his large and spectacular painting, The Mountain of the Holy Cross, to the Gallery of Elliot and Co. in Boston. There it was exhibited for several weeks with other western scenes Moran had recently completed. Longfellow may very well have seen it there and remembered it some years later when he wrote the sonnet, The Cross of Snow, memorializing his dead wife, Fanny.

Perhaps the best known of all the Hiawatha illustrators is Frederic Remington who, in 1890, was commissioned to execute twenty-two full page plates and nearly four hundred text drawings for the illustrated Edition of The Song of Hiawatha. The commission fulfilled

a long standing ambition of the artist's for, as his wife wrote to Remington's uncle on Dec. 3, 1888, "Fred has just left for Boston . . . to see Houghton Mifflin and Co. about illustrating Hiawatha and hopes to make satisfactory arrangements. Ever since he has done any illustrating he has dreamed of doing that, and now he hopes he can."[17] The drawings were duly commissioned and they did much to establish the young artist's reputation, for the Illustrated Edition was enormously popular. It is even possible that Remington's drawings helped to give the poem the cherished place it holds in American literature.

The Death of Minnehaha (Figure 14) is the best known of the illustrations for the 1891 series. It is, besides, typical of Remington's style. Where Moran delighted in brilliant color effects and luminous, far receding landscapes, Remington concentrates on the telling of the story, using a sharp and linear style that is more suited than Moran's painterly one to an illustrator's purpose. The picture is direct, vivid and unambiguous. Minnehaha has succumbed to famine and fever and lies on her death bed. Hiawatha has returned from a desperate search for game in the forest, "empty handed, heavy hearted," and, with his snowshoes hanging above him, he sits at the feet of his beloved, his "lovely Minnehaha / Lying dead and cold before him." Around them hover the spectral forms of the ghosts of the departed who had appeared to Hiawatha previously to warn him of impending doom: Their prophecy is fulfilled for Hiawatha.

> And his bursting heart within him
> Uttered such a cry of anguish,
> That the forest moaned and shuddered, . . .
> With both hands his face he covered,
> Seven long days and nights he sat there,
> Speechless, motionless, unconscious
> Of the daylight or the darkness.

If Frederick Remington was the quintessential illustrator of The Song of Hiawatha, Albert Bierstadt, like Thomas Moran, was the painter of its scenic locale. Bierstadt's vast, panoramic landscapes of the American west include several smaller views of the land of Hiawatha. He painted Minnehaha Falls at least twice, once as a regular studio piece and once, in 1886, as a gift to the young son of his friend and Minneapolis patron, Thomas Barlow Walker. This is a small sketch of the Falls painted with a looser brush and broader color areas than are usually found in the artist's more grandiose pictures of the West. Three year old Archie Walker, his patron's son, appears as a small, straw hatted figure, at the foot of the Falls, facing away from us toward the tumbling waters. It is a casual, almost genre view of the site Longfellow made famous as the home of the Dacotah arrow maker and his beautiful daughter, Minnehaha.

The same genre quality characterizes Bierstadt's View of Duluth at the western tip of Lake Superior. By now the big sea water beyond the shores of Gitchee Gumee has shed its wilderness aspect and the



Figure 14. The Death of Minnehaha by Frederic Remington (1861-1909), 1888-1890. Photogravure, from an original Remington design. First published in the 1890 edition of The Song of Hiawatha (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin and Company).

shining waters lap instead at the feet of a prosperous pioneer town. There are no picturesque savages here roaming through dense, primeval forests evoking a sense of the remote, romantic West. Instead, there is a sense of everyday life that describes the real rather than the ideal. Nevertheless, the scene is illuminated in the bright sunshine of a new day that reflects the cheerful optimism of a pioneer community.

Another painting by Bierstadt, however, is a specific illustration for the Hiawatha story. The small oil painting, The Departure of Hiawatha (Figure 15) has a history that is unique in Longfellow's association with visual artists. On July 9, 1868, Bierstadt and his wife gave a dinner at the Langham Hotel in London in honor of Longfellow, who was also in England at the time to receive an honorary degree from Cambridge University. The dinner was a star-studded affair for the guests included a number of members of Parliament in addition to Robert Browning, Edwin Landseer, the Duke of Argyll and even Gladstone himself. After an elaborate feast that included corn as a compliment to the American guests and George IV pudding as a compliment to the English ones, speeches and toasts paid tribute to Longfellow and to Bierstadt himself. During the evening, Longfellow was given the small painting by Bierstadt of The Departure of Hiawatha.[18]

The painting is similar to Moran's pictures in its spectacular use of color. In a blaze of sunset, Hiawatha embarks in his canoe "On a long and distant journey, / To the portals of the Sunset." Bidding farewell to his people, Hiawatha,

> Turned and waved his hand at parting;
> On the clear and luminous water
> Launched his birch canoe for sailing,
> Sailed into the fiery sunset,
> Sailed into the purple vapors,
> Sailed into the dusk of evening.

By the last quarter of the nineteenth century, as the consequences of westward expansion became obvious, a new and bleaker view of the Indian began to prevail. Henry Farny, for example, one of the last visual recorders of Indian life as it was lived before the coming of the white man, undertook, like Moran and Remington, to illustrate the Hiawatha story. Only ten of the illustrations of a much larger project were ever completed. In one of them, By the Shores of Gitchee Gumee, Hiawatha is portrayed as a doomed hero. Wrapped in his own gloomy thoughts and with his back turned toward the observer, the Indian figure is small in the context of the painting emphasizing his vulnerability in the vast and limitless power of nature. As in Remington's picture, Farny's ink wash technique creates a sharp contrast of light and shadow and the suggestion of dreary coldness achieves an effect of sad resignation. The image is far indeed from the proud and stalwart Indians depicted in the earlier part of the century by Eastman Johnson or George Catlin. Like some of Farny's other Indian paintings which bear such titles as End of the Race or In The Valley of the Shadow, By the Shores of Gitchee Gumee

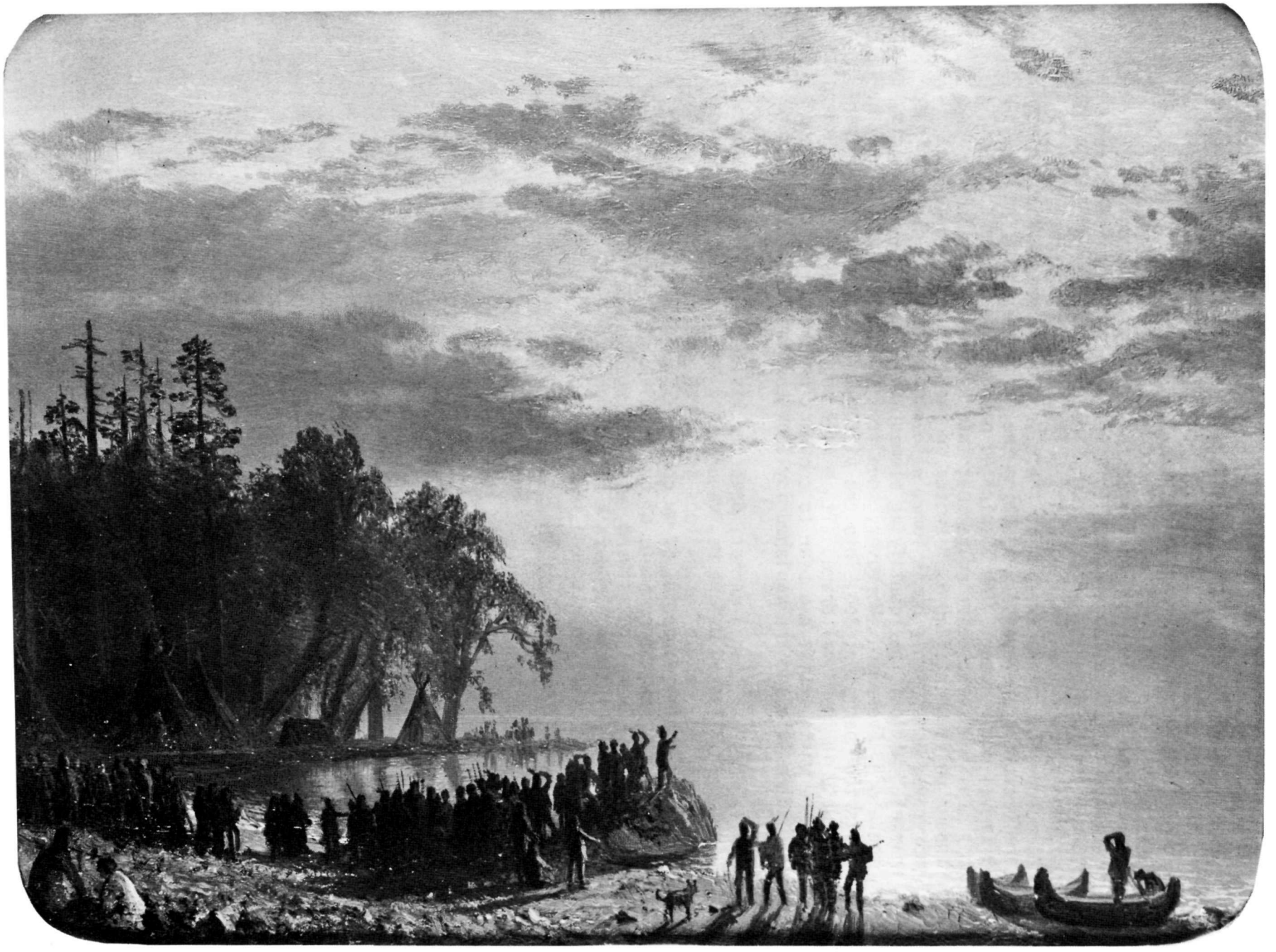


Figure 15. The Departure of Hiawatha by Albert Bierstadt (1830-1902), ca. 1868. Oil on paper, 6 7/8 x 8 1/8 inches. National Park Service, Longfellow National Historic Site, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

symbolizes the end of the noble savage and white America's awakening to the realization that the romantic dream of a primitive idyll no longer existed in the frontier west.

One final picture completes the story of 19th century artistic response to Longfellow's poem. This is Thomas Eakins's oil study of 1874 entitled Hiawatha (Figure 16). Here the tragedy of Indian life is suggested by the isolation of the figure in a landscape that is bare and featureless except for the cloud formations that march across the picture plane, vaguely assuming the animal forms of the Indian's primeval environment. The dispirited pose of the figure suggests his loneliness and dejected retreat into his own somber thoughts. Though he is identified as Hiawatha in the title, the Indian is portrayed as a simple human form, without feathers, beads or fringed garmet. Without the identifying elements of Indian costume, he is, therefore, Everyman. Moreover, seen from the back facing inward, he pulls the spectator, too, into the picture, forcing him thus to participate in the final drama. It is as though neither the Indian hero nor the white artist can bear to confront us directly with the end of Indian life and the vanished idyll of the American West.

> Then a darker, drearier vision
> Passed before me, vague and cloud-like;
> I beheld our nations scattered,
> All forgetful of my counsels. . . .
> Saw the remnants of our people
> Sweeping westward, wild and woful,
> Like the cloud-rack of a tempest,
> Like the withered leaves of Autumn!



Figure 16. Hiawatha by Thomas Eakins (1844-1916), ca. 1874. Oil on canvas, 14 1/8 x 17 5/8 inches. Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.

NOTES

[1] Longfellow counted many visual artists among his friends. He was also involved in a minor way with the art establishment of his day. When the first exhibition of the New England Art Union opened on Tremont Row in 1852, he was included among the vice presidents. See Neil Harris, The Artist in American Society (George Braziller: New York, 1966), p. 278.

[2] Quoted in Albert Keiser, The Indian in American Literature (New York: Oxford University Press, 1933) p. 190. See also Henry Rowe Schoolcraft, Algic Researches, Comprising Inquiries Respecting the Mental Characteristics of the North American Indians (New York, 1839).

[3] Keiser, The Indian in American Literature, p. 191.

[4] Charles S. Osborn and Stellanove Osborn, Schoolcraft, Longfellow and Hiawatha (Lancaster, Pennsylvania: The Jacques Cattrell Press, 1942), p. 11.

[5] Henry Rowe Schoolcraft, Historical and Statistical Information Respecting the History, Condition and Prospects of the Indian Tribes of the United States, 6 Vols. (Philadelphia: Lippincott, Grambo and Co., 1851-57).

[6] John Francis McDermott, Seth Eastman, Pictorial Historian of the Indian (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1961), p. 83, n. 17.

[7] Mary H. Eastman, Dahcotah; or Life and Legends of the Sioux Around Fort Snelling (New York: John Wiley, 1849).

[8] Mrs. Eastman's later works on Indian life and legends, illustrated by Seth Eastman, included, The Romance of Indian Life, With Other Tales, first published by The Iris in 1852 as An Illuminated Souvenir, and subsequently reissued by Lippincott, Grambo and Co., Philadelphia, in 1853, The American Annual, Illustrative of the Early History of North America, Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott, n.d., and Chicora, and Other Regions of the Conquerors and Conquered, Philadelphia: Lippincott, Grambo and Co., 1854.

[9] George Catlin, North American Indians, Being Letters and Notes on Their Manners and Customs, Written During Eight Years Travel Amongst the Wildest Tribes of Indians in North America, 2 Vols. (Edinburgh: John Grant, 1841).

[10] See Rena Neumann Coen, Painting and Sculpture in Minnesota, 1820-1914 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1976), Ch. IV, "Tourists and Travelers", pp. 32 - 50.

[11] Though the original Indian name was "Minnehaha" (Laughing Waters), the white settlers called the Falls "Brown's Falls" (probably

for Maj. Gen. Jacob Brown) as early as 1823, and also "Little Falls". By 1852, however, they too were calling the Falls by the Indian name, "Minnehaha". See John Francis McDermott, "Minnesota 100 Years Age," Minnesota History (Autumn, 1952), p. 112.

[12] Edward Wagenknecht, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Portrait of an American Humanist (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966), p. 106.

[13] Norman Geske, Ralph Albert Blakelock, 1847-1919 (Lincoln: Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery, 1975), p. 15.

[14] Moran was traveling in the company of Isaac N. Williams, a portrait painter and later landscape painter. See Thurman Wilkins, Thomas Moran, Artist of the Mountains (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1966), pp. 29-30.

[15] Newton Arvin, Longfellow, His Life and Works (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1963), p. 172.

[16] Wilkins, Thomas Moran, p. 55. The set of Hiawatha drawings proved very popular. In 1876 six of them were exhibited at the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition and in 1882 the series was shown at the Bromley Art Gallery in Bradshawgate, near Bolton, England where Thomas Moran and his wife were visiting that summer.

[17] Harold McCracken, The Frederick Remington Book, A Pictorial History of the Old West (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday and Co., 1966), p. 89.

[18] Gordon Hendricks, Albert Bierstadt, Painter of the American West (New York: Harry N. Abrams and Fort Worth, Amon Carter Museum of Western Art, 1974), p. 182.

LONGFELLOW, EMERSON, AND EMERSON'S "GOSSIPS": ALCOTT, CHANNING, AND THOREAU

By

Frederick Wagner

On January 19, 1832, Ralph Waldo Emerson, at twenty-six still pastor of the Second Church in Boston, wrote to his brother Charles that "Mr Longfellow the poet" had called the previous day when he was not at home. Although Emerson did not know what business had brought the twenty-four-year-old professor of modern languages at Bowdoin to his door, he remarked that "we hungerers for sympathy" welcomed the occasion.[1]

In their youths the two men were opposites in temperament and, once Emerson took to poetry, in technique; Longfellow sought virtuosity in meter and perfection in form, whereas Emerson looked for meter-making arguments and strove to break the bonds of form. In religion and politics Longfellow was more conservative than liberal; the young Emerson strove to be radical. In 1835 Emerson settled in Concord, a village that sometimes seemed farther west of Boston than it actually was; in 1836 Longfellow began his life-long residence in Cambridge, a village that already had assumed the guise of urbanity. Emerson, although he journeyed abroad three times, kept his face toward the American West. Longfellow, although he once traveled through the wilds of New York State to Niagara Falls, kept his face toward Europe; he seemed reluctant to travel even as far west as Concord. Yet the two men were drawn together, in part because by middle age both had become public monuments, but more importantly because of Emerson's hunger for sympathy of the sort Longfellow was so adept at giving. The three men that Emerson called his Concord "gossips"--Bronson Alcott, Ellery Channing, and Henry David Thoreau--he often found lacking; and, despite his occasionally expressed irritation with Longfellow, he kept turning to him for companionship and welcoming his responsive criticism.

When the two men first met we do not know, but Frank Sanborn tells us that, as Longfellow was preparing to leave for Europe in April 1835, Emerson greeted him aboard the steamer that brought him from Portland to Boston with a letter of introduction to Thomas Carlyle,[2] a report that seems to be confirmed by a June letter from Carlyle remarking that he had seen Longfellow several times "with great pleasure; as one sees worthy souls from a far country, who cannot abide with you, who throw you a kind of greeting as they pass."[3] After Longfellow's

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return from Europe, Emerson attempted to enlist his influence in publicizing Carlyle's History of the French Revolution.[4]

In the late 1830's Longfellow began to attend Emerson's lectures frequently, a practice he continued throughout his life. He thought that Emerson on Transcendentalism was "sufficiently obscure"[5] and noted that his lecture on "Holiness" proved "a great bugbear to many pious, feeble souls. Not exactly comprehending it (and who does?) they seem to be sitting in the shadow of some awful atheism or other."[6] But he pronounced that both the essay on Milton in the North American Review and the lecture on the "Affections" were "good," adding to his comment on the latter that Emerson "mistakes his power somewhat, and at times speaks in oracles, darkly. He is vastly more of a poet than a philosopher. He has a brilliant mind, and develops and expands an idea very beautifully, and with abundant similitudes and illustrations."[7] He advised his friend Sam Ward in New York not to fail to hear Emerson's lectures: "The difference between him and most lecturers is this: From Emerson you go away and remember nothing, save that you have been much delighted; you have had a pleasant dream in which angelic voices spoke. From most other lecturers you go away and remember nothing, save that you have been lamentably bored, you have had the nightmare, and have heard her colt neigh."[8] To George W. Greene in Rome he commended Emerson as "one of the finest lecturers I ever heard, with magnificent passages of true prose-poetry. But it is all dreamery, after all."[9] When the first series of Emerson's Essays appeared, Longfellow found it striking in its combination of "sublime prose-poetry, magnificent absurdities, and simple truths," but confessed to being unable to see any connection in the ideas.[10]

Soon after the Divinity School Address in July 1838 Longfellow, writing to a friend of the stir Emerson continued to make, reported Dean Palfrey's comment that "what in it was not folly was impiety!"; Longfellow defended the talk as "a stout humanitarian discourse." When the Address was published, he promised his father to send a copy and reported Andrew Norton's denunciation of it in the Boston Daily Advertiser. In December, when Norton sent Longfellow his rebuttal to George Ripley's defense of Emerson, the poet was guarded in his response, praising Norton not for his substance, but for his style, which had "all your customary strength, clearness, and directness."[11] Longfellow's position as a Unitarian seemed to be midway between the extremes taken by Norton and Ripley, but in late 1840 he assured Sam Ward that the Divinity School was free of Transcendentalists: "the infected class is gone."[12] Fanny Appleton Longfellow found "the Transcendental strata" cause for laughter; she noted that "Miss Fuller and Emerson sat like the old philosophers in the groves, each with a swarm of disciples as a halo."[13]

Both Fanny and Henry had mixed responses to the Dial. Fanny praised the first issue for testing the spirit of the times and for "the astonishing concentration of thought . . . for so few pages," but she found a later issue to be "'beyond beyond' for absurdity: some verses by Emerson on the Sphinx which you would think could only have been written in Bedlam."[14] Henry found the first two issues "strange" in their combination of affectation and beauty, folly and wisdom.[15]

When Longfellow heard of the proposals to establish Brook Farm, he regarded it as being another of the "sundry novelties" among the day's moral reforms, combining, as most of them did, the serious and the comic. He had been told that Emerson and Alcott were to join George Ripley and Margaret Fuller in "this land of Promise" and feared that Alcott would prove "an unprofitable farmer," for he had heard that the author of "Orphic Sayings" refused to use manure because it overstimulated the earth. Despite his reservations, Longfellow recognized the sincerity and good intentions of the reformers.[16]

Late in 1845 when Emerson was preparing his series of lectures on "Representative Men," he borrowed from Longfellow nine publications of the Shakespeare Society. On sending the volumes, Longfellow invited Emerson to take tea and spend the night at Craigie House. Emerson accepted the invitation to tea, but declined to stay overnight: "I am a restless lodger when I go abroad . . . . "[17]

Longfellow had varying reactions to the lectures. The introductory lecture on "Great Men" had "striking and brilliant passages," but lacked Emerson's usual "sweet rhetoricke"; many passages would "shock the sensitive ear and heart." A full theater greeted the lecture on "Plato," a curious audience, "bald heads and flowing transcendental locks, matrons and maidens, misanthropists and lovers, --listening to the reveries of the poet-philosopher." On January 22, 1845, Longfellow walked to Boston, despite a fierce, cold wind, had tea with Charles Sumner, and then attended the lecture on "Goethe," which he found "not so pre-eminent as some," but noted Emerson's "great charm . . . the Chrysostum and Sir Thomas Browne of the day." On February 4 Emerson took tea at Craigie House with the Longfellows and James Russell Lowell before the lecture on "Napoleon." The Longfellows found him "rather shy . . . but pleasant and friendly." "We like Emerson," Henry asserted, for "his beautiful voice, deep thought, and mild melody of language." The lecture was "very good and well spoken, to the evident delight of the audience."[18]

Emerson came to tea again on December 16, 1846, before his lecture on "Eloquence" at the Lyceum, which was "good, but not of his richest and rarest . . . . By turns he was grave and jocose, and had some striking views and passages." Longfellow observed that Emerson lets "a thousand new lights--side-lights and cross-lights--into every subject."[19] But perhaps Longfellow's most enthusiastic response to an Emerson lecture occurred somewhat more than two years later!

> Another of Emerson's wonderful lectures. The subject, 'Inspiration;' the lecture itself an illustration of the theme. Emerson is like a beautiful portico, in a lovely scene of nature. We stand expectant, waiting for the High-Priest to come forth; and lo, there comes a gentle wind from the portal, swelling and subsiding; and the blossoms and the vine-leaves shake, and far away down the green fields

> the grasses bend and wave; and we ask, "When will the High-Priest come forth and reveal to us the truth?" and the disciples say, "He has already gone forth, and is yonder in the meadows." "And the truth he was to reveal? "It is Nature; nothing more."[20]

Two days before Christmas 1846 Emerson, writing to Longfellow, said that he was seeking someone to give "two friendly lines in the critical column" of the Boston Courier to the new volume of poems by his unpredictable Concord neighbor Ellery Channing.[21] The next day Longfellow received a copy of the book and noted in his journal that the new poems were much like those in Channing's first volume, "written in a low tone, to use a painter's phrase,--and sometimes in the lowest tone. There is a good deal of poetic perception in them, but the expression of it is not very fortunate."[22] He wrote to Emerson, "I am not blind to its many beauties but it does not command the spontaneous admiration which I like so much to feel. Still I see in it much to awaken sympathy . . . . "[23] He did not take Emerson's hint of writing a notice for the Courier.

The day after Christmas Longfellow received Emerson's Poems, which Fanny read to him all evening and until late in the night. It was a "rare volume" with "exquisite poems" that gave them both "the keenest pleasure." Many of the pieces were "Sphinx-like," to "offer a very bold front and challenge your answer." He singled out "Monadnoc," "Threnody," and "The Humble-bee," as "containing much of the quintessence of poetry."[24] To Emerson he wrote that the volume was "a signal triumph" and added, "The only bad thing about it is, that I shall never get my wife to read any more of my poems, you have fascinated her so with yours!"[25] Fanny Longfellow reported to her brother that "the solemn Alcott," having read the letter, was going about asserting that Mrs. Longfellow no longer read her husband's poetry. She also noted that Emerson, "with his falling voice and shoulders," had grown "more communicative than usual" as a result of Longfellow's praise.[26]

Emerson, writing in his journal during this period, was not so generous in estimating Longfellow's worth as Longfellow had been in estimating his. After condemning Byron, Scott, and Cowper, and praising Homer, Dante, Milton, Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, Herrick, Herbert, and Wordsworth, he concluded, "But how shall I find my heavenly bread in Tennyson? . . . in Lowell, or in Longfellow?" On another occasion he complained that Tennyson and Longfellow were content to amuse and admonished himself, "Let your poetry taste the world & report of it . . . ." And a journal entry in 1853 may help to explain his shyness and uneasiness in the company of the Longfellows: "If Socrates were here, we could go & talk with him; but Longfellow, we cannot go & talk with; there is a palace, & servants, & a row of bottles of different coloured wines, & wine glasses, & fine coats."[27]

In November 1848 Emerson, after returning from his second visit to England, attempted to bring Longfellow closer to Concord and his circle. Fanny Longfellow made clear her attitude toward

the rural crowd when she wrote to her brother that "Emerson is among his pines in Concord, with his usual familiars about him, like the grotesque forms on a German illustrated poem."[28] On November 8 Emerson called at Craigie House, "quite changed . . . by his foreign, social life--much more lively and talkative and like a man of the world," reported Fanny Longfellow.[29] Apparently he beguiled Longfellow into accepting an invitation to spend a day in Concord. Longfellow, having pondered the prospect, wrote to Emerson five days later to say that, because of the onslaught of winter, he had changed his plans and would leave Cambridge on the two o'clock train and return from Concord on the five o'clock train.[30] Emerson responded that cutting him down to two hours was "a cruel privation"; he would forego his intention of showing Longfellow Concord, but because he had "bidden my gossips to dine with you, I shall not dine till 3 o'clock. There's for you."[31] Emerson's "gossips," as Longfellow noted, were "his meek philosophers, Alcott, Thoreau, and Channing."[32] According to Fanny Longfellow, her husband regretted having gone so late because he had no time for a satisfactory talk with Emerson before the others arrived. Longfellow regarded them as "quiet, impressive people, but he had little chance to hear them roar."[33]

Ellery Channing so impressed Longfellow with his desire to see Nathaniel Hawthorne again that Longfellow agreed to attempt to lure Hawthorne from Salem for a dinner at Craigie House the following Thursday, November 23. When Longfellow wrote to Hawthorne, he referred to Channing as "your fellow-boatman," no doubt recalling to Hawthorne's mind the night of July 9, 1845, when he and Channing, in the rowboat Hawthorne had bought from Thoreau, recovered the body of Martha Hunt, who had drowned herself in the Concord River.[34] Hawthorne replied that he would like to bring with him Thoreau, who would be lecturing in Salem on Wednesday night on "Student Life in New England, Its Economy," later incorporated in Walden. Hawthorne apparently was unaware that Longfellow had dined with Thoreau on November 16 and that Thoreau had been Longfellow's student during Longfellow's first two terms at Harvard; he described Thoreau as someone Longfellow would find "well worth knowing; he is a man of thought and originality; with a certain iron-poker-ishness, an uncompromising stiffness in his mental character . . . ."[35] Longfellow, in his journal entry for the 16th, devoted more space to the third birthday of his son Ernest than to the dinner.[36] He apparently failed to catch either Emerson's or Hawthorne's enthusiasm for his former student and seems never to have read Walden, although in mid-1849 he noted in his journal that Thoreau's account of his one night in Concord jail was "extremely good."[37]

Scarcely two months after the dinner at Emerson's, Alcott called at Craigie House and passed the evening. Longfellow described him as dilating in praise of Thoreau and Emerson, of whom he exclaimed, "This man is Pan,--more than Pan! His writings are a dialogue between Pan and Apollo."[38] Alcott yearned for a club of literary men and literary women so that he might have more opportunity to see writers such as Longfellow and James Russell Lowell; as he confessed in his

journal, "I, for instance, should never meet some of these gentlemen, never see them in private, perhaps," but in the small circle of a club "intercourse would be quite possible, and often very stimulating."[39] Alcott's attempt to strike up an acquaintance with Longfellow proved futile. Longfellow regarded him as "a prose Wordsworth,"[40] and Fanny Longfellow claimed to have given him the nickname "Plato-Skimpole."[41] She recognized Alcott's longing for "academic groves and tractable pupils," but ridiculed his attempt to gain a livelihood through his Conversations: "As if people could be made to talk as water-pipes, when the stop is removed, to flow!" She regarded him as one of the "weak, watery reflections" surrounding Emerson, "a sorry set of bores."[42]

Twenty-four years would elapse before Alcott again entered Craigie House. In March 1873 the poet's brother Samuel took Alcott to Cambridge to dine, and after dinner they found Longfellow in his study; the conversation was largely about Emerson and Hawthorne.[43] The conversation also was largely about Emerson in December 1878 when Alcott passed the forenoon and lunched with Longfellow. Alcott was happy to tell all he knew about his friend, but was pleased that Longfellow showed some interest in his own endeavors.[44] Alcott's view of Longfellow's poetry was idiosyncratic: he regretted that Longfellow, like Thoreau, had celebrated "the wild, the Indian, the beast, the bird, the forest and the savage, instead of the tame and tender, the genial sentiments and dear humanity of private life."[45]

However little Longfellow may have cared for Alcott's company, he had more compassion than many for Alcott's financial plight. Emerson, while soliciting funds for the support of the Alcott family, told James Russell Lowell that, in a conversation between him and Longfellow about Alcott's genius and poverty, Longfellow suggested that those who knew Alcott should each give the proceeds of a day's work: Longfellow would give a poem, or fifty dollars; Emerson should contribute the value of a lecture, and so on.[46] Emerson's records indicate that Longfellow fulfilled his pledge of $50; among the few other contributors Emerson gave $100 and Thoreau one dollar.[47]

Emerson wrote Longfellow two generally complimentary letters on his work in 1849. Although disappointed by the "temperate conclusion" to Kavanagh, he found the book as a whole persuasive; it induced "the serene mood it required." More importantly, he regarded it as "the best sketch we have seen in the direction of the American novel. For here is our native speech and manners, treated with sympathy, taste, and judgment." He also suggested that "we are so charmed with elegance in an American book that . . . you win our gratitude too easily . . . ."[48] Emerson thought that the poems in The Seaside and the Fireside (of which he had received a pre-publication copy) "like their predecessors, receive the best compliment of being at once read through by all experimenters." In the same letter he spoke of the need of a club, which "seems to offer me the only chance I dare trust of coming near enough to you to talk, one of these days, of poetry, of which when I read your verses, I think I have something

to say to you."[49]

Less than two months later Mrs. Longfellow noted that Emerson was "really hungering for society, but knows not how to get it . . . ." To her brother, Tom Appleton, she wrote, "I wish you were here to help him to some kind of sociable, agreeable club."[50] In a few years such a club--The Saturday Club--would appear.

In 1849, when Fanny had finished reading to her husband Emerson's essay on "War," written some years earlier, she remarked to a friend, "I wish he would write something as useful now and not absorb in clouds what should be fertilizing the earth and feeding his hungry brethern. Where has his humanity gone, I wonder . . . ." She acknowledged that he had written opposing slavery, but complained that he always seemed ghost-like, regarding human beings as "merely singular phenomena, not brothers," never caring from his heart for anyone.[51] Yet when Longfellow heard Emerson speak against the Fugitive Slave Law at Cambridge City Hall on May 14, 1851, although he thought that the first part and the conclusion were "grand," he did not care much for Emerson's treatment of Daniel Webster, and he added, "It is rather painful to see Emerson in the arena of politics, hissed and hooted at by young law-students."[52]

During the early 1850's the two men were brought together by their concern with an international copyright law; Longfellow, Emerson, Holmes, and Hawthorne were among those signing a petition that the works of British authors should be protected in the United States just as the works of American authors were already protected in Great Britain.[53]

Longfellow and Emerson also were drawn together by social affairs. On November 20, 1852, Emerson gave a dinner at the Tremont House in honor of Arthur Hugh Clough, the British poet and scholar who had come to New England in search of a livelihood that would enable him to marry. Among the guests were Longfellow, Lowell, Hawthorne, Ellery Channing, Charles Sumner, and Theodore Parker. Clough wrote to his fiancee that it was "a very swell dinner, I assure you."[54] On June 14, 1853, Longfellow provided at Craigie House what he described as "a very pleasant farewell dinner for Hawthorne, who sails for his Liverpool consulate in a few weeks." Emerson declared that the day should be marked with a white stone; he found the affair "very agreeable." Clough and Lowell were among the guests.[55]

In late April 1854 Moncure Daniel Conway, then a student at the Divinity School, borrowed a friend's room (his own was not elegant enough) to entertain the Longfellows, Lowell, John Sullivan Dwight, and a few others; the entertainment was provided by Emerson, who read his new essay on "Poetry." "When Emerson finished," Conway recalled, "there was deep silence"; presently one member of the group "moved to the piano and performed several of Mendelssohn's 'Songs Without Words.' These were the only words possible."[56] Longfellow

revealed the reason for his silence; the essay "was full of brilliant and odd things; but not very satisfactory on a first hearing. I hope to read it one day, and perhaps understand it better."[57]

When Hiawatha was published in 1855, Emerson's response was equivocal. He said that in Longfellow's skillful hands he always felt safe, especially when reading Hiawatha, which was "sweet and wholesome . . . very proper and pertinent for us to read, and showing a kind of manly sense of duty . . . ." But, Emerson complained, real Indians are "savage, have poor, small, sterile heads,--no thoughts . . . ." He criticized Longfellow's "tenderness . . . in accepting a legend or a song, when they had so little to give. I should hold you to your creative function on such occasions." Although he praised the "costume and machinery" as being "sweet and melancholy" and agreeing "with the American landscape," he "found in the last cantos a pure gleam or two of blue sky, and learned thence to tax the rest of the poem as too abstemious."[58]

The Saturday Club probably afforded more occasion than any other for Longfellow and Emerson to meet regularly during the last twenty-five years of their lives. Although Longfellow, Emerson, and Lowell had agreed in 1850 to form a club that would meet for dinner once a month,[59] not until late in 1855 did such a group draw together; Emerson was a member from the start, but Longfellow did not join until the spring of 1857.[60] The club, which met on the last Saturday in each month at Parker's, generally dined from three o'clock until nine; during the first few years it consisted of about fourteen members, including--in addition to Longfellow and Emerson--Louis Agassiz, John Lothrop Motley, John Sullivan Dwight, James Russell Lowell, and Oliver Wendell Holmes.[61]

According to Holmes, Longfellow--florid, soft-voiced, benignant--invariably sat at the foot of the table with his back to the windows and Agassiz--robust, jovial, animated--at the head. Emerson, smoking a cigar and talking in low tones or merely listening and recording, sat near Longfellow.[62] Emerson once noted in his journal, "Longfellow avoids greedy smokers. A cigar lasts one hour: but is not allowed to lose fire."[63] Although the gatherings generally were not marred by speeches or fussing with by-laws, Longfellow complained about "the heat of the room taking away all life and animation. It is impossible to boil and talk at the same time."[64]

Thoreau, although invited to meetings of the Saturday Club, refused to attend. He claimed that he had difficulty seeing through the cigar smoke at the Parker House, where "men were deposited about in chairs over the marble floor, as thick as legs of bacon in a smoke-house." His acquaintances, he said, had formed a club, "the handle of which is in the Parker House at Boston, and with this they beat me from time to time, expecting to make me tender or minced meat, so fit for a club to dine off."[65] Ellery Channing, who went delightedly whenever invited, reproached Thoreau for not going.[66] Bronson Alcott, who attended a few meetings in 1857 and 1858, always

remarked upon Longfellow's presence among the "quite literary and select" group. At the meeting in January 1858 he met Oliver Wendell Holmes for the first time and noted that the conversation was "spirited, turning chiefly on Personal Identities; the distinctions, physical and metaphysical, between man and beast. I would have discriminated more fully and finely between the threefold forces of brute, human, and divine, . . . but the company were unused to such analysis, and talked to the senses . . . ."[67]

In August 1858 the painter and traveler William J. Stillman organized an expedition of members of the club to Follansbee Pond near Saranac in the Adirondacks. Lowell, Agassiz, and Emerson agreed to go, and Stillman urged Longfellow to join the group. Longfellow asked whether the rumor that Emerson would carry a gun was true. When Stillman replied that it was, Longfellow exclaimed, "'Then somebody will be shot!' and would talk no more of going."[68] Longfellow recorded in his journal:

> Agassiz, Lowell, Emerson, and some others have gone to the Adirondack country, to camp out and do many wonders. Agassiz is to weigh the brains of trout which the others are to catch. [Emerson] has bought himself a double-barrelled shotgun for the occasion; on hearing which, I respectfully declined joining the party! They have been out ten days, and so far we have not heard of anybody's being shot.[69]

Longfellow's opinion of Emerson as outdoorsman is further implied in a letter to a friend the following year: "Emerson is on crutches,--Monadnock having 'trundled him down its stones.'"[70]

Stillman, in his autobiography, set forth a lengthy comparison of the two men. Longfellow, Stillman said, was unselfish and considerate, a man with "the most . . . gentle nature I have ever known,--one to which a brutal or inconsiderate act was positive pain, and any on the least creature, cause of intense indignation." Stillman conjectured that Emerson most liked men who gave him problems to solve, and Longfellow offered no problems; he was "transparent, limpid as a clear spring reflecting the sky and showing all that was in its depths."[71] Longfellow possessed "an invincible tranquillity; with no sympathy for mystery or obscurity; supremely above the general and the commonplace by the exquisite refinement to which he carried the expression of what the general and commonplace world felt and thought; remote from roughness in the form or the substance of his thought . . . ." Although Emerson was "too serene ever to be discourteous, and was capable of . . . the most intense indignation without quickening his speech or raising his tone," he had a way of "grasping and exhausting with imaginative activity whatever object furnished him with matter for thought, and throwing to the rubbish heap whatever was superficial; indifferent to form or polish if only he could find a diamond; reveling in mystery, and with eyes that penetrated like the x-ray through all obscurities . . .; he brushed

away contemptuously the beauties on which Longfellow spent the tenderness of his character, and threw aside like an empty nutshell the form to which an artist might have given the devotion of his best art, for art's sake."[72] Stillman reported that Longfellow once claimed that "Emerson used his friends like lemons,--squeezing them till they were dry, and then throwing them away."[73]

One of the most acerbic accounts of a meeting of the Saturday Club was that left by Henry James, Sr., who--so Longfellow noted in his journal--was present as a guest in January 1861, as was Ellery Channing, "our Concord poet," accompanying Emerson and Hawthorne.[74] Seated next to Frederick Henry Hedge, James reported that he "felt at one time very much like sending down to Parker to have him removed as maliciously putting his little artificial person between me and a profitable object of study." The object of study was Hawthorne, who had "the look all the time . . . of a rogue who suddenly finds himself in the company of detectives." James felt sorry for Emerson's future son-in-law, John Forbes, a "contented, sprawling Concord owl . . . brought blindfold into the brilliant daylight, and expected to wink and be lively like any little dapper Tommy Titmouse or Jenny Wren." Confiding all these remarks in a letter to Emerson, James praised him for keeping up the balance at his end of the table and asserted that "the good, inoffensive, comforting Longfellow, . . . seemed much nearer the human being than any one at that end of the table--much nearer."[75]

Illness kept Longfellow absent from several meetings late in 1863, and on February 24, 1864 Emerson wrote to him, "When will you come back to the Saturdays, which want their ancient lustre? . . . I have often in these solitudes questions to ask you; but, at such distant meetings, they have no answers." He also reflected, "What a rusty place is the country to live in, where a man loses his manners,--or never attains to them! What a fat and sleepy air is this . . . ."[76]

Three months later Longfellow would feel the sleepy air of Concord for the first time since his visit in 1848. On May 24 the sun shone on the blossoming apple orchards of Concord, the one bright day in a week of rain, as the coffin of Nathaniel Hawthorne was borne from the Unitarian Church to the pine-shadowed hillside in Sleepy Hollow. Among the pallbearers were Longfellow, Emerson, and Alcott, with Ellery Channing following.[77] Emerson noted, "All was so bright and quiet that pain or mourning was hardly suggested, and Holmes said to me that it looked like a happy meeting."[78] Sophia Peabody Hawthorne, writing to Longfellow, remarked that she could not see his face, "but only the form and the white hair waving in the wind." The day, she said, was made to seem to her, "a festival of life."[79] Longfellow told Charles Sumner, "You cannot imagine anything at once more sad and beautiful."[80]

On December 31, 1870 Longfellow concluded his annual journal with the comment, "The year ends with a Club dinner. Agassiz is not well enough to be there. But Emerson and Holmes of the older set were; and so I was not quite alone."[81] The 1870's proved a twilight decade for the two poets, but they continued to meet at the Saturday Club or at an occasional dinner given by James and Annie Fields. Despite Emerson's increasing problems with aphasia, Longfellow attended his lectures with as enthusiastic a response as ever; when Emerson talked on "The Natural History of the Intellect," Longfellow wrote to Charles Sumner that "these lectures would be a cordial to you."[82] Longfellow was among the guests of honor when Emerson read an address at the centenary celebration for Sir Walter Scott sponsored by the Massachusetts Historical Society.[83] In June 1876 Longfellow was host to Dom Pedro II, Emperor of Brazil, whom he described as "the modern Haroun-al-Raschid . . . wandering about to see the great world we live in, as simple traveler, not as king." Dom Pedro requested that Emerson and Holmes be invited to the dinner, which Longfellow termed "very jovial and pleasant."[84]

But the most notorious occasion on which Longfellow and Emerson were brought together in the 1870's was the dinner given by the Atlantic Monthly at the Brunswick Hotel on December 17, 1877, to celebrate John Greenleaf Whittier's seventieth birthday. Emerson recited Whittier's "Ichabod," and Holmes read a poetic tribute. Among the other after-dinner speakers was Samuel Clemens, who, as he rose to talk, was distinctly aware of the "Olympian trinity" seated at the table and facing him: "Mr. Emerson, supernaturally grave, unsmiling; . . . Mr. Longfellow, with his silken-white hair and his benignant face; Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes, flashing smiles and affection and all good-fellowship everywhere . . . ."[85] To Clemens, the upstart humorist from the West, the once-radical Emerson now seemed indistinguishable from Longfellow and Holmes as members of the literary establishment. Clemens began to deliver a burlesque, which began, "Standing here on the shore of the Atlantic and contemplating certain of its largest literary billows . . . ."[86] In the story that followed, Mark Twain knocked at the door of a lonely log cabin in the Sierras and was greeted by a melancholy miner who claimed that Twain was the fourth "littery man" to visit in twenty-four hours, the others being Emerson, "a seedy little bit of a chap, red-haired"; Holmes, "fat as a balloon," with "double chins all the way down to his stomach"; and Longfellow, "built like a prize fighter . . . . His nose lay straight down his face, like a finger with the end joint tilted up."[87] All three, having guzzled his whisky, then sat down to play cards. Emerson, complaining about the hand dealt to him, exclaimed:

> They reckon ill who leave me out;
> They know not well the subtle ways I keep.
> I pass, and deal again![88]

The following morning Longfellow, as he was about to leave wearing the miner's boots and carrying his own under his arm, said,

> Lives of great men all remind us
> We can make our lives sublime;
> And, departing, leave behind us
> Footprints on the sands of time.

When Twain told the miner that the three had been imposters, "not the gracious singers to whom we and the world pay loving reverence and homage," the miner then accused Twain of being an imposter.[89]

Clemens, as he continued, worried by what he perceived as a scarcity of laughter, imagined that his words were being greeted with disapproval and dismay. He thought the audience wore "the sort of expression their faces would have worn if I had been making these remarks about the Deity and the rest of the Trinity . . . ."[90] William Dean Howells, the toastmaster, "was aware of Longfellow sitting upright, and regarding the humorist with an air of pensive puzzle, of Holmes busily writing on his menu, with a well-feigned effect of preoccupation, and of Emerson, holding his elbows, and listening with a sort of Jovian oblivion of this nether world . . . ."[91]

A number of newspapers complained of Clemens's bad taste, and after Christmas he sent apologies to the three poets. Longfellow responded that the newspaper reports gave "what was meant in jest . . . a serious aspect. I do not believe that anybody was much hurt. Certainly I was not . . . ." Holmes, although admitting that some questioned the taste of associating the names of the authors with Western rogues, claimed that "it never occurred to me for a moment to take offense, or to feel wounded by your playful use of my name." Emerson's daughter Ellen, replying for her father, addressed her remarks to Mrs. Clemens: "The night of the dinner, my father says, he did not hear Mr. Clemens's speech. He was too far off, and my mother says that when she read it to him the next day it amused him . . . . To my father it is as if it had not been; he never quite heard, never quite understood it, and he forgets easily and entirely." But Ellen confessed that she herself found the speech "a real disappointment . . . . it didn't seem good or funny . . . ."[92]

On March 24, 1882, Bronson Alcott wrote in his journal, "The evening papers announce the death of the poet Longfellow, the pride of New England and singer for all countries."[93] Ellen Emerson took her father to the funeral in Cambridge. Oliver Wendell Holmes reported, "I was sitting opposite to him when he rose, and going to the side of the coffin, looked intently upon the face of the dead poet. A few minutes later he rose again and looked once more on the familiar features, not apparently remembering that he had just done so."[94] As Emerson returned to where Ellen sat, he asked, "Where are we? What house? And who is the sleeper?" When Ellen explained, he was shocked and crossed a third time to look at the face. That evening he had to be reminded again of his friend's death, but the next day he recalled everything.[95]

Shortly after the funeral Ellen reported, "Father says he wanted [Longfellow] should live at least as long as he himself should; he was very sorry to have him die first."[96] Emerson did not have long to wait. On April 16 he caught cold while attending church and died from pneumonia on April 27, a month and three days after the death of his fellow poet.

An entry in Longfellow's journal a few years earlier provides an appropriate benediction: "Last night I dreamed of Emerson. He said: 'The spring will come again; but shall we see it, or only the eternal spring up there?' lifting both his hands on high.--"[97]

NOTES

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[3]Joseph Slater, ed., The Correspondence of Emerson and Carlyle (New York: Columbia University Press, 1964), p. 136.

[4]RWE Letters, II, p. 99.

[5]Andrew Hilen, ed., The Letters of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966-1982), II, p. 9, hereafter cited as HWL Letters.

[6]Samuel Longfellow, ed., Life of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (Boston: Ticknor and Co., 1886), I, p. 282, hereafter cited as Life.

[7]Ibid., I. p. 277; HWL Letters, II, p. 92.

[8]Lawrance Thompson, Young Longfellow (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1938), p. 292.

[9]Life, I, pp. 301-02.

[10]HWL Letters, II, p. 292.

[11]Ibid., II, pp. 87, 100, 190.

[12]Life, I, p. 365.

[13]Edward Wagenknecht, ed., Mrs. Longfellow: Selected Letters and Journals of Fanny Appleton Longfellow (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1956), p. 81, hereafter cited as Mrs. Longfellow.

[14]Ibid., pp. 69, 75.

[15]HWL Letters, II, p. 254.

[16]Ibid., II, pp. 257-58.

[17]RWE Letters, III, p. 313.

[18]Life, II, pp. 26, 30, 32.

[19]Ibid., II, p. 67.

[20]Ibid., II, p. 132.

[21]RWE Letters, III, pp. 363-64.

[22]Life, II, p. 68.

[23]RWE Letters, III, p. 364.

[24]Life, II, p. 69.

[25]RWE Letters, III, p. 364.

[26]Mrs. Longfellow, p. 127.

[27]William H. Gilman et al, eds., The Journals and Miscellaneous Notebooks of Ralph Waldo Emerson (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960-1978), IX, pp. 376-77, XI, p. 386, XIII, p. 38, hereafter cited as JMN.

[28]Mrs. Longfellow, p. 163.

[29]Life, II, p. 127; Ibid., p. 146.

[30]HWL Letters, III, p. 185.

[31]RWE Letters, IV, p. 122.

[32]Life, II, p. 128.

[33]Mrs. Longfellow, p. 146.

[34]HWL Letters, III, p. 187; James R. Mellow, Nathaniel Hawthorne in His Time (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1980), pp. 251-52.

[35]Walter Harding, The Days of Henry Thoreau (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1965), pp. 34-35; Samuel Longfellow, ed., Final Memorials of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (Boston: Ticknor and Co., 1887), p. 29, hereafter cited as Memorials.

[36]Life, II, p. 128.

[37]Ibid., II, p. 143.

[38]Ibid., II, p. 130.

[39]Odell Shepard, ed., The Journals of Bronson Alcott (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1938), pp. 227-28, hereafter cited as ABA Journals.

[40]Life, II, p. 421.

[41]Mrs. Longfellow, p. 190.

[42]Ibid., pp. 166-67.

[43]ABA Journals, p. 430.

[44]Ibid., p. 493.

[45]Ibid., p. 296.

[46]RWE Letters, IV, p. 514, V, pp. 22, 159.

[47]JMN, XIII, p. 513, XIV, p. 443.

[48]Life, II, p. 140.

[49]Ibid., II, p. 154.

[50]Mrs. Longfellow, p. 167.

[51]Life, II, pp. 142-43; Ibid., pp. 151-52.

[52]Life, II, pp. 194-95.

[53]HWL Letters, III, pp. 345-46; RWE Letters, IV, pp. 292-93.

[54]Life, II, p. 228; RWE Letters, IV, p. 323; Frederick L. Mulhauser, ed., The Correspondence of Arthur Hugh Clough (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957), II, p. 333.

[55]Life, II, p. 234; RWE Letters, IV, pp. 362, 366.

[56]Autobiography: Memories and Experiences of Moncure Daniel Conway (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co.), I, pp. 167-68.

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[58]Ibid., II, pp. 265-66.

[59]Ibid., II, p. 161.

[60]Ibid., II, p. 294.

[61]Edward Waldo Emerson, The Early Years of the Saturday Club (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1918), p. 19, hereafter cited as Saturday Club.

[62]Oliver Wendell Holmes, Ralph Waldo Emerson (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1884), pp. 222-23.

[63]JMN, XIV, p. 144.

[64]Saturday Club, p. 24; Life, II, p. 306.

[65]Walter Harding and Carl Bode, eds., The Correspondence of Henry David Thoreau (New York: New York University Press, 1958), pp. 536-37.

[66]Saturday Club, p. 59.

[67]ABA Journals, pp. 299, 305.

[68]William James Stillman, The Autobiography of a Journalist (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1901), I, p. 240.

[69]Life, II, p. 325.

[70]Ibid., II, p. 343.

[71]The Autobiography of a Journalist, I, pp. 233-34.

[72]Ibid., I, pp. 240-41.

[73]Ibid., I, p. 234.

[74]Life, II, p. 361.

[75]Saturday Club, p. 331.

[76]Life, II, pp. 402-03.

[77]HWL Letters, IV, p. 412.

[78]Edward W. Emerson, ed., Journals of Ralph Waldo Emerson (Cambridge: Riverside Press, 1909-14), X, p. 39.

[79]Life, II, p. 410.

[80]Ibid., II, p. 407.

[81]Memorials, p. 149.

[82]Ibid., pp. 154-55, 158.

[83]RWE Letters, VI, p. 268.

[84]Memorials, p. 247.

[85]Albert Bigelow Paine, Mark Twain (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1912), I, p. 604; Mark Twain's Speeches (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1910), p. 10.

[86]Mark Twain's Speeches, p. 1.

[87]Ibid., pp. 2-3.

[88]Ibid., p. 5.

[89]Ibid., p. 7.

[90]Ibid., p. 12.

[91]Henry Nash Smith, Mark Twain: The Development of a Writer (New York: Atheneum, 1957), p. 98.

[92]Paine, Mark Twain, I, pp. 607-08.

[93]ABA Journals, p. 532.

[94]Holmes, Ralph Waldo Emerson, p. 346.

[95]Gay Wilson Allen, Waldo Emerson (New York: The Viking Press, 1981), p. 668.

[96]Saturday Club, p. 142.

[97]Memorials, p. 266.

LONGFELLOW NOW

By

Steven Allaback

In his preface to Longfellow Reconsidered: A Symposium, J. Chesley Mathews expressed the hope that the articles therein might lead to a reassessment of Longfellow. That was in 1969. Since then, only twelve articles have appeared on Longfellow in scholarly journals. Except as a historical personage, he is, in the eyes of most critics, very dead. Indeed, Mathews' symposium might more properly be regarded as the end rather than the beginning of a reassessment which had begun with Edward Wagenknecht's Longfellow: A Full-Length Portrait (1955) and his Mrs. Longfellow: Selected Letters and Journals of Fanny Appleton Longfellow (1956), continued with Howard Nemerov's little jewel of an anthology for the Laurel Poetry Series (Dell, 1959), Newton Arvin's Longfellow: His Life and Work (1964), Cecil B. Williams' Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1964), Wagenknecht again with Henry Wadsworth Longfellow: Portrait of an American Humanist (1966), and, of course, the first two volumes of Hilen's impeccably edited Letters (1966).

There has been no resurgence of interest in Longfellow. At present Paperback Books in Print lists only six Longfellow volumes: a Signet and an Airmont Evangeline, the Everyman edition of the poems, Jean Downey's edition of Kavanaugh, and children's editions of Paul Revere and Hiawatha. One may find in introductory poetry texts a selection or two from Longfellow (but often none at all), and in American literature anthologies like Bradley, Beatty, Long, and Perkins' The American Tradition in Literature--the most popular of such anthologies--there is a somewhat larger sampling of short lyrics. My own examination of college textbooks published since 1970 reveals that the poems most likely to be read are the following: "A Psalm of Life," "Hymn to the Night," "Skeleton in Armor," "Mezzo Cammin," "The Arsenal at Springfield," "The Jewish Cemetery at Newport," "My Lost Youth," the sonnets on the Divina Commedia and on Chaucer, Milton, and Keats, "The Tide Rises, the Tide Falls," "Ultima Thule," and "The Cross of Snow." At least among college students and their teachers, who are practically the only audience or potential audience for poetry that exists any longer, this extremely short list is it. And so I would like, in a moment, to discuss a few of these poems as poetry--that is, as works of art which delight and instruct. If we cannot talk about Longfellow's work in such terms, then it seems to me we gather at the centennial of his death only to exhume and then to rebury him even deeper.

Associate Professor of English at the University of California, Santa Barbara, Dr. Allaback has published a number of articles on Longfellow in the Harvard University Bulletin, the Emerson Society Quarterly, and American Literature. He has also written a book on Alexander Solzhenitsyn, which was published in 1978.

I fear it is true that even the poems on this list, although in print, are rarely read or studied. Other, more complicated poets get read while Longfellow gets laughed at. For years readers have been taught to regard Longfellow as an enemy of true poetry and authentic emotion, innocent of life's mysteries and complications. Howard Nemerov suggests that "a false romanticism in the present taste" is part of the problem, a "desire to indulge the spirit in pseudo-mysteries, which is embarrassed by plain statements and wants everything 'left implicit.'"[1] And George Steiner, commenting on the eroding base of referential recognition in modern literature and on its lack of affirmation, says that "one of the real problems of finding the positive note again is embarrassment. We are the culture of embarrassment. Never before have we been as blackmailed by embarrassment as now."[2] Countless twentieth century readers have found themselves embarrassed by Longfellow's simplicity, and yet, right now, in 1982, if I wished to encourage my students to read Longfellow (and writers like him, though there aren't many), it is that very simplicity--a wise, distilled, and earned simplicity--that I would want my students to honor and respect. But I would first have to teach them how to recognize it and how to respond to it, which seems a sorry state of affairs--though few of us who have a professional interest in literature are really, I suspect, all that good discussing simplicity, perhaps because it embarrasses us.

At his best Longfellow is a wise man who presents his vision straightforwardly to an audience which needs to be reminded that there <u>are</u> simple truths. This does not sit well with teachers and critics who make their living by demonstrating that all things are complicated and all truths problematic, even though these same teachers and critics run their own lives along quite different lines. Here is Edward Wagenknecht on the subject of Longfellow's simplicity:

> He cherished the virtue of simplicity in literature and in life, and he always wanted everything said as simply as possible, but he was himself a very complex man--at once a scholar and gentle worldling, yet with something primitive and elemental about him too. Thus he found himself in a very strong position to recognize the complexities both of America and of "Americanism." It may even be that the consciousness of his complexity caused him to cherish simplicity more, as perhaps those who are devoted to complexity for its own sake need it that they may avoid the sight of their own minds naked and dress up their lack of substance in the fine feathers of words, thus bolstering themselves in their own conceit.[3]

Longfellow was himself a very complex man, says Wagenknecht; we had best not forget that.

Do you, as readers of poetry, cherish the "virtue of simplicity in literature and in life"? Do you believe in the reality of simple wisdom? Do you believe that there are absolute truths--or "relative absolutes," as the novelist John Gardner puts it in his recent ruminations on moral fiction--which are passed from generation to generation? and that a principal function of a poet is to do the passing? Hardly anyone today can rest easy with such blunt and unsophisticated questions; we know there are many other ways of talking about poetry. But the fact is that when we turn to Longfellow we must leave our sophisticated reading self behind and allow a more vulnerable and teachable reading self to come forward. And at this point I must make two, quite unprovable assertions: that we are all made up of many reading selves, and that there are times when Longfellow speaks to some of those selves as powerfully as any poet who has ever written. (In my experience, I might add, genuinely sophisticated readers--and they are rare--catholic in their interests, widely read, knowledgeable about this world, have no trouble distinguishing between their reading selves; those who do are almost always people who enjoy guarding their own taste and who need to feel in control of, rather than open to, literature.) Even if they have never read him, there are times in life when most people need the kind of truth Longfellow delivers, times when no other truth, or voice, will do. As Newton Arvin says, we need to keep poets like him "available for states of feeling that respond to their styles."[4]

Let us look at one of Longfellow's most notorious and critically maligned poems, "A Psalm of Life." Didactic, sentimental, too easily optimistic--what does this shopworn piece have that we can possibly use? That bland regularity of meter makes it difficult to take seriously the struggle against despair which is the poem's subject. Nevertheless, a significant battle is being fought in those smoothly rhyming lines: a voice claiming that life is empty and meaningless and that men are like "dumb, driven cattle" or are "forlorn and shipwrecked" is being challenged by a voice claiming not that life is a bowl of cherries but rather that strength and will and action can make a difference.

This is something most people need to hear--and often. Longfellow knew that, and most of us know it too but for various reasons hesitate to admit it. Sophisticated readers of sophisticated poetry have within them other reading selves: naked, worried, often frightened selves in need of comfort and reassurance, hope and faith. Many Longfellow poems speak to that self, or awaken or reawaken it. Much of the poetry we are taught to admire today simply ignores that less sophisticated reader in us all, less sophisticated but more in need. From the beginning of his career as a poet, at least in works like "A Psalm of Life," Longfellow recognized that need.

Like a number of his poems anthologized today, "The Psalm of Life" grants that life is difficult and then shows how to overcome that difficulty: act now, forget the past, remember that men before us have surmounted similar difficulties, remember that we might set an example for others. So let us work hard, have patience,

be brave, and hope:

> Let us, then, be up and doing,
> With a heart for any fate;
> Still achieving, still pursuing,
> Learn to labor and to wait.

This is poetry for a state of feeling that does not need to be told how much more complicated life is than such straightforward exhortations suggest. The gentle reader of Victorian times, the general reader of today, professors, scholars, deconstructionists--all know that life is more complicated that this. This poetry does not speak to complication; it is not taking on the questions of those political, social, and psychological forces which, for example, might prevent people from being brave, patient, hardworking, and hopeful even if they wanted to. Its ideal audience, it seems to me, is a reader who has known or recently suffered a terrible shock--a death of a loved one, the loss of a job, something of that sort--and who now needs to be reminded of certain very basic facts of life in order to get going again. Or perhaps it is someone who has gradually become world weary and is now on the edge of a cliff. In any case, this person is not broken in half, and this poetic voice is telling him that he can build with what he has. He needs a cheerleader, an encourager; he does not need a complicator nor a sophisticator. We have all been in such a position. And when we were we didn't read Wallace Stevens or Ezra Pound for help.

But did we read Longfellow? We ought to. That's what he's for--or at least what this particular voice of his is for. But isn't this asking too much of literature? Isn't it naive? I can only reply that I agree with John Gardner's admittedly old-fashioned contention that "art is essentially and primarily moral--that is, life-giving," that critics must continually ask "who will this work of art help? what baby is it squashing?" and that "structuralists, formalists, linguistic philosophers who tell us that works of art are like trees--simply objects for perception," who "avoid on principle the humanistic questions" are mistaken and dangerous.[5]

But Longfellow is a great comforter and encourager, certainly the foremost nineteenth century American practitioner of this kind of poetry.[6] Part of the art of writing poems like "A Psalm of Life" is making sure that you identify what is wrong--name the problem--in such a way that when you encourage, your encouragement seems earned. Longfellow rarely explains, develops, or digs into the problem; he points to it or just touches it with phrases like "empty dream," "dumb, driven cattle," "a forlorn and shipwrecked brother." Such phrases seem to me very carefully chosen, placed in the poems as if placing weights lightly on a scale, not in order to balance equally the problem and the solution, because usually in a Longfellow poem there is more solution than problem, but to add just enough problem so that in fact the solution doesn't tip the scales entirely. The resolution of the problem has to seem relatively easy, but not too easy; otherwise it would clearly be

false encouragement. Again: poems of this sort are for states of mind that need recovery, that are asking for help, and so what is needed is a plausible program of action that can be taken now. The problem cannot be ignored or denied, but neither can it become an alluring poetic edifice in its own right; the purpose of the poem is to remind us that we can conquer complication, not become enamoured and rendered inert by it.

That is where the rhyme and meter come in, too. The poem's easy regularity, its sing-song quality if you will, drives the verse toward resolution as if resolution is as inevitable as the rising sun. Nothing can stop this pulsing rhythm, this speeding heartbeat. The poem moves us along a road faster than we want to go:

> Trust no Future, howe'er pleasant!
> Let the dead Past bury its dead!
> Act,--act in the living Present!
> Heart within, and God o'erhead!
>
> Lives of great men all remind us
> We can make our lives sublime,
> And, departing, leave behind us
> Footprints on the sands of time; . . .

Potentially complicated abstractions--the Future, the Past, the Present, and God--are treated in that one twenty-three word stanza as if they are all part of the scenery. They receive brief mention and a glance, but that driving rhythm tells us to move on and not get caught in the thickets of abstract speculation. If we are in fact to take heart in the poem's conclusion--"Let us, then, be up and doing"--we cannot stop by those woods; we dare not ask, "What does Longfellow mean by the Future? how can he so easily dismiss the Past? is the Present so clearly identifiable? what is Action? and where precisely is God?" The ideal reader of this poem lacks the leisure and peace of mind these questions require; he needs immediate relief; he is seeking comfort. If we fail to recognize that poems like this are intended to comfort people who have real problems, and that its rhythm and meter happily conspire to deflect the relief-seeking mind away from troublesome and unneeded complexity, then such poems will always seem too easy and too simple--and that would be to misread them.

Another early Longfellow poem which is commonly anthologized, "Hymn to the Night," seems somewhat more personal than "A Psalm of Life," but it is also meant to give comfort. Like "Nature," "The Tide Rises, the Tide Falls," and any number of others, it reminds us of certain inevitable processes in nature, certain regularly occurring events (fittingly mirrored by the regularity of the meter and rhyme) which could very easily make us feel acutely separate and apart from nature, irrelevant to its processes. Longfellow does confront that idea elsewhere--especially in "The Tide Rises the Tide Falls"--but here he doesn't rest his case on it because,

obviously, he doesn't believe it. His night (and the blessed sleep which accompanies it) assuages and heals:

> O holy Night! from thee I learn to bear
> What man has borne before!
> Thou layest thy finger on the lips of Care,
> And they complain no more.

It appeals to that part of us which knows that whatever care we bear has been borne by other men before us; just as night is cyclical, so men's cares are cyclical--in the broadest and most general sense. This is not a portrait of acute individual suffering or of that emptiness and despair that night often brings in modernist works, a night which can be only temporarily conquered by an electric lightbulb dangling from a cord. These lines, and others like them throughout Longfellow, conspire against preoccupation with the self and preoccupation with the details and intricacies of personal pain. Such renditions of pain rightly have a prominent place in our collective literary memory, but poems like "Hymn to the Night" unfortunately have lost such a place, and this is because we grossly underrate works that offer straightforward comfort.

The narrator of "Hymn to the Night" does not whine or complain. In effect, he reminds himself that his particular care is not so special after all and that the inexorable approach of night and sleep will prevent him from indulging his Care even if he should want to. The quick and almost perfunctory quality of this stanza--Night layest her "fingers on the lips of Care, / And they complain no more"--only emphasizes the comparative ease with which this perception is registered on this particular narrator. "Who," I can hear John Gardner asking, "who will this work of art help?" That reader in us who needs to be reminded that built into daily life are certain cycles which inevitably bring relief or comfort.

That is not to say, however, that the narrator of "Hymn to the Night" is complacent or completely content upon receiving that reminder. In the final stanza of the poem, he half prays, half implores:

> Peace! Peace! Orestes-like I breathe this prayer!
> Descend with broad-winged flight,
> The welcome, the thrice-prayed for, the most fair,
> The best-beloved Night!

Feminine night is being flattered a bit here, too, and the narrator seems somewhat anxious and a touch impatient, as if he is pretty sure but not totally sure that she will come yet again. This ever-so-slight note of doubt is typical of Longfellow: it keeps the easy resolution from being excessively and implausibly easy.

Another poem on our list of popularly anthologized pieces, "The Building of the Ship," has an even better example of this not-too-easy ease of resolution. In that stirring and important final

stanza--beginning "Thou, too, sail on, O Ship of State! / Sail on, O Union, strong and great!"--the narrator assumes a strong and manly tone and assures all concerned that there is nothing to fear. Here are the final lines:

> In spite of rock and tempest's roar,
> In spite of false lights on the shore,
> Sail on, nor fear to breast the sea!
> Our hearts, our hopes, are all with thee,
> Our hearts, our hopes, our prayers, our tears,
> Our faith triumphant o'er our fears,
> Are all with thee,--are all with thee!

The repetition of "Our hearts, our hopes" and of the phrase "are all with thee," especially the latter, keeps this from being too neat. It is not uncertainty, exactly, that we hear in these lines, but it's not utter certainty either. It is healthy hope, just what we would expect from a wise and optimistic narrator whose confidence is nevertheless not bullet-proof.

Even today, when most of us are tattered or wounded patriots at best, we respond to assurances that our nation will endure temporary threats and momentary setbacks. We need to hear such a voice from time to time (and, from our writers, we rarely do). But that voice cannot go unchallenged either. A public poet such as Longfellow has to respect common sense, and common sense tells us that rocks and gales do threaten the ship of state. But having made that clear, this same public poet steers us away from the ambiguity and complexity of those rocks and gales. "They are over there," he says, "but our way is over here. Follow me." We become less skeptical and more childlike under the leadership of this reassuring voice. Perhaps a long lost reading self is found again.

If part of my purpose here today is to suggest ways of discussing Longfellow now by acknowledging the existence of various reading selves within us who respond in turn to his various forms of wise and earned simplicity, I cannot overlook what might be called his learned historical voice. Longfellow's considerable learning sits lightly, almost casually, in his work in a way uniquely his own. It never intimidates, obscures, or dazzles. When his historical or geographical imagination plays over his subject, it is as if that knowledge immediately becomes his reader's knowledge as well, as if he is imagining on behalf of his reader rather than performing in front of him. Longfellow always uses his learning in the service of his subject and to add a perspective or weight to the truths he conveys. To many readers it hardly seems learning at all, but rather, as in these stanzas from "The Arsenal at Springfield," sketchy jottings from an amateur historian's notebook:

> I hear even now the infinite fierce chorus,
> The cries of agony, the endless groan,
> Which, through the ages that have gone before us,
> In long reverberations reach our own.

On helm and harness rings the Saxon hammer,
   Through Cimbric forest roars the Norseman's song,
And loud, amid the universal clamor,
   O'er distant deserts sounds the Tartar gong.

I hear the Florentine, who from his palace
   Wheels out his battle-bell with dreadful din,
And Aztec priests upon their teocallis
   Beat the wild war-drums made of serpent's skin;

But what Longfellow is doing here is earning the right to the concluding stanzas of the poem, where he offers as an answer to centuries of pillage, famine, and killing the voice of Christ saying "Peace!" Again this may sound like an excessively easy, absurdly hopeful answer (after all, since 1844, when the poem was written, America has been involved in seven wars). The narrator is actually suggesting--or imagining--the future possibility that Christ's message may be heeded:

Peace! and no longer from its brazed portals
   The blast of War's great organ shakes the skies!
But beautiful as songs of the immortals,
   The holy melodies of love arise.

How can this possibly be taken seriously? Is this not the most misleading kind of sentimentalism? I would argue that Longfellow has used his light-but-learned historical voice to make it unmistakably clear that he is fully aware of the universality of war and of the crimes men have committed. Yet he still ends the poem with hope and optimism. He does that because he knows, wisely, that men must have hope just as they must have food and water, and that hope can only be perceived and felt in relatively simple terms--otherwise it is not hope. We do not cling to complicated dreams of the future but to simple, clarifying ones. There is a part of us--basic, deep down, often denied by reason and analytic intelligence--that thrives on and needs absolutely the simple dreams that Christ (or someone, or something, a nuclear arms freeze perhaps?) will come again and set things right. And of course this part of us exists right next to another part which knows mankind as so darkly complicated and various that there are few solutions to anything.

In "The Arsenal at Springfield" Longfellow's narrator is, as elsewhere, a man of experience. After his sensitive imagination allows him to transform the arsenal into a huge organ, his mind fixes on a series of complicated and graphic images of historical catastrophes and human misdeeds and gives itself any number of reasons for despair and hopelessness:

The tumult of each sacked and burning village;
   The shout that every prayer for mercy drowns;
The soldiers' revels in the midst of pillage;
   The wail of famine in beleaguered towns;

> The bursting shell, the gateway wrenched asunder,
> The rattling musketry, the clashing blade; . . .

And yet that same knowledgeable narrator comes out at the end offering a simple and clear answer. "If such a wise and sensitive man can feel and perceive all that darkness and still have hope," says a willing reader within us, "then I shall too." No one can persuade me that such a reader doesn't exist in all of us, and it is that reader for whom Longfellow aims.

Not all Longfellow lyrics available to us today are as obviously hopeful and comforting as those I have discussed so far. Many are about death or the rapid passage of time to that end: "The Jewish Cemetery at Newport," "Mezzo Cammin," "The Tide Rises, the Tide Falls," "Nature," "The Cross of Snow," "Ultima Thule." William Dean Howells said that Longfellow's "life included in its course all the sorrow for all the tragedy that can educate a man to sympathy with other human lives."[7] Part of that sympathy took the form of poems about death or aging addressed implicitly to ordinary readers in need of instruction on this subject. Longfellow knew what people actually worried about. Phyllis Franklin has said that he "makes us poignantly aware of man in time by evoking a sharp sense of man's dilemma as he stands marooned in the present moment feeling, with some sadness, the past moving away from him and the future--as dark as the past and yet full of hope--irrevocably approaching."[8] I would say that poems like "Mezzo Cammin," "The Tide Rises, the Tide Falls," "The Cross of Snow," and "Ultima Thule" speak to that reader in us who needs strong and positive examples of men facing death or aging but examples which do not glaze over those hard facts either:

> Half of my life is gone, and I have let
> The years slip from me and have not fulfilled
> The aspiration of my youth, . . .

Who among us has not had that feeling? And who among us has not heard above them "on the autumnal blast / The cataract of Death far thundering from the heights?" Yes, there is certainly a sense of being "marooned" in "Mezzo Cammin," but placed directly in the middle of this fine sonnet are the pivotal lines "But sorrow, and a care that almost killed, / Kept me from what I may accomplish yet." From "what I may accomplish yet"! Despite that clear perception of the sorrow behind and of the thundering cataract ahead, there is no resignation here, no yielding to the despair of inaction. This is information we can always use. We need to know that other men, even in the face of death, still hope for more accomplishment,--that is, that they do not give up; their strength gives us strength.

There are of course, among the poems on our list, several other examples of credible strength in the face of death and aging. The Jews "trampled and beaten" as the sand yet "unshaken as the continent"; the calm acceptance of the "unending endless quest" in "Ultima Thule"; the relentless avoidance of self-pity in "The Cross of Snow." Longfellow's narrators do not challenge death or fight

it or regard it as a hyena at the foot of one's cot in the shadow of Mt. Kilimanjaro, but they appear to know it as a familiar presence and to be quietly unafraid. If you believe that art instructs, as I do, such poems can help.

Some may say that there is not enough pain or detail of personal feeling in these poems for them to be authentically helpful, but I would reply that Longfellow, like Hemingway, another writer who cherished wise simplicity and the plain style, is very wary of on-the-page detailing of personal emotion. In that tantalizingly general poem, "My Lost Youth," at the moment when the narrator seems about to reveal himself, he says, "There are things of which I may not speak," a line which, in my opinion, manifests one of Longfellow's first principles. Much does go unnamed and unspoken in his shorter lyrics, but true emotion is nevertheless there, looming up beyond the page, waiting for us to appropriate it. Longfellow always regarded himself as a public poet, not as a poet displaying his private emotion. He continually refrains from mapping out the details of his most personal feelings not only because he feels it indelicate and conceited to do so but also because he does not wish to usurp our own. His themes are universal--they are ours as well as his--and his poems invite the collaboration of reading selves whose existence we need to acknowledge once again without fear of embarrassment.

So I refuse to accept that tens of thousands of nineteenth century readers were wrong to admire Longfellow and we are right to reject him, for in doing so we reject a part of ourselves which thrives upon straightforwardness, simple wisdom, and honest expressions of unadorned emotion. His day will come again.

NOTES

[1]Howard Nemerov, Longfellow (New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1959), p. 22.

[2]From an interview in the Mississippi Review, Vol. 28 & 29 (Summer, 1981), p. 80.

[3]Edward Wagenknecht, "Longfellow and Howells," in Henry W. Longfellow Reconsidered: A Symposium, ed. by J. Chesley Mathews, The Emerson Society Quarterly, LVIII (1970), p. 55.

[4]Newton Arvin, Longfellow: His Life and Work (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1963), p. 327.

[5]John Champlin Gardner, On Moral Fiction (New York: Basic Books, 1978), p. 17.

[6]Howard Nemerov, otherwise a defender of Longfellow, believes that regarding a poet's work as a repository of values for the encouragement of others is a false idea left over from the Victorians. See Nemerov, Longfellow, p. 15.

[7]Quoted in Wagenknecht, "Longfellow and Howells," Longfellow Reconsidered, p. 54.

[8]Phyllis Franklin, "The Importance of Time in Longfellow's Works," in Henry W. Longfellow Reconsidered: A Symposium, ed. by J. Chesley Mathews, The Emerson Society Quarterly, LVIII (1970), p. 14.

☆U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE : 1982—501-942/211