

"No more! O how majestically mournful are those words! They sound like the roar of the wind through a forest of pine."

Thus the book may rightly be called a study in so far as it pictures the results of a great sorrow upon a nature yielding and sympathetic and administers the requisite panacea of distracting influence till the prostrate eyes are again lifted, till the step, though not again sprightly, has grown hopeful, firm.

In addition, moreover, and draping the plot fantastically, heavily but rarely gracefully appear philosophical disquisitions, moral epitomes, rhapsodies on art and nature, lengthy criticisms and breathless culminations till the structure grows top-heavy and a grievous burden to its legs. Under this cloud of garnish the story waxes oftentimes dangerously thin and is certainly "long drawn out." The incidents too apparently are indicated as so many interesting pegs upon which the super-structure of information and experience may be held up to clear view.

Cut the book in two, place the story in one division, the heavier of the much clothing in the other; title this—Leaves from a Sketch Book, that—From Dark to Dawn with Paul Flemming, and far more satisfaction would be experienced by the reader, while the reputation of Longfellow as a writer of prose would be materially heightened.

Maintaining for the time this division a word or two now for the "Sketch Book."

Longfellow as he wrote sweetly seems ever to have been a sweet thinker. Life for him could have had few discordant notes. Even his minor passages are but the shadows of an afternoon, nowhere comes down the darkness that we feel and fear. For this reason perhaps there is always wanting from his work a certain strength, depth and reach, that nowhere is more evident than in these "sketches" before us. The sweet monotone quickly grows wearisome and gladly we meet with good Jean Paul—his books, his poetry and his poodle; with Goethe, "The all-sided One," "witty and wicked"; and with Hoffman—his wild eyes and unearthly fancies.

"Glimpses into Loudland" is without doubt the gem among these "sketches." Here there still is song but its burden is full of meaning, and strongly suggestive. As a "Philosophy of life" it differs widely from Browning's Ben Ezra, yet is one more adapted perhaps to the general need. There is a

sympathy and a kindness here that have, as yet, more power than trite, sharp-hewn, inspiration. Be strong, oh man, thou art eternal, ever-during as thy Builder, for of him wert thou made. Life opens wide before thee and it endeth — never. Shame not the glory of thy existence. Begin, thou hast much to learn.

We close our "Sketch Book" and seek the acquaintance of Paul Flemming.

We find him completely crushed, in the first days of of his great grief. Like the Rhine by which he wanders the current of his life pours between the wreck and ruin of former days, dark and dripping with December rain. The society of his fellows is distasteful, all nature seems sombre and sullen. Listless, aimless he sighs and drifts stranded now, and again afloat, hopeless, sick-hearted. Time and tune go on with the Winter at Heidelberg and the companionship of the social Baron and still no change—still the dreary useless groping mid the mournful memories of other days. His imaginative mind plays only and ever in a sort of penumbra. Never from his lips comes the cry of genuine anguish—never wreathes there the chastened smile cheerful, resigned. With a sort of blind despondency he jealously hugs the shirt that is hurting him and feebly wonders why the wound never heals.

Such is Paul Flemming the idle, sentimental mourner. For his grief there is condescending pity but certainly little of respect. His one desire, apparently, is to make the most of his sad case. Everything he feels he must tell, if only to himself. Continually he is growing calm or dallying with despair—shades relatively light or dark upon the one sombre back-ground.

What now is the price of his redemption; Oh! Interlachen hast thou forgotten the form and face of Mary Ashburton or why hast thou naught for answer? Has care killed thee too good Berkely, and where are the words engraven on the wall of the little Chapel at St. Wolfgang?

In his arrangement of distracting influence Longfellow has displayed no little amount of dramatic skill. For here are, first the deep concern and self-accusation of love fresh awakened, the shock of its vain proffer, then the soothing strength of an atmosphere of charitable practicality, and last the inspiring appeal from the lips of the "little sanctuary." Change this order and Paul Flemming would have died in tears. Longfellow was however, too imagina-