

Contributed and Selected Articles.

A STUDY OF LONGFELLOW.

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Two years ago Mr. H. W. Longfellow died. With his death passed away our most distinguished American poet. Yet he is not dead, for through his poetry we are to-day conscious of his gracious presence and his sweet humanity. We feel his warm heart beating in sympathy with a wayward world.

Previous to Longfellow's appearance there had been no very great man of letters in America. The country was new, opportunities for speculation were many, business was active; but since then there has been a great advance. Men like Longfellow and Emerson have arisen and stamped their individuality upon the country and increased its taste for literature.

Longfellow was a man whom circumstances combined to make a great literary man—and who will say that circumstances do not play an important part in the formation of every great man. He was derived from Puritan stock: hence his pure morality; he received a gentle breeding: hence his refined benevolent disposition; he received an excellent education, and spent the greater part of his life as a professor: hence his literary taste and wide knowledge.

He was not a man who felt strong passions—he pursued an even way through life. His nature was gentle, and the world's handling of him was gentle.

Davidson thus sums up the perfection of his character: "A man in

intellect and courage, yet without conceit or bravado; a woman in sensibility, yet without shrinking or weakness; a saint in purity of life and devotion of heart, yet without asceticism or religiosity; a knight errant in hatred of wrong and contempt of baseness, yet without self-righteousness or cynicism; a poet in thought and feeling, yet without jealousy or affectation; a scholar in tastes and habits, yet without aloofness or bookishness; a dutiful son, a loving husband, a judicious father, a trusty friend, a useful citizen, and an enthusiastic patriot—he united in his strong transparent humanity almost every virtue under heaven."

And the character of the man is that of the poet. We would not expect from such a man strong, impassioned utterance like that of a Whittier, we would rather expect him to be like the gentle Chibiabos, whom he describes as

"The best of all musicians,
The sweetest of all singers."

The purity of his writings is in accordance with the purity of his nature. The artistic finish of his poetry, the excellence of his translations, the perfection of his sonnets, bespeak his perfect self-control. Many of his minor poems, and these are the ones which have chiefly earned him his fame, as "A Psalm of Life," "Footsteps of Angels," "The Reaper and the Flowers," show his nobleness of purpose and his matchless sympathy. When speaking of the flowers among the bearded grain, the children among