

How Longfellow Wrote His Best Known Poems.

BY HEZEKIAH BUTTERWORTH.

I once wrote to the poet Longfellow, asking him to give me some account of the circumstances under which he wrote "The Bridge"—"I stood on the bridge at midnight"—a poem which an eminent English critic has called "the most sympathetic in this language." I received in return a cordial note from the poet, in which he said: "If you will come over and pass an evening with me, it will give pleasure to tell you the history of the poem, and also of any of my poems that may interest you."

A few evenings later found me at the poet's door at his Cambridge home. He was then verging on seventy years, in the fulness of his experience and the ripeness of his fame. I paused at the door before ringing the bell. I rang, and was shown into a long, hall-like room, dimly lighted, in which was a broad table, antique furniture, and a tall colonial clock. The poet was here alone. He arose to meet me, and formed a striking and statuesque figure, with his kindly smile and long white hair and beard.

"And so you would like to know something about the first inspiration of some of my poems—what led me to write them?" he said when we were seated. "Well, you are very kind. I will tell you first how I came to write the 'Psalm of Life.' I was a young man then. I well recall the time. It was a bright day and the trees were blooming, and I felt an impulse to write out my aim and purpose in the world. I wrote the poem, and put it into my pocket. I wrote it for myself. I did not intend it for publication. Some months afterwards I was asked for a poem by a popular magazine. I recalled my 'Psalm of Life.' I copied it, and sent it to the periodical. It saw the light, took wings, and flew over the world. There you may see it written on a Japanese screen!"

He pointed to a high, richly ornamented screen which stood before a great fireplace. He added an anecdote which I have always regarded as a true picture of his soul: "When I was in England I was honored by receiving an invitation from the queen. As I was leaving the palace yard, my carriage was hindered by the crowd of vehicles. There came to the door of the coach a noble-looking English workingman. 'Are you Professor Longfellow?' he said. I bowed. 'May I ask, sir, if you wrote the 'Psalm of Life?'" I answered that I did. 'Would you be willing, sir, to take a workingman by the hand?' I extended my hand to him. He clasped it, and never in my life have I received a compliment which gave me so much satisfaction."

"I wrote 'Excelsior'" he continued, "after receiving a letter full of lofty sentiments from Charles Sumner, at Washington. In one of the sentences occurred the word 'Excelsior.' As I dropped the letter that word again caught my eye. I turned over the letter and wrote my poem. I wrote the 'Wreck of the Hesperus' because after reading an account of the loss of a part of the Gloucester fishing fleet in an autumn storm, I met the words, 'Norman's woe.' I retired for the night after reading the report of the disaster, but the scene haunted me. I arose to write, and the poem came to me in whole stanzas.

"The clock in the corner of the room," he went on, "is not the one to which I refer in my 'Old Clock on the Stair.' That clock stood in the country house of my

father in law at Pittsfield, among the Berkshire hills."

The great clock in the room was beating the air in the shadows as he spoke. I could seem to hear it say:

"Toujours—jamais!
Jamais—toujours!"

It was these words by a French author that had suggested to him the solemn refrain:

"Forever—never!
Never—forever!"

"Excelsior" had been set to popular music by the Hutchinsons, when the poet met one evening the minstrel family after a concert in Boston Music Hall. "I have," he said, "another poem which I will send to you." He did so. It was the first copy of the "Old Clock on the Stair." One of the family set the words to music.

"My poem entitled 'The Bridge,'" he said, in effect, "was written in sorrow, which made me feel for the loneliness of others. I was a widower at the time, and I used sometimes to go over the bridge to Boston evenings to meet friends, and to return near midnight by the same way. The way was silent, save here and there a belated foot-step. The sea rose and fell among the wooden piers, and there was a great furnace on the Brighton hills, whose red light was reflected by the waves. It was on such a late, solitary walk that the spirit of the poem came upon me. The bridge has been greatly altered, but the place is the same."

The City Boy.

God help the boy who never sees
The butterflies, the birds, the bees,
Nor hears the music of the breeze
When zephyrs soft are blowing;
Who cannot in sweet comfort lie
Where clover blooms are thick and high,
And hear the gentle murmur nigh
Of brooklets softly flowing.

God help the boy who does not know
Where all the woodland berries grow,
Who never sees the forest glow
When leaves are red and yellow;
Whose childish feet can never stray
Where Nature doth her charms display—
For such a hapless boy, I say,
God help the little fellow!

Stories of Some Royal Children.

When the Princess Charlotte was a child of five years old, she had a governess, a Miss Hunt—a lady of great talent, and better still, a truly good woman.

One day after pointing out some beautiful trees to the little Princess, Miss Hunt said: "You know, Princess Charlotte, that God made them; but what would you say to anyone who took it into their heads that they made themselves?"

"I should desire them to go and think," said the little princess.

The late Princess Mary of Teck—mother of the Duchess of York, was as a child extremely fond of dolls, and had a large and varied collection.

One doll, given by the French King Louis Philippe, was a special favorite. It was magnificently dressed; with a beautiful tiara, bracelets, necklace, and brooches, all of real diamonds, rubies and other stones. "I remember," says Lady Munster, "that when my sister and myself were taken up to the Princess's nursery, she was generally playing with this doll, and I used to think how hard it was that I, always considered so like her, should not have a doll with diamonds and rubies too."

The Bloom of Health.

HOW TO KEEP LITTLE ONES BRIGHT, ACTIVE AND HEALTHY.

Every mother knows that little children need careful attention—but they do not need strong drugs. When baby is peevish, cross or unwell, it is an unfortunate fact that too many mothers dose them with so-called "soothing" medicines which stupefy and put the little one into an unnatural sleep, but do not remove the cause of the trouble. What is wanted to make the little one bright, cheerful and well, is Baby's Own Tablets, which will promptly cure colic, sour stomach, indigestion, constipation, diarrhoea, simple fevers and teething troubles. They give children sound, refreshing sleep, because they remove the cause of the trouble. These tablets are guaranteed to contain no opiate or other harmful drug. Mrs. James Found, Valentin, Ont., says:—Before I got Baby's Own Tablets, my baby was very pale and delicate, and so peevish that I had to walk the floor with him day and night. The first tablet I gave him helped him, and that night he slept soundly. Since then the tablets have made him perfectly well, and he is now a fine, healthy looking baby, and is getting quite fat. I would not be without the tablets if they cost a dollar a box.

Baby's Own Tablets are good for children of all ages and are taken as readily as candy. Crushed to a powder, they can be given with absolute safety to the youngest, weakest baby. Sold by all druggists or sent postpaid at 25 cents a box, by addressing the Dr. Williams Medicine Co., Brockville, Ont.

Theo's April Foolishness.

BY MINNIE L. UPTON.

It began in the morning. It was cold "raw," uncomfortable, the sort of morning when Theo usually had to be called twice, and sometimes three times, for her room was not heated, and the bed was so "comfy."

But five minutes after mama had stood at the foot of the stairs and called "Theodo-ra," down came Theo, rosy and smiling, and all ready to cry "April First" when she saw mama's surprised face.

Papa had become so used to testing everything on the table each first of April, that his expression of surprised relief upon finding everything eatable made Theo laugh so that she could hardly gasp, "First of April! You're surpriseder than you ever were before—aren't you, papa?"

It was Saturday, and Saturday was Theo's day to read to blind old Auntie Dillaway; but by the time the work was done, so that mama could spare her, the rain was coming down in torrents.

"No little Theo to-day," sighed the poor blind old lady, as she heard the steady downpour.

"Rat-ta-tat-tat!"

Open flew the gray old door, and in a twinkling, dimpling and smiling, Theo was taking off mackintosh and rubber boots by the fire, and laughing merrily as she chirruped:

"You thought I wouldn't come to-day,—didn't you? But it's April First, you know, the day of surprises."

"They used to have a different kind for that day when I was a girl," quavered the happy old voice, "but I like your kind best."

"So do I, and so does mama, and so does papa," responded Theo.

Isn't it splendid to be a Christian?