

or the death of the duke." Point out parts of the poem which appear to justify this statement.

2. What details has the poet made use of in order to make his description picturesque?

### EXCELSIOR.

The idea of this poem was suggested to Longfellow by seeing in a newspaper the crest of the State of New York, with the motto "Excelsior." *Excelsior* means "higher."

In answer to a letter of inquiry regarding the interpretation of the poem, Longfellow wrote as follows:

"I have had the pleasure of receiving your note in regard to the poem *Excelsior*, and very willingly give you my intention in writing it. This was no more than to display in a series of pictures, the life of a man of genius resisting all temptations, laying aside all fears, heedless of all warnings, and pressing on to accomplish his purpose. His motto is *Excelsior*, 'Higher.' He passes through the Alpine village, through the rough, cold paths of the world—where the peasants cannot understand him, and where his watchword is an unknown tongue. He disregards the happiness of domestic peace and sees the glaciers—his fate—before him. He disregards the warnings of the old man's wisdom and the fascination of woman's love. He answers to all, 'Higher yet.' The monks of St. Bernard are the representatives of religious forms and ceremonies, and with their oft-repeated prayer mingles the sound of his voice telling them there is something higher than forms or ceremonies. Filled with these aspirations, he perishes without having reached the perfection he longed for; and the voice heard in the air is the promise of immortality and progress ever upward."

7. *falchion*. A broad short sword.

9. *unknown tongue*. Unknown to the people who heard it,—because it was a Latin word.

32. *Saint Bernard*. St. Bernard is a celebrated pass in the Alps. At the highest point in the pass is a hospice, or inn,