

The subject which receives those illustrations in the pages of our early English Poets, lies—as might be expected,—extremely remote from all the ideas and associations of this new world, carrying the fancy back into dim old centuries, with their archaic thoughts, suggestive picturings and quaint moralities for the instruction of an unlettered age. Yet Death leads us all the same dance in this new world as in the old, and in this most modern century as in all that went before it; and the old world theme of “The Dance of Death” has been handled—if the last, not the least beautifully,—by one of America’s living poets, in “The Golden Legend,” of Longfellow.

The scene lies on the road to Italy, whither Prince Henry and Elsie are travelling in company, and on reaching a covered bridge at Lucerne, the following dialogue ensues :

P. HENRY. "God's blessing on the Architects who built
The bridges o'er swift rivers and abysses
Before impassable to human feet,
No less than on the builders of Cathedrals,
Whose massive walls are bridges thrown across
The dark and terrible abyss of death.
Well has the name of Pontifex been given
Unto the Church's head, as the chief builder
And architect of the invisible bridge
That leads from earth to heaven.

ELSIE. How dark it grows !
What are these paintings on the walls around us ?

P. HENRY. The Dance Macabre !

ELSIE. What?

P. HENRY. The Dance of Death!

All that go to and fro must look upon it,
Mindful of what they shall be, while beneath,
Among the wooden piles, the turbulent river
Rushes, impetuous as the river of life,
With dimpling eddies, ever green and bright,
Save where the shadow of this bridge falls on it.

ELSIE. O, yes! I see it now!

P. HENRY.

The grim musician
Loads all men through the mazes of that dance,
To different sounds in different measures moving ;
Sometimes he plays a lute, sometimes a drum,
To tempt or terrify.

ELSIE. What is this picture?

P. HENRY: It is a young man singing to a nun,
Who kneels at her devotions, but, in kneeling,